

In coming to chapter 31, we come to Job's final speech (while he'll say a few words in the final chapter in response to God, this is his final statement). If you recall, in chapter 29 he looked back to better days, in chapter 30 he lamented his present condition, and here in chapter 31, he's going to maintain his innocence.

Now, it's important to notice at the outset, that Job is not claiming to be sinless, he's merely claiming to be innocent of all that his friends accused him of. He's claiming to be innocent of any specific sins that may have cause his condition. Thus, chapter 31 is not the ramblings of a proud man, but of a pure man with a good conscience.

I. Job's Innocence Explained

II. Job's Innocence Applied

I. Job's Innocence Explained

1. Job describes his innocence with respect to 12 things—his heart, integrity, women, servants, the needy, his riches, worship, enemies, strangers, sins, conscience, and land.
2. Before we briefly consider each one, let me say three things by way of summary: first, Job is not commending himself but defending himself.
3. Second, Job is speaking in the form of an extended oath—he repeatedly says "if" and "then"—"if" this is true "then" let that be true."
4. V5—"If I have walked with falsehood" v8—"Then let me sow, and another eat" v9—"If my heart has been enticed by a woman" v10—"Then let my wife grind for another."
5. Third, most of the consequences mentioned are OC curses—these God threatened against Israel if she rebelled against Him (this is true even though Job lived prior to the OC).
6. (1) His heart (vv1-4), v1—"I have made a covenant with my eyes"—if you remember, a covenant is an oath-bound relationship.
7. Thus, Job made a covenant (a promise) with his eyes, that he would not look upon a young woman with lust.
8. He then provides two reasons why—the allotment or inheritance for such is destruction and disaster (vv2-3), and God sees his ways and counts his steps (v4).
9. In other words, the reason he guarded his heart was because, God judges the thoughts and motives of the heart.
10. (2) His integrity (vv5-8), v5—"If I have walked with falsehood, or if my foot has hastened to deceit, let me be weighted on honest scales, that God may know my integrity."
11. This simply means, Job was free from falsehood and deceit—what he was, he was, without pretense.
12. There was no difference between who he was on the inside and how he acted on the outside—his heart and life matched.
13. V7—"If my step has turned from the way, or my heart walked after my eyes, or if any spot adheres to my hands, then let me sow, and another eat; yes, let my harvest be rooted out."
14. This speaks about the overall purity of his life—he walked in obedience to the holy commands of God.
15. His heart and hands were clear of offense—otherwise, let the temporal curses of God come upon him.
16. (3) His neighbor's wife (vv9-12), v9—"If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or if I have lurked at my neighbor's door"—that is, if I've committed adultery with my neighbor's wife.
17. V10—"Then let my wife grind for another, and let others bow down over her"—in other words, let me be put to death.

18. V11-12—"For that would be wickedness; yes, it would be iniquity deserving of judgment. For that would be a fire that consumes to destruction, and would root out all my increase."
19. He's referring to the destructive nature of adultery—it's like a wildfire that consumes everything in its path.
20. (4) His servants (vv13-15), v13—"If I have despised the cause of my male or female servant when they complained against me."
21. That is, if I've mistreated them and then ignored their complaint—if I've oppressed them because of pride.
22. V14—"What then shall I do when God rises up (that is, in judgment)? When He punished, how shall I answer Him?"
23. V15—"Did not He who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same One fashion us in the womb?"
24. If God made us both, then why would I mistreat them—he failed to look down upon those around him.
25. (5) The needy (vv16-23)—here Job describes his treatment of the poor, widows, and fatherless (orphans).
26. Keep in mind Job's high position—he had the money and authority to ignore and even mistreat the needy.
27. V22—"Then let my arm fall from my shoulder, let my arm be torn from the socket"—that is, if he's raised his hand against the needy (v21).
28. V23—"For destruction from God is a terror to me, and because of His magnificence I cannot endure."
29. That is, Job helped the helpless because he knew what God will do to those who misuse and abuse them.
30. (6) His riches (vv24-25), v24—"If I have made gold my hope, or said to fine gold, 'You are my confidence'; if I have rejoiced because my wealth was great, and because my hand had gained much."
31. It's easy for people to trust in their riches, because it gives them a sense of superiority and advantage.
32. 1Tim.5:17—"Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy."
33. (7) His worship (vv26-28)—here Job denies he has ever looked upon the sun or moon so as to worship them.
34. V26—"If I have observed the sun when it shines, or the moon moving in brightness, so that my heart has been secretly enticed, and my mouth has kissed my hand."
35. In olden days, subjects kissed the hand of their king—this was a display of reverence and submission.
36. Thus, in the context, to kiss the hand refers to religious worship and homage given to the sun and moon.
37. Basically, what Job is saying is this—he offers heart worship only to the Creator and nothing in creation.
38. He's kept himself from idolatry—"You shall have no other gods before Me" 1Jn.5:21—"Little children, keep yourselves from idols."
39. (8) His enemies (vv29-30)—"If I have rejoiced at the destruction of him who hated me, or lifted myself up when evil found him (indeed I have not allowed my mouth to sin by asking for a curse on his soul)."
40. Matt.5:44—"I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you."

