

# Your Excuses

by Paris Reidhead

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*The sermon explores how the excuses of sinners reflect a deeper contention with God and emphasizes the importance of accepting His sovereign shaping in our lives.*

**Duration:** 1:00:38

**Scripture:** Leviticus 19:17, Job 40:2-14, Galatians 6:1

**Topics:** "Excuses"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the idea that sinners often contend with God and make excuses for their actions. He explains that there are two types of contending with God: one through force and strength, which is not advisable, and the other through argument and reasoning. The preacher references Job chapter 40 to support his point. He emphasizes that when people argue with God and claim that His laws are unfair, they not only commit the sin but also justify themselves in it. The preacher concludes by urging the audience to let go of their excuses and repent.

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## Transcript

Will you turn please to Job chapter 40, the 40th chapter of Job, verses 1 through 14. I shall read this as our scripture reading. Our text actually is found in the second verse and the eighth verse.

Moreover, the Lord answered Job and said, Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer him. Then Job answered the Lord and said, Behold, I am vile. What shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth.

Once have I spoken, but I will not answer. Yea, twice, but I will proceed no further. Then answered the Lord unto Job out of the whirlwind and said, Gird up thy loins now like a man.

I will demand of thee and declare thou unto me. Wilt thou also disannul my judgment? Wilt thou condemn me that thou mayest be righteous? Hast thou an arm like God? Or canst thou thunder with a voice like him? Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency and array thyself with glory and beauty. Cast abroad the rage of thy wrath and behold everyone that is proud and abase him.

Look on everyone that is proud and bring him low and tread down the wicked in their place. Hide them in the dust together and bind their faces in secret. Then will I also confess unto thee that thine own right hand can save thee.

Job had answered well his critics as they had come to him, trying to make it clear that God judged even when there was a cause for judgment. Job had answered them well, I say, and yet in his haste and in his impatience he had spoken critically of God. And so when all is finished, God begins to speak to Job.

And you have heard this summing up of God's argument with Job. Now the matter that concerns us tonight is that which is found specifically in the eighth verse. Wilt thou condemn me that thou mayest be righteous? The thesis of this message is that the excuses of sinners condemn God.

Now we shall endeavor to prove that in several ways. First by showing to you again, though you were reminded of it no longer than three weeks ago, that sinners do contend with God. In the second verse, shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it.

There are two kinds of contending with God. There is the contending by force or strength of arms. Of course, it's not this kind that is used because who is the mortal man that would shake his fist in the face of God and expect to come off the winner.

But there is another kind of contending, namely argument and reasoning. This is the contending of which God speaks. You understand, of course, that it presupposes enmity.

Contention always does. The reason people contend is because there are crossed interests. And we discover by reading Romans the eighth chapter and the seventh verse that the carnal mind is enmity against God.

It is not subject to the law of God. Indeed, it cannot be. The reason for this enmity is that God desires the happiness of all creatures, including himself.

And sinners desire their own happiness at the expense of God and all others. And so there's a crossing of interests. Whenever you find contention--now, there's grounds for contention.

Paul said that he withstood Peter to his face. There was a crossing of interests. Peter was wrong by recommending that the Gentiles observe the practice of the Jews in the Judaistic ritual and rite, and Paul contended with him.

There was a crossing of interests, and consequently he was on the right side. There are times when it is necessary--we are told to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. And we are not led to let people, or especially ecclesiastical authorities, walk roughshod over the truths that are precious to our hearts, but in love are to speak the truth and to stand for the truth.

But this contention comes because a selfish man, a selfish individual, is resentful of God's intrusion upon his pleasure, and therefore the carnal mind is at enmity against God. In Isaiah, the fifty-fifth chapter and the eighth verse, you have the statement, My thoughts are not your thoughts, and my ways are not your ways. And obviously the reason for this lies in the fact that God wants everybody to be happy, equally happy, without deprivation or loss being sustained by any, and the sinner wants to be happy in his own terms, regardless of whether anyone else is or not.

Therefore, he will steal another's goods in order that he can have the pleasure that the possession of these goods brings. You see, his happiness is the supreme end of his being, and though he may have caused great suffering and heartache in someone else's life, he's not interested in that. It's his own interest that is the paramount concern.

And so his thoughts certainly are not God's thoughts. If you rightly view the Ten Commandments, you will see them as a fence to protect you against the selfish. Now, it just depends upon what side of the fence you're on as to whether or not you find the law irksome or not.

If you're inside the fence, wanting to please God and having your pleasure and your delight in God, then you look out and see these ten bars, and you say, isn't this wonderful? God put those bars up to keep the selfish from taking away my happiness and joy. But if you're on the other side of the fence, and if you are committed to selfishness, then you look over and see another's rights and another's joy and another's happiness, and your feeling is God has put a barrier in the way of my pleasure. So it depends on which side of the bar you are.

