

Title: Job’s Defense Rests (Part 4): Job’s Closing Argument

Number: 0822Job31:1-40(31)

Text: 31:1-40

Central Idea: Live for the freedom of a clear conscience

Date: August 7, 2022

{Read Text / Prayer}

4 “Does He not see my ways and number all my steps? 5 “If I have walked with falsehood, and my foot has hastened after deceit, 6 let Him weigh me with accurate scales, and let God know my integrity. 7 “If my step has turned from the way, or my heart followed my eyes, or if any spot has stuck to my hands, 8 let me sow and another eat, and let my crops be uprooted.

[i] Review . . .

Job’s Defense Rests (Part 4): Job’s Closing Argument

Part 1 - chapter 27 - Job’s Vow of Innocence

Job begins that chapt. w/an oath before G. that he’s not guilty.

5b . . . Till I die I will not put away my integrity from me.

6a “I hold fast my righteousness and will not let it go. . . .

(After an interlude on wisdom in chapter 28)

Part 2 - chapter 29 - A Soliloquy on Past Blessing

Job remembers t/good old days — his blessed life b4 tragedy struck.

Part 3 - chapter 30 - Singing In the Minor Key

Job complains about how he has been mistreated by others who once respected him — most of all his mistreatment as he sees it by G.

Part 4 - chapter 31 - Job's Closing Argument
(concludes w/"the words of Job have ended")

[ii] This is a difficult chapter

It's t/2d longest chapter in t/book at 40 verses.

In these 40 vv. Job lists some 14 sins of which he pleads innocence while he vows judgment on himself if he's not being honest.

[iii] Structure

Much of this chapter follows an (If / Then / For) structure

"IF I did this, THEN let me be judged FOR G. is not mocked."

IF / THEN / FOR.

Good example in vv. 21-23 ==>

21a If I have lifted up my hand against the orphan,

Because I saw I had support bin the gate,

22 [then] Let my shoulder fall from the socket,

And my arm be broken off at the elbow.

23"For calamity from God is a terror to me,

Job does this to prove his innocence.

Also gives us a glimpse of what t/early chapters mean when we're told that Job was a righteous man who feared God.

[iv] Courtroom language — We've seen that throughout

Here is Job's Closing Argument which we could sum up by saying that his conscience is clear.

[v] For us?

Live for the freedom of a clear conscience

J.E. resolutions was to live as he wished he had when he came to die.

A dirty, defiled conscience is spiritually suffocating. There’s nothing like the clear air of a good conscience before God. Confident living.

Live for the freedom of a clear conscience

- I. Job’s Past Prosperity (chapter 29)** Past
- II. Job’s Present Passion (chapter 30)** Present
- III. Job’s Prospective Pardon (chapter 31)** Future

III. Job’s Prospective Pardon (chapter 31)

First thing we see (covers t/bulk of t/chapt) ==>

A. Job Claims Innocence Over Nine Categories of Sin

I’ve grouped these together categorically.

1. Sexual Sin: Lust and Adultery (1-3, 9-12)

a. We see the sin of lust in verse 1

1 “I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?”

(1) Job made a purity covenant with his eyes

(a) A covenant is a binding contractual agreement between two or more parties

(b) Hebrew phrase is that he literally “cut a covenant”

Cutting a covenant is demonstrated in Gen. 15 where God has Abraham cut sacrificial animals into 2 parts while G passed between them.

(c) This was a covenant symbolically made with the eyes to specifically avoid the sin of lust

i. Here it's to gaze at a young unmarried woman

ii. Was a common idea that sin proceeds from the eyes

Gen 3:6 When the woman SAW that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the EYES . . .

2 Sam. 11:2 Now when evening came David arose from his bed and walked around on the roof of the king's house, and from the roof he SAW a woman bathing; and the woman was very beautiful in appearance.

Psalms 119:37 Turn away my EYES from looking at vanity, And revive me in Your ways.

b. Penalty should Job be guilty of this sin (therefore, lying) is in verses 2 & 3

(1) Job asks a question in verse 2:

2 “And what is the portion of God from above or the heritage of the Almighty from on high?”

What Job is asking is, “What would G. give me as my just reward for doing such a thing?”

(2) Job answers that question in verse 3:

3 “Is it not calamity to the unjust and disaster to those who work iniquity?”

