

**LIMITING GOD
PSALM 78:40-41**

Introduction

Read *Psalm 78:1-8*

In this **PSALM** the writer gathers up a wealth of historical evidence to show how that **in spite of the FOOLISHNESS of GOD’S PEOPLE, the DISLOYALTY of GOD’S PEOPLE, and the DISOBEDIENCE of GOD’S PEOPLE, the LORD still LOVED them and PATIENTLY WATCHED OVER them and PROVIDED for them.**

2 Timothy 3:16-17 says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”

This account, like all of **SCRIPTURE**, is recorded for our **LEARNING** and **BENEFIT** and even as a **WARNING** to us as **GOD’S PEOPLE** today!

In this **PSALM** we find an indictment against the **LORD’S CHOSEN PEOPLE: Vs 7-8, 10-11, 17-18, 22, 32, 36-37, and 40.**

Now, I want you to note *verse 41: "Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel."*

Can God be limited by man? Yes! There are two principles to consider from this verse:

1. **GOD** stands ready to do AND longs to do great things for us and through us who belong to **HIM!**
2. But, **GOD** is often prevented from proving **HIS** sufficiency and is not allowed to use us as **HE** desires because often WE will not let **HIM.**

I. LET’S CONSIDER THE PEOPLE WHO ARE GUILTY OF LIMITING THE POWER AND WORK OF GOD!

- A. In Our Text, HE Isn’t Talking About The UNSAVED!**
Now we need to understand that the **UNSAVED** can **LIMIT GOD** too!

After all **GOD** wants to save and is willing to save the world!
(John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9)

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JESUS’ BLOOD is SUFFICIENT to SAVE ANYONE and EVERYONE who will COME TO HIM!

But not everyone will come to **HIM!**

In *John 5:40*, **JESUS** told a group of unbelieving **JEWS**,
“And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.”

GOD is limited by the **UNSAVED** in that **HE** is prevented from **SAVING** those who won’t come to **HIM! BUT...**

B. In Our Text, HE Is Talking About HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE! (VS 1: "Give ear, O my people...")

ISRAEL is **GOD’S CHOSEN PEOPLE** and this passage is primarily referencing their **LIMITING GOD** after **HE** had been so merciful and gracious toward them!

I want you to look at *1 Corinthians 10:1-12* for a minute.

Romans 15:4—“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.”

The things that were written about **ISRAEL** were written for **OUR LEARNING!**

GOD’S problem, if we can call it that, is not with the world...it is with **HIS OWN PEOPLE!** Then, it was **ISRAEL**, now, it is **NEW TESTAMENT BELIEVERS!**

GOD is not talking here about the **ATHEIST**, the **AGNOSTIC**, the **INFIDEL**, or the **people who are devoted to bringing about a godless society being responsible for LIMITING HIM!**

HE’S talking about how **HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE, ISRAEL, LIMITED HIM!**

And we need to learn from them lest WE LIMIT HIM also!

We are living in a day of **SPIRITUAL INDIFFERENCE**, **APATHY**, and **APOSTASY** in the **CHURCH!** And so consequently, **many are LIMITING what GOD can do FOR THEM and THROUGH THEM!**

II. LET'S CONSIDER THE ONE WE ARE LIMITING!

A. The Holy One of Israel...GOD!

1. **HE** is the **CREATOR, SUSTAINER, and REDEEMER** of mankind!
2. **HE** is the **ONE** with whom ALL things are possible and for whom NOTHING is too hard.
3. He is a loving, **ALMIGHTY GOD!**

B. I Want You To Note How **HIS** Power Is Remembered In This Psalm!

1. **HE** is the **ONE WHO** revealed **HIS** power to both **ISRAEL** and **EGYPT** through the plagues **HE** sent upon the **EGYPTIANS**. (*Vs 12, details Vs 42-52*)
2. **HE** is the **ONE WHO** divided the sea to deliver **HIS** people from **EGYPT**. (*Vs 13*)
3. **HE** is the **ONE WHO** led them with the pillar of the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by the night. (*Vs 14*)
4. **HE** is the **ONE WHO** provided refreshing waters to **HIS** thirsty people who had been traveling through the wilderness. (*Vs 15-16, 20*)
5. But **HE** is also the **ONE WHO** was **LIMITED** by **HIS PEOPLE'S SIN** and **UNBELIEF!** (*Vs 40-41*)

This **ALMIGHTY GOD** is the **ONE** that **ISRAEL LIMITED** and that we also **LIMIT** sometimes.

III. SO, HOW IS IT THAT WE LIMIT GOD?

Nothing has really changed. We **LIMIT GOD** the same way that **ISRAEL LIMITED GOD!** Remember, these things about **ISRAEL** were written for our learning!

