LET US MAINTAIN A CHRIST-LIKE INTEGRITY

29 *Job continued his discourse, [2]How I long for the months gone by, for those days when God watched over me, [3]when he made his lamp shine above my head, and by his light I walked through the darkness! [4][I yearn for those days] when I was in the prime of my life, when God was an intimate friend residing in my tent, [5]when the Almighty was still with me and my children were around me, [6]when my steps were bathed in cream and the rock poured out streams of oil for me.*

[7]When I went to the gate of the city and took my seat in the public square, [8]the young men saw me and stepped aside and the old men rose to their feet. [9]Princes refrained from speaking and covered their mouths with their hands; [10]the voices of the nobles were hushed, and their tongues stuck to the roof of their mouths. [11]Indeed, whoever heard me, spoke well of me, and those who saw me, commended me, [12]because I rescued the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had no one to assist him. [13]The man who was destitute blessed me; I made the widow's heart sing for joy. [14]I put on righteousness as my clothing, and the justice I practiced was like a robe and a turban. [15]I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. [16]I was a father to the needy; I investigated the stranger's case. [17]I broke the fangs of the wicked and snatched the victims from their teeth.

[18]I thought, "I will die in my 'nest,' after my days have been as numerous as the grains of sand. [19]My roots will spread out to the water, and the dew will lie all night on my branches. [20]My life will remain fresh within me, and I will always have a new bow in my hand."

[21]Men listened to me expectantly, waiting in silence for my counsel. [22]After I had spoken, they were quiet; my words fell gently on their ears. [23]They waited for me like [men wait] for showers and they drank in my words like the spring rain. [24]When I smiled at them, they scarcely believed it; the light of my face was precious to them. [25]I directed their way and sat as their chief; I was like a king among his troops; I was like one who comforts those who mourn.

30 *But now I am mocked by men who are younger than I, [men] whose fathers I would have disdained to put with my sheep dogs. [2]Of what use was the strength of their hands to me, since their vigor was gone from them? [3]Gaunt from want and hunger, they roam the parched land in desolate wastelands at night. [4]They gather salt herbs in the brush, their fuel is the root of the broom tree. [5]They are banished from the community; men shout at them as though they were thieves. [6]They are forced to live in the dried up stream beds, among the rocks and in holes in the ground. [7][Like donkeys,] they bray among the bushes and huddle in the undergrowth. [8]They are a foolish, nameless brood, they have been reduced to being lower than the ground. [9]Now their sons mock me with their songs; I have become a byword among them. [10]They detest me and stand aloof from me; they do not hesitate to spit in my face. [11]Because [God] has loosened my tent cord and afflicted me, they throw off restraint in my presence. [12]At my right hand the young rabble attack; they lay snares for my feet, they erect their siege ramps against me. [13]They break up my pathway; they contribute to my calamity; there is no one to help me against them. [14]They advance as though pouring through a gaping breach [in the wall]; they come rolling in amid the ruins.*

15Terrors overwhelm me; my dignity is driven away as though by the wind, my safety vanishes like a cloud. 16Now my life is ebbing away; days of affliction grip me. 17At night [God] pierces my bones; my gnawing pains never cease. 18With great force he seizes my clothing, [squeezing me tightly in it]; he wraps a belt around me that is no larger than the collar of my tunic. 19He throws me into the mire; I am reduced to dust and ashes. 20I cry out to you, [O God], but you do not answer; I stand up, but you do not acknowledge me. 21You turn against me ruthlessly; with your mighty hand you attack me. 22You pick me up and mount me on the wind; you toss me about with a tempest. 23I know that you will bring me down to death, to the place appointed for all the living. 24Does not one stretch out his hand to break his fall? Or in his calamity, does not one cry for help? 25Did I not weep for those whose days were hard? Was not my soul grieved for the poor? 26But when I hoped for good, calamity came; when I looked for light, darkness came. 27The churning within my bowels never ceases; I am confronted with days of affliction. 28My complexion has become dark, but not by the sun. I stand up in the assembly and cry for help. 29I have become a brother to jackals, a companion of owls. 30My skin becomes black and peels; my body burns with fever. 31My harp is tuned for mourning, and my flute for the sound of wailing.

