

Limiting God

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Date: 23 June 2024

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[0 : 0 0] Psalm, Psalms 78, Psalms 78. If you're wondering where Psalms is, basically in the middle of your Bible.

Psalm 78. Today's going to be a little different than usual. I do have verses up behind me at times, but some other time I'm going to have you moving around.

I'm going to have you moving around a lot at the beginning of this message. So, be ready, have your fingers, do whatever you need to do to get them ready to go. Okay? Look with me, Psalm 78, and look at verse 41.

Psalm 78, 41. Yea, they turned back and tempted God and limited the Holy One of Israel. They turned back and tempted God and limited the Holy One of Israel.

Now, when you think of God, what do you think of? If you're like most people, when you think God, you think omnipotent, all-powerful.

[1 : 0 8] You think omniscient, all-knowing. Omnipresent, always-present. So here you have an all-powerful, all-knowing, always-present God, and that verse says, they limited Him.

How do you do that? How can you limit an all-powerful, all-knowing, always-present God? Well, we're going to talk about that this morning because God's people limited what He could do.

And God's people today can probably limit what He can do as well. Let's have a word of prayer and we'll take a look at this. Do you have any, Father? Father, I pray that You would help us this morning to understand.

Lord, we need to surrender ourselves to You. Allow ourselves to be used by You. Allow You to have control. Lord, otherwise we're going to limit the things that You would like to do in this world.

We may limit how You work in different areas, in different situations. Lord, help us not to be the ones that hold You back. from doing what You have to do.

[2 : 1 9] Lord, help us to be faithful. Help us to be servants. Help us to be those who will help the work of God go forward. We pray this in Jesus' name.

Amen. It says that they limited Him. How did they limit Him? Well, we just mentioned He's all-powerful, all-knowing, always-present. How did they limit His power?

I want you to see God's power first. Before we go too far in this, I want you to see God's power, and you're going to see it right here in this chapter. This chapter is basically a historical review of Israel.

And I want you to see what He says about the things that He has done. Look with me beginning at verse 12. Excuse me. Verse 12 says, Stop right there for a second.

What does He say God did? He says, God opened up the Red Sea so they could go over on dry land. I got thinking about that.

[3 : 4 5] You've seen places where rivers have been and where lakes maybe have stopped up and they go dry. But when the water first leaves, it's just a big thing of mud.

It's not dry land. So here's God. He opens up the Red Sea and then by using wind or using the fire that was leading them by night or whatever, they go through on dry land.

That stuff is all dried up. God may have just said, dry up. And they did. But He leads them through. That's a miracle beyond miracles. Then it says, He led them with that cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night.

He was there leading them all the way. God is taking care of them. He's showing them exactly where to go. And then when they complain that they're thirsty, He causes water to come out of a rock. Our God is powerful.

Go down to verse 23. And it says, Though He had commanded the clouds from above and opened the doors of heaven and had rained down manna upon them to eat and had given them the corn of heaven, man did eat angels' food.

[4 : 54] He sent them meat to the full. He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven and by His power He brought in the south wind and He rained flesh also upon them as dust and feathered fowl like the sand of the sea.

And He let it all fall in the midst of their camp about their habitations. So they did eat and were well filled for He gave them their own desire. They're in the desert now.

They're going through. He gives them food. He says manna came down. Manna came down every day, except Sunday, or it says Sabbath day, Saturday for them.

Came down every day except for that one day for 40 years. Think about that. God is powerful.

God is taking care of them. And then when they started complaining about the fact they only had manna, it says He caused the wind to blow and quail and things came in and landed right in the middle of their camp.

[5 : 57] They didn't land over there where they had to go look for. It landed in the middle of their camp. Our God is powerful. Go with me to verse 43. He says, How He had wrought His signs in Egypt and His wonders in the field of Zoan and had turned their rivers into blood and their floods that they could not drink.

He sent divers sorts of flies among them and He devoured them and frogs which destroyed them. And He gave also their increase into the caterpillar and their labor. He's talking about the different plagues that came into Egypt.

God had sent plagues into Egypt to help them be released so they could cross the Red Sea and everything. Look at verse 54.

