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Holy Spirit: Living Beyond Limits

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John 14:12-17

Lately I've been running up against a lot of limits in my life. I can't get to everything I want to do in life. Husband, father, friend, successful, I can't be everything I want to be in life; let alone wanting to go beyond this life and live as a world-changer for Christ. The limits are all around me. And probably in me. Not having time, not taking the time for the really important stuff, missing out on God's best. Limits come from too busy schedules, or lack of emotional energy, or being distracted by less important things that the stuff God would probably love to engage me in. I wind up feeling pretty limited. And I'm not sure how to fix it. Maybe you're there too.

In one Peanuts cartoon, Snoopy is talking about Woodstock. "Someday Woodstock is going to be a great eagle. He's going to soar 1000ft. above the earth." And in the next frame, Woodstock takes off about 20ft. in the air and begins to whirl around topsy-turvy, and Snoopy has second thoughts, "Well, maybe 100ft. above the earth." And then in the next frame, Woodstock plummets to the earth and is lying there dazed with his head up and his wings fluttering, and Snoopy says "Well, maybe he'll just be one of those eagles who walks around on the earth." Maybe you've felt like Snoopy, and somebody let you down. Maybe you feel like Woodstock, and you've resigned yourself to living "smaller" or "lower" than you once hoped for your life. You never dreamed your limits would include having to share your children on 4th of July. You never dreamed your limits would include having to work so hard to supply your family with less that *you* had growing up. You never dreamed your limits would include your own brokenness or frustration or physical dependency on someone else.

The Bible talks about limits. Some were given to us by God. But others we put there ourselves. And, most tragically, some are there because we are simply unaware of God's truth: how good God is, and what God's done for us. Look up John 14:12—17: *John 14:12 I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father. 13 And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father. 14 You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it. 15 "If you love me, you will obey what I command. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever— 17 the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him, because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.*

The dramatic power of the promise becomes more pronounced when we keep in mind who it is that is saying this. It makes a difference who says what. In this case, Jesus said it. The man who came to save the world. The ultimate rebel. Jesus said it. The man who has had a bigger impact on all of human history than any other man. He healed the sick, forgave the sinner, washed the disciples' feet, He took little kids on his lap and also calmed the raging sea. He threw his life in the face of raging prejudice of his day and finished all that God sent him to do. Imagine that...Jesus...Jesus said it: "*Greater things than I have done will YOU do, because I go to the Father.*" Do you believe it?... Don't answer too quickly. Do you believe it enough? Do you believe it enough to live beyond your self-imposed limits? Our problem is we trust Jesus with some things some of the time. We need to trust Jesus with all of the things in our life, all of the time. (Even that thing I'm struggling with? Yes.)

If we can trust Jesus with this one, we must realize **you are more than you think you are**. Let me say that again. I believe that is at least a part of what Jesus is saying in that promise. "*Greater things than I have done will you do, because I go to the Father.*" **You are important to God....** Let that sink in. You are important to God. In fact, you are an unrepeatable miracle of God. Try to remember Psalm 8:3—5. "*When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have established; what is humanity that you are mindful of us, that you care for us? You created them a little lower than the angels, and crowned them with glory and honor.*" The *book* is the authority, not your feelings. Jesus said the hairs on your head are numbered. Not a sparrow falls to the earth, that God doesn't take note of it; and you, you're more valuable than sparrows. That's what the book says! You are important to God. And that means there is a place in God's heart, that only you can fill. You see, God loves each one of you, as if each one of you were the only person in the world to love. Had there been no other person in the world, God would have still sent his only begotten Son to save you. So will you be open to the promise of greater things? You're more than you think you are.

There is a prayer that has come out of the Roman Catholic church's quietness movement. They suggest that you pray it every day. The prayer is this: "*O God, help me to believe the truth about myself, no matter how beautiful it is.*" Isn't that good? "O God, help me to believe the truth about myself, no matter how beautiful it is." You are important to God, and you are more than you think you are.

Now a second truth. **There is something you can be, but will never be apart from Jesus Christ.** At this point I want to invite up a friend of mine: Sam Watson. She just graduated from U of M, and she's been attending here regularly for the last 4 years. I've known Sam since she was in 6th grade. She was in my youth group in Birmingham. Many of our kids also know her, because she worked at the SOS mission in Memphis, TN, where our Jr High kids are right now. Sam has an amazing story about who she's becoming I think you'll be interested in...**SAM WATSON TESTIMONY.**

You are more than you think you are. There is something you can be, but will never be apart from Jesus Christ. These two affirmations move us toward living beyond our limits and claiming the promise. "*Greater things than I have done will you do, because I go to the Father.*"

The source of power to live beyond our limits is that Jesus links this promise with the equally amazing verses in 13 and 14. "*Whatever you ask in my name I will do, so that the Father may be glorified through the Son. If you ask anything in my name I will do it.*" He says the same thing twice. Let the impact of that settle in our minds. He didn't say "Ask anything in my name and I just might do it; or ask anything in my name and I'll probably do it; he didn't say "Ask, and there's a good chance, that you'll get what you ask. He was very clear. Ask anything in my name and I will do it. Extravagant and unlimited, it seems.

But, it's more than tacking "in Jesus' name" on the end of your prayer. In the Bible, each name is tied to the person's character and mission. Have you ever had someone do something "for" you, "in your name", and when you heard what it was, you were dying inside? And you say "That's not how I'd have done that! You can't attach my name to what you just did!" It's the same here. Our prayer is to be in Jesus' name. He has promised to answer every request, every time, when what we pray is "in his name." That's probably our biggest problem: we can't get to living beyond our limits because we don't spend enough time on our knees. We never even get to asking "in His name". We wind up trusting Jesus for some things some of the time, when we need to trust him with all things, all of the time.

What did Jesus promise he would do when he returned to the Father? He would send the Holy Spirit. And what would the Holy Spirit do? He would give us power. And Paul in his letter to the Ephesians said that very power which raised Jesus from the dead is available to us. (Eph. 1:19-20).

Let me ask you a question. When was the last time you attempted something *so* great, *so* demanding, *so* Kingdom-like, *so* limit-breaking, that you knew you would fail, unless you received the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit? When was the last time you heard the call of God to do something bold, and you followed boldly, knowing the *only* way you could walk in the way that you were being called, was if you were guided

by the Holy Spirit? When was the last time the people around you, (at work, or home, in your neighborhood or at school), heard something so outrageously Christian, that you shocked them? That's living beyond limits. We Christians are always to be attempting those things that we know we would fall flat on our face in attempting to do, and fail miserably, unless the Holy Spirit gives us power. Imagine a community where everyone was doing greater things than Jesus has done, because they choose to believe think of themselves and those around them without the prison of *self*-imposed limits? You're the vessel of God's Holy Spirit! There's something you can be but will never be apart from Jesus Christ. You were meant to live beyond limits for Him. Let us pray: "Jesus, some of us don't really believe we are as much as you say we are. So I pray you'll help us to see just how much you've done, and how much more we can do with you. Thank you that we were meant to live and serve you beyond any limits we've known thus far."