

# The Unequal Contest Between God and Man

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I want to read first a passage from the Old Testament. Well, both will be from the Old Testament, but a long passage and then take a text from the book of Job. In the book of Numbers, the 22nd chapter and the 22nd verse. Not that I'm going to speak from this chapter, but that I want to lay a sort of background for truth that will follow. God's anger was kindled because Balaam went. And the angel of the Lord stood in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding upon his ass and his two servants were with him. And the ass saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way and his sword drawn in his hand. And the ass turned aside out of the way and went into the field. And Balaam smote the ass to turn her into the way. But the angel of the Lord stood in the path of the vineyards, a wall being on this side and a wall on that side. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she thrust herself onto the wall and crushed Balaam's foot against the wall and he smote her again. The angel of the Lord went further and stood in the narrow place where it was no way to turn either to the right hand or to the left. And when the ass saw the angel of the Lord, she fell down under Balaam. And Balaam's anger was kindled, and he smote the ass with a staff.

And the Lord opened the mouth of the ass and she said unto Balaam, what have I done unto thee that thou hast smitten me these three times? Balaam said unto the ass, because thou hast mocked me. I would there were a sword in my hand, for now would I kill thee. And the ass said unto Balaam, am not I'm thine ass upon which thou hast ridden ever since I was thine unto this day. Was I ever want to do so unto thee? And he said, no. And the Lord opened the eyes of Balaam and he saw the angel of the Lord standing in the way and his sword drawn in his hand. And he bowed down his head and fell flat on his face. And the angel of Lord said unto him, wherefore hast thou smitten thine ass these three times. Behold, I went out to withstand thee because thy way is perverse before me. And the ass saw me and turned from me these three times. Unless he had turned from me, surely, now, also I would have slain thee and saved her alive. Balaam said unto the angel of the Lord, I have sinned. For I knew not that thou stoodest in the way against me. Now, therefore, if it please thee, I will get me back again.

Now, the text for tonight, is found in Job 14:20. Thou prevailest for ever against him, and he passeth: thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away. I read the text again, Thou prevailest for ever against him. It is job talking to God and says, Thou God prevailest forever against the unbelieving and rebellious man, and he passeth: thou changest his countenance, and sendest him away.

Now, in the Bible, there is never any twilight zone. There is never any soft and gentle purring on the part of heaven over earth. You find it in pulpits and in literature, but you never find it in the Scriptures. The Scriptures take the sharp, bold attitude that God and sinful men are opposed to each other. And that God has a controversy with every man until that man surrenders, repents, and begins to obey God. Now, that's the attitude that God of the Bible takes, and that God and man are in opposition. And Job takes it too when he says, Thou will prevail forever against him. If I were giving a name to this sermon tonight, I would call it, the unequal contest because the contest between man and God is unequal.

Now, I like to make myself perfectly clear that if you're not obeying God, then you're fighting God. Just as the man Balaam was going in opposition to God's will and God stood in the way. The angel of the Lord, which scholars believe is God, stood in the narrow way by the vineyard. And Balaam was too blind to see it. So, God stands to oppose every man who was going in the wrong direction, a direction of sinfulness, selfishness, or ungodliness, or all three. And God and that man are as the angel and Jacob were by the bank of the river. They're wrestling against each other.

But the contest between God and man must ever, ever be an unequal contest, because power is with God and weakness is with man. Wisdom is with God and ignorance is with man, because the right is always on God's side. Always remember this, if you don't know what the right thing to do is in a given situation, always take God's side and you'll have the right side. And if you take any other side but God's, you'll have the wrong side no matter how fine the argument may have polished it up for you. No matter how beautiful the veil may be that covers the sin, if it's not on God's side, the sin is there, nevertheless.

So, the right is always on God's side. And the length of years are always with God. How can we who live for a little day hope to win in contest with the great God who liveth forever. God has seen generation rise and go down again and rise and go down and rise and fall and pass away. And God has remained because God is eternal. God had no origin and God will have no end. God is moving on, always moving on and man is only moving on until the last heartbeat and then he drops down into the arms of mother earth again and God prevails. Thou will prevail says the Holy Ghost. Thou prevail forever. And all His length of years are on the side of God and man is only the ephemera.