54. 54. And He brought them to the border of His sanctuary, even to this mountain, which His right hand had purchased. He cast out the heathen also before them and divided them in inheritance by line and made the tribes of Israel to dwell in their tents.

He led them into the promised land and divided the land up by tribe, gave them everything He'd ever promised them. He promised them the promised land and He's going to give it to them.

[7 : 10] Our God is powerful. Do we understand? Have you seen God's power at work in your life? Have you seen God answer prayers for you? Has you seen God take care of situations for you?

Our God is powerful. Let me give you a couple more examples real quick. Go to Daniel. Daniel chapter 3. Daniel chapter 3.

Familiar story. You've known this one since Sunday school times. Daniel chapter 3. You've got Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Verse 16. Daniel 3.16.

Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the burning, fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods nor worship the golden image which I have set up. You know the story. They set up a golden image of Nebuchadnezzar.

[8 : 16] Everybody was supposed to bow down and worship it and everything. These three guys say, Nope. Not happening. We're not going to do that. And so they're sentenced to go into a burning, fiery furnace, it says.

And so it's so hot that when they go to put them in, the guys who led them there wound up being killed by the heat. But Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego go in. Look at verse 25.

It says, He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt. And the form of the fourth is like unto the Son of God.

Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the mouth of the burning, fiery furnace, and spake and said, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the Most High God, come forth and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came forth of the midst of the fire, and the princes and the governors and the captains and the king's counselors being gathered together saw these men upon whose bodies the fire had no power, nor was their hair of their head singed, neither were their clothes changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them.

Our God is powerful. They're thrown in this fiery furnace. You know, if I had been one of them thinking the way I think, I would have gone, when he goes, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, come on out, come out here, and let's have a talk, I would have said, why don't you come in here?

[9 : 42] They didn't do that. They went out and talked to him. And they saw nothing had happened, not even the smell of fire, not even the smell of smoke on them.

Our God is powerful. Our God will take care of us. But, those are demonstrations of God's power. Mark, let me show you a deterrent of God's power. Go with me over to Mark, chapter 6.

Mark, chapter, I told you I was going to move you around a lot today. Mark, chapter 6. I want you to see something. Jesus has come back to his home area.

He's in Galilee, probably in Nazareth, because it says in verse 3 of chapter 6, Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joseph and Judah and Simon, and are not his sisters here with us?

And they were offended in him. Oh. They were upset with Jesus because of the things he was preaching. They were upset with him because he was claiming to be God. They were upset.

[10 : 45] They were offended. Look at verse 5. It says, Stop right there.

He could do no mighty work. He marveled at their unbelief. Can we keep God from doing what he would like to do? Yes, we can.

It takes belief. It takes the fact that we trust God. And again, I've said that so many times lately. We have to trust God and what he is doing.

We have to trust God and allow him to do his work. And it says here, they would not trust him. These people knew him from the time he grew up and they did not trust him.

They did not. They heard about the works that he'd been doing. They heard about the miracles he'd done. But it says here, they didn't trust. They didn't believe. And therefore, he could do no mighty work.

[11 : 50] He did the same thing with his disciples. Go over to chapter 9 there of Mark. Just a few pages over. Chapter 9 of Mark. A man comes to the disciples and he says, My boy has a demon.

And it's causing him to be, so he can't talk. And it also causes him to do things that he wouldn't normally do. Look with me at verse 17. It says, And one of the multitude answered and said, Master, I have brought unto thee my son, which hath a dumb spirit.

And wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him, and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away. And I spake to thy disciples that they should cast him out, and they could not.

The disciples had been with Jesus. They'd been seeing miracles. Done. They'd even done some themselves. And he says, Look, we brought them to your disciples and they couldn't do anything. Look down at verse 23.

Jesus said unto him, If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believe it. And straightway the father of the child cried out, and saith with tears, Lord, I believe.

[13 : 01] Help thou mine unbelief. The disciples couldn't do anything because they weren't believing. He says, If you believe, man, your son's going to be healed. If you believe, I will take care of it.

He says, I believe. Help my unbelief. That's the way we should be. I believe God in what he says. I believe his word and what it says. Lord, help my unbelief. Help me not to doubt. Help me to put my trust in you.

