

Limiting The Holy One Of Israel (Part 2)

Causes for Limiting God

Martin G. Collins

Given 29-Mar-08; Sermon #874

A few days before I gave my last sermon on limiting God, I received a telephone call from a man asking for an anointed cloth for his illness. He said it just was not getting better, and then it dawned on him. He thought to himself, "You know, I think I'm 'limiting God' by not calling a minister for anointing and prayer."

His comment gave me 'cause for pause,' because I do not think anyone, except Sue, knew what I was speaking on just two or three days later on the Sabbath. It is interesting and exciting to realize how intricately God is involved in the lives of His saints. These types of things, although they seem small, really give us a great witness.

Negligence by not following God's instruction, limits His opportunity to heal us. We are commanded in James 5, to perform an act of faith when we are sick.

James 5:14-16 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.

God is limited to His character. He cannot sin. He has imposed certain self-limits on himself, requiring certain actions from his creation before He will allow Himself to act. So when we talk about limiting God, we are actually talking about self-imposed limits God has placed on Himself. In the case of this command, if we obey, those self-imposed limits are lifted.

In my last sermon, I pointed to the psalmist's indictment against Israel in Psalm 78, and that they "limited the Holy One of Israel." As you may recall, the psalmist briefly describes various events in the history of the children of Israel, and as he does he exposes many of the causes for their limiting God. His purpose is to show what they had done to limit God and how, as a result, they had become miserable and unhappy.

As far as we are concerned, the message to us is that we should be very careful to examine ourselves in the light of these causes of limiting the Holy One of Israel. We, as the church of God, are required to examine ourselves, especially before Passover.

So, what are some of the causes of limiting God?

The first and most common cause, of course, is sin and disobedience.

I used Psalm 78 as a pivotal chapter in my last sermon. Psalm 78 summarizes what Ancient Israel did in limiting God, despite His desire to give them every possible opportunity to turn back to Him.

In spite of the foolishness, the disloyalty, and the disobedience of the Israelites, He still loved them and patiently watched over and provided for them, but within limits.

Psalm 78:8, 17 And may not be like their fathers, A stubborn and rebellious generation, A generation that did not set its heart aright, And whose spirit was not faithful to God. But they sinned even more against Him By rebelling against the Most High in the wilderness.

Because of the disobedience, as promised, God turns a deaf ear to those who maintain sin in their hearts.

Psalm 66:18 If I regard iniquity in my heart, The Lord will not hear.

This is not saying, if I have "seen" any iniquity in my heart, rather: if I have had a sinful end in view; or, if I have not been willing to forsake all sin; or, if I have cherished it in my mind; or, if I have reveled in the thought of past sins; or, if I am planning to commit sin again; or, if I am not willing to dispose of all sin, and to be righteous—then, God will not regard and answer my prayer.

The idea is that, in order for our prayer to be heard, we must be determine to forsake all forms of sin. The same negative principle is implied in Proverbs 1.

Proverbs 1:27-29 When your terror comes like a storm, And your destruction comes like a whirlwind, When distress and anguish come upon you. "Then they will call on me, but I will not answer; they will seek me diligently, but they will not find me. Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the LORD,

Which is exactly what this nation is doing today, and they will eventually cry for God's help, but He will not hear them, at least not initially.

If Psalm 66:18, and Proverbs 1:28, are negative statements of the principle, then Psalm 34:15 and 17, gives the positive side of the principle. "The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are open to their cry. The righteous cry out, and the Lord hears, and delivers them out of all their troubles."

Remember we are talking about sin and disobedience and how this limits God.

This principle that God closes his ears to sinners and opens them to the righteous, applies directly to when and why God intervenes. Those who plan to sin, desire to do sinful things, obsess over material things, and tend toward evil cannot expect God to intervene on their behalf.

We see a pattern. There is a difference between committing a sin, repenting of it and not wanting to commit it again, and being a flagrant sinner—one who carries the same sin in his heart and repeats it over and over again without a thought of repentance.

