

THE MOST RIGHTEOUS MUST REPENT

Job 40: 1-5 – Pastor Richard P. Carlson

For many of us, even as godly believers, our concept of God is far from accurate. How many of us can conceive of the most righteous person in the world needing to repent? Yet, in Job 1: 8, we read the most revealing conversation of God with Satan. “And the Lord said to Satan, “Have you considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil?” Yet, even the most righteous of all men on earth, God’s servant Job had to repent before Almighty God. Yet in our text, Job is repenting. What is your picture of God? Jesus, God the Son became a man; He is the God/man. Yet many evangelical believers teach a view of God that suggests God does the best He can. He did not mean to see Job lose his health and his seven sons and three daughters. It was simply God giving Satan too much permission and letting him go too far. They see God as not totally sovereign for Satan took advantage of God’s goodness and His permission to afflict Job. They say God let matters get out of control. That is false doctrine. Another false Gospel, the prosperity Gospel, denies that God allowed Satan to afflict Job. They say God never allows sickness or sorrow. They give credit only to Satan. They make up their own alternate scripture saying, “The Lord gives, and Satan takes away. They speak of God as if he were unable to stop Satan’s assault on Job. To these false views of God, we must declare, “God is always on the throne. He never loses control. Every star, every planet, every molecule, every atom, every DNA, every stem cell, every baby born or aborted is under His sovereign omniscience. Whatever happens, happens under God’s directive or permissive will. God never wrings His divine hands. He is always providentially alert, and sovereignly, in control.

With all of us, even our conversations can get out of control. The car we are driving can get out of control. The checkbook we are writing checks from can get messed up and out of balance. Never with God! A relationship in which we are mentoring can get out of control. God never errs. God is always on the throne. When God calls us to account for ourselves, we ought never to make excuses. What can we say in reply? Even the man who was the most righteous man who ever lived, Job, still had two major verbal sins—**He found fault with God and he tried to reprove God.** When God called Job to account in our text, Job’s answer was, “I am insignificant. I am of small account. I cover my mouth. I have already said way too much. I have already been second guessing You, Lord, finding fault with You, reproving You, and trying to play the Holy Spirit.” Job’s admonition to us today would be, “Do not go there. Do not do it.” Ultimately the question that arises in our text is, “Will we as fault-finders contend with Almighty God?” Most of us already have contended with God, haven’t we? We say, “It’s not fair, God. This is too hard.” The Word is clear, “No temptation has overtaken you, but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted

beyond what you are able, but with the temptation, will provide the way of escape that you may be able to endure it.” (I Corinthians 10: 13) We say, “You don’t understand, Lord.” That is not true. God does understand. We say, “If I were you, Lord.” None of us will ever be God. Like Job, we need to stop fault finding with God. We need to cover our mouths. He is God. We are not. We are only men and only women, only young people, only boys and girls. We need to admit our foolish error. We need to listen to the Lord. He wants to speak to us as we pray. But we must be still and know that He alone is God. (Psalm 46: 10)

Before we get into the meat of this message, notice two words in our text. The first word is the Hebrew word **riyb**. It is found in God’s word to Job. God said to Job, “Shall the *fault-finder* **riyb** – contend with the Almighty?” **Riyb** means to contend with, to debate with, to have a controversy with, to find fault with God or with our parents or with authorities who are over us. **Riyb** means to wrangle with words. It means a war of words. Have you ever noticed that when we say, “I agree with you in principle, we often are getting ready to argue with someone? This happens often that Christians contend with God, with the Bible, and with those who teach the Bible. We have wars of words with God. When God says fornicators or those sexually immoral shall not inherit the kingdom of God—I Corinthians 6: 9-11, God is completely exposing the awful sin of pre-marital sex. Many people say, “Well yes, in principle, I believe that, but...this is 2020.” Beloved, we may momentarily win a word battle with our boss, our spouse, or someone else, refusing to do what our boss asks as a trustworthy employee. We may disobey as a disobedient son or daughter does. Job would remind us, “Never bank on winning a word battle—a **riyb** with God, debating, contending, or finding fault with Him.

