

Greater Series 2 - Greater Blessings
Pastor Deborah Oakley – January 7, 2024

Every year Pastor Joe and I receive a word from the Lord that is a theme for the whole year. Last week Pastor Joe shared that God gave Him the word “Greater.” So, we are beginning the year with a sermon series titled “Greater.” Which Pastor Joe started last week.

We learned the Hebrew word for greater means larger in size, intensity or importance. The New Testament word means abundantly more, over and above.

At the same time, Pastor Joe received the word “Greater,” God gave me the word “Blessings.” I kept hearing in my spirit that this would be a year of exponential, monumental blessings for our family AND for GFC – which means you.

Then I found out that Joe’s word was “Greater.” Suddenly it hit me...God is confirming my word because our two words together are “Greater Blessings.” Of course, the greatest blessing we will ever, ever, ever, ever have is knowing God. Nothing could ever be greater.

So, today I just want to declare over you “Greater Blessings” in your relationship with God. I declare 2 Peter 3:18 over you. That you may *...grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.* That you know Him more and more and hear His voice.

I declare 2 Peter 1:3 that *His divine power has given you everything you need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and goodness.*

I also declare Deuteronomy 28:6-8

Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out. The Lord will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before your face; they shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways.

The Lord will command the blessing on you in your storehouses and in all to which you set your hand, and He will bless you in the land which the Lord your God is giving you.

Together let us all embrace a greater knowledge of our God and let us receive the greatest blessings He has for us. 2 Corinthians 9:8 says:

And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

Notice, this passage has a purpose. God blesses us so we can be a blessing. In this case He blesses us so we can abound in every good work. He doesn't bless us so that we consume it on ourselves. Psalm 67:1-2, 6-7 says:

May God be gracious to us and bless us and make His face shine upon us, that Your ways may be known on earth, Your salvation among all nations... Then the land will yield its harvest and God, our God, will bless us. God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear Him.

We are blessed to be a blessing. From the very beginning we see God's intention for blessing. In Genesis 12:2 God said to Abraham:

I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.

God tells Abraham that he will be blessed SO THAT he can be a blessing to all. And the same is true for us. Every blessing, from material wealth, to children, to the gifts and talents we have, each one is given so that we might, in turn, bless others. Blessing others is what makes our blessing a greater blessing. Jesus said in Acts 20:35

It is more blessed to give than to receive.

This brings up a point I want to make here. I am not preaching a "Prosperity Gospel" message today. The Prosperity Gospel emphasizes the believers' abilities to transcend poverty and/or illness through devotion and positive confession. It's the teaching that faith—expressed through positive thoughts, positive declarations, and donations to the church—draws health, wealth, and happiness into believers' lives. It is also referred to as the "health and wealth gospel."

I'm not saying it's wrong to be healthy or wealthy. It's great. But I see two extremes to the prosperity message...and both are incorrect:

First, some believers have turned it into a formula that seems to leave God out entirely. All they must do is make a declaration and they will get whatever they declare. It's a "gab it – grab it" or a "name it claim it" mentality.

Some have used this "formula" to try and get wealth which has led to money becoming an idol. Over the years we've seen people who believed this actually turn on God when they didn't receive what they believed for.

On the other hand, some people have thrown the baby out with the bath. They shy away from anything to do with believing God for prosperity. They hesitate to make any "declarations" or to ask God for blessings because they've seen this misused by others. They see their lack of blessing as suffering for Jesus.

They say that Jesus teaches against material wealth. However, Proverbs 10:22 says *The blessing of the Lord brings wealth, and He adds no trouble to it. You see God wants to bless us.* So, neither of these are the correct biblical approaches. Both misbeliefs will hinder God's blessings in our lives.

So let me say it again... God wants to bless and prosper us. 3 John 2 says:

Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.

That means that there are levels of prosperity or blessing. It's not selfish or wrong to ask for blessings or to make declarations, UNLESS, you ask with the wrong motive. James 4:2-3 says:

You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Obviously, God is not going to bless us if we ask with wrong motives. He also will not bless us if we ask for something that is not His will. 1 John 5:14-15 says:

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us — whatever we ask — we know that we have what we asked of Him.

One of the things we know is it is God's will to heal us.

Kim Tatum is on my prayer shield, and she prays for me faithfully. So, a few weeks ago before the service, I told her I had some health issues and asked if she would pray for me. Shortly after, during the service, I had a word in tongues and Deondre gave the interpretation. The first words out of his mouth were "I am the God that healtheth thee." Let me tell you...that word went deep into my spirit. I knew I had heard from God, and I began declaring my healing.

Before all this I scheduled an MRI to find out what was going on. I was completely relaxed during the MRI – which alone was a blessing. I just worshiped God through it. A couple of days later, the results came back. I was perfectly normal. I just had one mild issue that was common at my age. For me that was a greater blessing than I could have asked for.

So, let's look at some biblical examples of greater blessings. Perhaps one of the greatest would be the life of Job. Job 1:1 tells us that Job was blameless and upright and that he feared God and shunned evil. He was also very prosperous. Job 1:2-3 says:

He had seven sons, three daughters, seven thousand sheep, three thousand

camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred donkeys, and a large number of servants.

But Job lost everything. Satan was given permission by God to test Job to see if Job served Him only because of His prosperity. But after losing everything, Job still refused to curse God. So, what does God do? Job 42:10 says:

The Lord made him prosperous again and gave him twice as much as he had before.

Job 42:12 says:

The Lord blessed the latter part of Job's life more than the first.

Remember "Greater" blessing is larger in size, intensity or importance. Abundantly more, over and above.

