

**Grace is Greater**

**Part 5 of 8**

**Grace Is Greater Than Your Lack**

***Week 1: Grace is Greater than your Depression***

***Week 2: Grace is Greater than your Guilt***

***Week 3: Grace is Greater than your Hurt***

***Week 4: Grace is Greater than your Mistakes***

***Week 5: Today: Grace is Greater than your Lack***

Message:

Psalm 78:41: “They turned back and tempted God and limited the Holy One of Israel.”

If you grew up going to Sunday School, you’re probably familiar with the story of Moses and the children of Israel. After Moses led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, they spent 40 difficult years wandering in the desert before they entered the Promised Land. Numbers 15-25 presents us with a detailed picture of this period of trial and testing that’s become known as “the wilderness experience.”

While most Christians today will probably never get lost in a literal desert, many of us have struggled or are struggling with a chronic physical illness, a financial problem, bondage to some sin, or a million other things. You may know what it means to lose sight of your heart’s desire. Your dream can seem just as unreachable as the land of Canaan must have seemed to the children of Israel.

Like the Israelites, we’ve escaped from slavery. When we put our faith in Christ, we were set free from the bondage to sin and to our old nature. But, like the children of Israel, many of us seem incapable of living the abundant life. It’s one thing to be set free from bondage; it’s another thing to be free enough from our former way of thinking to be able to enter the Promised Land. Like the children of Israel, we often choose to live in the wilderness because we don’t believe God’s able to lead us into the Promised Land. Again, our theme text:

Psalm 78:41: “They turned back and tempted God and limited the Holy One of Israel.”

Have you ever thought of God having any limitations?  People say, “Well, He’s God, He can do anything.” Believe it or not, there are some things that God can’t do: lie, fail, stop loving us, change, be tempted. There are some things that God won’t do: over-ride someone’s will, force someone to do His will, turn someone away that comes to Him in faith, leave us or forsake us.

Here’s the point: God is limitless, but we have the power to limit Him.

This one Bible verse gives us some insight into the wilderness mentality: “They turned back and tempted God.” The Israelites refused to believe the promise was for them. They didn’t believe God was really able to give them the abundant life. Since they didn’t believe the promise, they were unable to receive it. The verse goes on to say, they “limited the Holy One of Israel.”

When the Bible says they “tempted God,” it means they put God on trial. Instead of believing His promises and testing His Word to see if it would work, they put Him on trial as if in a court of law. They didn’t believe God was able to perform His promises. They tried Him and found Him guilty of lying. Since they didn’t believe God’s promises, they didn’t obey His Word. As a result, they found themselves wandering in the wilderness.

The Israelites saw great miracles performed on their behalf in the land of Egypt. They witnessed the plagues against the Egyptians. They saw the Red Sea part. They ate the manna from heaven every day. Twice God made water come out of a rock for them to drink. Their clothes and shoes never wore out. They had an intellectual understanding that God could do anything, yet when they saw the size of the enemy in the land of Canaan, they were unable to believe God could give them victory over their circumstances.

Like the children of Israel, we turn our backs and tempt God, and limit Him.

Hebrews 4:2: “For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.”

Like the Israelites, we look at the size of the enemy holding our inheritance and we feel inadequate in our own eyes (Numbers 13:33). We limit God in the same way the children of Israel did. We say, “Oh, I know God can do anything.” But we’re not convinced that He’s done very much or that He’ll do it in our lives and in our circumstances.

It’s possible to be saved, called, and chosen, yet like the children of Israel, to live and die without entering into your promised inheritance. It’s possible for your entire Christian life to be one of wondering and wavering, doubt and unbelief, trials and temptations, never knowing exactly where you are or where you’re going.

Yet Jesus came to set us free from these things. So why is it so difficult for us to lay hold of that freedom? I believe one of the main reasons is because we’ve been taught to put un-Biblical limitations on God in such areas as healing, increase, deliverance, and living in victory.

Because of unscriptural thinking, there are many today who actually believe the wilderness is somehow ordained of God. Some say, “It’s a normal part of the Christian life. It’s necessary for Christian growth. It’s designed by God to purify His people.” I don’t think so! When God called the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, it wasn’t His plan to make them wander in the wilderness for 40 years. He intended for that generation of His people to immediately receive their promised inheritance. And yet, that whole generation died without ever seeing it. What went wrong?

Hebrews 3:19: “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.”

The Children of Israel didn’t believe God would keep His Word and it was their unbelief that kept them out of the Promised Land.

Hebrews 11:13 says that the men and women of faith “…saw the promises afar off.” That’s exactly how many Christians see the promises of God – afar off. They acknowledge that God’s promises are true, but they see them as meant for the distant future. The writer of Hebrews warned the church about the need to enter into the promises of God right now.

Hebrews 4:9, 11: “There remaineth a rest to the people of God… Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest.”

We should desire to enter into that rest, not out of a motivation of greed, but because it’s a New Covenant mandate. It’s our right as God’s children. We’re commanded to enter into our inheritance.

The rest spoken of in the Old Testament was the land of Canaan, flowing with milk and honey, but this rest was only a type of the rest God has for the New Testament believer. Our rest is Christ. He’s our Promised Land flowing with abundance and enjoyment. Our rest is the abundant life, which Jesus promised us.

John 10:10: “I came that you may have life and have it abundantly.”

This New Testament “rest” is more than salvation. The children of Israel had already been saved from slavery in Egypt. When we put our faith in Christ, we’re saved from slavery to sin. Our goal now must be to enter into our inheritance: the promised land of abundant life, which Jesus died to give us.

