

# Limiting God - 1

## Psalm 78:40-41

### INTRODUCTION:

- A. Can God create a rock so large that He Himself cannot lift it? Theologians have debated that question.
1. If one answers "yes" to the creative part, then he limits God's creative ability.
  2. If one answers "yes" to the lifting part, then he limits God's power and strength.
  3. **2 Timothy 2:23** – “But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes.” (KJV)
  4. We are not here to debate that question . . . But rather to ask and answer some other ones.
    - a. Is God limitless?
    - b. Can man limit God? . . . If so, how?
- B. Is God limitless?
1. The prophet Ezekiel teaches that He is. Ezekiel 1:1-20
  2. **Jeremiah 32:27** - "Behold, I am the Lord, the God of all flesh. Is there anything too hard for Me?"
  3. **Malachi 3:6** - "For I am the Lord, I do not change . . . " The ever never unchanging nature of God.
- C. Can man limit God? (YES) . . . Do we limit God today? (YES)
- D. Lesson Text: **Psalm 78:40-41** - " How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, And grieved Him in the desert! Yes, again and again they tempted God, and **limited the Holy One of Israel.**"

### BIBLICAL EXAMPLES OF LIMITING GOD.

- A. **2 Kings 13:14-19** - Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die. Then Joash the king of Israel came down to him, and wept over his face, and said, "O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!"
- 15 And Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and some arrows." So he took himself a bow and some arrows.
- 16 Then he said to the king of Israel, "Put your hand on the bow." So he put his hand on it, and Elisha put his hands on the king's hands.
- 17 And he said, "Open the east window"; and he opened it. Then Elisha said, "Shoot"; and he shot. And he said, "The arrow of the Lord's deliverance and the arrow of deliverance from Syria; for you must strike the Syrians at Aphek till you have destroyed them."

18 Then he said, "Take the arrows"; so he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, "Strike the ground"; so he struck three times, and stopped.

19 And the man of God was angry with him, and said, "You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck Syria till you had destroyed it! But now you will strike Syria only three times."

1. Each strike of the arrows on the ground would mean a God-given victory over the Syrians.
2. Jehoash struck only three. Elisha said he should have done it five or six times.
3. Jehoash limited God to three victories when it could have been five or six.

B. **Malachi 3:10** - Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. "And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, So that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, Nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," Says the Lord of hosts.

1. In the two previous verses God told the people they had been robbing Him.
2. Now He tells them what He will do if they will stop robbing Him and do His will in the matter of their tithing.
3. They had a choice to continue robbing God and not receive His blessings, but do as God asked and receive an abundance.

C. In **1 Kings 3:12-14** the newly crowned king Solomon is sleeping at Gibeon when the Lord communicates with him through a dream. Behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days. So **if** you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days."

1. Could God give Solomon a long life? Yes!
2. Would he? That depended on Solomon and the little big word "if" in verse 14.
3. It was up to Solomon as to whether God would give him a long life or not.

D. Israel on any occasions.

## **ISRAEL LIMITED GOD IS PSALM 78**

- **Psalm 78:40-41** - "How often they provoked Him in the wilderness, And grieved Him in the desert! Yes, again and again they tempted God, And **limited the Holy One of Israel.**"
- In Psalm 78, Israel limited God in four distinct ways . . . four of the very same ways we limit God today.

A. They limited God by **TURNING BACK**.

1. **Psalm 78:9** - "The children of Ephraim, being armed and carrying bows, Turned back in the day of battle."
2. They had everything they needed... leaders, equipment, they had been trained for months, they had the right weapons.... and yet, when the battle began to heat up... they RAN AWAY!
  - a. These were God's troops. They did not even need to be good soldiers. God was on their side and He would fight for them. God had won battles where the soldiers never lifted a hand. At other times he had let them slaughter from behind.
  - b. They had no need to fear, they were more than prepared . . . and yet they shrank when the opportunity came.
  - c. They did not have to be strong or experienced... just show up, just be willing to enter the battle . . . God would do the rest.
  - d. They stymied, frustrated, thwarted, and circumvented God and His desire to bless them, to give them the victory.
  - e. God could still win the victory . . . he didn't need them in the first place . . . but now, He could not give the victory to them or bless them for their unwillingness. God wanted to throw open the doors of heaven and shower them with blessings and they nailed the door shut . . . And so do we.
  - f. When we limit God, we are the loser.