That man that is a new heart, that's a new creature, that's born of God, can say, I delight to do thy will, O God, because he has no desire to be happy at the expense of another. But the one on the other side finds that it is a constant goad to his rebellion and throws fuel upon the fire of his hatred of God. So God's ways and thoughts are entirely other than the sinner's thoughts.

Then there's a contention about the works of God. This was Job's debate with God. You see, Job argued that God had no right to deal with him in the fashion that he had, that Job had been righteous, that he'd kept the law, and that he'd pleased God, and what more could God ask? And why should God then have smitten his family and his goods and his own body? And Job's contention was, I pleased God and now look what he's done to me.

Of course, he failed to realize that God had an end and had a purpose in it, and that this purpose was worthy of anything that God should choose to do to accomplish it. In Isaiah chapter 8 and verse 21, we read, and it shall come to pass that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves and curse their king and curse their God. In other words, this contention with God is stimulated and excited and stirred by circumstances.

As long as everything's going well, for it will say, look what my hands have wrought, look what I have gotten. This man who can stand so proudly and beat his chest Tarzan-like, you know, and say, I am the captain of my fate and the master of my soul, and look what I've accomplished. As soon as something happens that causes the bottom to go out of the stock market or the business to be lost or the health to go or tragedy in the family, what does he do? Look what God did to me.

Immediately. He wouldn't think of giving God credit for his prosperity, but as soon as the tragedy comes, then he turns right around, blames the Lord for it all. Oh, the deceitfulness of the human heart.

And it shall come to pass that when they are hungry, they will curse God. They're going to argue with God over what he does. They'll contend with him.

In Revelation chapter 16 and verse 9, this same contention about the works of God is made clear. And men were scorched with great heat and blasphemed the name of God which had power over these plagues, and they repented not to give him glory. You see, God had a purpose in the plagues, and God had a purpose in the famine, and God had a purpose in this which was done to Job.

But men will contend with God because they're not interested in the gracious purpose that God had. Let me give you a definition for contention. Carl, writing of this, says, Any secret rising of the heart against anything that God does is striving with God.

Any time in your heart and in your life, according to the Puritan Carl, that you resent God's actions, and seek to get out from under them by means of your own rather than by your appeal to him, and your entreaty of him, and your dealing with him, then you are contending with God. It's imperative that we as Christians should come to understand that our God is the God of circumstances. We wear ourselves out and burn ourselves up, fighting often against the messenger of God to our heart.

How easy it is for people to quote Romans 8.28 and not to believe it. All things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to his purpose. But this verse is true only in the light of the verse that follows.

For whom he did foreknow, he did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Now you see, God's purpose in Job was to make Job in his own image, and God's purpose in Israel was to make them in his own image. And God's purpose in the revelation with the plagues was to cause these people to repent and come to him.

God's purpose is always there. And so when you as a child of God rightly understand the dealings of God with you, you will realize this, that when from the moment you repented--yes, even before then, but we'll begin then--from the moment that you came to Christ, God put all of his omnipotence, all of his wisdom, and all of his love as a fence around you. And he said, nothing can touch him but what I let it.

Nothing can happen to him but what I permit it. I have an interest here. My interest is that this person be conformed to the image of my Son, and I have ordained that all that touches him or her shall be to the end of making her like Christ.

That's why the Scripture is so explicit when it says, in everything give thanks. Well, why? If you are a Christian, you want to be like Christ. If you understand the Word, you understand that everything that happens to you is to the end of making you like Christ, and therefore you can't contend with your Maker, the Father that's molding and shaping you to the vessel of honor that he would have you be.

This is what happens. This is the contending with God, the resenting of the tools that God uses to shape you into the vessel he wants you to be. You see, when you were born again, it was as though you were just a block of marble, and God saw in that marble the image of his Son.

But the only way he could ever get the image out was to get the waste marble off. That's all a sculptor does. You thought a sculptor was something? No, all he does is take the trash away.

The image is there all the time, you see. He just takes away that which isn't part of it. There's nothing to sculpturing, is there, if you look at it that way? And that's what God is doing with you.

He's just taking the trash away so that the image of Christ can shine out of you. Now then, wouldn't you think ill of the marble that should say to the sculptor, why are you using that hammer, and why do you use this rasp, and why do you use this chisel on me? But you see, the sculptor has an image in the marble, and he wants it to be revealed. And contention with God is when you turn to your Maker and you say, don't press here, and don't scrape there, and don't chisel over there.

I'm comfortable. I'd rather be comfortable and holy. I'd rather be as I am than like Christ.