(a) That may sound a little strong for the sin of lust . . . But . . . “Calamity” “Disaster” // “work of iniquity” committed by t/“unjust”

i. Jesus demonstrating the gravity of the sin of lust says this:
Matt. 5:29 “If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

Live for the freedom of a clear conscience

c. We see Job’s innocence of adultery in verses 9-12

(1) Here we see that “IF” / “THEN” / “FOR” structure
9 “If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or I have lurked at my neighbor’s doorway, 10 [then] may my wife grind for another, and let others kneel down over her. 11 “For that would be a lustful crime; moreover, it would be an iniquity punishable by judges. 12 “For it would be fire that consumes to Abaddon, and would uproot all my increase.

(2) The word we saw in verse 1 was *bethulah* (a virgin)

(3) The word used here is *ishah* which in the context refers to a married woman

(4) It begins with the same sin of the heart

9 “If my heart has been enticed by a woman . . .

(a) The hypothetical woman is complicit in this sin — word “enticed” has the idea of being seduced

(b) Second half of the verse goes with the first half

9 . . . or I have lurked at my neighbor’s doorway,

Pictures an adulterer waiting for an opportune time — such as when t/woman’s husband leaves t/house.

i. Job - speaking of the wicked back in chapter 24:

24:15 “The eye of the adulterer waits for the twilight, saying, ‘No eye will see me.’ And he disguises his face.

(5) Job says, “If I’m guilty” (penalty in verse 10)

10 may my wife grind for another, and let others kneel down over her.

(a) Plainly this means may Job’s wife become a slave to another

“Grinding” (as in “grinding meal”) which was a duty of a common slave.

(b) “Grind”

Interesting interp. of this word that goes back to ancient rabbinics: understanding t/word grind as a euphemism for sexual relations.

Could have a double meaning like t/phrase “to lie with” someone

(c) Why would Job make his wife the object of the penalty for his sin?

10 may my wife grind for another, and let others kneel down over her.

i. Isn't that unfair?

Benign example of that be like me saying, "If I get a traffic ticket may my wife do 20 hours of community service"?!?!

No. Job is making a very strong point here that I think demonstrates t/value he has for his wife.

Some are offended that Job's curse would unjustly victimize his wife rather than him. But this criticism misses the whole point. Job is not wishing any evil on his wife; he is asserting his innocence in this area in the strongest possible terms. His wife is completely safe because he has never met the condition. [Talbert, 156]

This would be like a man who has been loyal to his wife over t/years saying, "If I have slept w/another man's wife may my children be accursed." This is using something precious in a way to emphasize how certain one is of t/oath. What Job is doing here . . .

(6) Job gives a double explanation (word "For") in vv. 11-12

11 "For that would be a lustful crime; moreover, it would be an iniquity punishable by judges.

Even in Job's day — before t/land of Israel, b4 t/Law that made adultery a crime punishable by death — t/judges in Job's day would punish such sin.

Second “For” (v. 12) ==>

12 “For it would be fire that consumes to Abaddon [death], and would uproot all my increase.

(a) That is so true

How many lives have been destroyed by sin of adultery? // Children? // Xn testimonies? // Churches torn apart? // Souls destroyed?

(b) There is no more intense desire than that of lust

It is a consuming fire. Any honest man will agree.

James would agree: 1:15 Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.

Proverbs 6:27–29 27 Can a man take fire in his bosom And his clothes not be burned? 28 Or can a man walk on hot coals And his feet not be scorched? 29 So is the one who goes in to his neighbor’s wife; Whoever touches her will not go unpunished.

Don’t fly close to that flame.

Proverbs 5:3–8 3 For the lips of an adulteress drip honey And smoother than oil is her speech; 4 But in the end she is bitter as wormwood, Sharp as a two-edged sword. 5 Her feet go down to death, Her steps take hold of Sheol. 6 She does not ponder the path of life; Her ways are unstable, she does not know it. 7 Now then, my sons, listen to me And do not depart from the words of my mouth. 8 Keep your way far from her And do not go near the door of her house, (cf. Prov. 5 - 7).

Obv. that advice works in reverse. Men & Women (2 to tango)

Live for the freedom of a clear conscience

A. Job Claims Innocence Over Nine Categories of Sin

1. Sexual Sin: Lust and Adultery (1-3, 9-12)

Move more rapidly through the rest . . .

2. Hypocrisy: A Duplicitous Life (4-8)

a. Job affirms that God sees everything

4 “Does He not see my ways and number all my steps?”

14:16 “For now You number my steps . . .”

(1) Another “If” in verse 5

5 “If I have walked with falsehood, and my foot has hastened after deceit,

b. Job affirms that God is the righteous judge over everything

6 let Him weigh me with accurate scales, and let God know my integrity.

c. Three times Job refers to the “feet” as analogous to conduct by using words like step/foot/walked (verse 4,5,7)

(1) Verse 7 we have step / heart / eyes/ hands

7 “If my step has turned from the way, or my heart followed my eyes, or if any spot has stuck to my hands,

“If I have walked away from t/paths of righteousness, or my heart has followed t/lust of t/eyes, or if my hands are stained w/sin.”