31 *I made a covenant with my eyes that I would never look lustfully at a young woman; 2for what would be one's lot from God above, his "inheritance" from the Almighty? 3Is it not disaster for the unrighteous and ruin for the workers of iniquity? 4Does he not see my ways and count all my steps? 5If I have walked with falsehood or my foot hurried after deceit—6let [God] weigh me on honest scales, so that he may know my integrity—7if my steps have turned from the path, if my heart has been led by my eyes, or if my hands have been defiled, 8then may others eat what I have sown, and may my crops be uprooted.*

9If my heart has been enticed by a woman, or I have lurked at my neighbor's door, 10then let my wife have intercourse with another man, and let someone else lay upon her; 11for my action would be a heinous crime, it would be an iniquity to be punished. 12Because it is a fire that consumes to destruction, it would burn up all my harvest.

13If I have denied justice to my servant or my maidservant when they had a grievance against me, 14what could I do when God confronts [me]? What would I answer when called to account? 15Did not he who made me in the womb [also] make them? Did not the same one form us both within our mothers?

16If I have denied the poor when they begged, or caused the widow's eye to be downcast [in hopelessness], 17[if] I have eaten my food by myself and did not share it with the fatherless—18indeed, from my youth he grew up with me as though I were his father, and from my birth I have guided the widow—19if I have seen anyone perishing due to lack of clothing, or a poor man without a garment, 20and his heart did not bless me for being warmed with the fleece of my sheep, 21if I have raised my hand against the fatherless because I saw that I had support from the court, 22then let my shoulder fall from its socket; let my arm be broken at the elbow. 23I dread destruction from God; I could not endure his majesty.

24If I have put my trust in gold or identified pure gold as my security, 25if I have rejoiced over my great wealth, or because my hands have gained a fortune, 26if I have regarded the sun in its radiance or the moon moving in splendor, 27and my heart was secretly enticed and my hand offered them a kiss [of homage] from my mouth, 28that

also would be an iniquity worthy of judgment—I would have been unfaithful to God on high.

[29]If I have rejoiced at my enemy's ruin and exulted when calamity befell him—[30]I have never allowed my mouth to sin by asking for his life with a curse. [31]If the men of my household have never said, "Who has not been filled with [Job's] meat?"—[32]the stranger has not had to spend the night in the street; I have opened my door to the traveler.

[33]If I have concealed my sin the way men do, hiding my guilt in my bosom [34]because I so feared the public's [opinion of me] and so dreaded the contempt of my clan that I kept silent and would not leave [my house]—[35]Oh[I wish] that my Judge would give me a hearing! Here is my affidavit! Let the Almighty answer me! Let my accuser put his indictment into writing! [36]I would surely carry it on my shoulder; I would wear it like a crown. [37]I would give him an account of all my steps; like a prince, I would present myself before 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 paying [the laborers], or [if I] have snuffed out the life of its tenants [by overtaxing their strength, [40]then] let briers grow instead of wheat and weeds instead of barley. Job's words are ended. (Job 29:1-31:40)

Introduction

The man was asked the question, "Why do you continue to maintain a relationship with your father?"

The question was asked out of curiosity, the inquirer being acquainted with the man's family background. When the man was still a very young boy his father abandoned the family. Yet over the course of the years this son, who was now a grown man, had always kept in contact with his father. Every year he would make a trip to the coast to visit his father.

Intrigued by this man and his on-going commitment to his unfaithful father, the inquirer asked the question, "Why do you continue to maintain a relationship with your father?"

The man replied, "Because it is my Christian obligation to honor my father—that is one of God's commandments. Even if my father has been unfaithful, I am still obligated to fulfill my Christian responsibility. It is a matter of maintaining a Christ-like integrity."

This is exactly what we find to be true of Job in this present passage. Job asserts that his change of condition (from a position of honor to one of dishonor) has not caused him to forsake his integrity. He continues to maintain a Christ-like integrity: *"until I die, I will not renounce my integrity"* (Job 27:5b.) By the grace of God, may we as Christians do the same.