If you rightly understand the sovereignty of God in your life, you will understand that he has sovereignly ordained that no one can touch you, and nothing can happen to you, and nothing can get to you, but that it

contribute to this end of making you like Christ. Now isn't that reason enough to say amen? I think it is. I think it should be the occasion of great joy to your heart to know that all of these mysterious circumstances through which you've passed were the sovereign end of God to make you like Jesus Christ.

Oh, don't kick against the hammer, and don't fight the chisel, and don't resist the rasp, but let the Lord do it. Arguing with God, reproving God, contending with God. What folly.

What folly. You see, Job knew that he had done certain things and thought that all what he had done was all God wanted. He knew he was something, and he felt that all what he was was all God wanted.

He failed to know that God had something more than what he'd given. And when you and I contend with God, it is that we are trying to prove to God that he has enough when he has us as we are, but he's not satisfied. He's going to have us like Jesus Christ.

He's going to make us in the image of his dear Son, and he will use any tool. And you see what happens, my dear. Let me warn you.

If you resist this chisel and that hammer, God has a bigger set in the cupboard. And if you won't bend this one, you'll get the other, because he's committed himself to make you like Jesus Christ. Now, there is a proper place for your reproof.

You are to contend with yourself, and you are to reprove yourself, but not God. Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat. We saw this morning as we came to the Lord's table.

You are to examine your own heart, but you're not to examine the actions of God. You're not to examine even the actions of others in respect to you. Now, wait a minute.

I've got to say that again. You are not to examine the actions of others in respect to you. Now, why? You say, if you only knew what she did to me, you wouldn't say that.

If you only knew what he said about me, or what he did to me, or what happened, you would never say that. Well, now wait a minute. Didn't we just go through the truth that nothing can touch you, but what your Heavenly Father permits it? Now, he's going to use people to permit people.

Look, someone comes to you in fierce anger, and they lift the hammer and take the chisel, and all they can do is just swing it with all their might. But you know something? While they're doing it in what seems to be rage, God is just getting the chisel put right there. He says, well, that's all right.

You see, I needed that off anyway. And then they bring it down so hard, and God says, too hard, so he just holds back a little. And it hits just enough to take off what he wants taken off.

And they go away saying, oh, look what I did to him. Look at that. And fail to realize that it was simply fulfilling God's purpose.

Now, if you're wise, what you'll do is go up to the hand and kiss it. And of course, they'll lose their mind wondering why you were kind under these circumstances. They expect you to come back with a heavier hammer and a bigger chisel.

But when you come back and say, thank you, dear brother. Thank you, sister. Well, words fail them, you see, because this is perfectly contrary to nature.

Ah, but it is absolutely understandable to grace. God's purpose is to make you like Christ. And you're not to reprove others.

Yourself, yes. Examine yourself. Prove yourself.

If you judge yourself, you will not be judged. But not others, and not God. Now, there is a time, having said this, I've said it's not your job to reprove others in respect to yourself.

But having said that, let me hasten to say there is a time and there is a duty to reprove others when there's a proper place and time for it. In Leviticus chapter 19 and verse 17 you read, Thou shalt not hate thy brother, thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him. When you see a brother in Christ sin, and you say nothing about it and do nothing concerning it, you are proving your hatred toward that person, so says God.

Because if you loved, then you would come in loving reproof and say, my brother, you ought not to do this or that. You see? Let me read it again. Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart, thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him.

In other words, said he, when you see sin, it's your responsibility to rebuke them. In Galatians, the sixth chapter and the first verse, you find the same truth carried from the Old Testament into the New. Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, and oh my friend, this is the key.

You make sure that you're in this state. Ye that are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness, considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. To restore means to go to the person and say, my dear, I heard what you said, and as a Christian and out of love for you and the Lord Jesus and our testimony, I would like to ask you to seriously consider this.

I feel that it was unwise, untrue, unfair, unkind, as the case may be. You see a person do something that's unbecoming to the testimony of Christ. It's your responsibility to go to that person and say, I have beheld you, I have seen this, and I know that I am certainly not one that is above the need for such rebuke as I am giving you, and I invite it as you see what I have seen, or something similar.

But I entreat you as a brother in Christ not to do this. You see, we are answerable to God for seeing another in sin and not reproofing him. Oh, what crime is added? You know, so many times Christians will see someone do something or hear someone say something, and they won't tell the person that's involved, but they'll tell others.

You ought to rather have your tongue burned right out to the roots than to do that, my friend, because you have sinned against God in not reproofing and not rebuking, and now you have added a double sin probably equal to theirs by that which God has condemned, saying it's worthy of death, whispering and backbiting and tail-bearing. You ought to just be perfectly willing for the executioner to come and nip your tongue by the end and drag it from its roots, rather than for you to add sin to sin in such a way. If you had gone to the person involved and had said to them, as I've outlined, then you would be in the way where God could bless you.

