

J O B

CHAPTER 31

Introduction

Job lived before Moses, probably before Abraham or contemporary with Abraham. That means Job lived *before* the Ten Commandments or any of the laws of Moses were given as a rule of life. Yet Job followed some kind of law; he says of himself, “Neither have I gone back from the commandment of His lips; I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food.”¹

What was the commandment or law that guided and directed Job? We’re not told, but I believe we are shown here in chapter thirty-one.

Job reviews his rule of life. Though he discusses many separate issues, this rule of life really falls into two main categories: His relationship with God, and his relationships with his fellow men and women.

Once you see this you can ask yourself, “What is the universal law or commandment that encompasses your relationship with God and your relationships with others?”

Jesus gives it to you in Matthew 22:37-40, saying,

Matthew 22:37 ...”You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.”

Matthew 22:38 "This is the first and great commandment.

Matthew 22:39 "And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

Matthew 22:40 "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

¹ Job 23:12

Although Jesus did not give this law until centuries after Job lived, it has *always* been “the first and greatest commandment” to “love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” Loving your neighbor as yourself is the inevitable result of loving God in this way. Whether you lived before the Ten Commandments and the laws of Moses, after they were given, or after they were fulfilled by Jesus - - Loving God and loving your neighbor as yourself is God’s code of conduct and your rule of life.

We’ll see two things in our study:

#1 Love For Your Savior
Conquers Your Lusts

#2 Love For Your Neighbor
Controls Your Living

*

*

*

#1 Love For Your Savior
Conquers Your Lusts
(v1-12 & 24-28)

These verses, and much of the Bible, can be approached in at least two ways. You can read them from the perspective of God’s **law**, or you can read them from the perspective of God’s **love**. You can see in them, and in the Bible, the *letter* of God’s law; or you can see the *spirit* of God’s love.

The Pharisees of Jesus day always stressed the letter of the law. On one occasion they were distressed because the disciples of Jesus were plucking heads of grain on the Sabbath - - a thing they considered unlawful by their strict interpretation. Jesus, stressing the spirit of love, answered them and said,

Mark 2:27 ... "The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

The Sabbath wasn’t intended to be a burdensome law; it was given in the spirit of love. It was given to benefit mankind. The Pharisees, and many modern-day Pharisees, enforce the letter of the law when Jesus would have us led by the spirit of the law.

I say all this so that you won't read Job thirty-one as simply a list of rules and regulations you must keep. Keeping them isn't the key to loving God more; loving God more is the key to keeping them!

Job's love for God had resulted in his rule of life. It conquered many fleshly lusts in his life: *infidelity, insincerity, impurity, and idolatry.*

▶▶ Love for your Savior conquers infidelity:

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

Job 31:2 For what is the allotment of God from above, And the inheritance of the Almighty from on high?

Job 31:3 Is it not destruction for the wicked, And disaster for the workers of iniquity?

Job 31:4 Does He not see my ways, And count all my steps?

"Infidelity" means *unfaithfulness*, especially to a spouse. Job is describing lustfully looking upon a woman. He sees the end of letting his lusts rule him - - he would inherit destruction and disaster. Not that God Himself brings it upon you; it is the inevitable result of following after your lusts. I submit our president as an example of the destruction and disaster that accompany following after your lusts.

Instead, Job sees that God has a better way for him - - God sees his ways and counts his steps. God isn't a cosmic killjoy; He is the loving Father Who knows best.

He takes a second look at infidelity in verses nine through twelve:

Job 31:9 "If my heart has been enticed by a woman, Or if I have lurked at my neighbor's door,

Job 31:10 Then let my wife grind for another, And let others bow down over her.

Job 31:11 For that would be wickedness; Yes, it would be iniquity deserving of judgment.

Job 31:12 For that would be a fire that consumes to destruction, And would root out all my increase.

His point is the same as before: Infidelity progresses to destruction, like a fire that consumes you and roots out your increase - - destroying your future.

We're not familiar with calling curses upon ourselves, but in Job's day it was a common way of emphasizing that you were telling the truth. His curse sounds like he's getting back at his wife! You

remember Mrs. Job? Mrs. “Curse-God-and-die” Job? But just the opposite is true: This statement is so powerful precisely because he wouldn’t want these things to come upon his wife. Job loved his wife - - regardless her faults and failures.

▶▶ Love for your Savior conquers insincerity:

Job 31:5 "If I have walked with falsehood, Or if my foot has hastened to deceit,
Job 31:6 Let me be weighed on honest scales, That God may know my integrity.

Job was no hypocrite. He told the truth. Was it because he didn’t want to get caught? No; it was because he was confident that God’s judgment was always perfect and therefore things would even out in the end. Again, the emphasis was on love, not law.

▶▶ Love for your Savior conquers impurity:

Job 31:7 If my step has turned from the way, Or my heart walked after my eyes, Or if any spot adheres to my hands,
Job 31:8 Then let me sow, and another eat; Yes, let my harvest be rooted out.

“If any spot adheres to my hands” refers to impurity in general. Job was sensitive to even slight deviations from the path of obedience. Why? Because God, in His love for Job, had a rich harvest for him to enjoy. But he would *not* enjoy it if he allowed impurity to take hold in his life.

