

# Trying to Restrict God

by Chuck Smith

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of not restricting God's message and allowing him to move in our lives as he pleases.*

**Duration:** 34:31

**Scripture:** Psalm 8:1

**Topics:** "Surrender"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the power of the Holy Spirit and the potential for transformation in the lives of believers. He encourages listeners to yield themselves to the Spirit's work and be instruments for reaching the world. The preacher also questions the effectiveness of moral principles taught through drama compared to the transformative power of the Word of God. He warns about the danger of a politically correct gospel that prioritizes entertainment over the truth. The sermon references Psalm 8 and highlights the greatness of God and His care for humanity. The preacher raises concerns about the watering down of the gospel and the fear of man restricting the work of the Spirit. He calls for a return to the Lord and a renewed focus on the power of the Holy Spirit. The sermon concludes with a reminder of Jesus' promise to the church of Philadelphia of an open door that no one can shut.

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## Transcript

Shall we turn in our Bibles now to Psalm 8 for our scripture reading. Now read the first, the unnumbered verses. Pastor Brian will lead the congregation in the reading of the even numbered verses through the eighth Psalm.

Shall we stand as we read the Word of God? O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth, who has set Thy glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength because of Thine enemies, that Thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger. When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars which Thou hast ordained, what is man that Thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that Thou visitest him.

For Thou has made him a little lower than the angels and has crowned him with glory and honor. Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of Thy hands. Thou has put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beast of the field, the fowl of the air, the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea.

O Lord, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth. Let's pray. Lord, indeed, how excellent is Thy name.

And we have gathered together today, Lord, to worship You and to give thanks and to honor You as our God. We ask, Lord, now that our hearts will be open, that You will speak to us through Your Word, challenge us, Lord, to a life that is committed fully. In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen. You may be seated. This morning, we'd like to draw your attention to the second chapter of Micah, verses six and seven.

Here he is saying that the people are saying to the prophets, prophesy not. They say to them that prophesy, they shall not prophesy to them. Don't prophesy to us, they're saying.

That they shall not take shame. Don't prophesy to us. We're not going to take shame.

We're not ashamed of what we're doing. For thou art named, the house of Jacob, the prophet is saying. And is the spirit of the Lord straightened or restricted? Are these his doings? Do not my words do good to him that walketh uprightly? Too many times I believe that men seek to conform God to their image, rather than seeking to be conformed to God's image.

Many people have sort of a composite God. They take a little bit out of Buddhism, a little bit out of Hinduism, and a little bit out of Shintoism, and they sort of make their composite God. The things that they like about each God, and they put it together, and this is the God that I believe in, or this is the God that I worship.

And they try to conform God into their image, and into their likeness. Man is often seeking to restrict what God has to say to them. They are saying to the prophets here, prophesy not.

The question I want you to think about today is, am I guilty of trying to restrict what God has to say, or what God wants to do in my life? Am I giving him only a narrow area to control, and keeping most of the control in my own heart? He addresses his message here to thou, he said, who are named by the house of Jacob. Now Jacob had served the true and the living God, and he was often referred to in the scriptures as the God of Jacob. And so he is saying to them, you're named by the house of Jacob.

But in reality they weren't serving or following the God of Jacob. They did not have a true relationship with God. Still known as the house of Jacob, but really far from the God of Jacob.

The name Christian was first given to the believers in Antioch, and it was sort of a slur because the Christians are actually, the name Christian was originally there, but because the believers were so much like Jesus, they called them Christ-like. And that's what the word Christian literally means, Christ-like. They were so much like Jesus.

It's sort of like, you know, the newspapers here talked about the young people that were worshiping the Lord here as the Jesus people. And it was a term that was given to us by the word, world, the Jesus people. So the word Christian was given to the believers in Antioch by the world because they were Christ-like.

Would to God that we would live up to the name Christian. I say I'm a Christian. Am I really like Christ? Here are the people, they are known as the house of Jacob, even more or less like the United States is

known as a Christian nation.

But we are far from a Christian nation, and that's what the prophet is saying to them. You are far from the God of Jacob. You have the name, but you're far from the God of Jacob.

You know, the name doesn't always tell the real or the true story. Go to the grocery store, look on the cereal shelf, and you'll see a box and it says grape nuts. Well, have you ever thought? It's really not grapes, and it's really not nuts.