In order for prayer to be acceptable to God, it must be accompanied with a genuine desire to submit, repent and overcome. The righteous are recognized by the good spiritual fruit they produce. On the other hand, sin separates us from God and is the greatest limiting factor of all. Sin limits all kinds of blessings from Him.

By immutable spiritual law God cannot reward sin; He is limited in how He responds to it. It is not that He is powerless, in issues of right and wrong, He cannot break His own standard of righteousness. If He did go against His own law He would be a liar, and confusion would follow. We know that, 'God is not a liar; and He is not the author of confusion.'

A person will never know the blessings of God's way of life until he stops sinning and obeys God's commandments. It is a matter of repentance and overcoming. It is of no value for him to ask for blessings if he deliberately continues to sin.

Sin and disobedience will always be a cause of limiting God.

A second cause is pride and self-confidence—self-satisfaction and self-reliance. That was a constant source of trouble for the children of Israel. In their minds, they did not need God's power. Since they could muster an army and have military leaders of their own, they did not need God to be their leader and fight for them—or so they reasoned.

They went and challenged the enemy with their own strength and were defeated. However, when they trusted in God, even though they were only a handful, they were

always victorious. We have to beware of the blinding attitude of self-confidence, self-satisfaction without God, and the feeling we are in control and have no need of Him.

Have you noticed that when a church organization is in spiritual decline, and is weakening (as we have seen, and are seeing, in so many in the past twenty years), that there is a self-confidence and a self-reliance that continues? They are trying to do it all themselves, even to the point of changing doctrine to be easier to follow, and to live by.

There is a perverse belief that people can still organize God's church and be successful. This is fatal self-satisfaction. Pseudo-Christians feel smug in the idea that they have become Christians, so what more is necessary?

They think everything is all right, 'once saved, always saved.' They may even physically prosper by using successful business management methods, which we see in these mega churches today. They advertise and canvas local communities receiving the physical benefits of their labor. But God does not bless their efforts with true spiritual fruit.

Just a side note, a Lutheran minister stopped by here to see our building as they were building a similar type of building. I do not know how many times it was, but it must have been a half a dozen times while we were talking. He kept telling me that we should send out flyers and advertisements to entice people to come, because they have found that it works so well to advertise and to canvas people. This was his whole focus. He was 81 years old, and that was his solution.

Pride limits God's decision to help people to grow spiritually. We humans refuse to humble ourselves to admit our way is wrong and truly understand that God's way is always right. He blesses the humble, those who seek Him, and those who repent.

II Chronicles 7:14 If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

Just because we may think of ourselves as small and of no consequence, or, as lowly and of no value does not necessarily mean we are humble. We may believe we are insignificant compared with the world, but still be far from humble. Low-mindedness is not lowly-mindedness. Depression is not humility.

Humility reflects godly character—Jesus is the epitome of humility. He strongly

Limiting the Holy One of Israel (Part 2) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

impressed upon His disciples the need to have humility, and was the perfect example Himself. He is humility's personification. Therefore, we can learn how to be humble by His example.

While on earth, Jesus knew that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He came forth from God and would go back again to God. Still His incomparable superiority over human beings did not negatively influence his desire to serve.

Mark 10:45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.

Whether one serves God's people is one of the major ways that we can tell whether someone is humble or not.

Jesus Christ was so meek and lowly in heart, so humble in spirit and ready for service, that He girded Himself with a towel and washed the disciples' feet. Genuine humility leads the strong to serve the weak. It never underestimates its own worth, but in unreserved unselfishness it is ready to sacrifice its own needs at any moment for the good of others.

Genuine humility loses all its self-conceit, but never loses all its self-respect. This is consistent with upholding one's personal dignity and integrity of character. We should want to put forward a good witness and a good image. Yet Christ humbled Himself to become a man. He made Himself of no reputation. He did not come to be ministered to, but to minister. He was the servant of all.

When Pilate asked Christ if He were a king, He honestly answered that He was. He stood in kingly humility before the mob, in kingly meekness before the magistrates. He hung as king on the stake. Yet He was never arrogant, He never waned in His humility because it is an integral attribute of His godly character.

