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We're focusing on our signature verse, Romans 15:13 - *May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.*

Overflow; a natural process of being filled. The Holy Spirit filling me - family & friends - local community - the world. Not forced or awkward. What you're filled with overflows to others. Filled with Jesus. Filled with the Word of God. Filled with the Spirit of God. Purified. Made holy. Last week we spoke of being blessed to be a blessing. We give God in proportion to what He's given us (Deut. 16) - Jesus gave his life, I lay mine down in like response.

Which brings us to the question of ownership. Who owns me? Do I own me? Who owns my stuff? My talents? My abilities? Car? House? Money? Kids? My life?

Scripture teaches that we and all that we are and have belong to God. In Leviticus 25 it says this about the people of God, ⁵⁵ for the Israelites belong to me as servants. They are my servants, whom I brought out of Egypt. I am the Lord your God.¹

In Revelation, in speaking about the work and person of Jesus it says, "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation. ¹⁰ You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."²

In 1 Corinthians 6 it teaches, You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price.³

In Romans 6 it speaks of our allegiance... ¹⁸ You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.⁴ A mirror image of Pharaoh and Israel's slavery in Egypt. God rescued Israel out of Egypt. In turn, their status as slaves transferred to God. We are literally slaves.

Here's the kicker...in the language of the 1st century Greco-Roman world a slave was considered a "living tool" of the master; "property" in every sense of the word.⁵ So,

¹ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Le 25:55). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

² *The New International Version*. 2011 (Re 5:9–10). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

³ *The New International Version*. 2011 (1 Co 6:19–20). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁴ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Ro 6:18). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

⁵ Biblical Studies Press. (2006). *The NET Bible First Edition Notes* (Phm 16). Biblical Studies Press.

when the original readers of this came across this slavery language, there was no mistaking what it meant. It was obvious. Whatever you yield to becomes your master.⁶

They would have understood that word slave as bond-servant; a person who willingly submitted themselves as slave of another. Maybe they had debt. Maybe they came from a line of bondservants. But we mustn't confuse this idea of bondservant with slavery in American history - they're not the same idea. Slavery in America was a wicked and oppressive system. However, a bondservant in this context willingly submitted to the master, and enjoyed many benefits of the master's household. Bondservants were often treated very well, and in certain cases, enjoyed elevated status in society.

A fitting illustration. Before Christ, I willingly submitted myself to sin. But sin is a tyrannical master never delivering what it promises. I transfer my allegiance to Jesus, a master who willingly gave his life to buy my freedom, which drives me to willingly give him mine. Jesus isn't tyrannical. He brings freedom from bondage. That's why Paul writes to the Galatians, *'It's for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.'*⁷ As master sin depletes, but as Master, Jesus builds me up.

As Dietrich Bonhoeffer once said, 'When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die.' Death to self - Alive to God in Christ Jesus. In Jesus we're a new creation, the old has gone the new has come. We've passed from death in sin, to life in Christ. We'll see that symbolized next week in the baptism of Erin Das. We've shifted allegiance - we have a new master.

According to Scripture, we're the willing bondservants of Jesus. And in that bondservant/master relationship, we must acknowledge that the master owns everything. Yes, the bondservant enjoys the benefits of the master's belongings and financial covering. Yes, the bondservant is entrusted with certain items and monies to steward/oversee - but the master ultimately owns everything. The servant stewards what is the masters. This is reflected in the story of Adam & Eve from the beginning.

Therefore, in speaking of FILLING & OVERFLOW, it brings us to an important spiritual subject. One which is brought up more than any other in Scripture. A subject of practical nature - Money.

It's been said that fools rush in where wise men fear to tread. In this matter though fear is unfounded. We need to talk about money openly & unapologetically. Boldly. In full trust and assurance that Six:Eight isn't in the business of misusing finances. Fear has gestated in the stories of those few who've misused the kingdom of God for personal gain. Like good Priests in the Catholic Church whose commission has been clouded by

⁶ Wiersbe, W. W. (1996). *The Bible exposition commentary* (Ro 6:16–20). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.

⁷ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Ga 5:1). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

a few unscrupulous men - the church sometimes resides under a cloud of suspicion in the area of money given a few televangelists.

As bondservants of Christ, our finances overflow to serve the King. We're not televangelists looking to scam anyone into giving their life inheritance so we can fly around in private jets and build personal empires. We don't speak the language of 'You and Us', but the language of family, 'We'. Local church is a family of faith sharing resources for kingdom purposes. So, if you your hackles raise at the mention of money, I ask that you gain self-control over the emotion for the next few moments. Set it aside. Listen. Because we can have a very candid conversation couched in trust and marked with purpose. I think we'll find that we have great opportunity to participate in the kingdom of God through our desire to overflow financially.