I. Let Us Maintain a Christ-like Integrity, In Every Circumstance of Life

Job longingly recalls his former state and laments for those days of honor and prosperity and communion with God (29:1-17.) He now proceeds to describe his former condition. It was a time when God watched over him (29:2,) affording Job His divine protection and favor. Recall the devil's charge, Satan asks the LORD, *"Have you not put a hedge all around him, as well as around his household and all that he owns? You have blessed the work of his hands, and his flocks spread out over the land"* (1:10.) The light of God's presence shone upon him and illuminated the darkness (29:3)—giving Job direction, courage, and confidence. He experienced the friendship of God (29:4) and the Almighty was with him (29:5)—the LORD was on Job's side, granting Job His divine favor. One evidence of God's favor was the blessing of Job's children being with him (29:5b.)

Job was blessed with an abundance of good things: *"my steps were bathed in cream and the rock poured out streams of oil for me"* (29:6.) Job's flocks produced such an abundance of curds that, figuratively speaking, he had the luxury of bathing his feet in thick cream; and his olive presses, made out of stone, were flowing with streams of oil (Hartley, pp. 388-389.)

Job held a high position at the city gate (29:7.) He was honored by young and old alike (29:8.) His counsel was highly respected (29:9-11a.) Job was blessed for his role as a defender of the poor and the oppressed (29:11b-13.) He clothed himself in righteousness and wore justice like a turban (29:14.) He showed mercy to the helpless, serving as eyes to the blind, feet to the lame, and being a father to the needy (29:15-16.) He showed himself to be a champion of justice and a defender of the oppressed: *"I broke the fangs of the wicked and snatched the victims from their teeth"* (29:17.)

Job expresses the confidence he entertained back in those days; namely, the conviction that he would enjoy such a state of honor and blessing all the days of his life (29:18-25.) He said to himself, *"I shall die in my 'nest'"* (29:18)—Job anticipated dying a peaceful and secure death after a long and useful life crowned with God's blessing. He describes himself as a tree whose root spreads out to the waters and upon whose branches the dew rests (29:19.) Here is the picture of a fruitful tree that is nourished by an abundance of water—again, the imagery depicts spiritual fruitfulness and usefulness in service to God with the accompanying experience of God's abundant blessing, both spiritually and materially.

The image now changes to that of a victorious and glorious warrior who, as verses 7-17 indicated, fought valiantly and successfully for the cause of righteousness (29:20.) Again Job returns to contemplating how his counsel was sought and how it was given the utmost respect; indeed, Job's ministry was like the refreshing rain (29:21-23.) Job occupied the position of most honored counselor and even that of benevolent king (29:24-25.)

But now, contrary to all expectation, Job finds himself in a far different condition, a condition of wretchedness that he describes in the following terms (30:1-10.) Now the young men hold him in derision (30:1a;) whereas formerly they feared and respected him (29:8a.) The offspring of the most contemptible men (as those men are described in 30:1b-8) now hold Job in contempt. The fathers of these youths who now hold Job in contempt were themselves such worthless and despicable characters that Job distained to even set them with the dogs who guarded his flocks (30:1b.) Since the Hebrews distained dogs as scavengers, those who were in charge of dogs were considered to have a very low job (Hartley, p. 397.)

Those men were worthless vagabonds, the derelicts of society who were driven away as one would drive away a thief, they were reduced to living like wild beasts of the wilderness (30:2-7.) They are described as being *"a foolish, nameless brood"*—literally, *"[men of] no name;"* i.e.; worthless men of no reputation, men who made no contribution to society and displayed no quality of character (30:8.) Now the children of these worthless men mock Job in their songs and use his name as a byword (30:9)—they use his name as a term of derision, almost in the place of a vulgarity or curse word. The sons of worthless men now abhor Job, they stand aloof from him, and they spit in his face (30:10.)