Even the unsaved at times are wise in their rebuke of sinners. John Bunyan, in *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, a classic that all should read, tells how one day he was sitting on a bench outside a neighbor's shop window and cursing and swearing and playing the madman after my wanted manner. Oh my, how ruthlessly he deals with his own sin.

Within this window sat a woman, herself a loose and an ungodly woman, but who was so shocked at Bunyan's profanity that leaning out the window, she told him that his words made her tremble and fear lest God should there smite him and she should suffer with him for even hearing such blasphemy. He said, this was the straw that broke the camel's back and was the last tool that the Lord used to awaken me to my dreadful plight. Rebuke by a sinner, of a sinner, was the tool that God used.

So there is a place for it, never with God, never in concerned regard to ourselves, but yet in returns of others. Now let's recognize that which I've already dwelt upon in this context. I'll move it just a little further so that you can see it in another light.

Verses three to five prove to us that God does deal with us through our circumstances. Let me read them to you. Then Job answered the Lord and said, Behold, I am vile.

What shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once have I spoken, but I will not answer ye twice, but I will proceed no further. Job, I suppose, is the most colorful example in all the Bible that God uses circumstances to advance a proper and a noble cause.

I guess in the Scripture you will find some individuals that have everything happen to them. No one else will ever have quite as much happen to them in the same way. God gets one man and does everything to him so all the rest of us can profit.

If we're wise, we won't make God do as much to us as he's done to others. For instance, God gave to Solomon an opportunity to try every other means to satisfy the heart. No, he probably won't give you the same opportunity he gave Solomon.

There isn't room for too many people to be kings anymore, and there aren't too many that can have armies under their control in an absolute manner as Solomon had, and certainly very few that can have a thousand wives in this day and age. It's pretty unlikely that any of us will ever have an opportunity to try what Solomon did to see if we can fill the void of the human heart with something other than God. God let this man do everything that all the rest of men have wanted to do so that somebody could have had an opportunity to go as far as possible.

And when Solomon has tried all there is in power, and all there is in money, and all there is in pleasure, and all there is in learning and wisdom, he writes over it all, vanity of vanity, all is vanity, and gives the answer, remember now thy creator in the days of thy youth. Nothing else matters but God. So with Job, God has let happen to Job everything, perhaps we could say, that happens to all the rest of us put together.

For who of us have as many cattle, as many camels, as many sheep as had Job? Who of us was the man of outstanding leadership, and probably as some commentators have said, the king of Salem, the king of priests, Melchizedek himself, though this is very problematic. Nevertheless, here was a man that had an opportunity to have his children taken from him, and his possessions taken from him, and his health taken from him, all right within a matter of minutes and less time than it took me to actually tell you about it. Now God let Job experience everything that all the rest of us would experience put together and over a long period of time.

Now there's a reason for it. I'll have to give you this to give a little insight into the book of Job. Satan came to God and said, look, man is bad, incurably, hopelessly bad, and there's nothing you can ever do for him

that'll make him good.

He sold you once in the garden, he's been selling you ever since, and all of your grace and all of your power has left him unchanged, he's hopeless. And God said, have you considered Job? Ah, the only reason, the only reason that Job serves you is because you've blessed him. And God now was proving to Satan that grace makes a difference in the heart.

And you will understand Job when you understand that God is letting one man go through the experience of all the redeemed, of proving that regeneration makes a difference in the heart of a man, and that he will not sell himself back to the devil again. Now Job, as we see, had to come to the end of himself. Job had to see himself.

So what the Lord was letting happen to Job was not only teaching Satan a lesson, but it was doing a needed work in Job's heart. Now understand that, you understand the book. Uniformly, uniformly, God's purpose is to get men to stop and to see when he allows circumstances to come into your life.

Now look, I want to say uniformly and make it stick. Here you are, a Christian that are walking in all the light you have and all the light you know, and something happens. And you're going to have a tendency to fight God and complain against God and say, look, do I serve God and get this in return? You're going to have a tendency to do it because I know your heart.

I know what my tendency is. But I want you to know right now that if God lets anything come into your life at any time, he has a purpose in it. And the first thing you'd better do is say, thank you, Lord.

I don't know yet why, but I thank you anyway, because it couldn't have happened if you hadn't let it. Every time a circumstance that's untoward or unpleasant or seems to be unhappy comes into your life, it's God's way of saying stop, look, and listen. There's something here.

Invariably. Now it doesn't necessarily, see God didn't want Job to be without cattle and camels and children all the time. He took it away.

He took his reproach away. He took his poverty away. He took his sickness away.