So the name is rather deceiving. If you buy a box and you think you're going to get a box of grapes and nuts, you're going to be disappointed because the name is deceptive. Many times I think as we take the name of Christian, it is deceptive.

When people open up, they find out that we are not really like Christ. That's exactly what was happening with these people. They had turned from the God of Jacob, and still they were known.

They had the name that they were the people of Jacob. Jesus said to the church of Sardis, you have a name that you are alive, but really you are dead. You don't live up to your name.

The prophet was speaking to the people who were trying to control the spirit of God. He said, is the spirit of God straightened or restricted? Is he restricted to your ideas, your concepts? In verse six, he speaks of them commanding certain of the prophets, don't prophesy to us. We don't want to hear what the spirit is saying to us.

The prophets were telling them that you need to amend your ways, warning them that the path that they were walking on would lead them to destruction. They were being told that God was not pleased with their devising evil schemes on their beds at night, and then seeking to fulfill them when it became day. That God did not approve of their coveting another man's goods and seeking to take them by force.

They were being warned that a nation that had lost its moral roots could not possibly survive. And so they were saying to the prophets, don't prophesy to us. We won't hear it.

The prophets were telling them that they're lying and they're cheating and they're drinking. We're not pleasing unto the God of Jacob. And so they wanted to restrict the message of God that he would bring to them.

They did not want rebuke for what they were doing. They wanted to sin without the feeling of guilt or remorse or shame. They wanted people to accept their immoral practices and not to shame them for their perverse activities.

They did not want to remain in the closets, but wanted to publicly flaunt their evil perversions and pray down the streets in their pride. They were saying, don't tell us what God says. We want to do our own thing without his interference.

And thus they were trying to straighten the Spirit of God. Restrict what God would say to them. Silence the voice of God.

They desired that evil be called good. And they in turn were calling good evil. If you accept their chosen evil practices, that was good.

If you would condemn their practices, then you were a narrow minded bigot. If you wanted to teach your children in school, moral values like the 10 commandments, that was evil. But if you wanted to instruct the children on how to properly use a condom, oh, well, that's good.

If their eyes, if in their eyes, the teaching children how to have safe sex, oh, that's good. But if you teach them abstinence until marriage, oh, that's bad. They wanted to restrict the message of the Spirit of God to hear only the things they wanted to hear.

Verse 11 tells us that if a prophet would come along or a man would come along walking in the spirit of falsehood and lies, and he would say, I want to prophesy to you of the pleasures of fine wine and strong drink. The people will say, oh, you're a great prophet. You be our prophet.

We like what you say. Don't talk to us about sin or evil or hell or things like that. We want to have a feeling of positive goodness when we leave the sanctuary.

They would like to dictate to the Spirit what to say to them rather than to hear what the Spirit had to say to the church. Just put a reverend in front of the man's name. Let him say that all of their evil practices were acceptable to God and that God loves them too much to restrict them from their chosen evil practices.

And he will be hailed as a great preacher and become very popular. But don't tell them that they are drunkards and that the Bible says that drunkards are not going to inherit the kingdom of heaven. Just tell them that they have a physical inability to metabolize alcohol.

It's something that's in their genes. God made them that way. And oh, how men would like to blame God for what they are.

They want to hear that God is so loving and kind and weak that he can condone whatever they wanted to do. Even those things that were harmful and destroying them, he would never restrict them or seek to warn them of the dangers of choosing such a lifestyle. In many circles, you're not even qualified to speak the Word of God unless you've graduated with a degree from some seminary, which for the most part teach you that you can't really trust the Bible as the Word of God.

They restrict what God has said in his Word to only those parts that they agree with. I think it is a travesty that these men are meeting in Claremont on a irregularly scheduled basis, going through the New Testament and determining which of the words Jesus actually said, that the New Testament said he said, and which ones were inserted by the writers of the New Testament. They really weren't the words of Jesus.

How audacious can you get in trying to divide the Bible and say, well, this you can accept and this you can't, this you can believe and this you shouldn't. I believe that the Spirit of God is not restricted and that God can speak through any person he desires. You don't have to have a degree, but if you have the Word of God burning in your heart, God can use you to speak to others.

Amos, who was up in Israel prophesying to the people, they didn't like his rebuke. In fact, they said, go on back down to your home. We don't want you here.

You are a danger. You're demoralizing the people, talking against their evil and against God's going to judge them. And Amos answered them.

I was no prophet. Neither was I the son of the prophet. I was just a farmer.

