

Thursday, August 29

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Job 31:1 - 33:33

31 1 “I made a covenant with my eyes not to look with lust at a young woman. 2 For what has God above chosen for us? What is our inheritance from the Almighty on high? 3 Isn’t it calamity for the wicked and misfortune for those who do evil? 4 Doesn’t he see everything I do and every step I take? 5 “Have I lied to anyone or deceived anyone? 6 Let God weigh me on the scales of justice, for he knows my integrity. 7 If I have strayed from his pathway, or if my heart has lusted for what my eyes have seen, or if I am guilty of any other sin, 8 then let someone else eat the crops I have planted. Let all that I have planted be uprooted. 9 “If my heart has been seduced by a woman, or if I have lusted for my neighbor’s wife, 10 then let my wife serve another man; let other men sleep with her. 11 For lust is a shameful sin, a crime that should be punished. 12 It is a fire that burns all the way to hell. It would wipe out everything I own. 13 “If I have been unfair to my male or female servants when they brought their complaints to me, 14 how could I face God? What could I say when he questioned me? 15 For God created both me and my servants. He created us both in the womb. 16 “Have I refused to help the poor, or crushed the hopes of widows? 17 Have I been stingy with my food and refused to share it with orphans? 18 No, from childhood I have cared for orphans like a father, and all my life I have cared for widows. 19 Whenever I saw the homeless without clothes and the needy with nothing to wear, 20 did they not praise me for providing wool clothing to keep them warm? 21 “If I raised my hand against an orphan, knowing the judges would take my side, 22 then let my shoulder be wrenched out of place! Let my arm be torn from its socket! 23 That would be better than facing God’s judgment. For if the majesty of God opposes me, what hope is there? 24 “Have I put my trust in money or felt secure because of my gold? 25 Have I gloated about my wealth and all that I own? 26 “Have I looked at the sun shining in the skies, or the moon walking down its silver pathway, 27 and been secretly enticed in my heart to throw kisses at them in worship? 28 If so, I should be punished by the judges, for it would mean I had denied the God of heaven. 29 “Have I ever rejoiced when disaster struck my enemies, or become excited when harm came their way? 30 No, I have never sinned by cursing anyone or by asking for revenge. 31 “My servants have never said, ‘He let others go hungry.’ 32 I have never turned away a stranger but have opened my doors to everyone. 33 “Have I tried to hide my sins like other people do, concealing my guilt in my heart? 34 Have I feared the crowd or the contempt of the masses, so that I kept quiet and stayed indoors? 35 “If only someone would listen to me! Look, I will sign my name to

my defense. Let the Almighty answer me. Let my accuser write out the charges against me. **36** I would face the accusation proudly. I would wear it like a crown.**37** For I would tell him exactly what I have done. I would come before him like a prince. **38** “If my land accuses me and all its furrows cry out together,**39** or if I have stolen its crops or murdered its owners, **40** then let thistles grow on that land instead of wheat, and weeds instead of barley.” Job’s words are ended.

32 **1** Job’s three friends refused to reply further to him because he kept insisting on his innocence. **2** Then Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite, of the clan of Ram, became angry. He was angry because Job refused to admit that he had sinned and that God was right in punishing him. **3** He was also angry with Job’s three friends, for they made God appear to be wrong by their inability to answer Job’s arguments. **4** Elihu had waited for the others to speak to Job because they were older than he. **5** But when he saw that they had no further reply, he spoke out angrily. **6** Elihu son of Barakel the Buzite said, “I am young and you are old, so I held back from telling you what I think. **7** I thought, ‘Those who are older should speak, for wisdom comes with age.’ **8** But there is a spirit within people, the breath of the Almighty within them, that makes them intelligent. **9** Sometimes the elders are not wise. Sometimes the aged do not understand justice. **10** So listen to me, and let me tell you what I think. **11** “I have waited all this time, listening very carefully to your arguments, listening to you grope for words. **12** I have listened, but not one of you has refuted Job or answered his arguments. **13** And don’t tell me, ‘He is too wise for us. Only God can convince him.’ **14** If Job had been arguing with me, I would not answer with your kind of logic! **15** You sit there baffled, with nothing more to say.**16** Should I continue to wait, now that you are silent? Must I also remain silent? **17** No, I will say my piece. I will speak my mind. **18** For I am full of pent-up words, and the spirit within me urges me on. **19** I am like a cask of wine without a vent, like a new wineskin ready to burst! **20** I must speak to find relief, so let me give my answers. **21** I won’t play favorites or try to flatter anyone. **22** For if I tried flattery, my Creator would soon destroy me.