The second word in our text is **yakach**. It is found in verse 2, “Let him who reproves God, answer it. The Hebrew word for reprove is **yakach**. It means to determine you are right—whether with God, authority, parents, your boss, and to correct them, to reprove them, to argue with them, to convict them, to justify your position, or your error, as if the error is theirs, not yours. We may momentarily pull this off on earth, but ultimately, our war of words is with God. God always gets the last word. It is God who is right always. Although in most of his words, Job spoke correctly about God, yet in his great anguish, and under his sore trials, he spoke some things that were hasty, and abusive, about God, and he even spoke them directly to God. It is for those things that Job 40 and 41 was written, as God shows us His strong rebuke of Job. **There are three lessons here we all need to learn.** There are 3 reasons why the most righteous man who ever lived, still had to repent.

OUR FIRST REASON TO REPENT BEFORE GOD IS THAT EVERY EXCUSE WE MAKE FOR SIN, CONDEMNS GOD. (I.) We read in verses 1-2, God’s rhetorical question. “And the Lord said to Job: “Shall a faultfinder contend with the Almighty?” He who argues with God, let him answer it.” The

answer to God's rhetorical question is always, "No!" Job soon came to see that. The idea, we all share at times, is that we are willing to take God on. We wish to shift the blame in our arguing with God, so that He is wrong, and we are right. If God ever condemned us for a sin, which had a good excuse, He would be a sinner. God will never reprove us for what we have a good reason for doing. Beloved, God condemns all sin, even the sin committed by the most righteous man who ever lived, Job. There is no good excuse for sin, or God would be wrong—and stand condemned. Therefore, we need to admit that every excuse we make for sin, really charges God, and it blames God. Each accusation of God accuses Him of tyranny. When we plead our excuses for sin, we charge God with blame.

There is a well-known story I have told many times, but it bears telling again. Nine GI's all agreed to lie to their commanding officer after failing to show up for morning roll call. The commanding officer was furious when these nine GIs, who had all been out on passes, failed to show up for morning roll call. That evening, at 7 p.m., the first man straggled in. "I'm sorry, sir," the soldier explained, "but I had a date and lost track of time, and I missed the bus back. Being determined to get in on time, I hired a cab. Halfway here, the cab broke down. I went to a farmhouse and persuaded the farmer to sell me a horse. I was riding to camp when the animal fell-over dead. I walked the last ten miles, and just got here." Though skeptical, the colonel let the young man off with a reprimand. However, after him, seven other stragglers in a row came in with the same story. By the time the ninth man reported in, the colonel was weary of the same lie. "Okay," he growled, "What happened to you?" "Sir, I had a date and missed the bus back, so I hired a cab." "Wait!" the colonel screamed at him. "Don't tell me the cab broke down." "No, sir," replied the soldier. "The cab didn't break down. It was just that there were so many dead horses in the road, we had trouble getting through." Aren't we all good at excuses? What had been Job's excuse? It is one of the most eloquent excuses of all time, but Job confessed that God had wronged him. Turn with me to Job 19: 1-27.

Sadly, in justifying himself, Job charged God. Listen to Job's words. "Then Job answered and said, "How long will you torment me and break me in pieces with words? These ten times you have cast reproach upon me; are you not ashamed to wrong me? And even if it be true that I have erred, my error remains with myself. If indeed you magnify yourselves against me and make my disgrace an argument against me, know then, that God has put me in the wrong and closed His net about me. Behold, I cry out, 'Violence!' but I am not answered; call for help, but there is no justice. He has walled up my way, so that I cannot pass, and he has set darkness upon my paths. He has stripped from me my glory and taken the crown from my head. He breaks me down on every side, and I am gone, and my hope has He pulled up like a tree. He has kindled his wrath against me and counts me as his adversary. His troops come on together; they have cast up their siege ramp against me and encamp around my tent. He has put my brothers far from me, and those

who knew me are wholly estranged from me. My relatives have failed me, my close friends have forgotten me. The guests in my house and my maidservants count me as a stranger; I have become a foreigner in their eyes. I call to my servant, but he gives me no answer; I must plead with him with my mouth for mercy. My breath is strange to my wife, and I am a stench to the children of my own mother. Even young children despise me; when I rise, they talk against me. All my intimate friends abhor me, and those whom I loved, have turned against me. My bones stick to my skin and to my flesh, and I have escaped by the skin of my teeth. Have mercy on me, have mercy on me, O you my friends, for the hand of God has touched me! Why do you, like God, pursue me? Why are you not satisfied with my flesh? “Oh, that my words were written! Oh, that they were inscribed in a book! Oh, that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever! For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last, He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh, I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!” What a marvelous excuse with eternal truth in it, but Job contended with Almighty God. Job charged God. Every excuse for sin condemns God. 2nd,