The apostle Paul points out to the members in Rome that Christ did not try to please Himself, but put the needs of others above His own.

Romans 15:2-3 Let each of us please his neighbor for his good, leading to edification. For even Christ did not please Himself;

Repeatedly, Christ demonstrated an attitude of service toward everyone around Him.

He showed loving-kindness to the poor and downtrodden. He was concerned for publicans and sinners. He took a personal interest in little children. In this way He showed that His concern was for the benefit of all classes of people and age groups.

Jesus even had concern for the thief on the stake while He Himself was dying. He remained humble through the most trying circumstances and lived His life as a lowly servant.

God has called us out of this world not only to repent of our sins, but also to overcome of what we are—self-seeking and self-centered by nature. Developing true humility requires that we turn to Him completely, so that He can infuse us with the mind and nature of His Son Jesus Christ.

God wants us to lose our sense of self-consciousness and replace it with an attitude of wanting to see others spiritually improve and grow. This new nature begins with faith, submission and obedience. Jesus obeyed even when obedience ended in death. Referring to Jesus Paul points out:

Philippians 2:8 And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

The lesson of this expression "obedient to the point of death" is that we may willingly and even with pleasure obey God where there is no specific risk. However, it is a whole different ballgame when obedience is in the face of fatal danger.

When we do our own will, we exalt ourselves. Scripture makes it clear that we have to do the opposite of what the human tendency our fleshly wills dictate. If we do not, we limit God's grace on our behalf. When we exalt God and His will, we overcome our own self-will.

This battle can be illustrated using a seesaw comparison, and I believe it has been illustrated several times in ministers' sermons over the years. Our human will is on one end and God's will is on the other. Because they are opposites, when one is exalted, the other is subjugated.

If we exalt God and His ways by obeying His laws and fulfilling His will, then our self-will will be conquered and humbled in direct proportion to how much we put forth God's will in what we focus on.

In other words, God sets Himself against the proud—those who refuse to submit in obedience to Him. He gives abundantly of His grace to the humble—those who surrender in full agreement to His will.

James 4:6 But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble."

James' comment, "God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble" is a quotation from Proverbs 3:34, "Surely He scorns the scornful, But gives grace to the humble."

The word for proud in James 4:6, is *huperephanos*, which literally means, one who shows himself above other people. Its real problem is that it is a crisis of the self-centered heart. Proud here means arrogant and overconfident.

Even still, a person with excessive pride might appear to be in downcast humility, while all the time there is in his heart an enormous contempt for others.

The proud have an unwarranted self-esteem, which stems from a high and perverse conceit of their skill or importance. This may include anything: beauty, or strength, or accomplishments, or family, or country, or clothing, or position, or religion.

When a self-willed person refuses to surrender himself to obey God's instruction, about how and where and when to worship Him, he commits idolatry. His pride makes himself an idol. Idolatry is both a cause and product of limiting God. By focusing on and relying on something substandard to God, people push God to the side, in effect saying, "God, you are incapable of handling this for us." "God, you are in the way; let me handle this."

A third cause of limiting God is ignorance and blindness.

Before I go on with this, I might say that there are so many ways of limiting God, but I am only able to cover four in this sermon. Faithlessness is a huge one that I am not going to be able to get to today. Faithlessness does limit God, His interaction with us, and His intervention on our behalf.

That third cause, ignorance and blindness about what is taught in Scripture is ignorance of God's truth. So many people never seem to realize what is possible for a person who is called to the truth. They think that to be a Christian you just make a decision to do so; you take a certain step, and that is all that there is to it. We hear of millions in mainstream Christianity professing that very thing.

Most people do not really know much about what Scripture says. For the most part they have not read the scriptures. They have no idea that they are described in the Scriptures as ignorant and blind. It is not only ignorance of the Bible, but it is also ignorance of history.

Here is an apt description of ancient Israel and the Israelitish nations today.