What has brought about this shocking change in condition for Job? Job attributes it to an act of God (30:11.) Because God has loosened Job's *"tent cord and afflicted [him]"*, that is why the sons of despicable men throw off restraint in Job's presence. God has loosened the cord that holds Job's "tent" erect; consequently, the "tent" sags into a crumpled heap. Witnessing this act of God against Job, the worthless youths have become emboldened to heap abuse upon Job without fear or restraint; they cast off restraint in his presence (Hartley's translation and commentary on 30:11, p. 400.) The young rabble menacingly rise up against Job: they are first depicted as a terrifying mob (30:12a,) and then as a fierce army that has broken through Job's defenses and is intent on his destruction (30:12b-14.) Terrors have been unleashed against Job: his dignity has been chased away by the wind, and his well-being has vanished like a cloud (30:15.)

Job now expresses his grief as he contemplates his change of circumstances and the fact that it has been brought about by the hand of God for a reason unbeknown to Job (30:16-19.) Job laments, *"my life is ebbing away"* (30:16a.) His days are filled with affliction (30:16b)—affliction of body, and even more painful, affliction of soul. The nights give him no respite: at night Job's gnawing pains never cease (30:17)—his pains are viewed as a wild animal that ceaselessly gnaws away at Job's flesh. Again Job testifies that it is God Himself who has brought him into this state and who even now is afflicting him: *"With great force [God] seizes my clothing, [squeezing me tightly in it]; he wraps a belt around me that is no larger that the collar of my tunic"* (30:18.) Job imagines that God has grabbed him by his clothing and pulled it so tightly about him that every part of his body screams out in agonizing pain (Hartley, p. 402.) God throws Job into the mire (30:19a;) indeed, Job finds himself being reduced to dust and ashes (30:19b)—here is an allusion to

the curse pronounced against Adam: *"you are dust, and unto dust shall you return"* (Gen. 3:19.)

In his agony of body, mind, and soul, Job cries out to God (30:20a.) But God does not answer him (30:20a): God does not come to his aid, He does not relieve him, He does not restore him to fellowship and blessing. On the contrary, when Job presents himself before God in his pitiable condition, God does not acknowledge him (30:20b.) Not only does God not acknowledge Job and do nothing to help him, Job protests that God has ruthlessly turned against him (30:21a.) With His mighty hand, God attacks Job (30:21b)—doing so by means of Job's cruel tormentors (30:1-15.) God lifts Job up to the wind and allows him to be swept away by its violent force (30:22.)

Job is convinced that God will bring him to death (30:23.) It is evident that God has set Himself against Job and it appears—from His opposition to Job as described in verses 20-22—that He will carry out His judgments to the inevitable end, even to Job's destruction in death. Note: The fact that God does not see fit to immediately relieve Job of his suffering and restore him to fellowship, leads Job to conclude in his moment of weakness that God has abandoned him and is intent on bringing him to death. In contrast to Job in his moment of weakness, consider Paul's confident faith when exposed to a similar fate and anticipating a similar encounter with death:

> *We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. [9]Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened so that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. [10]He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us ...* (2 Cor. 1:8-10)

Even though he has allowed himself to become engulfed in despair, Job protests that it is only natural for a man to cry out for help—even if he has no confidence that such help will be given (30:24-31.) Job asks, *"Does not one stretch out [his] hand [to break] his fall? Or in his calamity, [does not one] cry for help?"* (30:24.) It is an instinctive reaction to stretch out the hand in an effort to break one's fall; likewise, it is an instinctive response for one to cry out to God for help in the time of suffering—especially one who has been devoted to God and has known His fellowship.

When Job himself was confronted with suffering, he was moved to pity and wept for him who faced hard times and he grieved for the poor (30:25.) But now that he is in trouble, his cries go unheeded; indeed, he receives the opposite of mercy and aid: "*when I hoped for good, calamity came; when I looked for light, darkness came"* (30:26.) Again Job gives expression to the anguish he is experiencing: *"the churning within my bowels never ceases"* (30:27.) He receives no help from God or

from his fellow man: *"I stand up in the assembly and cry for help"* (30:28,) but, the implication is, no help is offered.

Job feels that he has become a brother to jackals (30:29)—jackals and owls were detestable creatures that inhabited the wilderness. Feeling forsaken by God and abandoned by the community, left to suffer alone—*"my body burns with fever"* (30:30b)—Job's previous joy has turned to mourning: *"my harp is tuned for mourning"* (30:31.)