When I was very young boy, I learned what an ephemera is. An ephemera is a fly that is hatched in the morning, lives a day, and dies in the evening. Now, it's called an ephemera, I suppose because it's ephemeral, it passes away. And man is an ephemeral creature. He's here today, but he is not here tomorrow, and the place where he is will know him no more.

And then there is God's side. He's the creator and the provider and the right of the proprietor. Always remember this, my brother and sister, that you and I are God's poor relation, and that

we're living off of God whether we believe it or not. And the proudest and richest man in the city of Chicago, who would scorn such a sermon as mine tonight, nevertheless, he lives off of God and God looks after him and feeds him even though he bites the hand that feeds him and hates the heart that provides for him and opposes the God who gives him his daily bread. Yet, nevertheless, he's living on God's property and God lets him have a house on His estate, rent free, and looks after him and takes care of him, but always, always, he's opposed to God.

And the opposition is the opposition of the one who has accepted the good gifts of God for a lifetime and yet has opposed the very God that has fed him. You can't win that way, you know. The person who is not with God, Jesus said, He that is not with me is against me. And he that gathers not with me scattereth abroad. And no man can hope. It's not in the nature of things. It's not in philosophy. It's not in reason. It's not in theology. It's not in nature that a man can oppose God and win. Always, always God prevails.

Now, prevails forever against him. And thus, we find man fighting God. And the fight is always against right. Somebody says I am not against right. But I don't believe in the church, and I don't believe in accepting Christ and going through all of that. Let me tell you, that you're fighting the right if you're fighting the gospel of Christ. If you're opposed to the will of God anywhere, you're opposed to the will of God everywhere. The outlaw is not the man who breaks all the laws of his land. The outlaw is the one who selects the laws he wants to break and keeps the rest. An outlaw will steal from a grocer in order that he might have money to pay somebody else. He's keeping some laws, but he's breaking others. So, the man that God is opposed to and has a controversy with God, is not the man who's breaking all the laws of God, but the man who's selecting the laws that he wants to keep and breaking the rest. I will prevail, is forever against him.

Now such a man is this and I feel this very deeply tonight. I don't know whether I can get it across to you; you can't always do it. It takes the Holy Ghost and a lot of other combinations in order to get an idea across to an audience or even to another person in private conversation. But I feel it very deeply tonight that I don't know about you, but I can't afford to oppose God. I simply can't afford it. Because the man that is an opposition to God can't win and he can't succeed. The two things that always men want to do. And the man who is on the other side from God cannot win and he cannot succeed. He can succeed as writers say, but he can't succeed as a man. He can win as an athlete, but he can't win as a human being. He can win as a politician and get the most votes and take office, but he's not half a man. He can't win as a man. He isn't what God meant him to be. He's not fulfilling the potentials of his nature.

The man that is opposing God anywhere, that has any controversy with God, is a man that can't win. If he's a farmer, he can have crops. And the tall corn may wave, and the yellow wheat and oats may wave on the field, but he's still not winning. He's only raising corn and wheat. He must win as a man. You must succeed as a human being, my listening friends. You must succeed as a human

being. You must fulfill that which God puts you in the world for. The Bible teaches us that we're not born by accident into the world. That we come here in the will of a sovereign God. And that God gave us our nature and gave us the blueprint for our lives and gave us possibilities and powers and potentials and gifts and faculties that lie within us.

And I can win as a farmer, but if I oppose God, I am not winning as a man. I might win as an athlete and lose as a man. And no man can afford thus to divide himself. The man who wins in an election and takes office and does it crookedly and violates the laws of his own nature and the laws of God. That man hasn't won. He's lost, tragically, terribly, lost.

Emerson said way back yonder nearly 100 years ago, young man, you want to be President, do you? Alright young man, let me tell you this. If you knew how much of his manhood a man has to sell out to be elected to office these days, you wouldn't want to be President. No, I didn't say that, Emerson said that way back there nearly 100 years gone. So, a man can win in one thing and lose in another.

