

# ***Maintaining the Stand***

*I will hold fast....*

*Job 27.6*

Unless you have been in a deep, Rip Van Winkle sleep for the last few months, you are very well aware that we are in the election season. And not just any, but as has been touted every 4 years, this is the most important election ever!

Perhaps you catch my cynicism. All elections are important, but often we forget that it is God who ultimately chooses the winner, for his own purposes. But on the human level, what we can see and judge, the issue of integrity is often in the forefront of discussion. We want people in elective office who are of good character, in addition to agreeing with us on what we consider important issues.

And of what we have been through in the last 19 or so chapters of Job, integrity seems to be at the root of the discussion.

Job and his 3 friends are done with their discussion, if you could call it that. They certainly aren't listening to Job's words, much less to his heart, his soul. They are talking past each other. But that seems to end with the last chapter.

Our author has Job now returning to his discourse (ESV, NAS), parable (KJV), theme (Tanak). The word is "mashal", and can mean "parable", "proverb" or "wise saying"—and the latter seems to be what Job is engaged in. Rather than answering his friends as he has done, he is now reflecting on something more than just their accusations. He is opening up what his life is really like, and what is at the root of it, beginning in this chapter, 27, and going through to chapter 31.

This morning we will briefly look at just the first 6 verses before we come to the Table.

## **Job Is Holding On—not swayed by other voices**

Job again states, very clearly, that he is aware that God is behind all that is going on in his life (v.2), and again calls on God to witness his, Job's, righteousness.

Job will not lie about his moral and spiritual condition (vv. 3-5) as long as he lives—he has made a firm commitment to himself, and now makes it to his friends. Nothing will persuade him or cause him to say that they are in the right, and he is in the wrong. His integrity, his blamelessness, remains intact.

Job holds fast to his righteousness because his own conscience—his heart—does not reproach or accuse him of any of his days that might have been involved in sin (v.6).

Think about what Job has done thus far to confirm what he has just stated:

- He didn't curse God in anger or charge him with wrong (1.22); his complaint against God is not so much what has happened to him, but raising the question "why"—because Job has not deserved all this loss as punishment for sin.
- He didn't forsake God by disobedience (2.10—"did not sin with his lips"). He didn't say, "If things don't go my way, then I will do whatever I want. If this is what happens when I am good, what do I have to lose by being bad?"
- He didn't take the "easy" way out when his wife suggested it: "*Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse/bless God & die*"—just end it all (2.9).
- Didn't yield to his friends by making a false confession (27.2-6). He could have done this to either:

- get them off his back, ending the discussion so they would leave him alone. The result would have been a corruption of his reputation more than what is happening now.
- create a false sense of guilt within himself, taking responsibility for something he did not do, and corrupt his reputation within himself. To lie to others is one thing; to lie to yourself is even more foolish—and dangerous.

All of these are integrity issues. And Job maintains his integrity throughout it all.

Which provides us with a very practical example of how to live.

### **We Can Hold On When The Going Gets Tough**

It may be that you have heard of Winston Churchill's famous speech to his alma mater October 29, 1941. Here is the exact text:

*But for everyone, surely, what we have gone through in this period — I am addressing myself to the School — surely from this period of ten months this is the lesson: never give in, never give in, never, never, never, never-in nothing, great or small, large or petty — never give in: except to convictions of honour and good sense.*

Sound advice for anyone, especially sound for a Christian who is challenged by the world to compromise doing what is right, to do something that is known to be wrong, because of inner temptation or outward pressure.

Paul provides encouragement for us when we become discouraged with a particular task that we as believers engage in. Church work & other ministries all have discouraging times when the outcome does not live up to our expectations. Even living our Christian lives God's way in a fallen world, and the occasional compromise leads to discouragement.

*And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. (Galatians 6.9-10)*

He reinforces this encouragement in light of the resurrection of Christ, and our promised resurrection:

*Therefore my beloved brothers, be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15.58)*

Note that not just anything we put our minds to is going to work out. There will be those who take the words of Scripture out of context, and thus complain that the Bible lies to us. It doesn't—but sometimes, many times, we lie to ourselves by taking a passage out of context.

The success of reaping is reaping what is *good*, in the truest, deepest sense; it is his work, nor ours—and for that reason, in spite of our inabilities, our weaknesses, our failures, his labor will be accomplished. And we have the great privilege to be part of

that. And with that privilege is the necessity of maintaining our integrity of conscious endurance in God's word.

Which leads us to something even more essential than our activities. That is our hope, our confidence in Christ. The Enemy wants to break that confidence by telling us a measure of the truth—how unworthy we are. How often we have failed. How we have no integrity any more.

Listen to Paul's encouragement in the face of this attack:

*Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, "For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8.35-39)*

And that assurance can only be possible because Jesus himself maintained his integrity. It is his righteousness, after all, that is placed on our account.

### **Jesus Held On...Even more than Job**

- Came to do his Father's will—all the way
- He didn't break in the wilderness temptations
- He didn't abandon the task, in spite of knowing the intensity of the coming suffering.
  - His prayer in the garden—*My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, your will be done.* (Matthew 26.42)
  - The mocking while on the cross—*"He saved others; he cannot save himself. He is the King of Israel; let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him. He trusts in God; let God deliver him now, if he desires him. For he said, 'I am the Son of God.'"* (Matthew 27.42-43)
- The final word from the cross: Finished! (John 19.30)

### **...and Holds On Now—holding on to us!**

- The love of God in Christ for us is not because of anything we do, but in spite of what we have done, do now, and even what we will do. When Jesus loved his disciples, he loved them to the end. (John 13.1)
- Together with his unending love is his unending presence: *Look! I am with you always, even to the end of the age!* (Matthew 28.20)

Through the struggles of this life, this age, our Savior is with us. And when this age, this life is over—he is still with us. Even when we cannot hold on to our integrity any better than the average politician this election cycle, the Savior, the Lord of All who maintained perfect integrity holds on to us.

Our hope is not in ourselves. Our hope is in him.