Look down at verse 28. It says, And when he was come into the house, the disciples asked him privately, why could not we cast him out? And he said unto them, This kind can come forth by nothing but by prayer and fasting.

Do you spend time with God? Do you spend time asking for his help? Do you spend time asking him to work in your life? We can limit the power of God by not spending time with him and by not believing what he can do.

We can also limit God's will in our life. Limiting the will of God. Go with me to Numbers, chapter 13. Numbers, fourth book in the Bible. Numbers, chapter 13.

[14 : 17] There are consequences when we don't trust God. Look at Numbers, chapter 13, beginning at verse 30. Numbers, 13, 30. And Caleb stilled the people before Moses and said, Let us go up at once and possess it, for we are well able to overcome it.

But the men that went up with him said, We be not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we. And they brought up an evil report of the land which they had searched unto the children of Israel, saying, The land through which we have gone to search it is a land that eateth up the inhabitants thereof.

And all the people that we saw in it are men of great stature. And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants, and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers.

And so we were in their sight. They sent 12 spies into the land to spy it out. Caleb and Joshua come back and they say, Let's go.

We can do it. God's on our side. We can take care of this. The other 10 are like, No, these guys are big. When it says sons of Anak, think Goliath. Goliath was on Anak.

[15 : 36] He was part of that tribe. And they say, No, there's no way we can go up against these guys. As a matter of fact, they go on to say at times, they're going to take our kids and they're going to kill our kids and stuff.

No, we're not going up there. We can't do that. But God had promised them this land. God had told them this was going to be their land. Joshua and Caleb say, God told us, let's go.

The other's like, no. You know, when we don't trust God, there are consequences. Look at chapter 14. Chapter 14, beginning at verse 30.

Doubtless, ye shall not come into the land concerning which I swear to make you dwell therein, save Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, and Joshua, the son of Nun.

But your little ones, remember they said the little ones, they're going to die if we go in there. But your little ones, which he said should be a prey, them will I bring in.

[16 : 33] And they shall know the land which ye have despised. But as for you, your carcasses, they shall fall in this wilderness. And your children shall wander in the wilderness 40 years.

Go down to verse 34. After the number of days in which ye searched the land, even 40 days, every day for a year shall ye bear your iniquities, even 40 years.

And ye shall know my breach of promise. God says, look, because you didn't go, I sent you in there for 40 days to search it out so you could make plans. You said no.

So therefore, a day for a year, for the next 40 years, you're going to wander in this desert out here until you're all gone and your children, whom you're concerned about, go in and take away the land you could have had.

Your children are going to be successful where you failed. What's the consequence? When you go against God, what's the consequence? He says, you're all going to die. Look at verse 38.

[17 : 37] But Joshua, the son of Jephunneh, and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, which were of the men that went to search the land, lived still.

Two guys got to go in to the promised land. Of all those that searched it out and all those that were there 40 years before, two guys get to go in.

There are consequences to following God. And for Caleb and for Joshua, God's blessing on their life. Don't limit the will of God.

Do what God has for you. Follow what He has for you. We can limit God's blessing on our life. Go to Malachi, last book of the Old Testament, just before Matthew. Malachi, chapter 3.

Malachi chapter 3. And I know some of you, if you know this book, or if you don't know it, as soon as I start reading, you're going to go, he's looking for money.

[18 : 42] No, he's not. He's looking for God's blessing on your life. Don't limit God's blessing. Look at Malachi chapter 3, verse 10. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes. And he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground, neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts.

God says, look, don't limit my blessings. Prove me. Here's what I want you to do. I want you to give. I want you to bring you tithes. I want you to give to my work. I want you to do the things that I've asked you to do.

He says, prove me. Now think about this. God, who's all powerful, we've already looked at that. He says, prove me. You give.

And see what I will do. He says, not only prove me, he says, if you do it, here's the proof you'll get. You will prosper. He says there in verse 10, toward the end, he said, if I will not open you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.

[20 : 12] God says, I'm going to take care of you. You do what I ask. Let me bless you by doing what I ask. You want to withhold God's blessing? Just ignore him.