I've known young women who went out to get a man just as certainly as a duck hunter goes out to shoot a duck. They had that in mind. They intended to do it. They didn't fall accidentally into the company of the young man. They are after him, or at least somebody of the masculine gender and they got him. And so, they were written off. They weren't failures. They won. They said, I do. I will. But in the act of getting that man, they lost everything that was dear to them for time and eternity. I've seen this horrible thing, and dear God, I don't know why it has to happen.

And I've seen sweet-faced, innocent looking young ladies, Christians, converted to Christ, walking with him carrying their Bibles. And I have seen that strange phenomenon that nobody understands grab them. And their eyes fell upon some alley cat of a man reeking to God Almighty, blue imperium with tobacco smoke, no culture, no education, no ambition, no polish, no gentlemanliness, no anything. And a refined, beautiful and delicate young woman marries that tomcat. And from there on, God Almighty knows what happens. Does she pull him up? Never. It's always the other way around. No matter how good a swimmer you are, if you jump into the lake with an anvil around your neck, you won't pull the anvil up. It'll pull you down.

And I have seen young men, fine looking fellows with a clear light in their eyes. And I knew that the voice of God was whispering to them. And they could have sung the simple colored song, I know the Lord laid His hand on me and meant it. And I have seen them become enamored of these--you know that type. And I've seen them follow them away from God and the church out into the world. And they won, but lost in the winning, tragic, terrible loss. You can't win and oppose God. You can't do it. God has the power and God has the glory and God has the might and God has the kingdom and God has the dominion and God has the years and God has the experience. You have nothing, nothing. You must turn unto God in Christ and get over on the winning side.

Now, that rich sense of relaxation and rest that comes when the fight is over and the worry is gone and you cease to oppose and stop fighting, and the contest is over and it's all right. And you know when a nation is at war with another nation and one nation wins and the other nation formally surrenders, there's always a sense of relaxation and peace comes to that nation. You can't escape it. During my lifetime, I've known twice that Germany surrendered and once that Japan surrendered and once that Italy surrendered. And always the pictures that come from those countries show a sense of rest. It's over. The fight is over now, and I won't have to fight anymore.

Well, the man that's fighting God is fighting a war, a battle that he never, never can win while the world stands. He can never have peace and happiness. What little he gets is only a passing thing, because God is always right and you're always wrong. People call me up or write me and they want me to approve their lives. I get lots of letters wanting me to approve a wrong that they're doing. They're hoping to be able to get a little help from me saying chuck up, keep your chin up. You're fighting God, but maybe one of these times God will drop asleep, and you can win. But they never do it, never.

When I was 17 years old, I formally took God's side of every question. And I have not lived perfectly down these years. Don't look at me and think I have. I haven't. But at this moment, by the grace of God and the blood of the Lamb, I am on God's side on everything. And I will not give any approval to anybody that are not on God's side. I'll never tell anybody they have a chance in the wide world if they're not on God's side. They have no more chance than you would have walking into a tornado hoping to turn it back. The Great God Almighty prevaieth forever against him and sendest him away. Thou changest his countenance and sendest him away. Thou changest his countenance and sendeth him away. I don't think Shakespeare ever thought of anything more brilliantly imaginative than that. And yet, how simply true it all is. God changes His countenance.

There's the pink-cheeked boy. And you never see a homely boy never. If nothing else, the very look out of their eyes is good to look at. And their round cheeks devoid of all this dope that you put on, the round cheek boy, the red cheek boy. Come back again in a few years, you'll see a strong-faced man were a pink-cheeked boy has been. God's busy changing his countenance. Come back again in a few years, you'll find the sagging face of middle life. God has changed his countenance again. He doesn't change it by snapping buttons. He changed it so slowly. People don't notice it. And we come up to each other and lie like thieves and say, you haven't changed a bit. God Almighty knows, He's changing his countenance.

And then there's the wrinkled, dry face, the flaky face of the old man. And then there's the pale, cold face of the dead man. Thou changest his countenance. And if I didn't believe in God for any other reason, I'd believe in God by looking at my own pictures over the years. Somebody's changing my face. Somebody's changing yours too. Don't you think they are not.