(2) THEN (verse 8)

8 let me sow and another eat, and let my crops be uprooted.

In an agrarian culture that would be like saying, “May I become poor & destitute.”

(a) Similar curse in Micah chapter 6

Micah 6:15 “You will sow but you will not reap. You will tread the olive but will not anoint yourself with oil; And the grapes, but you will not drink wine.

Job claims innocence over ==>

2. Hypocrisy: A Duplicious Life (4-8)

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3. Exploitation: Abuse of Power (13-15)

13 “If I have despised the claim of my male or female slaves when they filed a complaint against me,

a. NAS has “slaves” which I think is a misleading translation

(1) Slavery in our cultural context has nothing but racist abusive implications

(2) Better: “Servants”

1:3 . . . very many servants . . .

b. Claim of abuse or neglect by a male or female servant

Get t/impression that Job would never have knowingly abused or neglected 1 of his workers. Also get t/impression that if there was a concern over working conditions, Job acted.

After all, Job had a large estate. No doubt there were foremen supervising the work. We know that abuse/neglect can happen.

For Job, there as no ==>

3. *Exploitation: Abuse of Power (13-15)*

c. Job recognized that all are created equal

14 what then could I do when God arises? And when He calls me to account, what will I answer Him? 15 “Did not He who made me in the womb make him, and the same one fashion us in the womb?

(1) Remember Job’s earlier description of God’s creating him in the womb?

10:10–12 10 ‘Did You not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese; 11 clothe me with skin and flesh, and knit me together with bones and sinews? 12 ‘You have granted me life and lovingkindness; and Your care has preserved my spirit.

Job recognized, as we all should, that our prosperity in life is all of God’s grace. All born equal. Certainly some are born into advantage, some into disadvantage. But as far as who you are, who I am, we are equal as humans born in t/image of God our Creator. Lost that in today’s identity politics where everyone has to have some group they identify with. That’s just further divided us.

Prov 22:2 The rich and the poor have a common bond, the LORD is the maker of them all. [black/white; male/female]

Job didn't abuse his power or exploit those who were under his charge

A. Job Claims Innocence Over Nine Categories of Sin

4. Social Indifference: Stinginess (16-23, 31-32)

Here we have 2 general classes of those who were in social need: Widows & Orphans & Aliens (specif. travelers).

a. To Aliens (31-32)

31 **“Have the men of my tent [his “household”] not said, ‘Who can find one who has not been satisfied with his meat’? 32 “The alien has not lodged outside, for I have opened my doors to the traveler.**

In 22:7 Eliphaz had accused Job of denying “water to the weary” and withholding “food from the hungry.”

(1) Job was lavish with his hospitality!

Clines observes:

At Job's table, of course, there could have been lamb or beef on the menu every day of the week (he has seven thousand sheep and one thousand oxen . . .). We are to imagine Job entertaining guests on the pattern of Abraham in Gen 18:2–8. [David J. A. Clines, 1029]

(2) ANE and hospitality . . .

You would be hospitable to the detriment of your own family (Jdg 19)

(1) Job was lavish with his hospitality!

b. To Orphans and Widows (16-23)

(1) Long run-on sentence here

(a) Again — IF/THEN/FOR

“If I did this; THEN let this be done to me; FOR / because of this.”

(2) Job shared his wealth and his food

16 “If I have kept the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail, 17 or have eaten my morsel alone, and the orphan has not shared it 18 (but from my youth he grew up with me as with a father, and from infancy I guided her),

(a) Verse 18 may be hyperbole or a reference to Job’s household growing up

(3) Job clothed and sheltered the poor

19 if I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, or that the needy had no covering, 20 if his loins [some translations have “hearts”] have not thanked me, and if he has not been warmed with the fleece of my sheep,

(4) We see a fourth “if” in verse 21 which refers to Job’s righteous judgment as an elder at the city gate

21 If I have lifted up my hand against the orphan, because I saw I had support in the gate,

(a) Difficult verse

Job may be saying that even if he had political support to oppress an orphan, he wouldn't have done so. Or . . .

(5) THEN

22 let my shoulder fall from the socket, and my arm be broken off at the elbow.

