

Notes for the Ekklēsia Meeting

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Why Serve God?

by Dan Trygg

“Does Job fear God for nothing? ¹⁰ Have You not made a hedge about him and his house and all that he has, on every side? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his possessions have increased in the land. ¹¹ But put forth Your hand now and touch all that he has; he will surely curse You to Your face.”

Job 1:9-11

“By this the love of God was manifested to us, that God has sent His only Son into the world so that we might live through Him. ¹⁰ In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the satisfactory-sacrifice for our sins... ¹⁹ We love, because He first loved us. ²⁰ If someone says, ‘I love God,’ and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.”

I John 4:9,10,19,20

“He who loves his life loses it, and he who disregards his life in this world will keep it to life eternal. ²⁶ If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also...”

John 12:15,16

Why serve God? The passage from Job, cited above, is a quote from Satan. He is saying that the only reason Job reverences God is because He protects and blesses him. If, however, God would remove that blessing and prosperity, Job would abandon God like rats from a sinking ship. **The underlying assertion of Satan is that God is not worth serving for *Himself*. He is only worth serving because of *what He will do for those who love and worship Him*.** The book of Job addresses this issue, in that God allows Satan to test out his accusation by giving him permission to remove Job’s prosperity and loved ones. When Job humbly accepts the drastic misfortunes that come upon him without complaint or accusation against God’s character, the enemy ups the challenge by saying that it wasn’t really much of a test, because these things were all *external*. They did not really affect Job *himself*. If, however, God would actually bring painful sickness upon Job’s own body, then he would certainly abandon his faith and trust in God. God gave Satan permission to attack Job’s health, and he became *horribly* sick, ...feverish, achy and covered with painful, oozing boils all over his body. Again, **Satan’s underlying belief is that God is not worth serving for *Himself*. Loyalty to God is only offered to Him by those who are motivated by self-interest.**

Of course, **we should not be surprised that Satan thought this, because he himself has been so corrupted by his own self-interest. He *thinks* that way because he is that way.** He has set himself in opposition to God. *It is interesting to observe the psychology of pride and self-exaltation: Initially, he wanted to exalt himself above the other angels to become like God* in His glory and greatness (Isa. 28:12-14), but soon we find him questioning God’s character and motives (Gen. 3:1-5), and taking shots at God. **He began to denigrate and dishonor the very One he wanted to be like!** Satan’s own beauty, wisdom and greatness among the angelic host went to his head. His heart was lifted up because of his beauty, and he corrupted his wisdom to serve himself, instead of to glorify God. He became proud, and internally filled with violence. **He began to speak against God, leading a rebellion of angels to turn away from honoring the Lord** (Ezk. 28:12-17).

We find a haunting parallel to this dynamic played out in the story of Absalom and David. Now, David was not without fault or blame in what took place. There were things he did that contributed to Absalom’s frustrations. We do see, however, a son who initially loved and respected his father, and a father who deeply loved and longed for his son. **Absalom, too, was a handsome and winsome person. Somewhere, his heart changed, and he no longer respected David.** *He began to “steal the hearts” of the people, by questioning David’s judgment, or offering alternatives that seemed more attractive to those who had come to the king for arbitration.* His heart, too, became “internally filled with violence” as *he plotted to lead a rebellion to overthrow his father’s regime.* Through “the abundance of his trade” his hatred grew, and was fanned into open flame. **The father he had once revered, and wanted to become like, was now standing in the way of his own self-exaltation.** He built alliances, and plotted a coup that nearly succeeded. *He became ruthless in his quest for power, raping innocent women to make a point, and willing to murder anyone who opposed him.* **In the end, he was destroyed, undone by his own pride and imprudence.** He had underestimated the level of sacrifice and risk those loyal to David would be willing to take, nor had he considered that he was opposing God. More of his men perished in the forest, by the hand of God, than all those killed in the combat (II Sam. 13-18).

What had Absalom offered those he recruited to his rebellion? Was it not more prosperity and power for themselves? Isn’t that the motivation for *every* temptation, every plot, every scheme, every cultic religion, every political movement? *Aren’t we all motivated by a desire for peace, prosperity, safety and betterment of ourselves, in some way?* **Satan is quick to offer to people the very things he is accusing God of giving to Job! In fact, when Satan comes to us, he insinuates that he will give us something better than what God gives!** He entices us with an offer of *more*, ... more immediate, more in abundance, easier to get, ...more what *we* want, when *we* want it.