Thou changest his countenance and sendest him away. Sendest him away from where? Well, away from his comfortable little nest. You know, we are all old dogs at heart. We love our homes, and we love our bedrooms, and we love our chairs and we love the presence of familiar things, the pictures we've known for so many years. And even things that are not so nice, they're precious to us because we've had them a while. We all like to go in there like good old hound on a winter night and turn around three times and lie down and breathe deep and say it's good to be under a roof. And we have our little nest, don't we?

Well, it'd be sweet if the kind smile of God was on that home. Beautiful, if the kind smile of God was looking down like a moon that never changed and a sun that never set. But so many haven't God in their homes at all. And God changes their countenances and sends them away from their little nest. Away from the familiar things that they love. Away from the people they knew and away from the reassuring landmarks. Thou sendest him away. He doesn't want to go. He doesn't want to go from his familiar haunts. He doesn't want to leave the world.

Take a boy that has lived in a neighborhood; and he said lots of unpleasant, unkind things about the neighborhood and wished he could move out of it. And then, Uncle Sam grabs him and ships him off to Germany or Japan or Korea. And he isn't there very long until he begins to paint a picture, a sweet picture on memory's canvass of that back home, that little, dumpy corner where he used to get a soda with his girlfriend. It begins to shine like a palace of a king. And that crooked street with holes in it that trucks bumped in as they went along and waked him at night. And he turned over and grumbled, oh, the sound like the sound of the chariot that took Elijah home. He's homesick now. He wants to come back where it's familiar again.

And when he gets off the boat, nothing looks good except that little section where he comes from, where home is, where Ma is, and maybe his old, awkward father, who's so glad to see him but wouldn't let on, and maybe he is half-grown, freckled sister. Brother, does it look good to him back home there. He wants to come back home, and everything looks good to him. And when he walks up carrying that telltale canvas bag over his shoulder that says he's Uncle Sam's boy. When he walks up the street, he doesn't see the holes anymore, and he doesn't see how dumpy the corner delicatessen, or the corner candy store is. Wonderful as he comes home.

Am I describing to some of you fellows that went out and came back? Come on, fellows, isn't it so? That's the way we think about it when we go away. They've become familiar to us. And when we're pulling away from them, torn out like a plant out of the soil, how darling, how sweet, how wonderful to come back and get our roots back down in again for a while and rest.

But Job says, Thou changest his countenance and sends him away. He's fought God these years. He's heard the gospel. He's resisted it. He knows what's right and he won't know it. And he knows

whose side he ought to be on, but he won't take it. And one day God says to him, all right, boy, get going. Get going, Depart from me and God sends him away and he passes. Thou sendest him away and he passeth. I tell you, Shakespeare never wrote anything like this. Thou changest his countenance and sendeth him away and he passes.

There's the biography of the human race. There is the biography of that old uncle of yours that fought God until he died. There is the biography of that old aunt of yours that never went to church and laughed at you and your family for going. There's the biography of that smart aleck young fellow who had all the answers down the road there a few years back. Where is he now?

Where's Voltaire? Where is Hitler? Where is Lenin? Where is Stalin? Where is Tom Paine? Where's Bob Ingersoll? Where's the man who founded the American Association for the Advancement of Atheism? Where's the gangster? Where's the fellow who had the north side under his thumb and carried a gun under his arm? Thou sendest him away and he passes. Thou changest his countenance and sendest him away. And they're all gone. Where's the big, bloated woman who used to come in at nine o'clock in the morning bleared-eyed drunk, and then cursed when you tried to talk to her about the Lord Jesus. God changed her countenance and drove her away and she's gone.

Where are the multitudes that used to meet in Rome in the amphitheaters and watch the Christians being killed, and shout and scream like a breakfast club or a Bob Hope audience now and laugh as the Christians went in to die? They gained strength from the sound of their own voices. And the very volume gave them the idea that they could live forever and couldn't perish. But God changed their countenances one after the other. The pink-cheeked lad was changed to the stern-face man, to the tired, middle-aged man, to the drooping old man, to the dead man. One by one they went and not a one of them lives now.