Why is it so hard for us to enter into our inheritance? Why is so hard to take the Bible at face value in the areas of healing, increase, deliverance, and living in victory? Why do we have so much trouble accepting that the promises of the Bible are for us?

The answer, in a word, is negativism. We must learn to overcome negative thinking!

We’re programmed from childhood to think negatively, to expect bad instead of good. We’re trained to have a scarcity mentality rather than an abundance mentality. As a result, we limit God and we limit ourselves and what we can accomplish in life. Most of us dream of things we’d like to achieve, but only a tiny percentage actually succeeds in fulfilling even a small part of their life’s dream.

How easy it is to fall into the trap of confessing the Word with our mouths but wavering in our hearts.

Negativism attacks and ultimately destroys our faith and hope, until our dreams are abandoned in an atmosphere of frustration and despair.

There’s a shift in the atmosphere! We’re moving from frustration to success, from despair to joy, from lack to abundance, from anxiety to peace, from sickness to health, from striving to rest.

Hope is an essential element of faith. I don’t mean the kind of hope that says, "Someday God might do something for me." That’s wishful thinking - not hope.

The word translated hope in the New Testament means "confident expectation (of good)."

Hope is the breeding ground of faith. Without a confident expectation of good, we’ll never be able to work real faith. Once hope (the confident expectation of good) is destroyed, fear takes over. Fear is the opposite of hope: it confidently expects the worst. Fear is the breeding ground for unbelief, which always leads to disobedience. This process of fear and unbelief starts in childhood, and often, lasts a lifetime. Once the simple faith of early childhood is lost, it isn’t easily regained.

Matthew 18:3: “Unless you…become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Jesus told us that we must become as little children. Young children possess a quality that’s essential to achieving their dreams: they know no limits or boundaries! They don’t know what they can't do, so they dream big dreams. They’re limited only by their imaginations. But, indoctrination into negative thinking begins all too early.

Research has shown that few adults can be classified as highly creative, whereas 95% of all four-year olds are highly creative. The truly astonishing aspect of this research is that while 95% of all four-year olds studied were considered creative, only 4% of all seven-year olds studied retain their creativity. What happened to these children in the three years between four and seven? The answer is obvious: they started school.

Preschool children are expected to be imaginative. However, when children start school, they enter what we call the "real world." The real world is intolerant of dreamers. In school, away from the nurturing of our parents, we begin to learn all the things we can’t do. We’re compared unfavorably to others. We’re stereotyped. We’re encouraged to abandon our own ideas in favor of conformity to a group standard. We’re discouraged from developing our imaginations. Our hopes and dreams fall victim to negative input from people. We sacrifice our individuality on the altar of peer pressure.

From childhood, our thoughts are programmed for what we can’t do rather than for what we can do. Our self-image is so fragile that we can’t bear the possibility of failure, so we limit what we’re willing to try.

Here’s what really sad! When we get saved and begin developing a new relationship with God, we continue to limit ourselves with the negativism of our former selves. In so doing, we limit God as well. We’re inclined to doubt the promises of God because they don’t square with our limited self-concepts.

The only limitations that God has are those in your mind!

When we get saved, we’re to renew our minds so that we may know what’s the good and acceptable and perfect will of God (Romans 12:2). Many new Christians think the battle they fight is with their old nature, so they’re always trying to crucify their flesh. Your old nature is already crucified with Jesus.

Romans 6:6: “Our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.”

There’s nothing that can be added to what’s already done.

Your problem isn’t your old nature; it’s your old way of thinking. Before you got saved, you were programmed to a way of thinking and handling problems. You had your own ideas about what was good and bad, right and wrong, and what your abilities and limitations were.

When you received Jesus, you became a new creation. All the old has gone, and the new has come (2 Corinthians

An abundance mindset = an abundant life!‬ ‬

It’s been said that it only takes 3-6 weeks to develop a habit. A right habit can be developed in the same length of time it takes to develop a wrong habit. If we can develop the ability to believe God's Word, to see God's answer instead of focusing on the problem, we can remove all the limitations that we’ve placed on God.

1 Timothy 4:7 exhorts us to "…exercise yourselves…" We have to practice being who we truly are! That means you work at it: you do it, and do it, and do it, until it becomes a habit. An old proverb puts it this way, “You sow a thought you reap an act. You sow an act you reap a habit. You sow a habit you reap a character. You sow a character you reap a destiny.” The first link of the chain is the thought. It’s the mind that’s the key that unlocks your heart, your hands and your habits. If we practice taking control over our thoughts, rejecting negativism, and nurturing positive faith thinking, in a few weeks we’ll have laid the foundation to change the course of our entire lives. A few weeks is a small investment to make for so great a return!

It’s time to move from a scarcity mindset to an abundance mindset!

1. Bag Mindset – “Not enough.” Haggai 1:6 “You have planted much but harvest little. You eat but are not satisfied. You drink but are still thirsty. You put on clothes but cannot keep warm. Your wages disappear as though you were putting them in bags filled with holes!”

2. Barrel Mindset – “Just enough.” 1 Kings 17:14: “For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, ‘The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail…’”

3. Basket Mindset – “More than enough.” Matthew 14:20: “They all ate as much as they wanted, and afterward, the disciples picked up twelve baskets of leftovers.”

obedience to God opened an opportunity for abundance.

4. Barn Mindset – “ABUNDANCE.” Genesis 41:56 “The famine was over all the face of the earth, and Joseph opened all the barns…”