

“The Invisible War”

There are no easy assignments in ministry. The closer we draw to the front line, the more we find ourselves in the cross fire between God and Satan. It has always been this way. The prophets were a battered band of preachers. The OT prophet was a lonely man.

It was also that way with the apostles — 11 of the 12 were martyrs, and John died a lonely man on Patmos. Christ died a horrific, public execution. And He promised the 12 that *since* the world hates them, it hated Him (Jn. 15). The world hates you, He said. If they persecuted Me, they will persecute you. You will have tribulation.

And the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church. Justin Martyr. The martyrs became famous for what they said when tied to the stake. All who desire to be godly will suffer persecution. This is why I'm drawn to the book of Job. Because there is a note of reality in this text — what it means to stand tall for God in ministry and draw the fire of the evil one.

This war is an invisible war — unseen conflict between God and Satan, heaven and hell, good and evil and there are no draft dodgers and no neutrality and the taller we stand for Christ and *more faithfully we preach the Word of God the more we will draw the enemy's fire.*

1. The Unlikely Candidate (vv. 1-5)

Job was the least likely candidate for disaster. Lit., “man there was...” The emphasis is on Job. He was in northern Arabia — a real man living in a real place, blameless, upright, fearing God and turning away from evil. We are introduced to the sterling quality of the man. He is not sinless but beyond reproach in his character; he is marked by holiness and honesty.

He is **upright** — straight. He lived a separated life. Not courting the spirit of this age. Set apart to God. He was a straight arrow morally. He **feared God** — he took God very seriously. There was a gravitas to his life — no superficiality. He was turning away from evil. He knew what it was to resist temptation.

Notice the blessing of God on his life (v. 2) — God's blessing has been showered on Job. His possessions (v. 3) — sheep, camels, and oxen. This is a very successful businessman who is deeply godly. He didn't sell out his soul.

In fact, he was the greatest of all the men on the earth. He was the greatest in godliness.

There was harmony in his home (v. 4). The Lord has opened the windows of heaven to pour out his blessing on Job. He was the spiritual leader in his home (v. 5). Job functioned as the priest in his own home before the establishment of the priesthood. He would offer sacrifice for his children.

Job was the least likely candidate for a disaster that we could find in the record of Scripture. He towers over his community and region. He is the mightiest of men. And he is the one who will be marked out to suffer, but not because there is anything wrong in his life. In fact, God singles him out to suffer because God deems him worthy to suffer for His name's sake.

He is the tallest tree in the forest that is struck by lightening. It is because of his godliness in his generation (like Edwards' 63rd resolution) that he is singled out by God. It is because he is the tallest tree in the forest that he draws the fire of the enemy. With great godliness comes great exposure to the enemy.

2. The Unseen Challenge (vv. 6-11)

This is a unique picture where we are allowed to see into the throne room of God. We are allowed to hear God and Satan speak, though Job has no idea that this is even transpiring.

Note v. 6 — *there was a day...* It is a routine day in heaven. This is not a particularly unique day. It could have been any day...

The *sons of God* are the angelic host of heaven. These are the angels of heaven reporting back to the throne of God; they have been given divine assignments and now are coming back to God with accountability and receive more orders. At the end of v. 6, *and Satan also came...*

How could Satan enter heaven — an unholy creature approaching Holy God? Yet here we see Satan himself in the courts of heaven — how? I don't know. But here he is. Once the highest of angelic order. The one who had highest access to God in heaven who led a coup against God — how persuasive and cunning and shrewd he was to convince a third of the angelic host to turn against God?

The existence of a real personal devil is taught in 7 OT books, every NT book, and Christ Himself. Consider all the various names he carries... He is quite simply the evil one.

And what is Satan in heaven to do? The answer is found in his name — a word that means to attack, accuse and slander. An adversary and opponent in court. He brings criminal accusations. What is he doing? He is bringing charges against the people of God — cf. Zech. 3:1. This is the avowed purpose of the devil — to accuse God's people in God's court. He is a grave digger.

We need an advocate at the right hand of the Father — and that Advocate has never lost a case!

Notice v. 7 — the initiative is from God. The Lord put the ball in play. He asks a question — *from where did you come?* — to make the devil bring his evidence from his sinister nature into the court of heaven. Note that the devil is not in hell. He is on earth, creating destruction and appearing before the court of heaven to create problems for God's people (cf. 1 Pt. 5). The devil is on this earth and is stalking your path if you are one of God's people.

Luther — "I believe in the devil because I did battle with him this morning."

What is he doing? Attacking, deceiving, corrupting...

In verse 8, the Lord speaks to Satan — *have you considered My servant Job?* It is God who places Job's name into the ring. Job is there by divine order and sovereignty. This is God's agenda, not Satan's. God will use the devil for His own holy purposes.

Note why God singles out Job —*for there is no one like him*. He is in a unique and singular category. He is blameless. Would you not want God to say that about your life. Job is the most righteous man on earth and he will suffer not because there is something wrong in his life, but because there is nothing wrong with his life.