John Wimber, one of the original founders of the Vineyard, once wrote, "Twelve of Jesus' thirty-eight parables had to do with money, as did 1/6th of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is now clear to me that pastors have a responsibility to preach and teach about money, for Christians cannot grow to maturity until their hearts and minds are conformed to Scripture on their use of money."⁸ It's said that money is the one subject which comes up in Scripture more often than any other, so it must be an important topic with far reaching implications on our spiritual journey.

Billy Graham once said, "If a person gets his attitude toward money straight, it will help straighten out almost every other area in his life." Mull that over...it's very true.

Money promises everything it can't deliver. It can't save you. It can't give you purpose or happiness (I didn't say it can't help). Jesus urged us to have a proper outlook on money. ¹⁹ "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. ²⁰ But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. ²¹ For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."⁹

Where's your heart? What does it serve? What's your treasure? Because, overflow originates from the heart. What's in my heart overflows from within me. So, it's a question of ownership. What fills me is the same question of what owns me. Because Jesus said in reference to money ²⁴ "No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."¹⁰ Either consumed with the love of money, or consumed with the love of God.

Money isn't bad in & of itself. It's a spiritual matter. A tool of the kingdom which mustn't be allowed to become king itself. A spiritual tool in the hand of the steward, the

⁸ <http://www.vineyardchurchplanting.com/2013/09/04/every-pastor-needs-tell-congregation-money/>

⁹ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Mt 6:19–21). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

¹⁰ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Mt 6:24). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

bondservant, for the sake of the Master's bidding. It's not my job to tell you specifically what to do with your money, rather how to regard money in light of Jesus. We speak of ownership to see money & wealth for what it really is, which leads to wise choices with the resources God has entrusted to us. When we're filled with Jesus it naturally overflows from us. The same goes for our material and financial resources, they're an overflow of gratitude towards Jesus to see the kingdom advanced among the nations.

Martin Luther said, 'Every Christian needs two conversions. One for the soul and the other for his pocketbook.' True. It's a constant ongoing awakening for us as to what we are in relationship to God. In our early walk of faith we may look at this relationship very simplistically. We compartmentalize. Jesus saved me - which is placed in a box over here. Now, I live my life on my own terms until he comes back - which is in a box over there. We may not regard our relationship with Jesus to have any bearing on our finances, sexual purity, where we live, our career choices. Yet, as spiritual maturity sets in, we realize, God owns all of me - everything I am, do, and own, is His. The mature Christian willingly and gladly offers it all up to him as a living sacrifice.

As it says in 2 Corinthians, ⁷ Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.¹¹ We freely & cheerfully give to God what is already His - driven by gratitude of what He has already given to, or entrusted to us!

The longer we walk with Jesus & the more we learn, verses like Luke 14:33 come into focus, ³³ In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples.¹² There is no in-between in the kingdom of God. I'm either a slave to sin, or a slave to righteousness. Being filled with Jesus means I'm 'all in' which includes my finances, sexuality, career & calling, the way I speak, etc.

There are some very sober warnings about money in Scripture. ⁹ Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.¹³

There are some very sobering commands as well, ¹⁷ Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.¹⁴

¹¹ *The New International Version*. 2011 (2 Co 9:7). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

¹² *The New International Version*. 2011 (Lk 14:33). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

¹³ *The New International Version*. 2011 (1 Ti 6:9-10). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

¹⁴ *The New International Version*. 2011 (1 Ti 6:17). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Some of this may be difficult to hear. I strive to be relevant & understandable - to speak to the heart in my preaching. But I also must teach in order to change the way we think - some teaching may fly in the face of what you've been brought up to think. The way we think about money needs to come in line with Scripture. We need to understand we're bondservants of Christ - God owns everything - there's no compartmentalization. No 'Half-in/Half-out'. God doesn't own a tenth of my finances - it's all His. He's graciously letting me use & enjoy it.

Jesus teaches this in Matthew 25, the parable of the talents. The servants are given the masters money to steward while he's away. A parable clearly teaching we're stewarding God's resources here & now - therefore, the idea that we possess anything is a deception. The question is, do we invest what has been entrusted us to benefit God, or do we squander it, or merely sit on it waiting for his return?

John Wesley said, 'Make all you can, save all you can, give all you can.' Great advice. We should not be ashamed of proper ambition to make a good living for our families. Scripture pushes us in this way. But it pushes in the way of diligence, hard work and integrity in the issue of accruing wealth. There are no get rich schemes in Scripture. I remember a friend calling me in Indonesia about 15 years ago and asking, "Hey, I just got this email from a guy in Africa. He says if I give him my bank account number he will transfer a million dollars over to me and that I can keep a percentage..." You know the scam, right? Scripture warns us that if it looks too good to be true, it probably is. Very few win the lottery in life and those who do are often ruined by it - the way to secure wealth is through diligence, honesty, integrity, and hard work (Prov 14:23/28:19/Jer 17:11).