OUR SECOND REASON TO REPENT BEFORE GOD IS THAT EVERY ATTEMPT WE MAKE TO JUSTIFY OURSELVES, CONDEMNS GOD. (II)

Notice in Job 40: 3-4, Job promises God silence with no more accusations against God, justifying himself. No sin can ever have a justifiable excuse. We read, “Then Job answered the Lord and said: “Behold I am of small account; what shall I answer you? I lay my hand on my mouth.” Beloved, I am so much more insignificant than Job and so are you. Yet we try to justify ourselves before God. We have so many attempts. But we should be silent. Here are some of our futile attempts. Attempt #1 – **We are unable to do what God commands—the sin of inability.** How many times do we say, “I cannot do what God requires of me?” If God knows what we cannot do, He is to be condemned for He has commanded us to do an unreasonable impossibility. In the Westminster Shorter Catechism, it declares, “No man is able, either by himself, or by any grace received in this life, perfectly to keep the commandments of God; but doth daily break them in thought, word and deed.” I must disagree with that small part of that great confessional. Philippians 4: 13 states, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” With Paul we must affirm in Romans 3: 4, “Let God be true, and every man be found a liar.” We charge God when we accuse Him of asking us to do what He has not enabled us to do. Attempt # 2 -- **We are unable to do what God commands for there isn’t enough time.** Most of us try this with God, saying there aren’t enough hours in the day to do Your will, Lord.” If God truly did require of you and me what we did not have time to do, He would be to blame.

Attempt # 3 -- **We are unable to do what God commands due to our old sinful nature.** Since we claim that God created us, when we blame our old sinful nature,

since God created us, we blame God. Attempt # 4 -- **We would like to become Christians, if we could, but God blocks the way by His election or His hand.** This is a doctrinally evil charge against God because His Word declares, “He is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance. (II Peter 3: 9) That is such a strong accusation against God, charging God with causing sinners to go to hell. Attempt # 5 is -- **We would obey God’s will if it were His time.** This is one of our more marvelous excuses that puts all the blame on God for our disobedience. Attempt, # 6 is -- **We would like to do God’s will, but our circumstances are very strange, preventing us.** Because God’s providence is over all our circumstances, we have found a way to charge God and say as the man who buried his talents, “My master is a hard master, for He never makes an allowance for my circumstances.” Attempt # 7 is – **We would obey if it were not for our peculiar temperament.** I have heard this often. “I would gladly witness to others, but God made me so shy it is impossible.” We are simply charging God. Attempt # 8 is – **We would obey you Lord, but our health is too poor.** Think about it. God could change this, so His failure to make us well is the reason we cannot obey Him. We should lay our hand on our mouth. Thirdly,

OUR THIRD REASON TO REPENT BEFORE GOD IS THAT ALL OUR ADDED EXCUSES, ADD INSULT TO INJURY, CONDEMNING GOD. (III.)

Notice what righteous Job found out, the only thing we had better say, v.5 is, “I have spoken once, and I will not answer; twice, but I will proceed no further.” Do you remember how Adam added insult to injury by telling God after eating the forbidden fruit, “The woman You gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate.” See what God caused, by giving Adam a wife, Eve? None of us ever live long under the light of the Gospel, without finding some excuse for trying to justify ourselves. We need to pray for God the Holy Spirit to demolish our flimsy excuses. **Excuses render repentance impossible.** When we justify our sin, we remove ourselves from repentance, as far as we ever could. We know our excuses have holes in them. If we cannot bring our excuses before God, how incredible is it that we still, in our heart of hearts, we often rest on our excuses.

What pleases God? It is when we say, “I am sinful. I am of small account. I am insignificant. I come to You for mercy.” As sinners, what should we do? As believers, what should we do? If someone would press us to yield to God right here, now, what do we often say? Maybe at home, we will do that. Do you know how tender such a moment as this is, this morning? Jesus says, “Today if you hear His voice, harden not your heart.” When will we abandon every excuse before God, for not obeying His will? When will we quit saying, “I would forgive if, I would give up my anger or bitterness if...I would give up my lying lips and gossip if. I would quit trying to manipulate others if. Why not abandon our excuses right now? Why not yield our whole selves to God right this moment? Bow your heads. Will you come to the altar? God is calling for repentance. Will we come now!