Isaiah 56:10-12 His watchmen are blind, they are all ignorant; they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; Sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. Yes, they are greedy dogs which never have enough. And they are shepherds who cannot understand; they all look to their own way, every one for his own gain, from his own territory. "Come," one says, "I will bring wine, and we will fill ourselves with intoxicating drink; Tomorrow will be as today, and much more abundant."

So what do the socialist democrats do? They offer more and more handouts, and they keep people drunk with handouts of money, and the partying and the holidays. Do human beings learn nothing other than warfare from their past history? That was the trouble with the children of Israel; they chose to remain ignorant and blind. That is a key; our leaders choose to be ignorant and blind.

Psalms 78, gives the reason for their miserable and mental state in ancient Israel, and in this nation today.

Psalms 78:10-11 They did not keep the covenant of God; They refused to walk in His law, And forgot His works And His wonders that He had shown them.

The Israelites were always forgetting. A generation came along that had forgotten the wonderful things God had done, as He brought the people of Israel out of Egypt into Canaan. They were ignorant of the history of their own past, and they paid dearly for it.

That is what the psalmist, Asaph, reminds them of here in chapter 78. There are millions of professing Christians today who know nothing about (or are ignorant of) the facts of the history of the true church of God, and the history of ancient Israel. It is a commonly recognized principle, that "Those who ignore history are destined to repeat it."

There is also an ignorance that causes spiritual blindness. This is sometimes the case in prayer.

James 4:3 You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.

There are times when we dictate to God what kind of blessing we want. We ask God for something, but instead of receiving what we ask, He gives us an open mind to see our shortcoming or a secret sin. God's infinite wisdom has just given us a greater blessing than what we asked for, but it is in another shape than we expected, and we do not recognize it.

We go again down on our knees, and we complain to God that He has not answered us, when in fact he has answered the spirit of our prayer, but not necessarily the letter. He has given us the blessing itself, but not in the form we asked for.

Figuratively, we may pray to Him to give us silver, and He gives us gold. However, our blindness cannot understand the value of this different form of blessing. We go grumbling to Him as if He had never heard us at all.

Psalms 78:18-22 And they tested God in their heart by asking for the food of their fancy. Yes, they spoke against God: They said, "Can God prepare a table in the wilderness? Behold, He struck the rock, so that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed. Can He give bread also? Can He provide meat for His people?" Therefore the LORD heard this and was furious; so a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel, because they did not believe in God, and did not trust in His salvation.

If we ask, especially for material things, we have to always be careful to leave the degree of those things with God. We might ask, "Please give us food and shelter," but it is not for us to stipulate on what kind of table our food is to be served. We may ask for water, but it is not for us to specify to God out of what kind of cup we want to drink.

We have to leave the measuring of God's blessing to Him (who measures the rain, and weighs the clouds of heaven). Beggars must not be choosers, and we especially must avoid being choosers when it comes to God's infinite wisdom and sovereignty, and abundance in giving.

Here are a couple of scriptures that instruct us not to stay in this condition of ignorance.

Acts 17:30 Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent,

Ephesians 4:17-18 This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart;

Let us apply this to our world today and our situation. There is an economic collapse coming and it is going to be horrible. I read one analyst in England who was warning the British people to get ready for a dreadful downturn in their standard of living. They should get ready for it, because it is not going to be comfortable. He said for the Americans it is going to be far, far worse. So we should be preparing and not putting extra things on our credit cards, but we should be trying to pay them off. Things are coming, and the dates that have been coming up most have been third quarter of this year. I do not know if that is true, but a lot of people are saying that starting September things are going to get very bad. They could get bad before that, but let us not be in ignorance, as the rest of this nation is. If it is obvious to the analysts that we should be cutting back it should be far more obvious to us. We should have been doing it for quite a while now.

The fourth cause of limiting God that I am going to cover today is fear.

That is, fear of the cost of these things; fear of the consequences; fear of persecution; fear of ridicule, and fear of following God.

A common mistake we often make is when we are fearful that if we put ourselves in God's hands, we will lose control of our own lives, because we do not know what God will ask or command us to do. Therefore, we hold back and limit God.