Scripture also urges us to save as well. Proverbs 13:22 says, "A good man leaves an inheritance for his children's children." Proverbs 6:6 says, "Go to the ant, you sluggard; consider its ways and be wise! It has no commander, no overseer or ruler, yet it stores its provisions in summer and gathers its food at harvest." And 21:20 says, "In the house of the wise are stores of choice food and oil, but a foolish man devours all he has." Sometimes life does not afford us the opportunity to save enough for the future or our families. We are at the whim of volatile economies, business, and governments. However, we are urged to plan wisely and save as best we can.

Jesus also urges us to guard against hoarding. In Luke 12 he says, "Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; life does not consist in an abundance of possessions."¹⁵ and proceeds to tell the story of a man who is hoarding wealth but dies in the midst of his obsession. Jesus ends by saying, ²¹ "This is how it will be with whoever stores up things for themselves but is not rich toward God."¹⁶

Scripture also urges us to give all we can. John Wimber wrote it this way, "So where does God tell us first to invest his money? In the kingdom of God, in tithes and alms (which are sacrifices beyond our tithes). Formerly I taught that a tithe was not

¹⁵ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Lk 12:15). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

¹⁶ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Lk 12:21). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

necessarily 10 percent. But now I am convinced from Scripture that it *is at least* that, and that it should be given to the local church. Christians need to understand, from the Bible, their responsibility to give generously to God's work."

I agree with John. God's people have always been instructed to give at the least a tenth of their income, ³⁰ " 'A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord.¹⁷ And that tithe, or a tenth, went to the support of the Temple, the priesthood, care for people, and overall work of the kingdom. Jesus rebuked the leaders for neglecting other things but only keeping up with the tithe, ²³ "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former. ¹⁸ Notice he states they were clearly not to neglect tithing, just that they should be overflowing the life of God in all ways.

The local church is the avenue by which God is bringing the message of salvation to the world. Tithing is a spiritual issue practically tied to the local church. John Wimber went as far to say that we give that tenth to the local church before anything else, and anything outside that is considered alms.

I remember when we first started Six:Eight, and hadn't yet started passing the tithe box. A guy came up to me and said, "Man it's great that you don't ask for money! I think that's really cool." He further explained that he thought churches only cared about money and were always asking for it. That it was nice that a church lived by faith and didn't ask. I proceeded to tell him that the only reason we hadn't passed the tithe box was that I hadn't gotten a bank account open yet. I simply didn't want to be personally sitting on a bunch of cash. I'm not making fun of the guy, but it was a naive comment. Churches are organizations with bills & rent to pay. Churches like everything else operate on money. Churches expend resources on their communities, in areas of poverty and missions. Churches have salaries and people to care for. Comments such as his only come from younger people who've never had the financial responsibility of running an organization.

We cannot be afraid to talk about money. God calls us to speak unapologetically on the issue. At Six:Eight we never want our ministry to be limited by a lack of funding. In our history we've paid our rent, salaries, bought equipment, paid other necessary bills, helped out local families both inside and outside Six:Eight who were struggling. We've invested back into local community partnerships which has taken relationships farther. We've supported the Halls in their endeavor to mobilize people to the least reached people groups of the earth for the Gospel. We've invested money in this building, and others we've met in, as a thank you to them to show we care and love our neighbors and appreciate them. We've trained our leadership and refreshed them with meals and well deserved gifts. We've put on community parties and luncheons which have

¹⁷ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Le 27:30). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

¹⁸ *The New International Version*. 2011 (Mt 23:23). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

increased relationships and opened doors. We've welcomed our newcomers with meals and fun events. We've developed and implemented retreats and seen lives change as a result - we want to keep doing these things and more.

One of our dreams is that we have our own physical footprint in Ardmore. The Ardmore/Havertown area is a crowded place, there are few options to meet as a church. In a split second we could be out on our ear without a meeting place (explain). We need to be wise to save for the future and build our reserves for that rainy day when we need to rent or buy a larger place. We have a dream and vision to make that a community center (explain). But it will remain just a dream unless we overflow in the area of finances to make it happen - unless we tithe.

The Pastoral Council is meeting with another church who has recently gone through this process to understand what we need to be thinking and doing. We are seeking good council from other families of faith. And my challenge to us today is to think hard about ownership - are you glorifying God in all ways? Are you a good steward of what he has entrusted to you?