

Condemning God

Several years ago (2009) I started out the year with the intention of reading through the entire Bible. I was delayed in late March because of some surgery. I was up to Job 30 when I entered the hospital. I resumed my reading after about a week (when my head finally cleared up) and was soon just going along quite nicely.

I did find something at the end of Job that really caught my eye. It was Job 40:8. I know I had read this before in the KJV or NKJV, but on this occasion I was reading in the English Standard Version (ESV). This verse reads, *"Will you even put me in the wrong? Will you condemn me that you may be in the right?"*

I am sure that most of us know the basics about Job. He was a good man, upright before God. Satan was allowed to torment Job through the death of his children, the loss of his prosperity, and laying physical affliction on Job. All of this was to prove that Job would curse God. He didn't. There follows a series of dialogues between Job and three of his friends. A later individual also enters the picture. Job's side of the dialogues is that he is mystified as to the level of what he has had to endure. It seems excessive to him. His friends counter with dialogue on how the punishments show that Job is one of the worst sinners ever. Furthermore, they seem (at least to me) to imply that his punishments are probably not near enough. Every time I read the dialogue offered by Job's friends, I think of how these arguments would make a Calvinist swell with pride. Nevertheless, the friends of Job were wrong.

God finally breaks His silence on Job's predicament in chapter 38. The text I mentioned earlier is something that God says to Job. Please consider the passage again.

What God does is challenge Job to either make an accusation against God or not. Job makes no accusation. His words in Job 41:4-6 show the true integrity of character of the man named Job.

Now back to the words of Job 40:8. God gives Job an opportunity to do what so many before and after Job have done. It is the business of shifting blame in order to elevate oneself. We see this happen quite often. A person is caught or exposed in some evil business. Many are appalled at the behavior. The guilty party realizes that he must tear down everyone else in order to raise his own pitiful standing. Friends, this kind of thing is standard procedure in the political arena and I know you have seen it happen many times. It happens often in other venues as well. Of course, religion is not left out. One who is involved in sin will lash out at others, pointing out their shortcomings in a desperate attempt to neutralize his own situation. Some might call this a "smokescreen." Perhaps. I prefer to think of it more as an attempt to throw off the pursuit with counter charges intended to so muddy up the situation that the guilty may finally appear to be justified!

We need to realize that there are those who will do as God challenged Job. If they are pressed hard enough in their sin they will attack, even condemn, God in order to elevate themselves. One cannot imagine a more depraved maneuver on the part of anyone. Nevertheless, God said this because it is sometimes what men will do.

All of these attempts to shift the blame have a common connection. They are all tied to a refusal to admit wrong. Instead of admitting that one has sinned, there is the tearing down of all others. The castigation of brethren and the heinous practice of condemning God are all done so as to avoid admitting wrong. Let me add the comment from Adam Clarke on Job 40:8, "Rather than submit to be thought in the wrong, wilt thou condemn My conduct, in order to justify thyself? Some men will never acknowledge themselves in the wrong. 'God may err, but we cannot,' seems to be their impious maxim. Unwillingness to acknowledge a fault frequently leads men, directly or indirectly, to this sort of blasphemy. There are three words most difficult to be pronounced in all languages, – I Am Wrong."

Once again, there is nothing new under the sun. What is sometimes done today is apparently a practice clear back to the time of Job. Now that doesn't mean such a practice is acceptable. What ought to be done instead is admit the wrong (1 Jn. 1:9), repent and pray (Acts 8:22) for forgiveness. That is the Lord's way and it will work!

~Terry~