In contrast to this, the apostle John says:

I John 4:18 There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

They have limited God. The human mind is constituted in such a way that positives are not enough. We must have negatives also. We need to be told what not to do, as well as what to do. It is not always enough to be given a positive picture. It often has to be given in contrast with the negative. This is why the apostle John expresses verse 17 and the beginning of verse 18 as he does. In verse 17, "Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world." and, verse 18 again, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love."

This is concerned with punishment, and that is always something that tends to make us fearful and unhappy. Therefore He who fears is not made perfect in love. Love is not perfect in him, because if it were, he would have confidence with respect to the Day of Judgment instead of being fearful and feeling threatened.

There may be no better test that we can apply to ourselves in order to discover the quality of our Christian life and the nature of our standing in the sight of God—than to examine ourselves in the light of this fact of a Day of Judgment.

John's goal here is to encourage us, to give us comfort and joy, and to help us. In a sense, it can be put like this: "The people who are the most happy to be in this world are those who are happy about the next world." These things always go together; they are inseparable. This is how John puts it.

Doctrine and application always go together. It is possible for people to call themselves Bible students and scholars, and to be very well versed in the Bible, but it does not necessarily profit them in the end because they never apply it. We see this in the commentaries. They have an understanding intellectually but they cannot figure out how to apply it. It takes the Holy Spirit to be able to reveal that, and to give us the power of understanding.

They analyze it as if they were analyzing a Shakespearean play, and that is all they are interested in. Scripture never does that. There must always be an application. There is no value unless we test ourselves by it.

God's truth is not theoretical truth. It is not something merely to titillate the senses. It is extremely interesting and applicable. If we are only interested in it intellectually and as a system of thought, it will be of no value and will profit us nothing in the end.

God gives us His truth so that we can live by it. Our attitude toward our judgment day is

essentially far more important than when certain events are prophesied to happen, or even how many resurrections there are.

Every one of us at some time in our lives should have known a fear of our Day of Judgment. We can deduce that because there is no fear in love, and perfect love casts out fear. However, until love comes there is fear. Fear of judgment is there initially though—it is a great motivator when we are called.

Some say they do not fear the Day of Judgment and that they have never feared it. They regard it as just a relic of primitive superstition—an aspect of ancient biblical teaching that is no longer valid, something that is totally inconsistent with the idea of God as a God of love. This is primarily what we hear in mainstream Christianity.

There are people who are not afraid of the Day of Judgment because they deliberately and willfully reject it, and refuse to pay attention to it. The psalmist in Psalm 78 again warns about the plight of the unbeliever.

Psalm 78:31-33 The wrath of God came against them, and slew the stoutest of them, and struck down the choice men of Israel. In spite of this they still sinned, and did not believe in His wondrous works. Therefore their days He consumed in futility, and their years in fear.

A child is often not afraid of things that he should fear. The child is not afraid of sitting in a car and attempting to drive it because he is not aware of the dangerous possibilities if he turns that key.

Ignorance is often the cause of perverse fearlessness. If we are not aware of the dangerous possibilities, we will not fear them. The person who is ignorant of electricity is not as careful as the one who knows, or has experienced its dangers.

The more people know, the more they see the dangers. There are large numbers of people in the world who do not fear the Day of Judgment because they do not think about it. Ignorance is sometimes bliss, but it carries a dreadful consequence.

They do not stop to contemplate. They just blissfully enjoy life as it comes along, with the latest excitement and fad. Most never stop to ask, "What is the meaning of life?"

The thought of eternity itself surely should give a person pause for thought and to fill him with a sense of alarm and fear, and even of terror. Most people really do not know the

specifics of what is coming. The world cannot prove or demonstrate scientifically that death is the end.

Any "intelligent" person must know something of this fear of the Day of Judgment, no matter how much they deny it. However, when we get beyond the level of intelligence, there are infinitely more important reasons why we should know something about a fear of judgment. It is not merely death that concerns people; it is not merely the uncertainty of it all. But deep down God has instilled in every human being what we are told in Hebrew 9:

Hebrews 9:27 And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

God would never create human beings without making sure that they knew that there was a judgment to come.