41. (9) Strangers (vv31-32), v31—"If the men of my tent have not said, 'Who is there that has not been satisfied with his meat?'"
42. This is explained in v32—"But no sojourner had to lodge in the street, for I have opened my doors to the traveler."
43. Job is here referring to hospitality—he opened his house to those around him who needed a place to stay.
44. Not only that, but he treated them with respect, insuring that each one had his physical needs fully met.
45. (10) His transgressions (vv33-34), v33—"If I have covered my transgressions as Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom."
46. He's contrasting himself with Adam—if you remember, Adam sought to hide his sin from God (as he covered himself with fig leaves).
47. V34—"Because I feared the great multitude, and dreaded the contempt of families, so that I kept silence and did not go out of the door."
48. This is what he means—when there was sin in his house, he did not try to hide it (but dealt with it properly).
49. John Calvin—"Job shows us by his example that if we have sinned, the cure is not to hide our failings, as is the custom almost everywhere, but to confess our transgression willingly and not to be ashamed to confess the sin we have committed so that it may be forgiven before God. This virtue is indeed rare."
50. (11) His conscience (vv35-37)—verses 35-37 is unique, in that, Job doesn't refer to any sin or punishment.
51. V35—"Oh, that I had one to hear me! Here is my mark"—the imagery is that of a legal court and document.
52. He describes God as his Prosecutor who he wishes would write a book—the nature of this books is unclear.
53. It's likely a reference to a book of offenses that a prosecutor would write against someone being charged.
54. When he says "here is my mark" he means, he would be willing to swear his innocence to such a book.
55. V36—"Surely I would carry it on my shoulder, and bind it on me like a crown"—that is, without shame.
56. V37—"I would declare to Him the number of my steps; like a prince I would approach Him"—again, this is confidence not arrogance.
57. 1Sam.12:3-4—"I have walked before you from my childhood to this day. Here I am. Witness against me before the LORD and before His anointed: whose ox have I taken, or whose donkey have I taken, or whom have I cheated? Whom have I oppressed, or from whose hand have I received any bribe with which to blind my eyes? I will restore it to you."
58. Samuel is basically doing the same thing as Job—he's confessing that his conscience is good before God.
59. He isn't being proud or self-righteous but honest and open—he's merely confessing he lived a life of integrity.
60. (12) His land (vv38-40), v38—"If my land cries out against me, and its furrows weep together; if I have eaten its fruit without money (that is, if he stole the land or failed to sufficiently pay his laborers).
61. Even his land could testify of his innocence—every area of Job's life was characterized by equity and justice.
62. Thus, Job surveyed his entire life and to prove his innocence—he was free from any gross sin or hypocrisy.

II. Job's Innocence Applied

1. In closing, I want to summarize Job's final speech by way of three broad (and practical) observations.
2. (1) A description of a pious believer—chapter 31 provides us a beautiful picture of a mature Christian.
3. Job 1:1 describes him as "blameless and upright, and one who feared God and shunned evil"—the Hebrew word rendered "blameless" literally means "perfect" or "complete."
4. Thus, "perfect" doesn't mean sinless, but it describes someone whose religion fills every crevasse of life.
5. True religion fills every crack and crevasse of our soul—every room of our house and every area of our life.
6. In fact, Job 31 provides a beautiful portrait of a blameless and upright man, who fears God and shuns evil.
7. (a) True religion begins in the heart—as a result, Job made a covenant with his eyes to protect his heart.
8. Matt.5:20—"For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."
9. Matt.23:27-28—"Woe to you, scribes, and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."
10. (b) True religion is sincere and honest—that is, a Christian isn't one person in private and another in public.
11. Jas.3:17—"But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."
12. (c) True religion is humble and meek—Job confesses that he dealt with his inferiors with honor and respect.
13. A proud Christian is no Christian, for he understands that all he has is ultimately due to the grace of God.
14. He sees every other person, regardless of their station in life, as made in God's image and deserving respect.
15. (d) True religion is practical and helpful—that is, it has a special eye to the poor, needy, and vulnerable.
16. Jas.1:27—"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world."
17. (e) True religion trusts and worships God—this is the reason why Job lived the way he did—he feared God.
18. And this is very important to keep in mind—you can be kind and generous to others, and be no Christian.
19. A Christian does what he does because he fears, trusts, and loves God—he puts no confidence in his riches or in his own merit.
20. He understands that he's not saved *by* works but *for* works—he does what he does out of gratitude to God.
21. Hymn 186—"Were the whole realm of nature mine, that were a present far too small; love so amazing, so divine, demands my soul, my life, my all."
22. This is why Job never committed adultery, respected his servants, helped the poor, and showed hospitality.

