

About Job's Integrity

Job had integrity. This does not mean he was "sinlessly perfect." But it does mean that he endeavored to live consistently in the ways of God. He submitted to God's will. He feared God and hated evil - and his desire to do both of these came from the depths of his heart.

At the time these tragic events occurred to Job, he did not know many of the things we now know about the situation - things that were happening "behind the scenes." He didn't realize the spiritual battle that was occurring - a battle for his very soul. All he knew was that everything in heaven and on earth now appeared to be "backwards" to the way it should have been.

What was he to do? Give-up? It seemed that the more he tried to do what was right, the worse things got for him. Soon, it was "Job against the world." All the wisdom of the centuries seemed to testify against him. It seemed that God himself was now his enemy. Is this the reward a person gets for trying so hard to do what is right? Was he just being stubborn, set in his ways? Should he "loosen-up" and sin? Was it really worth all the trouble and pain, to try to faithfully follow God? Why not just "throw in the towel" and give-up? Why not take the easy road - the much less painful way? Is integrity worth the sacrifice - the painful hopelessness without end?

Job's wife offered the easy way out - simply curse God and die! Why continue in pain, when he could "get it over with" in a quick and easy manner? All he needed to do was to sacrifice his integrity and he could get instant relief from all this horror! Yet Job saw this as a direct attack against him (and his integrity) and he refused to do it.

What his friends offered, on the other hand, was no better. True, it wasn't a *direct* attack against Job's integrity... but it attempted to accomplish the same thing, *indirectly*.

According to his friends, all he needed to do was to "admit" that he was guilty of sin... and all his troubles would be over. That sounds so nice and easy! The problem is, he *hadn't* committed any sin, guilty of such punishment. To follow his friend's advice would have required him to *lie about himself!* He would have to sacrifice his integrity - to deny the fact that it truly existed - in order to gain the approval of his friends!

Think of the temptation: Maybe he *could* get relief from his unending agony, by cursing God and dying. And why not, since God had (apparently) abandoned him! Or maybe, somehow, acting "repentant" of fictitious sin *could* gain him some relief - surely it was at least worth a try! *Anything* was better than what he was going through.

Either way, following the advice of his wife or his friends, Job would have had to sacrifice his integrity. Either way - directly or indirectly - Satan would have won. It would have been shown that righteous people (even the best of them - Job 1:8; 2:3) were that way only because God rewarded ("bribed") them to be that way.

Yet Job *did* hold on to his integrity. He demonstrated that a truly blameless and upright person is that way because it is his *nature* to be that way, not because of personal advantage he can get from God. He proved that "those who are righteous will continue on in their ways, and those whose hands are clean from sin will grow stronger" (Job 17:9). They will hold on to their integrity, no matter what the cost.

Job 27:2-6

In the name of the Living God -
the God who has withheld justice from me [at least it seemed that way, to Job],
the Almighty One who has made my life bitter,
I swear by oath, that as long as I am still breathing,
as long as God's breath fills my nostrils,
my lips will never speak an evil word,
my tongue will never utter anything false.

And so, I will never say that your claims are right;
To the day I die, I will never lie about my integrity.
I will hold fast to my righteous ways, and will never let go;
I will never go against what I know is right, as long as I live.

It would be good for us to learn from his example!

Again, Job was not "sinlessly perfect." In the course of events, he said some things that required him to later repent (ch. 42). Sinful tendencies that were hidden deep within his heart, which he did not even know were present, came to the surface. But these things did not involve the issue of integrity - about which, he remained faithful to the very end. And after he had repented of these once hidden sins (and after he had forgiven his false accusers), God restored his blessings to Job, *double*.

This whole event was a *double* defeat for Satan. Not only did his accusation prove false, but he also lost spiritual strongholds - the sins (or sinful tendencies) that were lurking deep within Job's heart. His grip on Job grew weaker, as Job's trust in God grew stronger.

And so, Job prospered both spiritually and physically.

Of course, God knew the outcome before the test even began. He never had to question or worry about the outcome. Before the foundations of the earth were laid, he knew the nature of genuine righteousness. But now all creation knew it, as well. And just as he would remind his people more than a thousand years later, in Romans 8:28, he uses *all* things - both good and evil, blessing and pain - to accomplish good in the lives of those who love him.

Such people are grounded on a firm foundation. They may, at times, be overwhelmed by uncertainty and perplexity over what God is (or isn't) doing in their lives. But in the end, they will have no regrets. Even now, they can know that, though God's ways may be mysterious to them, he is trustworthy and will forever remain faithful to the promises he has made to them.