

## Exceeding the Limit Part 2

Last Sunday we talked about things in our life that limit the blessings of God. I said then that God wants to bless his people. He is an unlimited God who has called us to an abundant, unlimited life. Jesus said, **“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” John 10:10.** He has called us to a full life – not an unchallenged life – it is a crucified life – but a life that exceeds the limits. The problem is, we keep imposing limits. We limit the flow of God’s blessing to our lives by our wrong choices and our disobedience, but God has provided what we need to live that abundant and blessed life if we will live in obedience to God and his word.

Look again at the passage we read last Sunday. **“His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins.” 2 Peter 1:3-9.**

God has given us everything we need to live a godly, abundant life. Peter says by obeying God and living for him we can escape the corrupting influences of the world, and that means we can avoid the drama and pain and trouble that comes with sin and its consequences. All that and more has been offered to us in Christ, by the Holy Spirit. What prevents us from receiving it? We do. We blame God and others when we are responsible. The problem with me is me! I limit the blessing of God in my life. It’s time to break free and exceed the limits!

For some of us, even though we are saved and doing our best to obey God and live for him, we have a hard time believing God wants to bless us or that those “great and precious promises” Peter mentions could apply to us. We are still wondering whether God meant his word for us. “Has he really given me everything I need for life and godliness? Me? Does God really have a plan for me? God wants to use me? God wants to bless me? Others, yes, but not

me.” It’s time to start believing and accepting what God says about you! If you have made Jesus the Savior and Lord of your life then God has forgiven your sins and made you a new person in Christ Jesus. You are alive and able to live for him. His promises, his commands, his blessings, his plans apply to you. Believe it. You may still be dealing with some of the consequences of past sin and mistakes, I understand, but don’t let that stop you from serving Jesus. God has forgiven you even if you can’t forgive yourself. Live for God. Obey Him, trust Him, serve Him and watch what happens. The bible says God is a rewarder of those who diligently, earnestly seek him. Seek the Lord, obey him and you will see the blessings of God in your life.

The bible says **“For the Lord God is a sun and shield; the Lord bestows favor and honor. No good thing does he withhold from those who walk uprightly.” Psalm 84:11** God isn’t trying to withhold good things from our lives, we are the ones who are depriving ourselves of his favor and blessings by refusing to walk uprightly, obediently, faithfully.

Just a quick review. Last Sunday I told you to **Make every effort to get the sin out of your life.** Remember the passage from 1 Peter 1. **“As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written, ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’” 1 Peter 1:14-16.**

Stop living the way you did before you met Jesus! If you want the blessings of God in your life, stop giving in to sin. Peter said stop living like you did when you lived in ignorance. You’re smarter than that. God wants to bless you and help you. Stop working against God! Don’t limit what God wants to do in your life by disobedience and compromise. Live for Jesus and stop living the way you did before you met Him.

I also said **Make your obedience immediate.** Stop debating the pros and cons of obeying God and his word. “It will cost us money if we obey God. It will cost me that job if I obey God. I can’t afford to do what the bible says to do.” Seriously? Are you listening to yourself? Let me paraphrase Peter again: Don’t be ignorant! Our friend Pastor Anthony Roe said, “The cost of obedience doesn’t even compare to the cost of disobedience.” You can’t afford to not obey God! Do it now! Don’t hesitate. You are missing the blessing of God the longer you wait to obey. You can’t afford to delay your obedience. Stop making excuses and start living for Jesus like you know you should!

Peter said to “make every effort to add to your faith goodness, knowledge, etc.” We are

going to add a couple of things to our list this morning. We are dealing with things that limit the blessings of God in our lives. Here is the next thing: Unforgiveness.

**We limit the flow of God's blessing in our lives when we refuse to forgive.** The flow of God's blessing comes through forgiveness. We come to God, repent of our sins and ask Jesus to be our Savior and Lord. He forgives us of our sins and because we then are in right standing with God through Christ, he can pour his blessing upon us. The flow of his blessing follows his forgiveness of our sins. **Flow follows forgiveness.** But there's more to this.

In the prayer we call "the Lord's prayer" Jesus prayed "forgive us our debts as we have forgiven our debtors." After the prayer Jesus said, **"For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins."** Matthew 6:14-15. The flow of his blessing follows forgiveness – not just his forgiving our sins, but us forgiving the sins of others. **If you don't forgive others, you shut off the flow!** If you don't forgive, you aren't forgiven and if you aren't forgiven, the blessings of God can't flow into your life. You are still living under the curse and condemnation of sin. The flow of God's blessing follows forgiveness.

We are studying the sermon on the mount on Wednesdays in our Homecoming Wednesday service. We looked at this beatitude last week. Jesus said, **"Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy."** Matthew 5:7. If you want to increase the mercy you are receiving, you had better be showing mercy to others. Holding grudges against people, reliving all the wrongs done to you, rehearsing them over and over again, by doing so you are cutting off the flow of God's mercy and healing into your life. The flow of his life and healing and mercy and blessing into your life follows forgiveness. I can't make it any simpler or any more plain than what Jesus has already stated. If you don't forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins and you shut down the flow of blessing. You don't just limit the blessing, you are shutting it down. Let go. Let God be their judge, not you. Put it into God's hands. The bible says **"Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing."** 1 Peter 3:9. Repay with a blessing so you can inherit a blessing.

Flow follows forgiveness. The flow of healing and life and peace follows your forgiving them for what they did. Forgive God for what you think he did or failed to do for you. Forgive someone for a wrong, for hurting you, for letting you down. You want to be shown mercy?