▶▶ Love for your Savior conquers idolatry:

Look at verses twenty-four through twenty-eight:

Job 31:24 "If I have made gold my hope, Or said to fine gold, 'You are my confidence';
Job 31:25 If I have rejoiced because my wealth was great, And because my hand had gained much;
Job 31:26 If I have observed the sun when it shines, Or the moon moving in brightness,
Job 31:27 So that my heart has been secretly enticed, And my mouth has kissed my hand;
Job 31:28 This also would be an iniquity deserving of judgment, For I would have denied God who is above.

Idolatry is in view here - - trusting in material things, worshipping the works of your hands, or the heavenly bodies. It deserves judgment, but that is not how you conquer it - - by being afraid. You conquer it by loving God Who is “above” and, therefore, able to oversee your life in His wisdom and providence.

Love for God, for your Savior, Jesus Christ, is your great motivator. The Christian life is not a life of law, but one of love. When I love Jesus, I find myself keeping His laws as a result, as a byproduct. Love fulfills the law.

#2 Love For Your Neighbor
Controls Your Living
(v13-23 & 29-40)

The remaining verses highlight Job's relationships with his fellow men and women. Love for them motivated him in his dealings with them.

Job 31:13 "If I have despised the cause of my male or female servant When they complained against me,
Job 31:14 What then shall I do when God rises up? When He punishes, how shall I answer Him?
Job 31:15 Did not He who made me in the womb make them? Did not the same One fashion us in the womb?

Job had been a wealthy landowner with many slaves and servants. Yet he understood that he and they were made in the image of God - - that God loved them all, and that everyone was equal in God's judgment. Thus the love of God for all mankind motivated him to love all mankind.

His love for others extended beyond his own household:

Job 31:16 "If I have kept the poor from their desire, Or caused the eyes of the widow to fail,
Job 31:17 Or eaten my morsel by myself, So that the fatherless could not eat of it
Job 31:18 (But from my youth I reared him as a father, And from my mother's womb I guided the widow);
Job 31:19 If I have seen anyone perish for lack of clothing, Or any poor man without covering;
Job 31:20 If his heart has not blessed me, And if he was not warmed with the fleece of my sheep;
Job 31:21 If I have raised my hand against the fatherless, When I saw I had help in the gate;
Job 31:22 Then let my arm fall from my shoulder, Let my arm be torn from the socket.
Job 31:23 For destruction from God is a terror to me, And because of His magnificence I cannot endure.

Job saw God's "magnificence" and was motivated to help those citizens who were in distress. He's probably referring to God's magnificence in showing mercy to and having compassion on the

poor, the widow, the fatherless. God loved them; Job loved them and put his love in action to help them.

Who is your neighbor on this planet? Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan to show the Jews that everyone is your neighbor, and that you are the neighbor of everyone. The love of Jesus is what motivates you to reach out to others.

What about your enemies?

Job 31:29 "If I have rejoiced at the destruction of him who hated me, Or lifted myself up when evil found him

Job 31:30 (Indeed I have not allowed my mouth to sin By asking for a curse on his soul);

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

Job 31:32 (But no sojourner had to lodge in the street, For I have opened my doors to the traveler);

Job had compassion on those who hated him and spoke well of those who spoke evil of him.

Job 31:33 If I have covered my transgressions as Adam, By hiding my iniquity in my bosom,

Job 31:34 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;

He *did* "go out the door," encountering friend and foe alike with the love of God. He was a good citizen - - he was God's citizen - - and he did spiritual business using the currency of love.

Job 31:38 "If my land cries out against me, And its furrows weep together;

Job 31:39 If I have eaten its fruit without money, Or caused its owners to lose their lives;

Job 31:40 Then let thistles grow instead of wheat, And weeds instead of barley." The words of Job are ended.

Job had been a wealthy landowner. He had managed his land in a way that helped others to prosper. He understood God's blessing upon his life to be used to enrich the lives of others.

Love for his neighbor controlled Job's daily life in terms of his investment of his time and resources. He was on the lookout for ways in which he could love others - - practical ways that brought help into their lives. He loved them as he loved himself; in other words, he did for them what he would want done for himself.

The Christian life is by definition others-oriented. Love for God compels you to love others with a love that is practical.

Conclusion

We skipped a few verses. Let's read them now:

Job 31:35 Oh, 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 31:36 Surely I would carry it on my shoulder, And bind it on me like a crown;

Job 31:37 I would declare to Him the number of my steps; Like a prince I would approach Him.

God is going to address Job. He's **not** going to *answer* him; He's going to address him, and there's a big difference! We'll be getting to it soon, right after a young man named Elihu has his say.

For now, "the words of Job are ended." They end with him frustrated, but still upholding the love of God.

Love had been the key factor in his life, as you see in his review of his rule of life. His three friends had sought to put him under the law, accusing him of some heinous hidden sin. Job maintained his integrity and would not sell-out on love in favor of the law.

Don't be put under the letter of the law. Instead, be lifted up by the spirit of love, and you'll find yourself keeping the law as a byproduct.