But he had a purpose in it, and the purpose was, Job, stop, stop, look, listen. I have something to say to you. Now, all this time, I don't know how long it was, but quite a while, Job is arguing with his brother and proving to them that they're absolutely wrong, that there's nothing that he's done that merits this.

But finally, finally, God has to reveal himself on the top of the circumstances, and you will never understand what God's purpose is until you hear him speak as it were around the circumstances or under the circumstances or over them. The circumstances themselves aren't the message. All they are is, wait a minute, there's something here.

Now God is going to speak to you by his Spirit to your heart from the Word. The circumstances carry no message. You get sick, you're sick, you see.

You have loss of financial security, and you have a loss of financial security. There's no message in that. Study it as you will.

Study your boils. What's the spiritual lesson you get out of nothing? Nothing. Job could sit there and look at his boils all day long, he'd never hear the message.

That wasn't where the message came from. This was God's means of saying, stop, Job, listen, there's something you need to hear. And it's when God begins to speak to him, it's the revelation of God to his heart that brings meaning to the circumstances.

These events forced him to see something that God had seen all the time, that Job was very self-centered and self-complacent and far from being what God wanted him to be, and was capable of criticizing God. You see, perhaps he would never have found that out. Oh, it's so hard.

You know, God, the Lord Jesus, had to let Judas walk with him and work with him and minister all these years in order for Judas to find what was in his heart. And then, of course, the Lord Jesus had to let Peter deny him three times so that Peter could find out what was in his heart. Peter didn't know his heart.

Well, Peter said, Lord, these mothers may forsake you, but I'll never forsake you. I'll die first. The Lord Jesus said, Peter, you don't know your heart.

You don't know your heart. And the circumstances that forced Peter into a situation where he uncovered his heart was when a little girl pointed her finger at him and said, you were with him? I never knew him. And then the Lord spoke in a look, and in the look from the eye and the heart of the Son of God, Peter saw his heart.

And it's always the revelation of God beyond the circumstance that brings the meaning out. Listen to Job's words. Behold, everyone look.

You've heard me argue. You've heard me prove. You've heard me debate.

Listen. Come on over here, Elihi. Come on over here, Bildad.

I want something to say to you now. Behold, I am vile. There it is.

I am vile. And my friend, the circumstances that God was going to bring into your life will be invariably to show you what you are so that you will be willing to see what he is. This is what you must understand from it.

Behold, let everyone see what I now see myself. I am vile. I am light.

I am valueless, vile. All of God's dealings with us are to bring us here to see that we are vile, that we are nothing. And my friend, God couldn't stop putting the pressure on Job until Job got there.

And God won't stop with me, and he won't stop with you until we come here and see that in us, in our flesh, there dwells no good thing. And if we are unwilling to bend to what God is doing today, then tomorrow God will deal the heavier with us. But he will bring us to that place where we truly see ourselves.

Job was silenced. I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. Once I've spoken, but I'll not answer twice, but I'll proceed no farther.

He sees the folly now of his self-defense. He now sees the guilt that he had by arguing in his own behalf. Since he'd sinned with his mouth, he puts his hand over his mouth.

There's nothing more to say. This is the true evidence of repentance, my dear. It's not enough to be sorry for what you've done, but it's to cease from it.

He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy. Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him. But oh, my friend, if the wicked isn't willing to forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, he can't, he won't come to the Lord, and he will not have pardon.

Job had to see himself. Job had to repent. But Job still had to hear God speak out of the whirlwind.

Listen to it. Then answered the Lord unto Job out of the whirlwind. To me, the whirlwind speaks of the law, the terrifying revelation of God's holiness.

The Lord drives his arrows of truth deep into the heart by the wind of the law. Providence is judgment, personal affliction. This is the tornado that drives the truth into the heart.

I remember as a little boy in our, going up to our district's country school in north Minneapolis, we had tornadoes there about every two years. One, for years, I suppose three years, I walked by this telephone pole. There was a piece of wood, about twenty inches, twenty-two inches, piece of boxwood actually, maybe three-quarters of an inch thick, split and splintered, and that had been driven with such force that that piece of wood had gone right through a telephone pole and split it.

It just had gone through it. Never would have been possible except with the tremendous velocity of the tornado. And this is what God does through circumstances.

Your heart so hard that nothing could split it, nothing could open it to let the light in, and yet God, speaking to you out of the whirlwind of providences and judgment and all of the events that come, can open the heart and drive through that wedge which is going to split it to let the light get in so that you can see. God may have insisted that Job see several things. First, he had to see himself, and then he had to see God.

He had to see God in his sovereignty. He had to see God in his holiness. He had to see God in his righteousness.