Start being merciful. Start showing mercy. Exceed the limitations of your life by forgiving and letting it go! There is too much at stake. I've watched unforgiveness and bitterness take hold because of a wound inflicted and it doesn't just affect one person, it is a poison that spreads. Whole families lose out with God. Whole families stop going to church and kids and grandkids are lost and going to hell because you refused to forgive someone for something done to you forty years ago. Stop living like you did before you met Jesus. Turn it loose and let it go. Give it to Jesus. Ask God to help you release that person and that thing. Put it into his hands for his disposition of the matter. God is the only wise and just judge so let him decide the verdict. When you do, you'll allow the blessings of God once again to flow into your life.

Here is one more self imposed limit to the blessing of God. **Inconsistency limits the blessing of God in our lives.** Go back to our passage in 2 Peter 1. Think again about his godly instruction to us. **“Make every effort to add to your faith goodness, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love.”** Then he tells us to **“possess these qualities in increasing measure”** so we can be effective and productive. We are to be steadily, consistently obeying God and living according to his word. Consistently not sporadically; in increasing not decreasing measure; adding to not subtracting from. We are to be constantly and consistently serving and obeying God, making every effort, in increasing measure.

Inconsistency disrupts and limits the blessing of God in our lives. I know this is meddling and not preaching, but sometimes meddling is what a pastor is called to do. I also know if there is a political correctness to church and preaching then I am not being politically correct this morning, but I'm trying to help you experience all God has for you. So here we go. The bible says, **“Land that drinks in the rain often falling on it and that produces a crop useful to those for whom it is farmed receives the blessing of God. But land that produces thorns and thistles is worthless and is in danger of being cursed. In the end it will be burned.” Hebrews 6:7-8** Think of your life like a field. God is sending the rain but you have to cultivate the land and prepare the soil to receive the seed and the rain and then it will produce a crop. You will receive the blessing of God and you will be effective and productive, remember, in increasing measure. But to keep the land prepared requires making every effort and it requires consistency.

Consistency is what I don't have when it comes to taking care of the land. I've told you about our yard and flowerbeds. I pull weeds and clean out the weird stuff that grows, the thorns

and thistles, but I don't do it consistently. I get it clear and then a month goes by, a few weeks go by and I walk out and wonder "where did that stuff come from? How in the world did the whole flower bed turn into that?" There is nothing useful or beautiful about what is growing in the flower bed. It is worthless and is in danger of being cursed.

Some of us do that with our obedience to God. We pray and clean up our act when there is a problem and then when things improve we go back to living life as we want. The trouble is coming back, just like the weeds and thorns are coming back. You have to be consistent in living for God or you will consistently find yourself in trouble.

How about consistency in prayer, talking to God, committing your life to God in prayer, confessing your sins to God in prayer, asking for his help, pledging your obedience to God, surrendering your life to God in prayer? You can't have much of a relationship with someone if you only talk to them every few months. Be consistent in prayer, building a relationship with Jesus. It will keep the land cultivated and ready for the rain so a good crop will grow and yield a good harvest.

How about consistency in reading and studying God's word? If these great and precious promises have been given to us, don't you think you need to know what they are in order to live by them, to experience them, to make sure you aren't doing things that limit the blessing and favor of God? Be consistent in reading and studying God's word. It's part of consistently farming the field that is your life. Consistently planting, watering, growing.

How about consistency in church attendance? "Well I don't have to be in church to receive the blessings of God." Well, the bible did say "Let us not give up meeting together as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another." Hebrews 10:25. Attending church doesn't automatically make you a better Christian, it doesn't earn you the blessing of God, but attending church is a means of hearing and studying the word of God, of being challenged to obey God and to apply God's word to your life. Attending church means being in a place where you can worship and pray and be encouraged by others. If you have children, the consistency of church attendance is so important. They need to see you being consistent in attending church. They need to see you making church and faith and prayer and worship and serving God and serving the church and being involved in the life of the church - they need to see you making that a priority in your life. If it isn't a priority in your life, it won't even be a blip on the radar screen of their life. Church attendance is no guarantee your kids will serve

God, but not attending, or being inconsistent in attending and being a part of the life of the church...well, we are talking about self-imposed limits. I think you limit the chance of yourself or your family being faithful, active, passionate followers of Christ in the future. Don't be offended. I'm trying to help you.

Listen, if you are a parent or grandparent or guardian, your children are constantly and consistently influenced by peers, by culture, by all kinds of social media – influenced with messages that want to pull them away from God. They need all the encouragement they can get to serve God! I know you're tired, so was your grandmother, but she brought her kids to church Sundays and Wednesdays and to revival meetings and prayer meetings, and she did everything she could to consistently get her children in a place and in an atmosphere that was conducive to them hearing the voice of God. My advice is to make every effort and get yourself and your family to church, consistently. It's the best chance you've got at keeping your children on the path to faith. It's the best chance we've got to hand this faith to the next generation. The church is only one generation from extinction. You've got a responsibility, to God, to yourself, to the next generation. Be consistent. I've got forty years of pastoral experience and I'm telling you, just showing up every once in a while won't work! Be consistent if you want to exceed the limit and allow for the blessing of God.

I won't even mention tithing. Well, just for a moment. God wants to bless your finances, but he can't open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing if you keep slamming the windows shut from the outside by refusing to give and obey God with your finances. Something or someone will devour your income and finances if you aren't obeying God. If you don't believe me, read Malachi 3:8-12.

It's time to exceed the limit and start living your life in obedience to Him. Surrender your life to Jesus and exceed the limits! Get the sin and compromise out of your life. Make your obedience immediate, don't hesitate. Don't let unforgiveness limit the flow of God's blessing into your life. Choose to forgive and be forgiven. Don't let inconsistency in your walk with God rob you of his blessings. Decide today to live a consistent life for Jesus.