

His Spirit Without Limits John 3:31-36

A question as we begin our study today . . . can you imagine having the presence of God's Holy Spirit within you "without limits", with no limitations at all?

The scripture passage that we'll study today tells us that that was true for the Lord Jesus, that God the Father had given His Holy Spirit to His Son the Lord Jesus "without limits".

And then consider also that in John chapter 14 Jesus said that God the Father was also in Him, meaning that even as He remained within His human form, the entirety of the Trinity of God resided within, abided within, dwelled within the Person of the Lord Jesus, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

And yes, for most seasoned Christians, these considerations about Jesus are fully accepted and without question. But there are some who believe differently, some who believe that while Jesus was in His human flesh He had limitations. And they quote verses such as the one in Matthew chapter 24 that tells us that,
³⁶ "No one knows about that day or hour, (when He will return) not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. (Matthew 24:36)

I don't know how or why Jesus chose to set boundaries for Himself in this way, but I do know from many, many other scripture verses that as the "Son of Man" the Lord Jesus was still also the "Son of God" and "without limits."

And no, this is not some form of contradiction. There are no contradictions within God's words. It is simply one of those mysteries that the Holy Spirit has written into these words.

And for me, while I'm here, I really have no problem with accepting that God gives us these mysteries for a reason and His reasons for them are always "good". And as we're told in 1 Corinthians chapter 2, perhaps He will share the secrets of His mysteries later on as we draw nearer in our relationship with Him.

With all of that being said then, let's pause for a moment and read the scripture passage that we'll study today. And as we do, may I ask us to consider what these words, "without limits" might mean as we learn more about our Lord.

And then also especially, may we consider what these words might mean as they might be applied to each of us, to you and to me personally in our knowledge of our Lord and in our relationship with Him. As we are adopted as sons into the family of God, does He give us His Holy Spirit "without limits"? If there are limits, why does He set those limits on us?

Turn again with me to these words of John chapter 3 where John the Baptist was continuing to explain the role and the purpose that God had commissioned him to carry forward as he went about preaching and baptizing and "preparing the way" for the Lord Jesus. Listen, in verse 28 John said,

²⁸ You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, 'I am not the Christ, but I have been sent before him.' ²⁹ The one who has the bride is the bridegroom. The friend of the bridegroom, who stands and hears him, rejoices greatly at the bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is now complete. ³⁰ He must increase, but I must decrease."

³¹ "The one who comes from above is above all; the one who is from the earth belongs to the earth, and speaks as one from the earth. The one who comes from heaven is above all. ³² He testifies to what he has seen and heard, but no one accepts his testimony. ³³ The man who has accepted it has certified that God is truthful. ³⁴ For the one whom God has sent speaks the words of God, for God gives the Spirit without limit. ³⁵ The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. ³⁶ Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him." (John 3:28-36)

Do you now, or have you ever struggled to know what God's plan might be for the future days of your life. Because yes, God really does have a plan for each of our lives. And He tells us so in these scriptures given in Jeremiah 29:11 that I remind us of often. There He says to us,

¹¹ For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. (Jeremiah 29:11)

Unfortunately, not everyone accepts this kind of thinking. Most people seem to believe that all the occurrences of our day are purely by our own decision making, or at most, things just randomly "happen" to us.

For me, having worked in a ministry to young people for most of my life, I have had this very conversation with many, many of those young people on so many

occasions. Most of them having come from a broken home with little or no parental involvement, what else were they to think.

But as part of our ministry to them, we wanted them to know that "life" and the occasions of life don't just "happen" to them. That God really does exist and is intimately involved within the daily occurrences of their lives. And that He really does have a plan for them, a plan that will take place throughout all the future days of their lives.

And as sojourners in the faith with them, we wanted to help them to know what that plan would be.

And we had several ways of doing that. We taught bible classes in our school, helping those young people to get to know our God who created us and sustains us daily.

And along with Church and Sunday School each Sunday, we had bible studies and prayer groups to help reenforce the teachings within the scriptures.

One group of young people that I was involved with for many years was a small group bible study called "Face To Face". And one of the emphases that we dwelled on was that as a person receives the Lord Jesus as Savior and Lord, God gives them the presence of His Holy Spirit to dwell within them and to guide and direct them through all their many daily involvements.

And as the Holy Spirit dwells within them, He brings with Him two forms of wonderful benefits. He brings His "Fruits" with Him, wonderful "Fruits" of His own character, "Fruits" that will be displayed in each of us as we join with Him in His ministry through us, "Fruits" of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness and self-control, "Fruits" that will not only give us joy beyond measure, but are intended to bless anyone and everyone that we spend our time with.

