

Job 31
October 4, 2026

Open with Prayer

HOOK:

Q: Can a person truly claim moral innocence before God? [Let people engage]

Transition: Job appears to stand before God with an unshakeable confidence in his moral record. But as we examine his actual words, we'll discover that his real concern isn't proving he's sinless—it's something far more urgent. Job isn't asking God to declare him perfect; he's asking God to explain why his suffering seems so disproportionate to whatever wrongs he may have committed. That distinction transforms our entire understanding of what this chapter is really about.

At a basic level, Job asserted an “oath of innocence,” in which he boldly challenged God either to acquit him or to condemn him as charged. Let's read the chapter and glean what we can.

BOOK:

31 “I made a covenant with my eyes
not to look lustfully at a girl.
² For what is man's lot from God above,
his heritage from the Almighty on high?
³ Is it not ruin for the wicked,
disaster for those who do wrong?
⁴ Does he not see my ways
and count my every step?
⁵ “If I have walked in falsehood
or my foot has hurried after deceit—
⁶ let God weigh me in honest scales
and he will know that I am blameless—
⁷ if my steps have turned from the path,
if my heart has been led by my eyes,
or if my hands have been defiled,
⁸ then may others eat what I have sown,
and may my crops be uprooted.
⁹ “If my heart has been enticed by a woman,
or if I have lurked at my neighbor's door,
¹⁰ then may my wife grind another man's grain,
and may other men sleep with her.
¹¹ For that would have been shameful,
a sin to be judged.
¹² It is a fire that burns to Destruction;
it would have uprooted my harvest.
¹³ “If I have denied justice to my menservants and maidservants
when they had a grievance against me,

¹⁴ what will I do when God confronts me?
What will I answer when called to account?
¹⁵ Did not he who made me in the womb make them?
Did not the same one form us both within our mothers?
¹⁶ “If I have denied the desires of the poor
or let the eyes of the widow grow weary,
¹⁷ if I have kept my bread to myself,
not sharing it with the fatherless—
¹⁸ but from my youth I reared him as would a father,
and from my birth I guided the widow—
¹⁹ if I have seen anyone perishing for lack of clothing,
or a needy man without a garment,
²⁰ and his heart did not bless me
for warming him with the fleece from my sheep,
²¹ if I have raised my hand against the fatherless,
knowing that I had influence in court,
²² then let my arm fall from the shoulder,
let it be broken off at the joint.
²³ For I dreaded destruction from God,
and for fear of his splendor I could not do such things.
²⁴ “If I have put my trust in gold
or said to pure gold, ‘You are my security,’
²⁵ if I have rejoiced over my great wealth,
the fortune my hands had gained,
²⁶ if I have regarded the sun in its radiance
or the moon moving in splendor,
²⁷ so that my heart was secretly enticed
and my hand offered them a kiss of homage,
²⁸ then these also would be sins to be judged,
for I would have been unfaithful to God on high.
²⁹ “If I have rejoiced at my enemy’s misfortune
or gloated over the trouble that came to him—
³⁰ I have not allowed my mouth to sin
by invoking a curse against his life—
³¹ if the men of my household have never said,
‘Who has not had his fill of Job’s meat?’—
³² but no stranger had to spend the night in the street,
for my door was always open to the traveler—
³³ if I have concealed my sin as men do,
by hiding my guilt in my heart
³⁴ because I so feared the crowd
and so dreaded the contempt of the clans
that I kept silent and would not go outside
³⁵ (“Oh, that I had someone to hear me!
I sign now my defense—let the Almighty answer me;
let my accuser put his indictment in writing.

³⁶ Surely I would wear it on my shoulder,
I would put it on like a crown.
³⁷ I would give him an account of my every step;
like a prince I would approach him.)—
³⁸ “if my land cries out against me
and all its furrows are wet with tears,
³⁹ if I have devoured its yield without payment
or broken the spirit of its tenants,
⁴⁰ then let briers come up instead of wheat
and weeds instead of barley.”
The words of Job are ended.