And only in the light of God and what God is could he rightly see himself. Now then, after God has done this, after he's spoken to Job and he sees that Job has seen himself, then he says, Now Job, I want you to understand what you've been doing. I want you to realize what's happened.

He says, And here it is. Job now is facing the fact that every excuse he offered, every argument he presented, was but to condemn God. Will thou disannul my judgment? Will thou condemn me that thou mayest be righteous? I'd like to point out to you that every excuse that you offer does condemn God.

May this truth be so self-evident that I do not need to labor it. Let me give you some of the excuses, and you will see how that these charge, accuse God of tyranny and charge God with injustice and declare that God is ignorant and unreasonable. And they indict God of being guilty of cruelty and caprice.

Some of them say, I can't help sinning. I am helpless to resist sin. It is my nature.

But God says his commandments are not grievous. But this argument, I can't help sinning, declares that God's word is false. God sentences sinners to eternal hell, to eternal death.

The soul that sinneth it shall die. To argue that someone is sent to hell for doing what they can't stop doing is to argue that God is a moral monster. I say to you that there is absolutely no grounds of reason or justice in any sinner ever saying, I can't stop sinning.

It is nothing but a blatant condemnation of God. The reason that men don't stop sinning is not because they can't, but because they won't. In Ecclesiastes, the eighth chapter in the eleventh verse, you read, the heart of the wicked is set to do evil.

This is the reason that sin is a crime and sinner is justly condemned. Anyone that ever says, I can't stop sinning, is simply saying, I am so willful, I am so stubborn, I am so committed to this policy of pleasing myself that I will not stop. Then someone else may argue and say, I don't have time to do what God commands of me.

Even if God, even if I could do it, I don't have time. God exacts so much. You have to read so long, and you have to pray so long, and you have to work so long.

I don't have time to be a Christian. My, what a condemnation of God. How long actually will it take a sinner to do his first duty? What is that first duty? To change his will and his purpose from pleasing self to pleasing God.

How long does it take for a person to say, I will not longer live for me, I'll live for God. Doesn't take any longer than it does to say it. And when a person says it takes too long to please God, he's only saying, I am so stubborn and so willful and so rebellious that I know that it's going to take me years to come to the place of doing what I know I ought to do and what I could do in just a moment.

Well, if there are years in contending and contesting, when it's finally done, if it's ever done, it'll be done in a moment. It's all it takes. How long does it take to open the heart's door and to receive the Lord Jesus Christ? No longer than it takes to say it.

To argue that one doesn't have time is folly. How long does it take to love God with all one's heart and mind and soul? All God asks is you love him with your heart. He doesn't say love him with an angel's heart, love him with Adam's heart.

He says love him with your heart. A mother says, but I can't, I can't serve God. I have children to care for.

What does she think God is? A brutal taskmaster that would have her neglected children? Never. Not so. The only thing God asks is that she to care for her children to his glory.

This doesn't require any longer than she's now putting in doing it for herself. How long does it require for a man to say, to please God in his work, for instance? How much longer will it take a man to work for the glory of God instead of for his own glory? No longer than he's now working. How much longer will it take you to do your housework for the glory of God than you're now doing it? How much longer will it take you as a student to get your lessons for the glory of God rather than just for your own praise? This excuse, I haven't time, is an utterable folly and merely a reflection upon God that God is both ignorant and cruel and asking the impossible.

Then someone else says, well, I am not so bad. I really haven't committed any great sins. I haven't deliberately done anything to hurt anyone.

I heard that just the other day. This argument, of course, condemns God for having established an unjust standard by which he judges men. It is saying to the lawgiver, your law is unjust and unfair.

Your law says that we should love you with all our hearts. You're not worthy to be loved, says this one who argues I'm not so bad. Here the first and the great commandment is broken with impunity.

And the person said, I am not so bad. In the first second commandment is thou shall love thy neighbor. And he argues and says, I haven't hurt him.

What is this, not having hurt him, not having injured him? What proves this except the man is either willfully stupid or is horribly cruel in saying to God that God's law is unjust and unfair. It's the sinner's effort to indict God for having set up a standard that's unjust. All it does is prove that the sinner has turned to his own way and refuses to have God in his thoughts.

Then there's someone else that gives this excuse. I am too bad to be saved. My heart is so wicked.

If by this it is meant that the heart is so hardened by sin and so desperately wicked that they will not bow, it's true. However, since this is offered as an excuse, it actually is nothing more than an attempt to lay the blame of wickedness upon God. Oh friend, if you can see this, when a person says I'm too wicked to be saved, actually what he is saying is God has made me with this wicked heart and God has made my heart so wicked that I can't do anything about it.