Just stay back. Don't do what he asked you to do. But he says, if you want to see me do some things, follow my commands and watch the blessing that I send your way. You know another way we can do that?

I think it's up behind me. First Samuel, praying for others. Praying for others. First Samuel chapter 12, verse 23. Moreover, as for me, God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you, but I will teach you the good and the right way.

He says, God forbid that I should sin. Let me read that again. God forbid that I should sin in ceasing to pray for you.

He says, but I will teach you the good and the right way. Pray for those around you. Pray for those that are near you. Pray for those who are part of this church. Pray for your neighbors. Pray for, don't cease praying for those around you.

[21 : 25] John R. Rice, some of you may know that name. He was an evangelist, pastor, author. He was preaching one time and he said he had a dream.

And in that dream, he had died and gone to heaven. And Jesus was giving him a tour of heaven. I like this dream so far. This dream's going good. Jesus is giving him a tour.

He says, I saw the streets of gold. I saw the gates of pearl. I saw the mansions and everything. And then Jesus took me to this room and he opened up the door and told me to look inside.

He said, I looked in. He said, it was filled with presence. It's a presence everywhere. And he said, I got looking at them and I'm looking at the ones closest to me.

He said, and it said, John R. Rice, John R. Rice, John R. Rice, John R. Rice, John R. Rice, John R. Jesus, what is all of this?

[22 : 27] All the blessings that I would have given to you, but you never asked. We need to be praying for ourselves and for those around us that we get the blessings that God has for us, that we get the things that God has desired for us.

Number four, we can limit the answers of God. We can limit the answers of God. How do we do that? Number one, by neglecting the study of God's word.

Neglecting the study of God's word. Colossians 3.16, let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.

Let the word of God dwell in you richly. Do you run your life by the word of God? Do you do what the word of God tells you to do? Do you follow that?

He says, do that. He says, you'll have answers. Because right in the next chapter, chapter 4, verse 6 of Colossians, it says, let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how you ought to answer every man.

[23 : 45] How do you know the answers that God wants you to give? Let the word of God dwell in you richly. Let God's word be in you, and he says, and you'll be ready to give answers. He said, you're limited on your answers of what you do?

Get in the word of God. He said, other things that can limit you from the answers that you want? When we nurture sin in our lives. We allow sin to stay there.

Isaiah 59, 2. But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he will not hear. Did you know sin can block?

When you're trying to talk to God, sin can block what's going on, and we limit God by doing that. We limit the answers of God by allowing sin in our life.

Jeremiah 5, 25. Your iniquities have turned away these things, and your sins have withholden good things from you. He says, your sins withhold things that God wants you to have because you've allowed sin to put up a barrier between the two of you.

[24 : 48] James 4, 3. Ye ask and receive not because ye ask amiss that ye may consume it upon your lust. Sometimes we do go to prayer, but we're asking God for things that are totally against God's will.

That's not what God has for us. See, if we're in the right relationship with God, he's going to give us the things that we need. And the things that we need are going to be the things that we want, not other things in our life.

Not believing. Not believing. James 1, 6 and 7. But let him ask in faith nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like the wave of the sea driven with the wind and tossed.

For let not that man think that he shall receive anything of the Lord. We talked about people not believing and Christ's power was limited. He says, look, ask in faith nothing wavering.

Believe. When you pray, believe what God is asking, what you're asking God for. Believe that he's going to hear you. Believe that he's going to answer. And believe that he's always going to answer right.

[25 : 55] Sometimes he's going to answer no. And believe that's what is best for you. Because he knows what is best for us. Number five, we can limit the salvation of God.

We can limit the salvation of God. 2 Peter 3.9 says this, the Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness, but is long suffering to us not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

Jesus wants everybody to come to a saving knowledge of him. Jesus wants everybody to know who he is and accept him as savior. But, he says, there are some who are slack.

we pray, but we don't pray regularly. We pray, but we don't pray believing. I always reminded, I haven't given you this illustration in a while, Billy Sunday.

When Billy Sunday first got saved, he was a baseball player. But he got saved at the Pacific Art Mission in Chicago. He was there for a game and stuff, and he was walking by, and heard the singing and stuff, went in, heard the message, wound up getting saved.