Process Observations/Questions:

Q: What stood out to you? What questions do you have? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about man? [Let people engage]

Q: What did you learn about God or Jesus or the Holy Spirit? [Let people engage]

Q: What is your takeaway? [Let people engage]

LOOK:

Guarding your inner life shapes your outer actions. Job’s opening commitment—making “a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a girl”— ([Job 31](#)) demonstrates that moral purity begins with intentional boundaries at the thought level. This speaks directly to how we consume media, engage online, and manage our attention in a digitally saturated world. The principle extends beyond sexuality: what we allow our minds to dwell on inevitably influences our behavior.

Your treatment of the vulnerable reveals your true character. Job’s extensive reflection on caring for the poor, the widow, and the fatherless—including sharing his clothing and providing for the needy from his youth— ([Job 31](#)) establishes that genuine faith expresses itself through concrete acts of justice and mercy. This challenges believers to examine whether their compassion extends beyond sentiment to sacrificial action. His rhetorical question—“Did not he who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same one form us both within our mothers?”— ([Job 31](#)) grounds this obligation in shared humanity and divine image-bearing, making it impossible to dismiss the poor as “not my responsibility.”

Fear of God should motivate ethical living. Job explains his restraint by saying, “I dreaded destruction from God, and for fear of his splendor I could not do such things.” ([Job 31](#)) Rather than viewing God’s judgment as oppressive, Job sees it as a stabilizing force that prevents moral compromise. This invites reflection on whether believers genuinely live with awareness of accountability before God, or whether that awareness has become abstract.

Close in Prayer

Commentaries for Today's Lesson:

Wiersbe, W.W. (1996). *Be Patient*. (pp. 117-120) Victor Books

3. Job looks ahead for God's justice (Job 31)

This chapter records Job's final defense. It is like a legal document in which Job puts himself under oath before God and asks for judgment to fall if God can prove him wrong (Job 31:35–37). Job's only hope was that God would hear his cry and vindicate his name. He could die in peace if he knew that his enemies had been silenced and his reputation restored. In sixteen "if I have ..." statements, Job reviews his life and relationships and asks God to pass judgment. "I sign now my defense" (v. 35, NIV), said Job as he made the oath official and signed the document. "I rest my case!"

In verses 33–37, Job asked God ("my adversary"=judge) to give him three things: a hearing, an answer to his charges, and a document to prove his innocence. If God couldn't do these things, then Job was willing that God send the curses included in Job's oath. Job was prepared to give God an accounting of his every step if that's what it would take to bring the case to an end. Job had nothing to hide; he was not a hypocrite, cringing for fear of the people (vv. 33–34).

Job the man (Job 31:1–12). Job mentions three specific sins that could trip up any man: lust (vv. 1–4), deceit (vv. 5–8), and adultery (vv. 9–12).

(1) *Lust* is the first step toward sin, and sin is the first step toward death (James 1:13–16). It is one thing to see and admire an attractive person, but it is quite something else to look *for the purpose of lusting in the heart*. Jesus said, "Everyone who is looking at a woman in order to indulge his sexual passion for her, already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. 5:28, WUEST). While sin in the heart is not as destructive as sin actually committed, it is the first step toward the act; and you never know where a polluted imagination will lead you. Furthermore, God above looks down and sees both our actions and "the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12–13); and He will judge both. "Is it not ruin for the wicked, disaster for those who do wrong?" (Job 31:3, NIV)

(2) *Deceit* is the second sin that Job denies (vv. 5–8). He never used deception in his business dealings in order to make more money. In fact, he wouldn't even walk with those who did such things. His scales were honest (Lev. 19:35–37; Prov. 11:1), and he was not afraid for God to weigh him! (Dan. 5:27) His heart had not been covetous nor were his hands defiled because he had not taken what was not his. If he were guilty of covetousness and deception, then Job was willing for his next season's crops to be taken by others.

(3) *Adultery* (Job 31:9–12) begins with lust in the heart (v. 1) that leads to furtive attempts to satisfy sinful desires. Job had never lurked about to see when his neighbor's wife would be alone. If he was guilty, then he was willing for his own wife to become another man's slave and mistress! Adultery is a heinous crime that brings shameful and painful consequences in this life, and judgment in the next (Prov. 6:27–29; Eph. 5:3–7; Heb. 13:4).

Job the employer (Job 31:13–15). So careful was Job in his self-examination that he even included his treatment of his servants. Most masters in that day would have ignored this aspect of

life. Job treated his servants generously and settled their grievances fairly because he knew that one day he would have to give an account to God (v. 14; Eph. 6:9). He also knew that he was created by the same God who created them and that he was born in the same way.