Nothing more than another attempt to blame God. The fault lies wholly with the sinner who, rejecting every flash of his conscience, every sting of remorse, and every word of God's truth, determines to go on in his sin. You, when you say, when anyone says I am too bad to be saved, my heart is so wicked, he simply declares that he has set his mind and heart and purpose to go on in rebellion against God.

And you blame God as a liar who has said, let the wicked forsake his way and his unrighteous thoughts and return unto me and I will abundantly pardon. God says to the wicked, turn and live. The wicked man said, I am too wicked to turn, and he brands God as a liar.

There's another excuse you'll hear from time to time. I am willing to be a Christian. I am willing, you know.

This implies that their willingness is not enough, that God requires something more than a willing heart and a willing mind. He has said in his word, if there first be a willing mind, it is accepted. But when a man says I am willing to be a Christian, he is saying that God didn't mean what he said or wasn't true when he said it.

Oh, no, this plea is utterly false. No sinner is willing to be any better than he is. He's just as good as he is.

Anyone who pleads that he's willing to be a Christian and remains in his sin is both branding God as a liar and talking nonsense. Because what is to be a Christian but to will to please God? Then someone else will say, I ought to become a Christian, but my circumstances are very peculiar. You see, there's really no one that's lived quite like I have and has the problems and difficulties that I have.

Now, of course, this is silly, because it implies that God does not understand your circumstances. Actually, the fact is he has had part in making them. And still, understanding them and knowing them, he commands you to repent and believe the gospel.

You see, your circumstances, dear friend, are not what hinder you from coming to Christ and abandoning your sin and unbelief. It's the stubbornness of your heart. If your circumstances are keeping you from Christ, then you must abandon your circumstances.

It's just that simple. You say, well, my job. I couldn't be a Christian in my job.

All right, then either abandon your job, abandon your circumstances, or be forever lost. There's no alternative. It's just that simple.

But I can't get out of that. Oh, you can. If it's necessary to do so to serve God, you can either change your circumstances or you can leave them.

Then somebody else will say, my mental state and my temperament and my health all keep me from becoming a Christian. Now listen, should your mental state be such that you are incompetent to make the decision, you don't need to worry about it. There's no necessity for it.

If you are in that undeveloped state where you can't see the issues and face them and decide, then God will teach you as he does the child before the age of accountability and there's no worry about you. But I don't think that that person means that when he says it. What he is saying is that his temperament and his mind has simply been set to please himself.

How many times people will say, my feelings. You know, I don't feel. Wait a minute.

Your feelings, your emotions are involuntary and are never required by God. God doesn't require you to feel sad or happy or joyful. Now remember that.

You say, well, what about love? The love which God commands is a volitional love, the intention to please him. It's not an emotional love. God does not command the emotions because the emotions are not subject to the volition.

The emotions are automatic and involuntary. God understands your health. You can't argue and say my health is such that I can't make a decision for Christ.

Every excuse of this kind is a reflection upon God's character and says that God is uncapricious and unwise, ungracious and unkind to ask anyone in my state to repent and believe the gospel. Then somebody else turns around and says, but you see, my heart is so hard, I cannot feel any concern or any remorse or any desire to be saved. Does this mean that you have such an apathy of spirit and atrophy of soul and sensibility that you cannot get up any emotion? Or does it mean that you are so stubborn and willful that you cannot or will not act? God asks us to yield our will to him, whether we have any feeling or not.

He didn't say that we were to feel like it. He said repent. That's why I deplore the fact that we have made the definition of repentance an emotion.

How many times you've heard people say, and I have spoken to it frequently, that to repent is to be sorry enough to quit. This puts repentance on the realm of the emotions. And it's not in the emotions, my dear.

It's in the volition. It's not in the emotions. It isn't a question of how sorry you feel about yourself.

Oh, it does say godly sorrow works repentance, but sorrow isn't repentance. Repentance is a decision of the will, a commitment of the mind and the volition to the purpose of pleasing God. And God commands that whether you feel like it or not.

When a person says my heart is so hard I cannot feel, he is literally saying I am so obstinate, so stubborn, my will is so set to sin that I will not and cannot for so much as a moment consider the thought of repentance. Because, and this is what you read in Ecclesiastes again, because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil. But oh, there's one, there's one last calumny against God that I bring to you.

I tried it and it doesn't work. I tried to give my heart to Christ, but he won't receive me. My, what a charge of God is a liar this is.

The Lord Jesus said, him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. And yet here is a mere man that will stand and look into the face of the glorious Son of God and say you lied. I came to you and you wouldn't take.

I don't believe that for a moment. I believe that this is the height of arrogance. Our Lord Jesus said, behold, I stand at the door and knock.

If any man open, I will come in unto him and sup with him and he with me. Quickly, here's what you'll hear. Someone will say there's no salvation for me, it's a lie.