Thankfully, we have God's inspired written word, which contains many promises that the saints need not fear. We should be free from fear of judgment. The natural man should fear it, but we should be free from such fear.

Take for example Hebrews 2:15, where we are told that one of the main purposes of Christ's coming, and one of the main effects of His death on the stake and of His resurrection, is to 'release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.'

The writer of the epistle to the Hebrews says that was the whole purpose of Christ's coming—so He could deliver us from this fear of death that holds us captive.

Romans 8:15 For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, "Abba, Father."

This is everywhere in Scripture, so, to assume that this is something to which we are not entitled, and to consider it as a kind of presumption, is against Scripture.

The apostle John drives this point home. He says that love and fear are totally incompatible, 'there is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear.' Now this is something that can easily be elaborated upon. Love and fear are direct opposites. The spirit of fear is the antithesis to the true spirit of love.

Think of the loving mother who nurses her sick child who has an infectious disease. Does she worry about the possibility of catching the disease from her child? Absolutely not! Her love for the child casts out fear. Love and fear are incompatible.

Take, for instance, the example given by Christ when He was sending out His disciples to preach and cast out demons. He warned them they would certainly be in danger. How would you like to get a job and be told that you are going to be in danger, and your life is going to be at risk at times? Christ told them that many would dislike them, but here is His advice, as recorded in Matthew 10:

Matthew 10:28 And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.

That word hell there is actually *gehenna*, which as you know was the fire that all of the trash was thrown into outside of Jerusalem.

The way to get rid of this fear, Christ says, is, in a sense, to have this greater fear. Ultimately the greater fear is the reverence for God, that is the love for God. The greater fear drives out the lesser fear.

If we are true Christians, love is being made perfect in us. Therefore, we should not dwell in a fearful state of mind, because of the love God has given us by His grace.

If people are fearful it means that they are afraid of punishment and there is something defective in their whole conception of love. They are not loving and abiding in this state of love. Love and fear are unable to coexist. Love drives out fear. Love comes into the heart of the Christian from God through His Spirit and drives out fear. We have no right to be fearful in this sense.

The fear that limits God is a cowardly fear and is a very different thing from reverence and holy awe. There is always a sense of reverence in connection with love. When a person loves God there is a sense of awe, a holiness, a reverence about it.

'Reverence and godly fear' is a very different thing from this fear that torments—a fear that cringes and trembles. That fear is the thing that perfect love drives out.

The natural man should have fear of the Day of Judgment, and the Christian should be free from that fear.

So, how then, do we become free from the fear of condemnation? First, we have to realize that the love of God comes to us as revealed in Jesus Christ and in His work for us. We have to understand and appreciate what God has done for us in our Savior Jesus Christ.

I John 4:9-10 In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

Propitiation refers to the removal of God's wrath by offering Jesus Christ as a perfect gift sacrifice. In the Old Testament, it is expressed in the word 'atonement.' Sin inevitably causes the strongest reaction from God. While He may be 'slow to anger', His anger is certain in the face of sin.

The love John is speaking of involves concrete and purposeful acts. God's love required Him to send His Son. His love in us requires deeds by which we show our love for one another. The intention of God's act was not just our salvation, but also our righteous living. In addition, it is meant to be a living in love, so that God's love is seen visibly working in us and through us.

In a sense, we are standing before God on our Day of Judgment now! And we are instructed to commit ourselves to doing good works—to live righteously in service to others.

I Peter 4:17-19 For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now "If the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?" Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.

In standing before God, we know perfectly well that we have been sinners. We have offended God, have broken His law, and have forgotten Him. We have not loved Him with all our heart, mind, and strength. We have been guilty of sins against Him and His people.

In Psalm 143:2, David makes a genuinely humble appeal to God: "Do not enter into

Limiting the Holy One of Israel (Part 2) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no one living is righteous."