Job the neighbor (Job 31:16–23, 29–32). In reply to the false accusations of Eliphaz (22:6–9), Job had already told how he had cared for the poor and needy (29:12–17); but now he repeated it as a part of his oath. He was not boasting; he was defending himself before men and seeking vindication from God. If he had lifted his hand in court against any man, Job hoped that God would rip that arm from its socket.

Job was concerned for the needs of widows, orphans, and the poor. He provided them with food and clothing and came to their defense in court. He even treated them like members of his own family and cared for them until they could care for themselves. God had given Job his wealth, and God could take it away from him if he didn't share it with others (31:23). But Job was also a good neighbor to his enemies (vv. 29–31) and to strangers passing through town (v. 32). Because Job was a wealthy and powerful sheik, no doubt there were many people who envied him and hated him; yet Job was kind to them. He didn't gloat over their misfortunes (Ex. 23:4–5; Prov. 24:17–18; Matt. 5:43–47) or ask God to curse them (Rom. 12:17–21).

Job was also generous to strangers, giving them food to eat and a place to spend the night. None of Job's servants could ever accuse their master of being selfish (Job 31:31, NIV). His home was open to all, and he was generous with his gifts.

Job the worshiper (Job 31:24–28). Job worshiped God with a sincere heart. He didn't worship his wealth or trust it for his security, nor did he take credit for earning it (Deut. 8:17–18). Eliphaz had accused Job of making gold his god (Job 22:24–25), but Job denied it. He did not worship gold nor did he worship the heavenly bodies and secretly "throw them a kiss of homage" (1 Kings 19:18, NIV). If Job committed such a sin, men might not see it; but God would see it and would judge Job for being unfaithful to Him.

Job the steward (Job 31:38–40). In verses 35–37, Job had completed his "official demand" for a hearing and signed the document. Then he remembered one more area that needed to be covered: his stewardship of the land God had given him. Job treated the land as though it were a person. If he had abused the land, it would have cried out against him and wept in pain (v. 38). If Job's field hands had been overworked and underpaid, then God would have had every reason to give Job a harvest of weeds instead of wheat and barley.

Review Job's oath and you will discover that he has asked God to send some terrible judgments if he is guilty of any of these sins: others will eat his harvest and uproot his crops (v. 8); his wife will become another man's servant and mistress (v. 10); his arm will fall from his shoulder (v. 22); his harvest will be weeds and thistles (v. 40). He made it clear that he was willing to face the righteous judgment of God (vv. 14, 23, 28) along with these other judgments.

When the words of Job were ended, everybody sat in silence, wondering what would happen next. Would God send immediate judgment and prove Job guilty? Or would He accept Job's

challenge, appear to him, and give Job opportunity to defend himself? Perhaps God would speak from heaven and answer Job's questions.

Job had challenged God because he was sure God would vindicate him. Job's three friends were sure that God would condemn him. What will God do? The answer may surprise you!

Zuck, R. B. (1985). *Job*. In J. F. Walvoord & R. B. Zuck (Eds.), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (Vol. 1, pp. 753-754) Wheaton, IL: Victor Books

31:1–4. First, Job denied being guilty of **lustfully** desiring someone of the opposite sex. Job knew that the **heritage** God gives sinners is **ruin** (**wicked** translates 'awāl, "an unrighteous person"; cf. 18:21; 27:7; 29:17) and **disaster**, as both Zophar and Job had spoken of the "heritage" (20:29; 27:13). Job therefore did not **look** on female beauty in lust because **God** *looked* on him, seeing all he did (cf. 7:19–20; 10:14; 13:27) and followed his **every step** (cf. 14:16).

31:5–8. Job then denied he had dealt dishonestly with others (cf. **deceit** in 27:4). **If** he had cheated in weighing out goods for others then he was willing for **God** to use **scales** in an **honest** way to judge him. Confident that he was aboveboard in business, Job knew that God would admit he was **blameless**. **If** he were guilty of deviation in his conduct (**steps** and **hands**) or inner motives, he was willing to starve as a result of his **crops** being ruined (cf. 31:12).