The NIV Application Commentary has this to say about verse 22 ==>
The ramifications of this idiomatic expression reach beyond anatomical casualty: both arm and hand are metaphors for power. If Job had possessed the power to help and failed to do so, his power would be revoked. [NIV Application Commentary: Job, 326]

(6) FOR or BECAUSE

23 “For calamity from God is a terror to me, and because of His majesty I can do nothing.

(a) This is Job putting into practice the ending words of chapter 28

28:28 . . . ‘Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; And to depart from evil is understanding.’ ”

A. Job Claims Innocence Over Nine Categories of Sin

1. Sexual Sin: (1-3, 9-12)

2. Hypocrisy: (4-8)

3. Exploitation: (13-15)

4. Social Indifference: (16-23, 31-32)

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Numbers 5 & 6 are grouped together ==>

5. Materialism: Trust in Wealth (24-25)

6. Idolatry: Worship of Idols (26-28)

5. Materialism: Trust in Wealth (24-25)

24 “If I have put my confidence in gold, and called fine gold my trust, 25 if I have gloated because my wealth was great, and because my hand had secured so much;

a. This was a sin that Eliphaz accused Job of in chapter 22

22:23–25 23 “If you return to the Almighty, you will be restored; if you remove unrighteousness far from your tent, 24 and place your gold in the dust, and the gold of Ophir among the stones of the brooks, 25 then the Almighty will be your gold & choice silver to you.

Job says, “That’s not true. God has always been my treasure!”

That being true ==>

6. Idolatry: Worship of Idols (26-28)

Here specifically t/astral deities of the sun and moon ==>

26 If I have looked at the sun when it shone or the moon going in splendor, 27 and my heart became secretly enticed, and my hand threw a kiss from my mouth,

a. To “throw a kiss” was an act of pagan worship

T/Roman historian Tacitus [Histories 3.24] wrote that it was a Syrian custom to salute the rising sun.

T/Nabataeans, according to Strabo, honored t/sun, w/altars in each

house & daily libations. T/Greeks, according to Lucian [The Dance 17], would kiss their hands to t/sun as it rose . . . [cited in Clines, 1026]

b. Again, note the “IF/THEN” sequence

24 **“If I have put my confidence in gold . . .**

25 **“If I have gloated because my wealth was great . . .**

26 **If I have looked at the sun when it shone or the moon going in splendor, 27 and my heart became secretly enticed, and my hand threw a kiss from my mouth,**

28 **THEN - that too would have been an iniquity calling for judgment, for I would have denied God above.**

(1) God will have no rivals — Idolatry of any kind

Religious; Materialistic; Relationships. Put away your idols that JC be your sufficient treasure!

In doing so ==>

Live for the freedom of a clear conscience

7. Vengeance: Hatred of Enemies (29-30)

29 **“Have I rejoiced at the extinction of my enemy, or exulted when evil befell him? 30 “No, I have not allowed my mouth to sin by asking for his life in a curse.**

a. This is talking about personal enemies / adversaries

Don’t relish in the misfortune of suffering of others, partic. enemies.

Schadenfreude (shahw-den-froi-duh) - pleasure in other’s affliction.

Proverbs 24:17–18 17 Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, And do

not let your heart be glad when he stumbles; 18 Or the LORD will see it and be displeased . . .

TAP puts it succinctly in Romans 12:14 ==>

Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse.

8. Deceit: Secret Sins and the Fear of Man (33-34)

a. Just look at verse 33 for a moment

33 **“Have I covered my transgressions like Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom, [NAS]**

(1) Like Adam — most translations don’t render this Hebrew word literally

ESV If I have concealed my transgressions as others do . . .

NIV If I have concealed my sin as people do . . .

KJV / NAS have as/like Adam . . .

(a) Could be translated either way — the Hebrew noun “adam” can be a proper name Adam or simply “man”

I think that Job, even though he didn’t have t/book of Genesis (he lived before it was written) knew of Adam & Eve.

Would have become an oral tradition b4 it was recorded in Holy Writ.

(2) The point is that the man Adam - in hiding his sin (literally hiding from God) - is the father of all men & women who do the same

(a) Job didn’t do that — He didn’t do it out of fear of others:

34 because I feared the great multitude, and the contempt of families terrified me, and kept silent and did not go out of doors?

(3) How many of us struggle with the fear of others?

May be demonstrated in your wanting to look good. I struggle w/that. I don't want to look bad or stupid or incompetent before other ppl. Fuels my perfectionism. Some of you are like that.

Have you ever considered that this is wrong? Even sinful?

Fear God & no one else. Secret of wisdom.