Nevertheless, even in this most extreme circumstance, Job has not abandoned his integrity—as is clear from his testimony in chapter 31. The fact that he continues to maintain his integrity is evidence of his underlying confidence in the integrity of God, despite the clouds of doubt caused by his present condition, which subject his soul to moments of bitter darkness.

Like Job, may we by God's grace maintain a Christ-like integrity; in every circumstance of life:

> *This is [part of] your calling, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example with the intention that you should follow in his footsteps. 22He "committed no sin, neither was any deceit found in his mouth." 23When they insulted him, he did not insult them; when he suffered, he did not threaten; rather, he committed [himself] to him who judges righteously.* (1 Pet. 2:21-23)

II. Let Us Maintain a Christ-like Integrity, In Every Aspect of Life

Job declares himself to be innocent with regard to the sin of lust and fornication (31:1-4.) He has made a covenant with his eyes that he would never look lustfully at a young woman (31:1.) Job recognizes that the lust of the eyes and of the heart is tantamount to the actual act of fornication: *"You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' 28But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart"* (Matt. 5:27-28.) Job's commitment to moral purity stems from his knowledge of the fact that God is a righteous Judge who punishes wrongdoing (31:2-3) and from whose sight nothing can be hidden (31:4.)

Job declares himself to be innocent with regard to the sin of falsehood and deceit (31:5-6.) In all his dealings with his fellow man Job has conducted himself with integrity, never resorting to dishonesty for personal advantage or to avoid the consequences of personal error. Because he has always used just balances in his dealings with others, Job is not afraid to have his conduct weighed on honest scales (31:6.)

Job declares himself to be innocent with regard to the sin of covetousness (31:7-8.) He has not allowed his life to be controlled by a covetousness that would cause his steps to turn out of the way (31:7a.) He is referring to a covetousness

that would cause him to forsake the path of righteousness in order to secure by illegal and unjust means the thing he coveted. Job asserts that he has not allowed his heart to be led by his eyes (31:7b)—he has not allowed himself to entertain a covetous desire for what he has seen.

Job declares that he is innocent with regard to the sin of adultery (31:9-12.) His thoughts about covetousness turn from the coveting of material possessions to the coveting of another man's wife. Job has not allowed his heart to entertain covetous thoughts about his neighbor's wife, thus he has abstained from the sin of adultery in both thought and deed (31:9.) He has guarded his heart and his actions in this area of life because he recognizes this particular sin to be a heinous crime (31:11)—a sin that betrays a neighbor's trust and undermines society.

Job testifies that he has never dealt with his servants in a sinful way (31:13-15.) He has not denied justice to his servants when they had a grievance against him (31:13.) Job has not callously ignored or ruthlessly suppressed the grievances presented to him by his servants; he has listened to their case and has sought to deal with them in a just and merciful way. He has shown such respect towards his servants because he recognizes that he and they share a common human identity (31:15.) In no way does Job allow himself to think that he is superior to his servants because of his higher social position. Job is fully aware of the truth expressed in Proverbs 22:2, *"The rich and the poor have this in common: Jehovah is the maker of them all."*

Looking beyond his own servants, Job testifies that he has never mistreated any of the poor or the weak that he has encountered (31:16-23.) Job has never turned the poor away when they expectantly looked to him for aid (31:16.) He has always been mindful to share his bread with the fatherless (31:17)—those who have no source of support. His concern for the needy and his ministry to them has been his constant practice since his youth (31:18.) Whenever he saw anyone in need of clothing he never failed to provide for them (31:19-20.) He has never taken advantage of the fatherless by misusing his prominent position of authority at their expense (31:21.) Again, Job has been diligent to practice mercy and social justice because of his keen awareness of the justice of God (31:22-23.)