Where are they? Gathered on a Sunday night in the rain to watch the prize fights out here when John L. Sullivan fought bare-fisted 75 rounds? They thought they could get away with anything and everything, but where are they now? Where are the boys that get in the cars? Where will they be a few years from now and drive away in a roar of smoke and egotism, and whistle up the girls down the street? Where will they be a few years from now? God will change their countenances and drive them off. Send them away. God prevails forever against them and stands in the way. And always God is there. Always He's there. The boy that steals the car, Gods there. The girl that goes out into questionable company, God is there. The man that lies soaked in nicotine and alcohol and looks blear-eyed at the TV set till one o'clock in the morning and neglects the church and God. God is there. Thou prevailest.

There it is Jacob. There it is Balaam. There He is Paul, on the Damascus Road, there's God. God surrounding him like the air, going before him, following up, on the right of him and the left of him,

above him, beneath him, all around him, there is God. The most awful thing about him is that he doesn't know the jackass inspired by God could see the angel and the Prophet couldn't.

McAfee, it's an awful thought, a prophet of God with two men with him. A prophet of God and two men with him going on their way to get an offering, make a little money and bring in a little change. And the angel of God was opposed to their program, and they didn't know it, but only the donkey knew it. But God was there, and they were turned back.

Now what is the answer to all this? You can't win. You can't know enough to win. You say, I want to get my M.A., then I'll be all right. Your M.A. will only push back the frontiers of your ignorance and show you areas that you will never know that you didn't know that were there. That's all the M.A. will do for you. Somebody else says, I'm writing my thesis now and I'll have my PhD. PhDs are a dime a dozen. I've got a seventh-grade education and PhDs write me and ask me questions, and I'm just an ordinary dumb fellow. I'm only telling you that because PhDs, they just have Doctor of Philosophies, that's all.

That's all a fellow that got a PhD told me this. He said, you know, Brother Tozer, what they do to you when they take in to examine you? He said, they examine you in fields where you're not familiar in order to make a fool out of you. And he said, after they have reduced you to groveling idiocy so that it's obvious that you don't have the IQ of a half-grown tabby cat, then they give you your degree. So, they just want to show you how little you know and then they make you a doctor of philosophy.

Now, I worded that after my own method, a PhD couldn't word it like that. But I worded that myself. But that's what he told me. He told me that they just reduced him to a palpitating protoplasm and then give him and say, here's your PhD, Brother. When you know you don't know anything, then you're smart enough to get a PhD. So don't think a PhD is going to help you, son. It won't help you at all. It'll just make you proud, proud of your ignorance.

But what to do? What is there to do, change your religion? Somebody says, I'm going to change to be Catholic or Jehovah's Witness or something else. It's just like an enemy of God changing his clothes, that's all. Just like Al Capone putting on a gray suit when he'd been wearing a blue. You're just changing the externals, but you haven't changed one thing; that you and God don't get along. You and God have a controversy.

You never, never get any help by changing your religion. You never get any help by reading Aristotle. You say, I've heard the name Aristotle. He was a wise Greek. I can read him. I was just reading his categories this afternoon. But he didn't say anything to help me. He's just defining things, that's all. Just helping me to know how to rot when I die. It's helping me to know the laws



of nature that reduce me to dust. But he never in any wise ran up a white flag and brought me and God together and he can't. Nobody can.

What do we do then? Well, there's only one thing to do. Quit the fight. Put up the white flag. Throw in the towel and say, O Great God, what a fool I've been that I have tried to run my life. Live my life and go my way and neglect the Savior and neglect the cross, oppose Thee and live an unrighteous life. O God, I can't do it and I won't continue to do it. Cease the fight.

You know, part of the joy of conversion is, the fight's over. The fight's over. You're not fighting God anymore. That's over. Amen? No more fight. Say, O God, I fought until it was awful. You know, it's nice to get knocked out in the ring when you've really fought, until you're exhausted. Some of those fellows that are lugged off on the stretcher are the happiest fellas in the world. It's over now. They've quit. They're done. Well, God won't knock you out. But God will reduce you as he did Jacob. Jacob wasn't happy one second all night long as long as he wrestled against God. But when he threw in the sponge and quit wrestling, then the sun rose upon his forehead.