There is another reason to serve God, than simple self-interest. This is a much deeper, stronger motivation, one that causes people to cast aside self-interest and embrace sacrifice for things of God. It is the same thing that motivated those who were faithful to David to risk everything to rally to the cause of their king. They knew that to publicly join with him was to lose family, friends, property, liberty and probably even their lives, should Absalom win. Nevertheless, they chose to side with David. It was also the root and foundation of Job's life that remained firm and steadfast, and kept him from falling into total despair. In spite of all the things that had come upon him, ...horrible, painful, seemingly-relentless and beyond any reasonable explanation that he had..., there was one thing that kept him loyal to God. **It is the same motivation that has stirred Christians through the centuries to make radical sacrifices to follow God,** ...at times leaving, or giving away, goods, property, worldly pleasures, relationships, prosperity, recognition, and even life itself.

What is this other motivation? It is love, a grateful-love born out experience. Job had experienced God's friendship (29:4). He had walked in God's way, and carefully obeyed Him. He had treasured the words of His mouth more than his necessary food (23:11,12). He knew that God was his redeemer, and was convinced that He would vindicate his faith. Even if he should die in this trial, yet "even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see God" (19:25,26). In fact, the one thing he desired was to talk it out with God (13:3,20-23). He was convinced that God would listen to him, and he would be delivered (23:3-7). In spite of all appearances, in the face of all his pain and the unfairness of his circumstances, he maintained his trust in the God he had come to know. It certainly *felt* like God had become his enemy, his attacker (9:17,18; 16:6-14; 19:6-22), but **once he got past the surface feelings, there was still a loyal-love for God.** In the end, God appeared to him in the whirlwind. Job was humbled, vindicated and restored.

David's followers also arose to help him because they loved him. He had done so much for them. He had exemplified a passionate love for God. He had endured great hardships, and accomplished great things with God's blessing and help. Many of them knew him personally, or had been at his side through those times. He had ruled well and justly for many years. Unlike Saul, or other kings from surrounding lands, David remained humble, approachable, sensitive to the peoples' needs and concerned for their welfare. His example, his walk with God, his fearless obedience, and his humble love for his people were exemplary, and had become almost legendary. He was the shepherd-king, and his sheep loved him. **When he was threatened, they immediately arose to help. He didn't even have to ask for their support. They volunteered on their own. In their minds, he was worth serving.**

Isn't this the apostle Paul's argument in Romans 12:1? "I urge you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and consecrated sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service." **It is reasonable, logical, understandable that we would want to respond to His great love and mercy with gratitude, love, and a willingness to serve Him.** It is a built-in, natural response to want to return a kindness with a kindness. It feels right and appropriate to do so. God has done more for us than anyone else ever has, or could. When we truly begin to see the extent and depth of His love, it leaves us speechless. We are undone. The only response is praise, weeping, gratitude, laughter, and a rightful willingness to do anything He would ask of us. "In *this* is love, not that we loved Him, but that He loved us, and sent His only Son to be a satisfactory-sacrifice for our sins." By His act of love, ...giving of Himself to the greatest possible extent for us, even when we did not know Him or care about Him..., we finally come to see what real love is. **His love sets the standard for love. His loving concern for us** when we were lost and rebellious; **His extreme sacrifice, which He willingly made** to free us from our bondage and doom; **and His ongoing commitment to us,** by adopting us as His own children, dwelling in us personally by His Spirit, preparing an idyllic place for us, and intending to commune with us daily for eternity, **are like nothing else we have ever seen or experienced.**

This kind of radical love incites a radical response. Those who really know God and have experienced His grace are deeply, profoundly affected. There is no question in their minds as to whether or not God is worth serving. Their heart is *full* of desire to serve Him! **People hear the good news of God's love and grace, and they are willing to sell everything, do anything, give up anything, to have this God in their lives.** Jesus spoke of the treasure hidden in the field, or the pearl of great value, as illustrations of the Kingdom of God (Matt. 13:44-46). Those who found these prizes were willing to sell all they had to obtain them. Jesus said it is the same for those who find the Kingdom. They must be willing to give up everything else in order to follow Him. *He* can't be Lord, if *they* are in charge. **It is interesting, isn't it, that Jesus didn't talk about what prosperity people would obtain, or that God would keep them from difficulty. He talked about giving up things, making sacrifices, for Him.** He talked about enduring difficulties and persecutions for His name's sake. **What's the attraction? Why would I want to serve Him? He is the attraction!** What has He called us *to*? He has called us to *follow* Him. **Those who are His sheep will hear and recognize His voice, and they follow Him** (Jn. 10:27). **Why? Because He is the Good Shepherd who loves them enough to lay His life down for His sheep.**