33 **1** “Listen to my words, Job; pay attention to what I have to say. **2** Now that I have begun to speak, let me continue. **3** I speak with all sincerity; I speak the truth. **4** For the Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life. **5** Answer me, if you can; make your case and take your stand. **6** Look, you and I both belong to God. I, too, was formed from clay. **7** So you don’t need to be afraid of me. I won’t come down hard on you. **8** “You have spoken in my hearing, and I have heard your very words.**9** You said, ‘I am pure; I am without sin; I am innocent; I have no guilt.**10** God is picking a quarrel with me, and he considers me his enemy. **11**He puts my feet in the stocks and watches my every move.’ **12** “But you are wrong,

and I will show you why. For God is greater than any human being. **13** So why are you bringing a charge against him? Why say he does not respond to people's complaints? **14** For God speaks again and again, though people do not recognize it. **15** He speaks in dreams, in visions of the night, when deep sleep falls on people as they lie in their beds. **16** He whispers in their ears and terrifies them with warnings. **17** He makes them turn from doing wrong; he keeps them from pride. **18** He protects them from the grave, from crossing over the river of death. **19** "Or God disciplines people with pain on their sickbeds, with ceaseless aching in their bones. **20** They lose their appetite for even the most delicious food. **21** Their flesh wastes away, and their bones stick out. **22** They are at death's door; the angels of death wait for them. **23** "But if an angel from heaven appears— a special messenger to intercede for a person and declare that he is upright— **24** he will be gracious and say, 'Rescue him from the grave, for I have found a ransom for his life.' **25** Then his body will become as healthy as a child's, firm and youthful again. **26** When he prays to God, he will be accepted. And God will receive him with joy and restore him to good standing. **27** He will declare to his friends, 'I sinned and twisted the truth, but it was not worth it. **28** God rescued me from the grave, and now my life is filled with light.' **29** "Yes, God does these things again and again for people. **30** He rescues them from the grave so they may enjoy the light of life. **31** Mark this well, Job. Listen to me, for I have more to say. **32** But if you have anything to say, go ahead. Speak, for I am anxious to see you justified. **33** But if not, then listen to me. Keep silent and I will teach you wisdom!"

2 Corinthians 3:1 - 18

3 **1** Are we beginning to praise ourselves again? Are we like others, who need to bring you letters of recommendation, or who ask you to write such letters on their behalf? Surely not! **2** The only letter of recommendation we need is you yourselves. Your lives are a letter written in our hearts; everyone can read it and recognize our good work among you. **3** Clearly, you are a letter from Christ showing the result of our ministry among you. This "letter" is written not with pen and ink, but with the Spirit of the living God. It is carved not on tablets of stone, but on human hearts. **4** We are confident of all this because of our great trust in God through Christ. **5** It is not that we think we are qualified to do anything on our own. Our qualification comes from God. **6** He has enabled us to be ministers of his new covenant. This is a covenant not of written laws, but of the Spirit. The old written covenant ends in death; but under the new covenant, the Spirit gives life. **7** The old way, with laws etched in stone, led to death, though it began with such glory that the people of Israel could not bear to look at Moses' face. For his

face shone with the glory of God, even though the brightness was already fading away.

8 Shouldn't we expect far greater glory under the new way, now that the Holy Spirit is giving life? **9** If the old way, which brings condemnation, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new way, which makes us right with God! **10** In fact, that first glory was not glorious at all compared with the overwhelming glory of the new way. **11** So if the old way, which has been replaced, was glorious, how much more glorious is the new, which remains forever! **12** Since this new way gives us such confidence, we can be very bold. **13** We are not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so the people of Israel would not see the glory, even though it was destined to fade away. **14** But the people's minds were hardened, and to this day whenever the old covenant is being read, the same veil covers their minds so they cannot understand the truth. And this veil can be removed only by believing in Christ. **15** Yes, even today when they read Moses' writings, their hearts are covered with that veil, and they do not understand. **16** But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. **17** For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. **18** So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

Psalm 43:1 - 5

43 1 Declare me innocent, O God! Defend me against these ungodly people. Rescue me from these unjust liars. **2** For you are God, my only safe haven. Why have you tossed me aside? Why must I wander around in grief, oppressed by my enemies? **3** Send out your light and your truth; let them guide me. Let them lead me to your holy mountain, to the place where you live. **4** There I will go to the altar of God, to God—the source of all my joy. I will praise you with my harp, O God, my God! **5** Why am I discouraged? Why is my heart so sad? I will put my hope in God! I will praise him again— my Savior and my God!

Proverbs 22:8 - 9

22 8 Those who plant injustice will harvest disaster, and their reign of terror will come to an end. **9** Blessed are those who are generous, because they feed the poor.