I have a picture. If I had the ability of an artist, I'd paint the picture of old Jacob with the sun reflecting off his old bald head there by the river Jabbok. And I'd put an old Jewish smile on his face and mix it in with his old beard. And I'd show a happy man completely relaxed from head to foot. For the first time in his life, he's relaxed. He wasn't fighting anymore. God was on his side and he was on God's side and he was on the winning side, and there was nobody opposed to him that amounted to anything. If you've got all the world on your side and God is opposed to you, you haven't got anything on your side. But if you've got God on your side and the world is against you, you haven't anything against you that amounts to anything. For John tells us that if God is for us, who can be against us.

So, give up the fight and kneel before your Maker. Kneel before your Maker. It would be a great thing for some of you if you would kneel down on your knees before your Maker. Get down on your knees, bend those knees of yours. Get down on your knees. Say here I am, God. It's strange for me. I haven't been on my knees except to work for a long time. Here I am on my knees. What a change.

I heard a Methodist preacher many years ago preach a sermon on the text: behold, he prayeth. It was about Saul when Saul of Tarsus was fighting Jesus Christ, you know, fighting him all the way along breathing, threatening slaughter, fire coming out of his nostrils like a dragon. And the Lord met him on the Damascus Road. He knocked him flat and blinded his eyes. And God said to Ananias, go down to such and such a street and find Saul. Behold, he prays. And the Methodist preacher made a great deal of it, that God is even a bit taken aback. He's praying. This hard, vicious man, this heresy, this self-righteous enemy of the church was like a little lamb on his knees bleating up to God in his blindness.

It will be a great day for you, Brother, the day you will drop to your knees and not be ashamed and say, I'm quitting. I'm throwing it in. I can't fight eternity. I can't fight time. I can't fight nature. I can't fight God. Now give up and quit. What do you want me to do, God? What do you want me to do? And I know what God will say. God will say, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved. He will say as many as received Him, to them He gave the power to become the sons of God, even to them that believed on His name. That's what he'll say. He'll say, you believe in my Son now. Obey Me for now on and your troubles, the main problems are over. You will have little troubles, but your main troubles are over.

And then take refuge from God's anger in God's love. I read that again. Dear old, what's his name, the great medieval poet. It said he wanted to take refuge from the wrath of God in the mercy of God. The wrath of God blazed out of one side and he ran around on the mercy side and took refuge. There is a wrathful side of God and don't you think there isn't. But there's a mercy side of God to that side of the cross. So, if you will get over on the side of the cross, you will meet God in peace at the cross of His love.

For Job said just above, Thou hast the desire to the work of Thine hands. Thank God. He has a desire to the work of His hands. A mother, yea, a mother may forget her second child. Do you know any mother would forget her child? Occasionally they do. Occasionally, the police find them in doorways or alleys. Occasionally, they'll find a little foundling at the door of a hospital, but not very often. God selected the most wonderful thing He knew and said, can a mother forsake her baby? No. Not if she's human. Not unless there's some awful tragedy that's taken her that makes her heart hard for a moment. She has a desire to the child of her love. And God has a desire to the work of His hands. I'm glad I can preach that tonight too. He has a desire to the work of His hands.

Well, what about you now? You. Don't make excuses and don't put up reasons and don't try to make terms and don't try to bargain and don't try to make a deal with God. Come just as you are. Believe just where you are. Trust God just where you are. Throw up the hands of the inside your heart and say, Lord, I surrender all. I give up. I quit. No more fight. I take Thee Lord Jesus as my Savior forever. Would you do that, and will you do that? Have you done that? I wonder how many have done that? Good. Would you learn if you haven't? I don't want to embarrass. I don't want to press you.

But if the blessed Holy Spirit has talked to your heart tonight and told you that God has a desire over you, that He hasn't forgotten you. If you go, you're away, he'll stand against you though He'll follow you and follow you as the angel did Balaam the renegade prophet. He'll follow you on and on and on and on. But there will be a day when He'll send you from Him and you will pass with a changed countenance and a broken heart. That's a fact. But it's also a fact that He has a desire to

you. And He sent His only Son to die. And mercy's door is open, and the grace of God can be yours.  
Let us pray.