A. We **LIMIT GOD** By Our **FORGETFULNESS!**

(*Vs 7, 10-11, 42-43*)

1. How many mighty things has **GOD** done for us?
2. Answered prayers are soon forgotten. **GOD'S** goodness and mercy to us fades quickly from our memories.
3. Our forgetfulness limits **GOD'S** blessing in us and through us just as it did in the **ISRAELITES**.

B. We **LIMIT GOD** By Our **DISOBEDIENCE!** (*Vs 10*)

1. The fundamental condition of blessing in the lives of **GOD'S PEOPLE** is OBEDIENCE. That was true for **ISRAEL** and it is also true for us!
2. That simply means that we are to gladly and unquestionably do what **GOD** says!
3. Is it really all that important? What did **JESUS** say?
*John 14:15, "If ye love me, keep my commandments."
John 15:7, "If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you."*

John 15:10—"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."

John 15:14—"Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you."

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The Apostle John also said, in 1 John 3:22,
"And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight."

4. But, our **DISOBEDIENCE** limits **GOD'S** blessing in us and through us also!

We LIMIT GOD By Our FORGETFULNESS... We LIMIT GOD By Our DISOBEDIENCE...

C. We LIMIT GOD By Our DOUBT And UNBELIEF!
(Vs 17-22; 32-33)

When **JESUS** went to **HIS** hometown of **NAZARETH**, the **BIBLE** says: *Matthew 13:58*—*"And he did not many mighty works there because of their **unbelief**."*

Mark 6:5—*"And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them."*

What was the problem? Their **DOUBT** and **UNBELIEF** **LIMITED GOD!**

Look at *Matthew 17:14-21*.

Here we see that **UNBELIEF** on the part of the **DISCIPLES** was the problem!

Our **DOUBT** and **UNBELIEF** **LIMITS GOD'S** blessing in and through us also!

FORGETFULNESS, DISOBEDIENCE, DOUBT And UNBELIEF. . .

D. We LIMIT GOD By Our STUBBORN REBELLION!
(Vs 8a)

REBELLION is the resistance to a lawful authority!
(That authority might be a parent, husband, the government, the man of **GOD**, or **GOD HIMSELF!**)

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STUBBORN REBELLION is an **OBSTINATE DISOBEDIENCE!**

STUBBORNNESS refuses to hear **GOD** or **HIS** representative who speaks **GOD'S WORD!** (O.T. Prophets, N.T. Preachers)

The **PROPHET SAMUEL** told **KING SAUL** in *1 Samuel 15:23*—*"For **rebellion** is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry."* (Both sins that were worthy of death!)

REBELLION says, "I know better than **GOD** what is best for me!"
REBELLION stiffens one's neck against **GOD** and **STUBBORNNESS** keeps one there!

Proverbs 29:1—*"He, that being often reprov'd hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy."*

Look at Jeremiah 5:23-25 (STUBBORN REBELLION!)

E. We LIMIT GOD By Our INSINCERITY! (Vs 8b, 36-37)

We **LIMIT GOD** when we talk the talk, but do not walk the walk!

When we sing "*Oh how I love Jesus,*" but most everything about our lives show how little we really do love **HIM!**

When we pray to **GOD** in **CHURCH** and tell **HIM** how precious **HE** is to us, but then we live our lives during the week as practical atheists, living as if **GOD** does not exist!

How much do we really mean it when we sing "*All to Jesus I surrender?*"

JESUS called people with that kind of behavior **HYPOCRITES!**
Matthew 15:7-8—*"Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, 8 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me."*

INSINCERITY means **INCONSISTENCY** in our **LIFE** and **TESTIMONY** before the world.

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ISRAEL wanted to say they were **GOD'S PEOPLE** while they were involved in the same fornication and idolatry as the wicked heathen!

The **CORINTHIANS** were doing the same thing! They were involved in the same things as the unsaved people around them were!

Look at *1 Corinthians 6:9-12; 15-20* and *Ephesians 5:1-11*.

i.e. If you are truly a **CHILD OF GOD**, then live like one!

Because, **INSINCERITY LIMITS GOD'S** blessing in us and through us also!

Conclusion:

*FORGETFULNESS, DISOBEDIENCE, DOUBT and UNBELIEF,
STUBBORN REBELLION, INSINCERITY!*

The truth is that we **LIMIT GOD'S BLESSING** upon us by what we do and fail to do! I want you to consider your life and witness for a moment.

Have you **LIMITED GOD** or are you **LIMITING GOD?**

One of the greatest hindrances to our spiritual growth is ourselves.

We don't need to look around us for the answer, we need to look within us!

Psalms 139:23-24—“Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: 24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”