[27 : 09] After he got saved, Billy Sunday started praying for five different friends of his. Within a year, the first one got saved. Many years later, the second one got saved.

Then the third, just before he passed away, the fourth one got saved. And at his funeral, the fifth one got saved.

He prayed for those guys, didn't even know about the last one. But he prayed believing that God was going to answer. He prayed for their salvation. There are people who say, oh, you know that person, I would pray for that person, but they're just so bad.

They are just such sinners. You wouldn't believe the things that they do. Can I give you three words? Don't limit God. You may be talking to someone who tells you, I am so bad, I am so sinful.

I have had times when I've talked to God and I shook my fist in his face. Don't limit God. Don't limit what God can do.

[28 : 20] Our God is all-powerful. He knows what he's doing. He's all-knowing. He's omnipresent. He's right there while you're having this discussion with him. He's right there. Do not limit what God can do.

You want to hear somebody that was the worst of the worst? There was a guy, some of you might have heard him by the name of Mel Trotter. Mel Trotter, pastor, evangelist and all that, but Mel Trotter started out as a barber and a wicked, wicked barber because he was a drunk.

He spent most of his time when he wasn't working as a drunk. He had a baby, he and his wife had a baby.

The baby was sick. Very, very, very sick. You know where Mel Trotter was while the baby was sick? Out drinking. Getting drunk.

Didn't want to deal with it. So he went out and got drunk. Baby died. Oh, that's going to change him. He's going to become, he's going to, well, no.

[29 : 31] He took the baby's shoes and sold them so he could buy some more to drink. You say, that guy is terrible.

That guy's awful. That guy's awful. Guess where he went one day? He was walking by Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago. Heard the word of God and got saved and became a pastor evangelist.

You say, that guy's too bad to be saved. No, he's not. God's not going to limit his salvation. Mel Trotter, after he's saved, he's talking with a man by the name of Herb Siloway.

Siloway was another barber who was also drunk. Siloway got saved, came to know Christ. But, he said, I'm accepting Christ as my Savior.

I'm taking him into my life. But that doesn't cure everything, does it? You have to live with Christ and have his concerns become your concerns. Siloway got drunk six times in four weeks after fully accepted Christ as Savior.

[30 : 44] He got so bad that the last time he got drunk, he tried to drown himself. Wound up in jail. Mel Trotter goes to see him in jail.

He got there so fast that he's standing in front of Herb Siloway who's standing behind his cell. Clothes are still wet. And he's talking to him and he actually he just when he first came in he just stood there crying.

And Siloway says, you really do love me, don't you? He says, I love you like my own soul. I want nothing but the best that Christ has for you. Siloway wound up becoming Trotter's assistant in the ministry.

God can't do anything with that kind of person. God don't limit God. Can I tell you one thing, last thing, one thing that God cannot limit?

You cannot limit the grace of God. You cannot limit the grace of God. God loves mankind. God sent Jesus Christ to die on a cross for you and I.

[32 : 05] God's grace will never be limited to us. God's riches at Christ's expense we say or God's redemption at Christ's expense. Jesus came so that we could know the forgiveness of sin.

Jesus came so that we could know the salvation that God has to offer. Jesus came so that we could know the power and the will and the blessing and the answers that God has for us.

Jesus gave us everything we need. Ephesians 3 verse 20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that work within us.

Did you catch that? God is going to do exceedingly abundantly above Ephesians 3 20 exceedingly abundantly above all that we can ask or think. How does he do that?

According to the power. What did we look at at the very beginning of this message? The power of God. God has power. God can do as long as we allow him to.

[33 : 19] He says, I will do exceedingly abundantly above. Anything you can come up with according to the power as long as you don't limit me. I can save you.

I can redeem you. I can change you. Now probably most of the people in here this morning are Christians. Don't limit what God can do.

If you're here this morning and you're not saved, don't limit what God can do. God can save anyone. God can help anyone.

God can lead anyone. Do we trust God again and again and again? Do we trust God to do the work that he is doing in our lives?

Do we trust him to take care of everything that's taking place in our lives? don't limit God.

[34 : 27] Let's pray. Dear Father, Father, God dear, God Father, God to%.

God to God love God to all Him to God this heaven times