31:9–12. The third sin the defendant denied was adultery (v. 1 pertained to lustful viewing; this pertains to sexually immoral actions). **If** it could be proved that he was guilty of such a heinous crime, Job asked that his **wife** be demeaned (grinding **grain** was a menial task, Ex. 11:5) and degraded sexually by **men** (plural). Such **a sin**, he acknowledged, is **shameful** and deserves punishment. Furthermore, like **a fire** it destroys a person's life, leading to **Destruction** ("Abaddon," a synonym of Sheol; cf. Job 26:6; 28:22).

31:13–15. Job also affirmed his fair treatment of his servants. **If** he were unjust with them when they had some complaint, then he would be unable to face **God** now that *he* was complaining to Him. In two parallel questions, that may have startled Job's onlookers, he admitted their equality with him as objects of God's creative work **in the womb** (cf. 10:8–11).

31:16–23. In answer to Eliphaz's false allegations (22:7–9), Job **denied** oppressing **the poor** and **needy**. He was not selfish (31:17), for he shared his food with orphans and even took them in under his roof. He encouraged widows (v. 16) and counseled them against oppressing creditors (v. 18), and he gave **clothing** and even **fleece** to those who lacked it even if they were unappreciative (vv. 19–20). He never mistreated orphans **in court** (lit., "in the gate," the place of court proceedings; cf. 29:7); **if** he had, he asked that his **arm** would **fall ... off** (cf. **hand**, 31:21). He was unusually considerate of the needy, for he feared God's punishment. He knew that his money and rank would not forestall judgment **from God**.

Job's self-defense in verses 13, 16–22 (and in 29:12–17, 25) implied that he had done a better job than the Lord in carrying out justice.

31:24–28. Materialism and idolatry were two other sins Job denounced. Eliphaz had implied that Job was trusting in his riches (22:24), but the patriarch affirmed that he never did so and was not proud of his **wealth**. Besides his heart not being **enticed** toward women (31:9), his **heart** was not even inclined to worship the sky’s luminaries, a common practice in the ancient Near East. Such worship of creation would be punished by the Creator (**God on high**; cf. v. 2).

31:29–34. Other sins Job said he was not guilty of were being glad over **the trouble** of an enemy (an inner attitude) or calling on God to judge (**curse**) him (an outer action). People in his family and his workmen always had plenty to eat, and even travelers enjoyed his hospitality. Nor did he hide his **sin as men do** (or, perhaps better, “as Adam did,” NIV). Had he been hypocritical, the public would have found it out sooner or later and would have scorned him.

31:35–37. Job longed that **someone** would **hear** him, for his committee of accusers was not really listening to his views (cf. 13:6, 17; 21:2). So, like a defendant in court, he signed (figuratively) his statement of **defense**, ready for God to **answer** him. He was so confident of his innocence that he would proudly **wear** God’s written indictments, knowing they could easily be proved false. He called God his **Accuser** (lit., “Man of my indictment”). This was a daring move, for accused people usually do not want their plaintiff’s indictments, whether true or false, to be publicized. Job would refute all God’s incriminations, doing so in confidence **like a prince**.

31:38–40. As a wealthy landowner, Job could have mistreated his employees, but he denied any fraud or injustice. **If** hired farmers had been overworked in the fields or underpaid, his **land** would have cried **out** (a personification) and their **tears** in the **furrows** (spoken in a hyperbole) would have testified **against** him. In one final denial and imprecation, Job stated that **if** he withheld **payment** from his tenant farmers or had disheartened them by unreasonable demands or difficult working conditions, he wished his **wheat** fields would grow thornbushes and his **barley** fields weeds. This would mean a loss of much income in retaliation for his withholding his farmers’ income.

With this oath of innocence, in which **Job** denied almost a dozen sins of action or attitude, he rested his case. Ending his arguments against the belligerent team of tyrants, he hoped to *force* God to move. He apparently felt that such an ultimatum would make God break His silence. If Job were innocent, then God would be required, according to legal practice, to speak up and affirm it. If Job were guilty, then God would be expected to bring down the imprecations on him. But, as Job found out, God *still* remained silent. The sovereign God cannot be pushed into a corner, or pressured into action by anyone’s demand.

The Holy Bible: New International Version. (1984). (Job31). Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.