Whosoever cometh to me I'll in no wise cast out. I must have more conviction. No, no, more conviction won't have help if you don't ask on what you now have.

I must have more of the spirit. Nonsense, you haven't walked in the light of the Spirit's ministry you already have. God must change my heart.

No, he said make you new hearts. And when you purpose to do please God, you do it. I couldn't live the Christian life.

I couldn't hold out. What a nonsensical excuse this is. For he has said that he will come in.

You try and take a gunny sack, an empty gunny sack and hold it up. You've got to put sticks and stones and pins and wire and it'll still collapse and blow in the wind. But if you'll take that same sack and fill it with corn it'll stand against every wind you'll direct against it because something's in it to hold it up.

And he has said I will come in. I will come in and be your light. Then someone else says there are too many hypocrites in the church.

We're not asking you to believe on the church or believe on the hypocrites. We're asking you to believe on Christ. A man can stand and throw dirt up in front of the sun between your eyes and the sun.

But my friend it didn't get the sun dirty. And when the dirt has fallen the sun hasn't been soiled. And all the hypocrites through all the ages that have been in the church have not in one sense sullied the spotless person of the Son of God.

Nonsense again. Just a calumny against God saying that he doesn't do what he said he'd do. I can't believe.

God commanded you to believe. You can. I can't repent.

You can repent. God commanded you. And to argue this is to say that God is a liar.

All excuses for sin do but add insult to injury. You see it done has become self-justification. And this is an aggravation of the crime.

Whenever a person contends with the law and says that the law is unfair the crime is aggravated because it shows that he not only committed the crime but justified himself in it. May I remind you dear friend that as you experience in your own heart the validity of the Word of God and the work of God, as you listen to these excuses you will remember that they were your excuses. And God broke down your heart and brought you out from behind them.

Now there's only one thing to do if you're here tonight and you're unsaved. As long as you hold on to one excuse you will not repent. It's impossible for you to repent.

Therefore the thing for you to do is just to bring all your excuses at one time and put them out and tell God what they are. You know what an excuse is? An excuse is the skin of a reason stuffed with a lie, someone has said. And to bring them all out and lay them before God and spread them out in the presence of God they are but excuses.

And furthermore may I say this to you, that excuses are not needed. That isn't what God asks. That isn't what he wants.

My you ought to be ashamed of the excuses. I'll be done with all excuses. Charlotte Elliott knew it.

She said, just as I am without one plea, not one excuse. Just as I am, here I am Lord, from the top of my head to the sole of my feet, wounds, imbuers, bruises, and putrefying sore. I am vile, said Job.

Depart from me for I am a sinful man, said Peter. God be merciful to me a sinner, said the publican in the temple. No excuses here.

You don't need them. But someone's going to say, now let me go home and think about this. Now you're starting to make excuses already.

No, this is the time. Now is the time. This is the accepted hour.

No, you don't need another day. You don't need any more emotion. You don't need anything else.

God has given you all you need. Simply make up your mind that you're through with fighting against God, you've finished with warfare with God, throw down the arms of your rebellion, come to him as you are, and sue for peace now. Be done with all excuses.

This is you as a child of God, if you have sin in your life, or if you're here tonight as one who's never known the joy and peace that the Lord Jesus died to make yours. Every excuse that's ever offered is but an attempt to condemn God to vindicate oneself. Be through with them now, tonight, forever.

Let us pray. Our Father, we thank and praise Thee that Thou didst let Job experience for us so much, and through him Thou hast taught us so much. Undoubtedly, there are those tonight that have been hiding behind the web of lies, hiding behind this pile of excuses that they've put up to shield and shelter themselves from the pure light of Thy truth and from the working of Thy Spirit.

Might it be somehow that the Holy Ghost is broken in upon hearts, and that there is a discovery of this effort to vindicate oneself at the expense of the character of God? And in these closing moments, might

there be those who would say, Yes, I've been making excuses, but tonight I'm through. I have nothing more to argue, nothing more to present. I have no more debates to bring.

I'm through. I want to sue for peace. I'm coming just as I am, God knowing all there is to know about me.

Bring to Him my hopeless heart in order that I can receive all from Him. Oh God, do this tonight for the glory of the Lord Jesus. With our heads bowed and our eyes closed, are there those here who would say, Yes, I've been making excuses for my sin.

I've been hiding behind them. I've been weaving this web of lies to shield me from the Lord, but God has shown me the error of them, folly of them, and I'm through with them. And I tonight do want to come just as I am to open my heart to Him and receive forgiveness and cleansing.

Would you raise your hand and be remembered in prayer? God bless you, sir. Yes, I see it. Anyone else? Any child of God that's had unconfessed, unforsaken sin in your life, and you've been hiding behind it, and you've been making excuses?

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