And the evidence of these "Fruits of the Holy Spirit" can be seen in ever-increasing measures as we surrender our hearts, our attitudes and our behaviors to our Lord moment by moment.

And then also, in addition to His Spiritual Fruits, God's Holy Spirit brings with Him special "Spiritual Gifts", special abilities that often look a lot like "natural talents"

but are far, far better in their abilities and in their results, Spiritual Gifts that will bring glory and honor to God.

Those special "Spiritual Gifts" are revealed to us in the Books of Ephesians, Romans and 1st Corinthians, gifts that enable us to Preach and to Teach God's truths, Gifts of leadership, of compassion, of serving, of faith, of wisdom, of knowledge, of understanding, and many, many more.

And as He tells us, especially in the Book of 1st Corinthians chapter 12, the Holy Spirit is very selective in the gifts that He gives. And He is also meticulous in His choice about the ones to whom He gives those gifts. He tells us in verse 11,

¹¹ All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines. (1 Corinthians 12:11)

Those last words of this verse 11 are emphatic in that the Holy Spirit knows us well and He knows what He wants to accomplish in and through each one of us. And He gives us the "specific Gifts" to make our efforts successful and glorifying to Him.

And yes, sometimes we can observe where some people have more than one "Spiritual Gift", especially Pastors and Church Leaders. And sometimes, another "Spiritual Gift" might show up later, when a circumstance requires the need of it. God is always present within us to see and to know what the needs are.

But one thing that needs to be kept in mind. While the "Spiritual Gifts" within us will bless us greatly, it's clear from these scriptures that the "benefit" is first to glorify God, then to bless other people, and then lastly to bless us personally.

The understanding that I have about our relationship with our Lord is that yes, as we mentioned a moment ago, He has definite and specific plans for us as His beloved "sons". And He guides our path in the directions that we should go to carry out His plans. And again, along the way, He gives us all of the necessary "Gifts" and strength to enable us to be effectual in our efforts.

But unfortunately sometimes, during the process of our carrying out the plans that we understand that God is working out in us, we falter, we stumble, we get distracted and confused and sometimes we even lose our way.

That has happened to me more often than I can name. And in the process, I have questioned what is taking place in me, what is causing me to lose my way.

And when I go back to the source of my strength, the Holy Spirit, I find that I have allowed myself to be distracted.

A verse of scripture that comes to mind is 2 Timothy 2:4. There we are told that,
⁴ No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. (2 Timothy 2:4)

And that verse reminds me also of the words of Proverbs 3:5-6.

⁵ Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. ⁶ In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

Here in these words, we are being called to a specific task. A good soldier must follow his leaders and his training and not get caught up in following after other “pursuits”. And in that process we must not lean to our own understanding, but in all our ways follow God’s leading through His Holy Spirit who is dwelling within us and guiding us.

But how do we get distracted to begin with, distracted and drawn away to other matters and pursuits?

It’s often as simple as one of our culture’s favorite sayings, “keep your head on a swivel”! Always be on the watch, the alert for opportunities.

And yes, that can be a good idea when rightly applied. But then not such a good idea when we are being distracted from the good and right purposes that God wants us to follow after.

The Lord gives us a good example in the Book of Ephesians chapter 5 when he tells us,

¹⁸ . . . do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit. (Ephesians 5:18)

And no, not everyone is an alcoholic. But folks, it is easy to see that we are imbedded within a culture that loves its “pursuit of happiness”. We love to party,

filling our heart and mind with ways and substances that dull our senses and distract us over into the “debauchery” that is spoken about here.

And notice here in God's words that His remedy for our distraction is that we “be filled with the Spirit”.

I confess that in my first readings of this verse, I was confused and did not understand it well. And even now, I still don't grasp the complete meaning of it.

But for sure, this is a “command” to us, a command from God to flee from the captivating and intoxicating secular remedies and pursuits that lead us into debauchery, and to instead allow the Holy Spirit to fill all of those needs within our souls.

And we need to be especially aware of the context and the occasion here in which God uses this command. In this chapter 5 of the Book of Ephesians, you will note that God is there giving instructions about family and about marriage, about how to conduct a life-long loving relationship between a husband and wife and their families.

Distractions and wandering from the paths of righteousness in a love relationship is ever so hazardous to a good and righteous marriage and family behaviors.

And then to add even more caution to the circumstance and warning, in the very next words given in chapter six of the Book of Ephesians, God gives us very stern warnings about how the demonic kingdom reaches over into our human world and interacts with us in our circumstances adding to the debauchery and bringing harm to everything we hold dear in this life.

And the remedy for our distractions and wanderings is very specific. We are to be “filled with the Holy Spirit”.