I picked figs and the Lord took me as I was following the flock. And the Lord said to me, go and prophesy unto my people, Israel. They were saying, you don't have a degree.

You didn't graduate from seminary. Don't try to tell us about God. And he said, I was a farmer.

I wasn't a prophet, but God spoke to me and sent me here to give you his word. Even in the days of Jesus, the scholars of his day came to him and questioned him saying, who gave you the authority to do these things? They were challenging the authority of Jesus. My blood begins to boil when I hear men with their religious degrees claim that their knowledge of the scriptures is superior to the knowledge of Jesus.

I was talking with a doctor of philosophy who was the head of a religious department of a prestigious university. In the Los Angeles area. And he was declaring that the Bible doesn't have any prophecies in it.

And so I brought out Isaiah chapter 44, 45, where Isaiah prophesied that Cyrus would be the name of the king that would release the Israelis from their captivity in Babylon. And he said, any fool knows that there were two Isaiahs and that the first part of Isaiah was written by the first Isaiah and the second Isaiah, the second part from chapters 40 through the end were written by the second Isaiah. It does.

It is interesting. You go to Israel and sometimes the guides, you know, you'll ask them a question. They'll give you an answer.

It may not be right, but they're a guide and they're supposed to know everything. And, and we've caught them giving some pretty interesting answers to the questions of the people. I've for the most part kept silent, but I heard of this one particular guide and the guide was pointing out and he said, that's the tomb of Samuel over there.

And there is a monument and a building on the top of this hill and they call it the tomb of Samuel. The person said, well, now I was here a while back and I had a different guide and he showed me a different place. And he said, that was the tomb of Samuel.

He said, oh, well, that's second Samuel. This is first Samuel. And, uh, and so there are those that say there are two Isaiahs in this professor said, uh, you know, he, he wrote this after the fact, it wasn't a prophecy.

He wrote it after the fact. I said, well, it's interesting to me that Jesus makes reference to Isaiah, both to the first part of Isaiah and to the latter portion of Isaiah. And he attributes both to Isaiah, the prophet.

He said, well, Jesus did not have all of the advantage of the scholarship that we have today. And I said to him, do you mean to tell me, you know better about the scriptures than Jesus knew? He said, well, he didn't have the advantage of the scholarship that we have available to us today. And I said, well, I beg your pardon.

I don't think I'm smart enough to talk to someone who is smarter than Jesus. But you see, they would straighten out the Lord. They would, uh, restrict what God can do and can't do.

Is the spirit of God straightened? Is God restricted as to what he can do today? Can we blame the lack of the power of the Holy spirit in the church today on the Holy spirit? Has God changed? Or is it possible that we have changed? Can we say with scriptural authority that God no longer wants the gifts of the Holy spirit

to be in full operation in his church today? Could it be that we are guilty of restricting the spirit of God today? Can we now look at man's genius to win the world for Christ through programs rather than through the power and the guidance of the Holy spirit? Is the church that begun in the spirit now going to be made perfect in the flesh? Could it be that we are to blame for the lack of power rather than the Holy spirit? Look at the conditions of our world today. After 2000 years of the preaching of the gospel on a percentage, fewer people believe in Christ than ever before. Our world is wracked by wars, terrorist, wickedness, evil.

As the bible said, evil will abound and surely it is. We have one of our Calvary Chapel pastors who was in the area where Katrina did so much damage. They had to evacuate from their home and when they were finally able to go back to their home, they were thrilled as they drove up to the house to see that it was not really damaged outwardly by the hurricane.

The house was still intact. The roof was still on. All of the windows were still there and they were rejoicing that their house escaped damage until they went into the house and they found that looters had gone into their house, had stolen all of their furniture, all of their valuables, even took the bathroom fixtures.

And you think, what kind of a world is this? What kind of people are living around us that would take advantage of a situation like that and try to turn it to their own advantage? Has the word of God lost its power to transform lives? Or could it be that the teaching of moral principles through drama just lacks that same power that the word of God does have to transform a life? Can a politically correct gospel designed not to offend anyone but rather to provide an hour of entertainment and bring men, can it bring men out of their darkness of sin into the glorious light of God? It would seem that we are coming to that day that Paul warned Timothy about when he said to Timothy, be instant in season out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but after their own desires, they shall gather to themselves teachers to scratch their itching ears. They shall turn away from the truth and shall be turned unto entertaining stories.

Are we living now in that day when the gospel is so watered down that it no longer has the power to lift man out of the quagmire of sin and set him on the solid rock and transform his life for good? Have we ceased warning men that the wicked will be cast into hell and all nations that forget God because the idea of hell is held up to ridicule by the world? Is the spirit of God straightened or have we restricted the work of the spirit because of the fear of man and our desires to be popular? I agree with Charles Spurgeon, who told his congregation, let us return to the Lord, lest we seek again to be baptized and let us seek again to be baptized into the Holy Spirit and into the fire. And we shall yet again behold the wonderful works of the Lord. Jesus said to the church of Philadelphia, I have set before you an open door that no man can shut.

If we do not enter that open door, who then is to blame? Isaiah told us that the people were saying, awake, awake, oh Lord arise. And the Lord answered them and said, I'm awake, you wake up. And I think that, you know, so many times you're saying, oh God, you know, awake, awake, look what's happening.

And God's saying, I'm awake, you wake up and you start praying and you start seeking the power of the spirit. How many times it's true of us. The psalmist tells us that they limited the Holy one of Israel.

God wanted to do so much more, but they limited God through their unbelief. They restricted what God would do through their unbelief. We're told when Jesus came to Capernaum, he could do no mighty works there or very few mighty works because of the unbelief of the people.

Is the spirit of God strengthened? The prophet said, are these his doings? In other words, is it God's fault or is it perhaps our fault? Jesus Christ, the Bible said is the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is still seeking to save those who are lost, who will come to him. He will still empower and use men and women to accomplish his eternal purposes in our world today.

How often are we conscious of our own inability to deal with all of the issues that arise from this vast ministry that God has created here at Calvary Chapel. With Paul, we often ask who is sufficient for these things. But with Paul, we always find the answer our sufficiency is not of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of Christ.

He's not restricted. I am. He's not.

And thus it is so important that I yield myself to the spirit of God and allow him that freedom to do what he desires and longs to do. Even though men might at times get upset, yet I must obey God rather than man. When I look around and I see the deteriorating condition of our society, I see the increased drug and gang problems.

I see the social chaos. I feel so inept and incompetent to affect any real change. How can you deal with the filth that comes out of Hollywood, the corruption of our government, the breakdown of the family structure, the immoral conditions of our teenagers, and even those less? I feel so helpless at a time like this, but I'm so thankful there's no restriction to what God can do.

The spirit of the Lord is not straight and he's not restricted. I may be weak and ineffectual. He is not.

And I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. It is still true. The mountains of difficulty that are around us can be removed, but not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of God.

He is not straightened. He's not restricted. Oh, may God help us to let him move in our lives as he pleases, not as we control or direct.

Father, we do thank you today for the unlimited power of your Holy Spirit that you've made available to us, as you told us that we would receive power when the Holy Spirit would come upon us. And so we pray that your Holy Spirit would come upon our lives this day, Lord, and that we would not seek to fetter or to restrict or to lay the parameters, but let you move freely, Lord, in our lives, doing what you want to do. And may we not, Lord, try to dictate to you, but may we be willing to be dictated from your word.

In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Shall we stand? Can it be that God wants to use you in a more powerful way, a more effective way in these days? Could it be that God is calling you to just live a life empowered and led by the Spirit? Could it be that you have restricted the work of the Spirit in your life? And that other things have become so dominant that God really isn't free to use you and to work through you? Maybe God is speaking to your heart today and the Spirit is saying, yes, you have put limits.

You have been restricting that which I'm wanting to do in and through your life. And God is calling you to surrender fully, not to restrict or try to restrict that work that he wants you to accomplish. The pastors are down here at the front to pray with you.

As we're dismissed, if you'll just come forward and say, you know, I do feel that I've been restricting what God is wanting to do in my life. I'm guilty, but I want to be used by God in whatever capacity he desires. I want to just be God's instrument doing the work of God in this world in which we live today.

And just make yourself available to God, surrendering yourself even now to allow the Holy Spirit to have free sway in your life. They're here. They'll be glad to pray with you.

And if that is your prayer and desire, then I would encourage you, once you come down and pray, fasten your seatbelt, because you're in for an exciting ride as the Spirit of God begins to work in and through your life, his wonderful work that he is wanting to do in this world in which we live today. And he can do if we will just but yield ourselves to him. The world has yet to see what God can do through just one life that's totally dedicated to him.

Maybe you are that one. And God is wanting you to be his instrument to reach this world in which we live today. His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.

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