



December 13, 2021

## The Faith of Propriety

*So Satan answered the LORD and said, "Does Job fear God for nothing? Have You not made a hedge around him, around his household, and around all that he has on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. But now, stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" (Job 1:9-11)*

The story of Job is not a fairytale someone made up. Job lived in the land of Uz, which is essentially the land of Jordan today, running south and north up into Syria on the eastern side of the Jordan River. He was a man of reputation, power, and wealth. Job trusted God to be good to him if he lived a proper and upright life. He had obviously heard that if you do good things, God would be pleased and would provide for and protect you.

His main problem seems to have been with his family, his sons in particular. Apparently they did not have much to do beyond throwing parties: "And his sons would go and feast in their houses, each on his appointed day, and would send and invite their three sisters to eat and drink with them" (Job 1:4). That his children spent their time like this was probably worrisome to Job, a good man living with the faith of propriety, concerned about the benefits that come from serving God. In response to his family's activities we are told, "So it was when the days of feasting had run their course, that Job would send and sanctify them, and he would rise early in the morning and offer burnt offerings according to the number of them all. For Job said, 'It may be that my sons have sinned and cursed God in their hearts.' Thus Job did regularly" (v. 5).

As the story goes, one day a company of angels came into the presence of God. Along with them came Satan. God asked him where he had been, and Satan replied, "From going to and fro on the earth, and from walking back and forth on it" (v. 7). Remember, Satan is the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2). He presides over the thought patterns, the social organization, the forces of human society, trying to move them in opposition to God. That is precisely what he had been up to.

So God asked him, "Have you considered My servant, Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil?" (Job 1:8) When he heard God's glowing description of Job, he went right to the heart of the matter, questioning the sincerity of Job's faith in the passage above.

Eventually we see that Satan was wrong about Job. His faith was sincere. God was right in bragging about Job. He was a man of faith who never cursed God. He was, at this point in the story, a man of the faith of propriety. Yet, while it is genuine, this kind of faith is essentially superstitious and relies heavily on ritual, for it believes that it must get everything just right to reap the benefits. It involves a vision of God that has him up in heaven looking down to see if you are going to make any mistakes. If you do, you are in real trouble.

**Reflect:** *As we'll see, Job worried about this (Job 3:25). Job would rise early every morning to offer burnt offerings on behalf of his sons, the faith of propriety is intent on living life, as we say, "religiously." Job got out there and did it just right, and the Lord was pleased with that and blessed him for it. God will bless that kind of faith because God likes to bless people. Satan knew this, and decided to challenge this arrangement.*

*(Q) There are worse things than having the faith of propriety, but how can believing God's only concern is that we get things just right make us vulnerable as we face the challenges so often encountered in life?*