9. Corruption: Mistreatment of Tenant Farmers (38-40a)

a. If/If/Then

38 “If my land cries out against me, and its furrows weep together; 39 if I have eaten its fruit without money, or have caused its owners to lose their lives, 40a let briars grow instead of wheat, and stinkweed instead of barley.” . . .

(1) This is not a passage to use in defending ecology

Job is personifying t/land and its furrows as crying against him, IF he were guilty of taking t/produce of others or removing them from t/land that is rightly theirs (thus causing them to lose their lives).

A. Job Claims Innocence Over Nine Categories of Sin

- 1. Sexual Sin: Lust and Adultery (1-3, 9-12)**
- 2. Hypocrisy: A Duplicious Life (4-8)**
- 3. Exploitation: Abuse of Power (13-15)**
- 4. Social Indifference: Stinginess (16-23, 31-32)**
- 5. Materialism: Trust in Wealth (24-25)**
- 6. Idolatry: Worship of Idols (26-28)**
- 7. Vengeance: Hatred of Enemies (29-30)**
- 8. Deceit: Secret Sins and the Fear of Man (33-34)**
- 9. Corruption: Mistreatment of Tenant Farmers (38-40a)**

Job has made his case. Next ==>

B. Job Signs His Affidavit (35-37)

1. First: Job invites God to answer

35a **“Oh that I had one to hear me! Behold, here is my signature; let the Almighty answer me! . . .**

a. “Signature” (tav - the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet)

In old paleo Hebrew it looked like a X (similar to people signing their name with an X).

In Ezek. 9 a tav was placed on t/foreheads of those whom God would spare punishment.

Interesting that in the old Heb. script this tav looked like an X or t/Grk Chi which is a symbol for the name of Christ.

b. Job signs his affidavit

2. Then: Job is so confident of his innocence that he invites God

to hand down a written indictment

35b . . . And the indictment which my adversary has written,

**3. Third: Job is so confident of his innocence that if God could show him guilty he (Job) would publicly display the indictment
36 surely I would carry it on my shoulder, I would bind it to myself like a crown.**

4. Fourth: Job would boldly approach God

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

C. Job’s Defense Rests (40b)

40b . . . The words of Job are ended.

At the end of this section we could almost hope to go right into God’s response in chapter 38. However, we have the words of Elihu to contend with first in chapters 32-37.

1. Job is Concerned With Sins of the Heart (in an age of deeds)

IOW - it’s 1 thing to say “I’ve never committed the act of adultery”

It’s another to say, “I’ve never committed the sin of lust.”

It’s 1 thing to say, “I’ve never murdered.”

It’s another to say, “I’ve never hated.”

I could speak with great confidence as to overt actions . . .

“I have never committed the physical act of adultery.”

“I have never murdered another human being.”

Sins of t/heart? I'm guilty . . .

1. Job is Concerned With Sins of the Heart (in an age of deeds)

Job is way ahead of his time in that regard.

2. Job's Conduct Parallels the Teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount.

a. Job made a covenant with his eyes (heart) that he would not lust after a young woman — or committed adultery with another man's wife. Job knew that t/eyes were the gateway to t/heart.

b. Jesus taught in Matthew 5:28 that to look (eyes) at another with lust was committing adultery in the heart.

a. Job was not glad when his adversary suffered loss. He would not curse his enemy.

b. Jesus taught in Matt. 5 that murder did not end w/the phys. act, but hatred of another was tantamount to murder.

a. Job put no confidence in his wealth and was not proud of his status.

b. In Matthew 6 Jesus warned about storing up treasures on earth & exhorted us to store up heavenly treasure, "for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

a. Job was not stingy, but freely shared his resources with the needy.

b. Jesus in Matthew 5:42 said:

"Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.

a. Job was sincere and free from fear of others.

b. Jesus warned in Matt. 6 that we are to beware of practicing our righteousness before men to be noticed by them.

3. Job was Righteous Yet Sinful

I'll argue that his ultimate righteousness was grounded in JC.

32:1 Then these three men ceased answering Job, because he was righteous in his own eyes.

Was job righteous in his own eyes?

Maybe in that he didn't have a full understanding of God's holiness.

When G. reveals himself to Job at t/end of the book, Job's response?

42:5–6 5 “I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; But now my eye sees You; 6 Therefore I retract, And I repent in dust and ashes.”

Job, if he didn't understand it before, comes to understand t/words of the Psalmist ==>

Psalm 143:2 And do not enter into judgment with Your servant, for in Your sight no man living is righteous.

3. Job was Righteous Yet Sinful

What about you? Are you sinful & condemned in your sin?

Or are you righteous in JC — through your faith in Him as L&S?

Live for the freedom of a clear conscience