

WHO ART THOU THAT REPLIEST AGAINST GOD?

TEXT: ROMANS 9:14-29

Introduction:

1. We have been studying the book of Job in our Sunday School class.
2. Job suffered greatly and he could not understand why God was allowing him to go through such severe pain and agony.
3. Job had often appealed to God, and had boldly declared how he would order his cause before God. But when God gave Job his opportunity to speak, Job was silent before Him.
4. Job had nothing to say in his own defense. This is because Job realized it was foolish to enter into controversy with God.
5. Romans 9:20 says, “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?”
6. In Job 38, God said to Job, “Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me” (38:2, 3).
7. Later on, when Job finally does speak up, he says, “I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (42:5, 6; cf. 40:1-4).
8. Romans 9:20 says, “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?”
9. Note the words, “against God.”
10. In the book of Malachi, we read that the backslidden Israelites were talking against God. They were talking back to God.
11. The people in Malachi’s day were so backslidden and disobedient that they were actually wearying God with their words (2:17). They were so haughty and so backslidden that they were actually contradicting God.
12. The book of Malachi is marked by eight instances where these haughty Israelites, insensitive to their own sinfulness, ask the LORD for evidence of their wrongdoing (1:2, 6, 7; 2:13, 14, 17; 3:7, 8, 13).
13. When we hear a little child talking back to his father or mother, challenging them, or criticizing them, or contradicting them, or questioning them, we are filled with disgust and indignation.
14. It bothers us greatly because this is unacceptable. It should not be tolerated. But what is it for any mere human being to talk back to

God? To contradict God? To question God?

15. "It is the most exceedingly foolish and desperately wicked thing a human being can do" (RA Torrey).
16. In Romans 9:20 we read, "Nay but, O man, who art thou that repleist against God?"

I. IT IS FOOLISH BECAUSE GOD IS OUR CREATOR (ROM. 9:20).

1. We are the thing formed, and God is the One who formed us.
2. It is foolish to challenge God's wisdom in ordering and disposing of us into this or that shape of figure. We should submit to God, not reply against Him (Rom. 9:20).
3. We are to lie down under the sovereign hand of God, not talk back to Him, or challenge Him, or question His wisdom or providence.
4. Titus 2:9 says, "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again."
5. If servants are to be obedient to their masters, and to please them well in all things, and are to never talk back to them, how much more should we be careful and circumspect in our conduct before God?
6. God is our master, and we are His servants; and it is wrong for servants to talk back to their master.
7. Matthew Henry said, "The rude and unformed mass of matter hath no right to this or that form, but is shaped at the pleasure of him that formeth it. God's sovereignty over us is fitly illustrated by the power that the potter hath over the clay" (cf. Rom. 9:20, 21).
8. Jeremiah 18:6 says, "Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel."
9. Returning to Romans 9:20, I would like to draw your attention to two words: "man" and "God." RA Torrey said, "Here God and man are put in sharpest contrast, God in His infinite greatness and wisdom and man in his infinitesimal smallness and ignorance."
10. It is foolish to question God because He is our Creator.
11. RA Torrey said, "You are one out of 2,000,000,000 like yourself now inhabiting this globe. (*Note: the world's population has more than tripled since Torrey's time. Now it is estimated there are 6.8 billion people living on planet Earth.*) And what is this globe on which you and I live? The earth is so small a part of the already known universe that if the sun were hollow, you could pour into it 1,200,000 earths like ours and still there would be room enough left for them to rattle around in it. Yes, the sun itself is very, very small

in comparison with Arcturus and some of the other stars whose diameters have been recently measured, and there are now known to be more than 225,000,000 of these great worlds we call stars in this universe of ours. God, with whom you are seeking to enter into controversy, seeking to criticize and condemn, made them all. 'He made the stars also' (Genesis 1:16). 'O man, who art thou that repliest against God?'"

12. David said, "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?" (Psalm 8:3, 4).

13. Again, I will quote Dr. Torrey, "Our increasing discoveries of the vastness of the physical universe ought to fill us with an increasing sense of our own nothingness in comparison with the infinite greatness and majesty of Him who planned and made them all. But, alas, oftentimes it seems only to puff us up with pride that we are so wise as to understand a small part of the ways and power of yon infinite God."

II. IT IS FOOLISH BECAUSE GOD IS HOLY

1. The second fact that shows us the exceeding folly and desperate wickedness of replying against God is the fact of the infinite and absolute holiness of God.
2. In Isaiah 6, we read that the seraphim veil their faces and their feet in the presence of God, and they cry, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa. 6:3).
3. Beholding this scene, the prophet Isaiah said, "Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." (Isa. 6:5).

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!

Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;

Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!

God in three Persons, blessèd Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,

Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;

Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,

Who was, and is, and evermore shall be.

*Holy, holy, holy! though the darkness hide Thee,
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see;
Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee,
Perfect in power, in love, and purity.*

*Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!
All Thy works shall praise Thy Name, in earth, and sky, and sea;
Holy, holy, holy; merciful and mighty!
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!*

4. There is a similar scene in Revelation 4:8, where we see the four beasts (living creatures) saying, “Holy, holy, holy, LORD God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.”
5. At the burning bush, the LORD said to Moses, “Draw not nigh hither: put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (Exodus 3:5).
6. “Holiness occupies the foremost rank among the attributes of God” (Henry C. Thiessen, *Lectures in Systematic Theology*).
7. “God’s will is the expression of his nature, which is holy” (Thiessen).
8. Consider Romans 9:29. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is referred to over 25 times throughout the Bible as a reminder of man’s unspeakable filthiness and God’s ineffable holiness.
9. Humble Christians appreciate the holiness of God. It is foolish to question or challenge God because God is holy.
10. When we properly understand the holiness of God, we will respond like Peter, who “fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord” (Luke 5:8).

III. IT IS FOOLISH BECAUSE GOD IS GOOD AND ALL-WISE

1. God is not only a Being of infinite majesty and holiness; He is also a Being of infinite wisdom and of infinite love.
2. Last week I preached on the fear of God, and we were reminded that, “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom” (Psalm 111:10).
3. A wise man, a Christian man, can look up in awe at the sun and the moon and the stars and be overwhelmed by the majesty and greatness and wisdom of God.
4. But a foolish man, an ungodly man, has the audacity to look up to Heaven, and shake his puny fist at God (cf. Romans 9:20).
5. God is good, and it is foolish to question the goodness of God (cf. Romans 9:14; 8:38, 39).

6. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17).
7. Horatio Spafford was a wealthy lawyer and businessman who lost all his investments in the great Chicago Fire of October 1871. He was ruined financially. He put his wife and children on a ship for Europe, telling them he would soon join them there. He was delayed on business concerning zoning problems following the Great Chicago Fire. But while crossing the Atlantic Ocean, all four of his daughters drowned when their ship collided with another ship. Spafford’s wife Anna survived and sent him a telegram, which simply said, “Saved alone; What shall I do?”
8. As soon as he received his wife’s telegram, Horatio Spafford left Chicago without delay to bring his wife home. As the ship crossed the Atlantic, the ship’s captain showed him the very spot where his daughters drowned. As he looked out over the vast ocean, the Holy Spirit gave him these words:
*When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
 When sorrows like sea billows roll;
 Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,
 It is well, it is well, with my soul.*
9. Following their reunion in Europe, Horatio and Anna Spafford returned to Chicago to begin their lives again. God blessed them with three more children. One died at the age of 4 from scarlet fever. After his death, the Spaffords decided to leave their home in America and move to Jerusalem to start a mission. They remained there for the rest of their lives.
10. Their daughter, Bertha Spafford Vester, wrote the following in her book *Our Jerusalem*:
 “Father became convinced that God was kind and that he would see his children again in heaven...his faith came through triumphant and strong. On the high seas, near the place where his children perished, he wrote the hymn that was to give comfort to so many:
*When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
 When sorrows like sea billows roll;
 Whatever my lot, Thou has taught me to say,
 It is well, it is well, with my soul.”*

CONCLUSION:

1. When I considered how foolish it is to talk back to God (Romans

- 9:20), I thought of the Syrophenician woman in Matthew 15.
2. It seems she was actually arguing with God. And yet, our Lord commended her and said to her, “O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt” (Matt. 15:28).
 3. But the Syrophenician woman was not talking back to our Lord. She was praying, and our Lord commended her for her persistence (Matt. 15:25-28). Are you complaining and talking back to God, or are you praying with great importunity?
 4. Isaiah 41:21 says, “Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons.”
 5. The Syrophenician produced her cause, and she brought forth her strong reasons.
 6. And the Lord commended her, and granted her request.
 7. Do not question the goodness of God or the justice of God or the providence of God.
 8. But by all means, come boldly to the throne of grace and “bring forth your strong reasons.”