B. They limited Him by **DISOBEDIENCE**.

1. **Psalm 78:10** - "They did not keep the covenant of God; They refused to walk in His law."
2. There is nothing that so suddenly and completely slams shut the windows of heaven and ties God's hands and isolates you from God's presence as does DISOBEDIENCE!
  - a. In Israel's case it was REFUSAL . . . knowing disobedience. That is something God cannot and will not bless.
  - b. Imagine that someone accidentally hits you in the nose and it bleeds Then imagine that someone intentionally hits you in the nose and it bleeds.
    1. In both cases you have been hit and it bleeds.... but will you not react to the two situations differently?
    2. In one case... with forgiveness and in the other... with anger? So it is with God!
    3. Willful disobedience is defiance . . . A challenge to God's authority.

C. They limited Him by **FORGETFULNESS**.

1. **Psalm 78:11** - "And forgot His works And His wonders that He had shown them."
2. Ten plagues in Egypt . . . Pillar of fire- pillar of cloud . . . dry land in the midst of the Red Sea . . . water from rocks . . . manna . . . quail . . . And **THEY FORGOT!**
  - a. Not their children forgot but they forgot.
  - b. God developed a plan so they would not forget. **Psalm 78:5-6** - " For He established a testimony in Jacob, And appointed a law in Israel, Which He commanded our fathers, That they should make them known to their children; That the generation to come might know them, The children who would be born, That they may arise and declare them to their children, That they may set their hope in God, And not forget the works of God, But keep His commandments."

#### D. They limited him by **INSINCERITY**.

1. **Psalm 78:36-37** - "Nevertheless they flattered Him with their mouth, And they lied to Him with their tongue; For their heart was not steadfast with Him, Nor were they faithful in His covenant."
2. Doesn't insincerity turn you off? It does me.
3. When I think of sincerity or honesty I think of the woman doing a family history and had to do something about the reputation of two family members . . . One had been hanged and the other went to the electric chair.
  - a. For the uncle electrocuted for murder, she wrote, "occupied the chair of applied electricity at a large state institutions."
  - b. For the one hanged as a horse thief she wrote, "died at a public ceremony when the platform he was standing on gave way."
4. We see homeless people with their signs and we don't trust them. We figure they will just use the money to buy beer or drugs.
  - a. We would almost rather give to someone who is honest
  - b. Picture a homeless person with sign saying "Why lie, I need beer."
5. God has never been fooled by the insincere words or deeds of men. **Galatians 6:7** - "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap."

### CONCLUSION:

- A. The Israelites limited God through four major avenues:
  1. They limited Him by **TURNING** back.
  2. They limited Him by **DISOBEDIENCE**.
  3. They limited Him by **FORGETFULNESS**.
  4. They limited Him by **INSINCERITY**.

B. Listen to how Israel lost. **Psalm 78:59-64** - " When God heard this, He was furious, And greatly abhorred Israel,

60 So that He forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, The tent He had placed among men,

61 And delivered His strength into captivity, And His glory into the enemy's hand.

62 He also gave His people over to the sword, And was furious with His inheritance.

63 The fire consumed their young men, And their maidens were not given in marriage.

64 Their priests fell by the sword, And their widows made no lamentation."

1. Have you limited God?

2. God takes the limiting of His love and power very seriously.

3. Will you not take the handcuffs off of your God and allow Him to open the windows of Heaven?

C. **God's Plan for Man's Salvation**