So how can we stand before Him? There is only one way, and that is to know and believe that He sent His Son to bear our sins in His own body on the tree.

Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.

We may be able to say we have done a lot of good, but what is the value of good to counteract the wrong that we have done in our past? So His own spiritual law in how He deals with us limits God. Nevertheless, there is a solution.

That is where we see the real impact of justification and sanctification. Both remove the legal limitation on God that keeps Him from having a personal relationship with us through Jesus Christ, until we are invited to accept His process of salvation and we respond affirmatively.

The first way to get rid of fear is to understand the doctrine of justification by faith. Nothing else can give us peace with God at this point, except being in Christ and receiving it through Him.

Romans 5:1-2 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Justification is the basis and starting point for sanctification. We have to be assured of acceptance with God before we can grow in grace and conformity to Christ. There is also a freedom from condemnation in the sense of guilt.

God justifies, but He does this only as He unites a person to Christ. This union takes place by faith in Christ. Faith is trust. It begins with knowledge, so it is not a blind knowledge. It builds on facts, so it is not speculation. Faith is trusting Christ and proving His promises. Faithlessness, on the other hand, limits God, preventing Him from justifying the unbeliever.

Galatians 2:16-17 knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law

Limiting the Holy One of Israel (Part 2) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. "But if, while we seek to be justified by Christ, we ourselves also are found sinners, is Christ therefore a minister of sin? Certainly not!"

We have no other hope as we consider the holiness of God. Our only hope is the righteousness of Christ that covers our sins, so we can stand before God.

The love of God has provided justification for us by faith. Justification is the essential first step to making it possible for us to overcome sin within the self because without justification we have no access to God.

We can be justified. We can have a relationship with the holy God even though our conduct is so inferior that it makes us unacceptable for a relationship with Him otherwise.

King David was an honest man who would not dodge the issue of where he stood with relation to God in the matter of his sins.

In Psalm 51:4, he acknowledged, "Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight—that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge."

A reason for being able to stand with confidence is that as we contemplate our judgment we believe that in spite of our unworthiness we are regenerated children of God.

As baptized members of God's church, we want to know God better; we want to love Him more. We want to submit to Him. We want to obey Him. We love all the other members of God's Church, and long to be with them. We love reading and studying the inspired written word of God. We enjoy praying. And, we work at producing spiritual fruit. God is in the process of giving us His own nature.

These are things are not true of the natural man, and by this we confirm that we are spiritual children of God. Therefore, in addition to our justification, our sanctification helps us.

I John 4:17-18 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.

Limiting the Holy One of Israel (Part 2) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love.

If we are still fearful, we have not been made perfect in love, and therefore, we are limiting God. We must always take justification and sanctification together. If we do not always take those two things together, we will be misleading ourselves.

Without taking these two things together we would wrongly say to ourselves that if Christ justifies us, it does not matter what we do. John, of course, does not teach like that. It is a superficial argument. If we do not take justification and sanctification together we end up with mainstream Christianity's wrong view of the doctrine.

What is the relationship of justification and sanctification? There is the immediate and mediate way of getting rid of fear of judgment, or in other words, there is a direct and an indirect way, and we need both. The immediate or direct way is to understand the doctrine of justification by faith.

Justify is a metaphor taken from the court of law. It can imply "aligned with a standard," "acquitted," "cleared of guilt," "found innocent," or "declared righteous."

However, we must remember the other side as well—the mediate or indirect way, that is sanctification, which works like this: If we are not living righteously, and love is not being perfected in us, we will have a constant sense of condemnation and fearfulness. We will spend our whole life miserable, but we are meant to have a better quality of life than that.

We are meant to live a life of joy, peace and happiness, and we are meant to have confidence as we contemplate our Day of Judgment.

We have to live a life of love, not fear. Since love is the keeping of God's commandments, keeping them casts out fear. Love for God and one another as fellow members of the body of Christ. Sanctification indirectly, will act with the justification that does it directly and immediately.

What are the similarities and differences between justification and sanctification?

