

Talking Back to God

In the time, place, and circumstance in which I grew up, *talking back* (aka, *back-talking*) to one's parents, or any other adult for that matter, just wasn't done... at least not without swiftly-rendered and soon-regretted consequences. *Murmuring* or *grumbling* something in return after a parent (again, or *any other adult*) meted out a punishment, prohibition, or prescribed course of action to be taken was considered to be one of the highest insults and lowest forms of "lack of respect for your elders." It was NEVER considered "cute," or regarded as a social or mental disorder deserving compassion and treatment (at least not of the *medical* variety). Because of this prevailing attitude and uniform "treatment" of such violations, almost all children quickly learned that "Yes Sir" and "Yes Ma'am" were not just the right reply *words*, they were the right response *attitude*.

However, this regard for adults did not necessarily transfer to the higher forms of respect for authority. The same individuals who learned and practiced respect for and to their elders as children did not always manifest the same toward the laws of God as adults. Then as now, men who learned not to *talk back* to their parents, were willing to *talk back* to God. Such is, by no means, a new phenomenon...

Isaiah warned against such, "*Woe to one who quarrels with his Maker- an earthenware vessel among the vessels of the earth! Will the clay say to the potter, 'What are you doing?' Or the thing you are making say, 'He has no hands?' Woe to him who says to a father, 'What are you begetting?' Or to a woman, 'To what are you giving birth?'"* Isaiah 45:9-10.

Job boldly said he wanted to "*argue with God*" and "*argue my ways before Him*" when speaking to his friends, Job 13:3,15; but quickly changed his tune when actually presented with the opportunity by the Almighty, "*Then the Lord answered Job and said, 'Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it.'* *Then Job answered the Lord and said, 'Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to Thee? I lay my hand on my mouth. Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; even twice, and I will add no more,'"* Job 40:3-5.

Surely we can see the folly of such, and discern the wisdom of Proverbs 21:30, "*There is no wisdom and no understanding and no counsel against the Lord.*" Consider the question of Romans 9:20 personally, "...*who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, 'Why did you make me like this,' will it?'"* I'm afraid that is sometimes just what we do...

When we become Yeahbutters. When we either are confronted with what already know, or become more recently informed of some portion of what God's Word says that contradicts our desires or actions, and yet reply, "Yeah, but..." it doesn't matter what follows. Such is just a flimsy excuse proffered in a feeble attempt to justify NOT doing what God says. Whenever we seek to do something *other* than what God said, we are, in essence, talking back to God, cp. Isaiah 40:8.

When we become Butwhatabouters. As *Yeahbutters* usually want to do *less* than what God's word requires, *Butwhatabouters* often want to do *more* than God's Word provides (or allows). Though we seldom realize it at the time, we are in essence declaring that we know more, or better, than God does when we seek to "*exceed what is written,*" cf. 1Corinthians 4:6. Again, when we endeavor to use "*the wisdom of the world*" in this way, we forget that God has made such "*foolishness,*" cf. 1Corinthians 3:18-20.

Whenever you are tempted to *talk back* to God because His way does not coincide with your wants and desires, remember 1Peter 5:6-7, "*Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.*" Talking back to parents (the ones who made us) is never a good thing, but how much more problematic it is to do so to Him who made all things! (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org; email to mrpcstrong@hotmail.com)