



TRUTH APPLICATIONS

Articles

FAITH FREED FROM THE HEDGES

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It's a remarkable scene, played out in heavenly halls. Satan, literally, "the Adversary," joins "the sons of God [who] came to present themselves before the LORD." Hearing that he had been "roaming throughout the earth . . . the LORD said to Satan, 'Have you considered my servant Job? There is no one on earth like him; he is blameless and upright, a man who fears God and shuns evil.'"

Satan wasn't buying it. Of course Job was faithful. Who wouldn't be? "'Does Job fear God for nothing?' Satan replied. 'Have you not put a hedge around him and his household and everything he has? You have blessed the work of his hands, so that his flocks and herds are spread throughout the land'" (Job 1:6-10, NIV).

In those words, we learn that the book of Job is about more than suffering. That's merely the catalyst for the more important question: Was Job's faith real or not? Was he true to God only because of the hedge he enjoyed? Was he really a man of integrity, "blameless and upright," a man who "feared God and shunned evil" (v. 1)? Or would he crumble when his life caved in? Satan dared God to put Job's faith to the test: "But now stretch out your hand and strike everything he has, and he will surely curse you to your face." And God accepted the challenge: "The LORD said to Satan, 'Very well, then, everything he has is in your power, but on the man himself do not lay a finger'" (vv. 11-12).

Job's story is the story of Every Man, and Every Woman. At least every man and woman who profess faith. As John Mark Hicks wrote,

Satan's implied accusation is an accusation against all believers. . . . Satan asserts that the basis of faith is profit or personal gain. As long as believers are prosperous, healthy, and happy, they will serve God. But let God permit some evil, permit the loss of a family member or the loss of a job, then believers will lose hope in him and reject him. . . . Job himself acknowledges that this is the attitude of the wicked. They ask, "Who is the Almighty that we should serve him?" (21:15). Will anyone love God even when there is nothing to be gained other than God's fellowship? This is the trial of Job, and the test of all genuine faith. . . . (John Mark Hicks, *Yet Will I Trust Him: Understanding God In a Suffering World*, 87-88).

No followers stand in greater danger of failing this test than prosperous and comfortable American Christians. Life is good. We worship in comfortable buildings with no fear of reprisal. For many, the biggest temptation is not to “curse God and die” (Job 2:9) because of unbearable loss and pain, but to expect lives of ease as if it was a God-given right. We rightly condemn health-and-wealth television preachers who misuse God’s name to promise material prosperity to those who will follow him. But, if we are honest, we must ask whether our faith has in fact been protected by the hedges. Is our faith in God or the things he provides? Do we delight in his fellowship or only in the tangible blessings he gives us?

Troubles, and the doubts and questions that accompany them, can and will come. Looking at our world with anything other than rose-tinted lenses makes that obvious. The truth is, we have no sound reason to expect that life will be pleasant and trouble-free. And when trials come, they reveal something about ourselves and the nature of our commitment to God (cf. Romans 5:1-4; James 1:2-4).

Let us, then, learn to delight more in our relationship with the Father than in the tangible blessings he gives us. Let us seek to know him above all. Let us develop the ability to see his sovereignty and glory no matter how much our troubles hinder our view. Let us aspire for a faith that can survive when freed from the hedges.

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