23. This is why Job honored God with all his time, talents, and treasures—because these were gifts from God.
24. Furthermore, God gave Job a better and more important gift than all these—He gave Job Christ (His indescribable Gift).
25. (2) A defense of personal innocence—here I want to underscore that defending your innocence isn't always bad.
26. We have to remember, Job was a righteous man, and thus he's not commending himself in a sinful way (1Sam.12:3-4).
27. But he's defending himself from the false accusations of his three friends—that he was a secret sinner.
28. And yet, before I go further, I want to briefly suggest that defending yourself is not always righteous (three reasons not to defend yourself).
29. First, if you are wrong—that is, don't defend yourself if you're wrong, but instead own and confess it.
30. It's difficult for us to admit when we are wrong—in fact, it's one of the most difficult things for man to do.
31. I think we all know someone who refuses to acknowledge when they're wrong; it's as if they're always right.
32. Second, just to be right—that is, it's never proper to defend yourself, for the mere purpose of looking good.
33. Third, to gain merit before God—that is, it's always wrong to defend yourself if you think it gains merit with God.
34. For example, Lk.18:11—"God, I think You that I am not like other men—extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess."
35. These are the words of the Pharisee in seeking to gain merit before God because of good deeds (works).
36. God already knows our works and He knows whether or not we are innocent of any or all false accusations.
37. Thus, these are a few reasons not to defend yourself—but now I want to consider three reasons to defend yourself.
38. (a) To keep a good name, Prov.22:1—"A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches, loving favor rather than silver and gold."
39. It's never wrong to defend yourself from false accusations, for the purpose of maintaining a good name.
40. In fact, preserving the good name of your neighbor as well as yourself, is commanded in the 9th commandment ('you shall not bear false witness against your neighbor').
41. Larger Catechism (Q.144)—"What are the duties required in the 9th commandment? A The duties required in the 9th commandment are, the preserving and promoting of truth between man and man, and the good name of our neighbor, as well as our own."
42. Most people today don't place much stress on the importance of a good name—a name above reproach.
43. But a good name is something to be valued and prized—it is to be chosen rather than silver and gold.
44. Ps.26:1—"Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity. I have also trusted in the LORD; I shall not slip."
45. If you remember, David was being accused of deceit and hypocrisy by Saul—rumors were spreading.
46. Thus, David asks God to vindicate him—not merely in the Day of Judgment but now, in the land of the living.

47. (b) To quiet your enemies—and by "enemies" I mean—man, Satan (the accuser of the brethren), and our own conscience.
48. For most of us, it becomes increasingly difficult not to believe what others have said or are saying about us.
49. Stop and think for a second—Job's friends have been falsely accusing him for the past 28-30 chapters.
50. They fundamentally accused him of being a secret sinner (or hypocrite)—they claimed he was a fake.
51. Thus, what Job does is something we all need to occasionally do—we need to confront our enemies with truth.
52. He says—"No, that's not true! I am not a secret sinner or hypocrite! You can look at any area of my life as evidence!"
53. I do seek to keep my heart pure—I am a man of integrity—I do treat others with respect—I do honor God with my possessions—I do confess my sins when necessary.
54. And, I do all these things because I do fear, trust, and love God—I don't put any confidence in them.
55. (c) To glorify God's grace—this is the ultimate reason to defend yourself—to defend the honor of God.
56. Every Christian person is a work of God—a product of His grace—and those who deny that grace dishonor God.
57. Remember, Job was a man of authority and influence in his community—thus, these accusations would cast a shadow over God's honor.
58. It wasn't so much that Job's name needed to be vindicated, but the name and honor of God needed vindication.
59. (3) A depiction of the perfect Savior—here I want to close by reminding you something I said last week.
60. That is, Job typified Christ as a righteous sufferer—this means, we behold a shadow of Christ in Job.
61. Thus, as we skim through this chapter, I want you to look past Job to Christ who is shadowed throughout.
62. He alone was perfectly pure and spotless—He alone loved His neighbor as Himself—He alone was perfectly innocent of every charge.
63. Do you remember some of the things they accused Him of? They said He was possessed by demons!
64. They said He was a liar and deceiver! They said He was a fake and a fraud! A glutton and a drunkard!
65. And then, if this wasn't enough, they brought false charges against Him and convicted Him in a sham hearing.
66. And thus, our beloved Savior was publicly crucified as if, every false accusation against Him was true!
67. Scripture describes Him as the Last Adam—but unlike the first Adam He had no sin of His own to confess.
68. And yet, because He bore our sins, we can find Him in vv33-34—He did not cover or hide His iniquities for fear of the great multitude.
69. He did not keep silent nor refuse to go out of the door—but He openly and publicly owned our sins (as if they were His).
70. 1Tim.3:16—"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh, vindicated by the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory."