

Job's Innocence

Job 31:1-40

Introduction

Job has pleaded with both his friends and God that he is innocent.

Job felt like his friends lacked sensitivity and compassion and has made basic appeals for sympathy; for the chance to confront God and to affirm his basic integrity. At the end of the book when God shows up and Job realizes his own worthlessness and ignorance in the presence of Almighty God; God does not accuse Job of sin. God's accusation towards Job was that Job did not fully realize the greatness of God.

Job is not claiming sinless perfection. But rather that he is not guilty of deliberate, willful sin.

We may have different standards of righteousness; or what constitutes a truly good person or decent person. But all human beings share a common tragic trait; we are all sinners, we are all guilty before God. When faced with the purity, holiness, and righteousness of God, we all fall short. The repeated testimony of the Scriptures is we all fall short, there is none righteousness, no not one.

We will all face God in judgment. What will you say? On what basis can anyone approach God's throne or justify one's life? Will you appeal to personal purity? Or innocence? Will you appeal to your belief in God or the good deeds done in this life? Will you appeal to some religious ritual or religious institution?

The Bible teaches that only one thing can make us righteous before God; the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The Bible teaches that the death of Jesus on the Cross can satisfy God's demands for perfect holiness, perfect sinlessness, perfect righteousness.

Job doesn't know about Christ. Job lived more than a thousand years before Jesus; Job lived hundreds of years before Moses wrote any portion of the Bible. But Job does hope for a mediator, that God would provide Himself an advocate; who would present his case before God.

Personal Innocence (vv.1-12)

Job 31:1-40 (NKJV) 1 "I have made a covenant with my eyes; Why then should I look upon a young woman?

2 For what is the allotment of God from above, And the inheritance of the Almighty from on high?

3 Is it not destruction for the wicked, And disaster for the workers of iniquity?

4 Does He not see my ways, And count all my steps?

Does it seem odd to you that Job puts sexual purity at the top of his personal inventory?

Job made a promise with his eyes not to look on a woman with lust. Think of what is happening. Job wants to please God. Job understands the importance of personal purity. He does not simply say; "I will not look". He makes a contract. A personal pledge.

Matt. 5:27-28; "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.' (28) "But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

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Job made a decision to control his eyes. Job sensed that God would bring disaster on the wicked and destruction on those who do wrong (vv.2-3). Job sensed that God was looking—and would hold Job accountable! God sees everything.

*5 "If I have walked with falsehood, Or if my foot has hastened to deceit,
6 Let me be weighed on honest scales, That God may know my integrity.*

Job appeals first to purity and then to honesty. Remember Job was powerful rancher, businessman and entrepreneur. Job had to constantly contract with people and Job refused to use deceit to gain personal advantage. Job makes appeal for a kind of spiritual lie detector test; Job was not afraid to let God judge his honesty, evaluate his integrity, and find him whole (integrity).

Paul pleads with the Colossians (3:9); "Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, (10) and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him".

Proverbs 11:1; "A false balance is abomination to the Lord: but a just weight is his delight".

*7 If my step has turned from the way, Or my heart walked after my eyes, Or if any spot adheres to my hands,
8 Then let me sow, and another eat; Yes, let my harvest be rooted out.*

Job refrains from covetousness. This is the desire for something that does not belong to you. Job affirms his innocence of not straying off the path of righteousness in seeking riches or possessions. Job has not stolen. He again expresses confidence in his integrity. Job is innocent of covetousness or theft. He is so sure—that he was willing to lose his income—(crops) if he were guilty.

Remember Jesus said, "Beware of covetousness: for a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things possessed". Jesus spoke a parable of a certain rich man who brought forth a lot of crops, and he thought to himself, what shall I do? I have no room to bestow my fruits—or I have so much stuff I don't even have a place for it. He said, I will take my goods, and build bigger and better barns; and I will save and I will have enough saved for many years into the future. I will take my ease. I will eat drink and be merry. But God said to him, "You fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall these things be, which thou has provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (Luke 12:15-21).

*9 "If my heart has been enticed by a woman, Or if I have lurked at my neighbor's door,
10 Then let my wife grind for another, And let others bow down over her.*

Job denies having a mental or emotional affair. He refused to indulge fantasy or the women who might seek to seduce him. He never sought to seduce a friend's wife or hire a prostitute. He

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refused to peek into neighbor's tent. If Job was guilty of immoral behavior he was willing to have his own wife enslaved and defiled!

It would appear that grinding grain was one of the lowest forms of service.

11For that would be wickedness; Yes, it would be iniquity deserving of judgment.

12For that would be a fire that consumes to destruction, And would root out all my increase.

Think about what Job is saying; that would be wrong; sexual sin is wrong; Job remains both morally and sexually pure—because he knew that adultery was harmful, shameful, wicked, devastating; a sin like fire and leads to destruction (Abaddon; the grave hell) and would destroy what little he had gained;

1 Corinthians 6:9-10; “Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God” (1 Cor.6:9-10).

Relational Innocence (vv.13-23)

13“If I have despised the cause of my male or female servant When they complained against me,

Job denies treating his servants unfairly. Job claims he never mistreated his workers. What a strong statement. If you are a business owner or work with dozens or hundreds of people how can one avoid offense? The book of Job seems to indicate that he employed scores—perhaps hundreds of people and their families! Note—Job doesn't say—he never received a complaint—but rather with each complaint Job treated the worker justly and fairly!

14What then shall I do when God rises up? When He punishes, how shall I answer Him?

Job gives two reasons; Job will face God's judgment and have to give an account for his behavior! Job was aware that a Creator God created all human beings; established by God, accountable to God; and that we have an obligation to treat others justly and fairly. Human beings are loved by God and deserved fair treatment.

15Did not He who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same One fashion us in the womb?

Job observes the unity—and equality—and dignity of all people! All human beings share a common origin—we are designed by God—made in the image of God. Equality and dignity are not simply philosophical concepts to be embraced by enlightened thinkers—it is a truth to be practiced by young and old, rich and poor—this is truth—to be applied in every walk of life, in every transaction, every business dealing, every profession!

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In the ancient world people had a keen sense of justice. Plato said, "To do injustice is more disgraceful than to suffer it."

Herbert Vander Lugt tells the story that during the Great Depression his father moved to a farm as a tenant. He signed a contract stating that he and the owner would share equally in the proceeds from the milk and crops. In the fall, the landlord refused to give the Vander Lugt family their fair share of the wheat crop. The Dad's appeals fell on deaf ears. He consulted a Christian attorney. The lawyer read the fine print in the contract; and the lawyer advised the Dad that he could take no legal action. The landowner was unethical—but he was clever enough to include in the contract a clause that kept him out of trouble. The lawyer said, "Mr. Vander Lugt, you have three choices; you can kill the crook and get yourself in deep trouble. You can cheat him and become like him; or you can take the wrong and let God take care of you and him.

*16 "If I have kept the poor from their desire, Or caused the eyes of the widow to fail,
17 Or eaten my morsel by myself, So that the fatherless could not eat of it
18 (But from my youth I reared him as a father, And from my mother's womb I guided the widow);
19 If I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, Or any poor man without covering;
20 If his heart has not blessed me, And if he was not warmed with the fleece of my sheep;
21 If I have raised my hand against the fatherless, When I saw I had help in the gate;*

Remember Job was a man of great wealth and great influence. His influence brought him to the gates of the city where justice was carried out. Job refused to use his great influence to pervert justice. Job never mistreated orphans, the helpless, the powerless.

Job affirms his innocence in neglecting the needy or the helpless.

Job helped the poor (v.16).

Job helped the widows and the orphans (two of the most helpless segments of society) (vv. 17-18). Job fed and reared orphans and became a father to them; clothing them, providing shelter for them; in appreciation they blessed and praised him (vv.19-20).

22 Then let my arm fall from my shoulder, Let my arm be torn from the socket.

Job was so confident that he was blameless, guiltless in his treatment; he was willing to lose his arm if he was lying, exaggerating or falsifying his statements. Job in effect is saying—amputate my arm—if I am lying. Job knew and feared God. Feared His judgment. Feared His Holy Majesty. Job knew what was required by God—in relation to the poor and the needy! And was therefore willing to meet those needs.

In Exodus the Lord said; (Exodus 22:22); "You shall not afflict any widow; or fatherless child".

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Deut. 24:17-18; “You shall not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow’s raiment to pledge: But thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the Lord thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore I command thee to do this thing”.

23For destruction from God is a terror to me, And because of His magnificence I cannot endure.

Innocence Towards God (vv.24-34)

24“If I have made gold my hope, Or said to fine gold, ‘You are my confidence’;

25If I have rejoiced because my wealth was great, And because my hand had gained much;

26If I have observed the sun when it shines, Or the moon moving in brightness,

27So that my heart has been secretly enticed, And my mouth has kissed my hand;

28This also would be an iniquity deserving of judgment, For I would have denied God who is above.

Job denies trusting money or false gods! Job had great wealth and great property. But Job refused to boast in his wealth. Job never claimed to be self-sufficient or independent from God. Job also denied having confidence or security in false gods. Job did not worship the sun or the moon or the sky or the stars. Job knew that idolatry was wrong and would be punished by God.

In the ancient world people were fascinated by astronomy and astrology and the mystery of the lights in the sky. Job denies being involved in pagan worship and pagan practices. The expression “and my mouth has kissed my hand” may refer to the ancient practice of blowing or throwing a kiss of adoration!

29“If I have rejoiced at the destruction of him who hated me, Or lifted myself up when evil found him

30(Indeed I have not allowed my mouth to sin By asking for a curse on his soul);

Job never rejoiced over the tragedies or misfortunes of others; Job never cursed or sought revenge against his enemies; Job sensed that mocking his enemies was wrong! That it was God’s duty to punish or avenge not his! Job did not rejoice or curse his enemies misfortune.

1 John 2:9; “He that saith he is in the light and hates his brother, is in darkness even until now!”

31If the men of my tent have not said, ‘Who is there that has not been satisfied with his meat?’

In Job’s house there was always plenty of food. Job was not guilty of being inhospitable. Job opened his doors to strangers—and travelers—fed them and lodged them. NOTE—how a person treats complete strangers becomes a barometer or thermometer of the human heart.

32(But no sojourner had to lodge in the street, For I have opened my doors to the traveler);

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33If I have covered my transgressions as Adam, By hiding my iniquity in my bosom,

Job makes an interesting reference to our original father Adam. The expression 'hiding my iniquity in my bosom' is literally 'my hiding place'. The verb form is found in Genesis 3:8, 10 in relation to Adam's hiding from God. Job has no secret sin to hide (Ryrie; p.794). Some suggest that the reference is not specifically to Adam but to all mankind in general who have a tendency to cover or hide sin!

Job's friends were convinced that Job was hiding his secret sin! Job was sinning behind closed doors!

Paul speaks of healthy saints who "Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality" (Romans 12:13). "Use hospitality one to another without grudging" (1 Peter 4:9). Do I have too?

34Because I feared the great multitude, And dreaded the contempt of families, So that I kept silence And did not go out of the door—

Job was aware that people sinned "behind closed doors" and they did things, shameful things, they did not want their neighbors to know. People fear rejection by family and friends and neighbors; but Job was not like this. He did not have a public life and a private life (different).

35Oh, that I had one to hear me! Here is my mark. Oh, that the Almighty would answer me, That my Prosecutor had written a book!

Job is in the dump! Job is surrounded by his friends (accusers). Job cries out! Isn't there anyone who will hear his claim? Isn't anyone interested in his innocence? Job used to be one of the judges at the gates of the city! Using legal language Job says he is willing to sign an affidavit, a pledge of truth—he is willing to tell the truth the whole truth and nothing but the truth. He is willing to take a lie detector test. He is willing

But he has Job! God has written a book!

36Surely I would carry it on my shoulder, And bind it on me like a crown;

Job is willing to wear the charges against him on his shoulder; and treasure it as a crown. Job is saying he is innocent of the charges; he is willing to take the stand; prove his innocence; and face his accusers like a prince.

37I would declare to Him the number of my steps; Like a prince I would approach Him.

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Job's confidence that God would find him innocent is truly remarkable. Yet we know—that we fall short—that we do not come near God's standard of righteousness or perfection. The only person who can stand before God completely blameless is the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus died on our behalf. Jesus bore our sin. In Christ God accepts us. How in the world did Job imagine God could accept him? Job did not know exactly how God was going to work out his salvation. Job believed God and trusted God—and counted that belief as righteousness. Job's faith in God was real. Job's sincere attempt to live righteously was real. God accepted Job. Job was thoroughly convinced that God would accept him and find him innocent on the day of judgment.

38 "If my land cries out against me, And its furrows weep together;

Job claims he did not misuse or abuse the land God gave him. If Job has raped the land or plundered or spoiled the environment; he invites God's wrath.

39 If I have eaten its fruit without money, Or caused its owners to lose their lives;

40 Then let thistles grow instead of wheat, And weeds instead of barley." The words of Job are ended.

Job was willing to swear an oath that he was not guilty of greed; of abusing land or laborers; he was willing to suffer the loss of all his crops and give up the use of his land. God was not disciplining him or correcting him because of greed or secret shame, or unconfessed offense.

This is Job's final defense. These are his last words.

Conclusion

The chapter reads like a laundry list or personal inventory:

Sexual lust (vv.1-4)	Not guilty
Dishonesty or Deception (vv.5-6)	Not guilty
Covetousness (vv.7-9)	Not guilty
Adultery (vv.9-12)	Not guilty
Injustice (vv.13-15)	Not guilty
Neglecting the Poor and needy (vv.16-23)	Not guilty
Trusting Money or Phony gods (vv.24-28)	Not guilty
Hating Enemies (vv.29-30)	Not guilty
Refusing Hospitality (vv.31-32)	Not guilty
Hypocrisy (vv.33-37)	Not guilty
Greed (vv.38-40)	Not guilty