Major similarities between the two are: justification and sanctification originally come from God's freely given grace—being justified and sanctified is by His gift alone. Both processes begin at about the same time, (justification first, then sanctification) when the

sinner accepts Jesus Christ as his personal Savior by faith and repents of his sins.

A justified person is always also sanctified, and a sanctified person is justified. The result is that believers are both justified and sanctified. Both are essential and necessary parts of God's work of salvation.

Christ is the fountain of life from which forgiveness and holiness, that is, justification and sanctification flow. Before entering the Kingdom of God, we have to be first justified and sanctified.

Major differences between the two are: that the righteousness ascribed for justification is Christ's, not ours. In the way of an analogy, God grants it to us or accounts it to us as in a legal procedure, thanks to Christ's righteousness and intercession.

On the other hand, sanctification is actually the process of making a person inwardly righteous through experiencing life within a relationship with God.

The righteousness of justification ascribed to the believer is perfect, never increasing or diminishing, because that righteousness is Christ's. However, the righteousness of sanctification ascribed to the believer is mingled with our many weaknesses and imperfections.

Our works have nothing to do with justification, but our works are very important in sanctification. Our works require a great deal of sacrifice, work, prayer, and warfare to overcoming and conquer sin. Justification opens the door to God's presence and the Kingdom of God, and sanctification makes us acceptable to live there.

We will not be perfect in this world, but as we dwell in Christ and as we manifest this love, we will know that we are in God and God is in us by way of His Spirit. We will not be perfect in this world. We have nothing but Him, and though we are still imperfect, "being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;" as Paul says in Philippians 1:6.

He will complete us, and so at the end He will present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. The more we are like Christ, the less we will fear our judgment.

Israel's history of frequent rebellion stands in stark contrast to all the evidences of God's goodness. Humanly speaking, Israel as a child caused great trouble to her heavenly Father in the wilderness. Israel caused grief to, tried the patience of, provoked and

limited the Holy One of Israel.

Limiting God is far more serious than we may realize. There is great harm done to the name of God when we, His people, limit Him from bestowing His abundant grace. God's name is tarnished when we provide a poor witness of His way of life.

Is there any person more miserable than the person who has just enough knowledge to know of the coming judgment? How fearful he must be deep down. How sad it is that He limits God's working with Him.

How many people are like that? They have no joy of salvation. They have no joy in the blessings of God's way of life, partly because they do not recognize them. So, to the extent that we have all felt ourselves guilty of this charge of "limiting the Holy One of Israel," we must, in faith and humility, submit to God's will.

When God is not limited—He can fulfill His desire to intervene in great and wonderful ways for us and through His love we can become fearless.

Isaiah 41:10 Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, Yes, I will help you, I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.'

The promise is one that is addressed to all of God's people in a similar circumstance. It is as true now as it was then, that those who God has chosen have nothing to fear. This is a reason why we should not be afraid, as God is our protector even more so than ancient Israel's. So, of whom should we be afraid, if God is for us, who can be against us? What better consolation can we desire than the assurance that God is with us to protect us!

Isaiah 41:13-14 For I, the LORD your God, will hold your right hand, Saying to you, 'Fear not, I will help you.' "Fear not, you worm Jacob, You men of Israel! I will help you," says the LORD And your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.

Isaiah uses the title, "the Holy One of Israel" five times the number of 'grace' in Scripture

Even though Israel was exiled because of sin and unbelief, God still did not reject her. Since the covenant God made with Abraham was unconditional, his descendants do not

Limiting the Holy One of Israel (Part 2) by Martin G. Collins (<http://www.cgg.org>)

have to fear.

Today, the Father remains spiritual Israel's—His Church's—God, so He will continue to be with us, to strengthen us, help us, and sustain us.

May God help us bear in mind and apply these things: The natural person should fear the Day of Judgment, but members of God's church should not fear theirs. We should not fear it because we are justified and sanctified by Christ and are being made like Christ, every day that we submit to Him.

We have every reason not to limit 'the Holy One of Israel.'