Sometimes we suffer because of our sin or other's sin, or because we live in a sinful fallen world, and other times because there is a challenge between God and Satan. Does God think highly enough of your spiritual walk to make this challenge with Satan. Does God see you as blameless, God-fearing and upright. It is a badge of honor that God pins on the man that he appoints to suffer for the sake of righteousness.

In verse 9 Satan offers the unholy counter attack to God. It is diabolical genius. He is sinister. It is a frontal attack on the glory of God and the integrity of Job. He accuses Job for serving God for what he gets from God — like a great ATM machine. It is also an attack on God — “You have to buy worshippers on the open market. It is only by Your blessings that You are lavishing on Your people that you have seduced them into worshipping You. Job has every reason to worship God — all the gifts...” The indictment is that Job only worships for the gifts.

Verses 10-11 indicate that Satan has already been attempting to get to Job — he has been considering Job for quite some time... Luther — “Would to God that I were as well-known in hell as I am in heaven.” Job had been protected by the *hedge* of God.

Satan — vv. 10b-11 — “God, you’ve been way too good to Job.” Only 3x is the voice of Satan heard — Genesis 3 (Satan talks to Eve about God — “God’s not good to you”); Job 1 (Satan talks to God about Job — “you’re too good to Job”); Mt. 4 / Lk. 4 — “if you worship me, I’ll be better to you than God; I’ll give you the world”).

Verse 11 — here is the hammer blow — strike everything that Job has. How diabolical are the ways of Satan. Will we worship God in tough times? Will we bless the name of the Lord when we are thrown into the fire of affliction? Are we going to go home and curse God, or will we say, “I will worship the Lord”? That is the challenge for each one of us. The more we grow in ministry the more will be the attacks and challenges...

3. The Unrelinquished Control (v. 12)

God is completely in control throughout the response. There is no tug of war. Everything is unfolding from the top down, God is defining what the devil can do for the glory of His own name. God even now is using Satan as an instrument of His hand.

The evil one departed from God and came to the land of Uz and found Job and has Job in his crosshairs. The hedge is now removed. But there is no panic in heaven. Only plans for the glory of God's name.

4. The Unleashed Catastrophe (vv. 13-19)

Round one of the catastrophe is in vv. 13-14. Do you think that just happened? Satan was behind it all.

Round two is in v. 16 — do you think that just happened — *I alone escaped*

Round three is in v. 17 — *while he was still speaking...* These catastrophes are stacking up; the people are standing in line at the door.

Round four is in v. 18 — *while he was still speaking...sons and daughters...* We want to turn our heads and not hear what is to come. Not this!

“For still our ancient foe doth seek to work us woe...on earth is not his equal.” Our struggle is not against flesh and blood. We find ourselves in the same kind of warfare. The taller you stand in your faith for Christ, the more you will be singled out by the devil under the sovereignty of God. It may not be this extreme, but there is no one who is his equal.

5. The Unshakeable Confidence (vv. 20-21)

Job stands over ten fresh graves.

He stands and tears his robe under the weight of the affliction and the devil is waiting to hear the shrieks that he is used to hearing when he brings these burdens. But instead he sees and hears, *and worshipped*. Job prostrated himself before a superior and ascribed worship to the One of great importance. Job's first response was to ascribe honor and glory to God, all of whose ways are perfect and right and pure toward me — *the Lord gave...* He understands the sovereignty of God.

Job, who cannot see into heaven to see the challenge still understands that God rules and reigns in the heavens and He does what He pleases. There is only one primary causality — God in heaven. So he says, “I came into the world with nothing and I will leave this world with nothing and the giving and taking of God is the divine prerogative of God.” God doesn't need to know why, He just needs to know who.

And then he says, *blessed be the name of the Lord*. Job didn't malign, but magnify the name of God. Not to revolt, but to reverence. This is the choice we must make again and again and again. There are times that we are thrown into the deep end of the pool, and we must make the choice to say “blessed be the name of the Lord.”

Verse 22. Through all of this ordeal, Job did not sin nor did he blame God. Job is held before us as how a man or woman should live in the midst of difficulty and live in the trials of life. “I kiss the rod that smites me.” Hab. 3:17.

How do we respond when we are in ministry, plowing rocky soil and the storm has gathered and difficulty is coming. How will we respond? We must worship. We must bless the name of the Lord. We must ascribe honor and glory to God.

We must make the sovereignty of God “the pillow on which we will rest our head at night.” (Luther)

At the end of his life, after his release from prison, Bunyan wrote *Advice to Sufferers*. “What God appoints, that shall be done...” This must be our bedrock confidence as we face the devil head on. He has appointed and ordained my trials and it is God who will preserve me in the midst of the flames.

Lawson’s story of the affliction that arose as he wrote the commentary of Job.

How wise it is of God to bring adversity into your life and dark nights and difficulty in ministry and antagonistic elders and unconverted members and shrinking budget. How wise to bring all these storms of afflictions so that we will be broken vessels, walk with a limp, weaned from this world, so that our faith will grow stronger, be more humble, be more Christlike. His ways are not our ways. As high as the heavens above the earth, so high are his ways above ours.