But I must confess that this instruction has some of its own confusion. Some people have asked, “does God only give us a portion of His Spirit”? And if so, “how are we supposed to “add to” what we already have? How are we to get more of His presence within us?” How are we to be “filled with His Holy Spirit. It doesn't seem to be something that we, as fleshly humans are able to do.

And that is so! That is so!

May I preface these next words of mine with a caution because I am about to offer some of my personal beliefs on the matter.

And yes, my beliefs are based on the truths that I have read in these scriptures. But other people, very devoted believers in Christ, have read the very same scriptures and have arrived at differing understandings about what is being said.

With that being said, I personally have no doubt that our God does not “piece-meal” His presence and His being. Every attribute of His being and character is full and complete in all that He is and all that He does.

God is “love”, 100% love, not just some, a little bit, or a lot. He is 100% love.

And that is so in every one of His attributes. God is “Just”, 100% Just, not some, a little bit, or a lot. He is 100% Just.

And again, that is so in every one of His attributes.

And that is also absolutely true for His Being and His presence. And for that reason, as He comes to live within you and me He is not “just a little bit in you and me”. He is “fully” within us.

But if that be so, what does this command to us “Be filled with the Holy Spirit” mean?

The conclusion that I have arrived at is a simple one. Since God always does His part and gives us Himself completely, 100%, the shortcoming must be within me and within my response to His “good and perfect gift” of His Holy Spirit.

And as we can read about in the Book of Romans chapter 7, we each seem to have a “bent” towards ignoring the presence and the influence of God’s Holy Spirit within us and we choose instead to “grieve” Him by doing the things we know we should not do.

But thanks be to God, He truly is our Savior, from the very beginning moments, and throughout all the moments of our lives. And yes, even in those moments when we have drifted away from Him.

The Apostle Paul voiced those words for us so well there in his struggle described in Romans chapter 7. Listen, remembering that this is us also. Verse 15,

¹⁵ . . . I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate.

. . . ¹⁸ . . . I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. ¹⁹ For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. (Romans 7:15, 18-19)

Oh dear Christian, thanks be to God, as we read these words, we know that He doesn't give up on us. And thanks be to God, we can never lose the salvation He has given to us. Both the Lord Jesus and God the Father will make sure of that. No, in faltering moments like these, God pursues after us, drawing us back to Him.

But folks please listen! Our response is crucial! We must not ignore His "still small voice" within the ongoing distractions that might have us captivated during those moments.

Those words in 1st Thessalonians 4 that tell us, "It is the Will of God, your Sanctification", those words are real folks, and they are ever and always effectual. And this is when it takes place within us folks. But only by being "filled with the Holy Spirit".

And no, in those times of struggle, our efforts at "being filled with the Spirit" are not just our trying harder to conjure up some feeling for God. We are not able to do that! It is instead our continual "surrender of ourself", our "yielding of ourself", over to Him and letting Him do the things that are needful within us.

Oh dear Christian, yes, the sinful nature that was born into us at our birth is strong and it is powerful on our daily behavior. But our Lord has the only good and final answer for us in our ongoing dilemma. He assured us of that in those blessed words of Romans chapter 8 verse 1. There we joyfully read,

¹ There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
(Romans 8:1)

Oh dear friends, there are no more precious words given in all of the scriptures than these. The blood of the Lord Jesus has set us free from sin and death. And all that our Lord asks of us is to continually "surrender", to "yield our will" over to

Him every moment and allow His Holy Spirit to “fill us”, and He will guarantee that all of the rest of the real matters of life will be “okay”.

Our Lord Jesus Himself is filled with the Holy Spirit “without limits”, His Spirit is able to also draw you and me into that same blessed condition of soul, “filled with His Holy Spirit without limits”, “without limits”.

And Listen! Within these words truly is a command to you and to me, a command that we must obey. And that command is for us to join with Him and ourselves “be filled with His Holy Spirit”! And for our own eternal good and gracious pleasure, we must surrender to His command!

Now, before we finish our thoughts for today may I tell us about one more blessing that the Holy Spirit can bring to us? In the Book of Joel chapter 2, the Lord tells us,

²⁸ . . . I will pour out my Spirit on all people.

Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your old men will dream dreams,
your young men will see visions.

²⁹ Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days. (Joel 2:28-29)

I confess to you that I don't know much about this special provision of God's Holy Spirit, but I do know that it is real and it will be a great blessing to me when my Lord “pours out” His Holy Spirit upon me!

Until then, I do want to do my part in my relationship with Him. I want to surrender my heart completely and allow His Holy Spirit to “fill” my spirit so that He can accomplish His purposes in me.

Listen to these words and we'll close.

²⁶ I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws. (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

Pray with me.