Job testifies to his innocence with regard to the sin of idolatry (31:24-28.) Job has never idolized his wealth, looking to that wealth as his source of security and confidence, instead of putting his trust in the LORD his God (31:24-25.) Nor has Job ever engaged in the practice of actual religious idolatry (31:26-28)—he has never offered to the heavenly bodies (the sun and the moon) the worship that must be offered unto the Creator alone. Apparently, Job is referring to the gesture in which one kissed his hand and then threw the kiss to the heavenly bodies as a sign of affection and devotion, a widespread pagan practice (Hartley, p. 419.)

Job testifies that he has ever been faithful to practice the godly attributes of kindness and mercy (31:29-32.) He has never rejoiced when his enemy met with adversity or calamity; indeed, Job has never succumbed to the temptation of asking God to curse his enemy (31:29-30.) He has been faithful in showing hospitality to travelers who have passed his way: he has fed them and provided lodging for them—and his hospitality is well attested to throughout the community (31:31-32.)

Job testifies that he has ever been diligent to maintain good communion with God and man, never allowing his relationships to be impaired by unconfessed sin (31:33-34.) Job here acknowledges that as a fallen human being he has committed acts of sin, but he has always sought reconciliation and has always made restitution. He affirms that he has never sought to conceal his sin or hidden himself in shame; he has been diligent to confess his sins and repent of them.

Job has never been guilty of abusing the land (31:38-40.) Recognizing that the earth is God's creation, and ultimately God's possession, Job has been ever careful to be a good steward of the land: he has not abused the land, causing it to cry out against him (31:38.) Furthermore, Job testifies that he has never taken advantage of his laborers (31:39;) he has never withheld their just wages or overworked them. If he has offended, Job pronounces a curse against himself upon his own land: *"let briers grow instead of wheat"* (31:40.)

As he testifies in great detail, Job has been faithful to practice integrity in every aspect of his life and in all of his relationships. His integrity has been motivated by a holy fear of God, knowing that the LORD is a righteous Judge who punishes the wicked and rewards the righteous.

Being rebuked and inspired by Job's godly example, may we, in reliance upon God's grace, maintain a Christ-like integrity in every aspect of our lives:

> *... just as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16because it is written, "Be holy, because I am holy." 17And if you call upon the Father who judges impartially according to each one's work, live your remaining time [on earth] in fear.* (1 Pet. 1:15-17)

III. Let Us Maintain a Christ-like Integrity, Committing Ourselves to God with Confidence

Having testified to his innocence, Job now presents an affidavit verifying the truthfulness of his testimony (31:35a.) Since he is unaware of any outstanding sin for which God could rightfully inflict upon him the "judgments" he now experiences, Job requests that God would present him with a written indictment (31:35b)—so that Job may know his crime, repent of it, and be restored to the divine fellowship.

If Job were presented with a written indictment, he would surely carry it on his shoulder; he *"would [wear] it like a crown"* (31:36.) Because Job is confident of his innocence, he is confident that the indictment God would present would actually prove to be a divine "proclamation of acquittal." Note: The Hebrew term translated, *"indictment,"* literally means "book" (סֵפֶר.) This term may refer to various kinds of legal documents, not just an indictment (Hartley, p. 424.) Consequently, upon receiving such a document from the Almighty, Job would proudly display it, serving notice to all that he has been found innocent and has been acquitted before the court of the Judge of all the earth. As a result of having been acquitted by the Almighty, Job would be restored to honor: *"like a prince,"* and restored to fellowship with God: *"I would present myself before [God]"* (31:37.)

Thus, despite his present condition, (being subjected to apparently unwarranted tribulations and being treated like a lawbreaker,) Job steadfastly maintains his integrity and expresses his confidence that God will vindicate him.

Likewise, may we as Christians always maintain a Christ-like integrity; committing ourselves to God with confidence:

> *… Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example with the intention that you should follow in his footsteps. 22He "committed no sin, neither was any deceit found in his mouth." 23When they insulted him, he did not insult them; when he suffered, he did not threaten; rather, he committed [himself] to him who judges righteously.* (1 Pet. 2:21-23)

Conclusion

If we would live a Christ-like life, as we are called to do, we must maintain a Christ-like integrity at all times. Relying upon God's grace, let us maintain a Christ-like integrity: 1) in every circumstance of life; 2) in every aspect of life; and 3) committing ourselves to God with confidence.