In 2 Kings 2 Elisha also received a double portion of blessing. Elisha's spiritual father Elijah is about to die, and he asks Elisha what he can do for him before he goes. Elisha answers in verse 9-

Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit.

And that is exactly what happens. Elisha receives a double portion.

In John 21:1-6 some of the disciples had been fishing all night long but they caught nothing. Early that morning Jesus calls to them from the shore (By the way, they didn't recognize Him at first) and He tells them to cast their net on the right side of the boat. (Some of us are fishing on the wrong side of the boat)

Verse 6 says that when they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish. It's interesting to me that when they obeyed what Jesus told them to do, they went from no fish to a large number of fish.

If we want greater blessings, we need to recognize who Jesus is!

If we want greater blessings, we must hear and do what Jesus says!

If we want greater blessings, we need to start fishing on the right side of the boat!

Greater blessings are the result of greater hearing, greater obedience and greater faith!

In Matthew 14:13-21 we read about the feeding of the five thousand. Jesus was ministering to this large crowd and when it was time for the evening meal, they only had 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish. Jesus took the five loaves and the two fish, gave thanks, fed 5000 + women and children, everyone was satisfied and there were 12 basketfuls left over. Two things stand out to me here.

One - the people followed Jesus.
 Two - Jesus gave thanks to the Father
 The result was greater blessings.

So, we see the Bible teaches that God is a God of greater blessings.
 So, let's look at some of the things that can hinder greater blessings.

Obviously, this is not an exhaustive list. There are many sins that can hinder our blessings. However, sometimes it isn't because of sin. Sometimes it's simply God's timing. And God's timing is always perfect. God might be delaying His answer because it's not time. Just remember that a delay is not a denial. Hinderances to greater blessings include:

Unrepentant sin.

Isaiah 59:1-2 says:

Surely the arm of the Lord is not too short to save, nor His ear too dull to hear. But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden His face from you, so that He will not hear.

Obviously being separated from God will prevent blessings. To overcome that we must do what Psalm 66:18-19 says.

If I had cherished sin in my heart, the Lord would not have listened; but God has surely listened and heard my voice in prayer.

Notice the key to overcoming the sin is to quickly confess sin to God and receive His forgiveness. That restores us to God's presence and His blessings.

Unbelief

The only way to overcome unbelief is to have faith. To choose to believe God over circumstances! We receive from God according to our faith. Faith is a strong conviction that something is true! Hebrews 11:1 says:

Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

Wuest's Translation says:

Faith is the title deed of things hoped for, the proof of things which are not being seen.

In other words - faith takes ownership of something by faith before it takes actual possession of it!

Double Mindedness

Being double-minded is a form of unbelief. It's actually part-time faith mixed with part-time doubt. James 1:5-8 addresses this.

If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him. But when he asks, he must believe and not doubt, because he who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind. That man should not think he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all he does.

To be double minded is to vacillate back and forth between faith and doubt. They believe – then they don't. They're in church – then they're not. That kind of double mindedness will never be blessed!

Prayerlessness

James 4:2 says *You do not have, because you do not ask God.*

I wonder how many greater blessings we could have had if we only had asked.

Praying with wrong motives

As we saw earlier, James 4:3 says:

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

What this is talking about is praying selfish prayers. Let me say this first – it's not selfish to pray for yourself. It's not selfish to ask God to bless you. When Jesus taught us to pray in the Lord's Prayer – He said in Matthew 6:11 *Give us today our daily bread.* However – it is selfish when we pray only for ourselves.

We also saw earlier that we will not be blessed if we are

Praying outside of the will of God - so I won't elaborate on this.

Lastly, I want to talk about what I believe is - one of - if not the - most common hinderance to blessing in the lives of believers.

Disobedience.

Most of us are familiar with the scripture that says:

...and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

But do you know the condition that comes before this blessing? Malachi 3:10-12 says;

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”

This is the only place in the Bible where God says, “Test me in this.”
So, listen to the blessings that are a result of giving financially to God.

I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not cast their fruit,” says the Lord Almighty. “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the Lord Almighty.

Let’s quickly go over these 7 blessings that are a direct result of giving tithe to God:

Blessing 1 - God promises is that He will open the floodgates of heaven.

Blessing 2 - He will pour out so much blessing it will overflow.

In other words...greater blessing

Blessing 3 – The KJV says: I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes.

The word “rebuke” here is the Hebrew word “cripple” or “paralyze.”

God will cripple the devil on your behalf.

Blessing 4 - The enemy will not be able to destroy the fruit of your ground.

In other words...your finances.

Blessing 5 - The vines in your field will not cast their fruit.

The fruit of the vine refers to fruitfulness. So, we will be fruitful.

Blessing 6 - All the nations will call you blessed.

God Almighty will bless you so much that you’ll become a testimony to others. He will make you a mighty testimony of His blessings as you give.

Blessing 7 - Yours will be a delightful land. The word “delightful” means “highly desired.”

God will highly desire you, use you and anoint you for His service.

Every time we give in faith, we bring ourselves and our family into a covenant of blessings with God. God has obligated Himself to bless us in this. That’s why he say’s “test Me in this”. If you have problems with Malachi because it’s Old Testament, listen to what Jesus said in Luke 6:38:

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

In other words, you determine the level of your blessing!

The measure of your financial giving is the measure of your financial blessing – greater giving results in greater blessing.

Your level of obedience will determine the level of your blessing!

So greater obedience results in greater blessing!

Your level of prayer will determine the level of your blessing!

So greater prayer results in greater blessing!

Your level of faith will determine the level of your blessing!

So greater faith results in greater blessing!
So, choose to believe God, trust God, and obey God.
When you live to bless God and bless others you receive greater blessing!