

A MAN REAPS WHAT HE SOWS

The all-righteous God never rewards any man on the strength of the opinions of others about him but strictly on account of his own actions, utterances and thoughts ... heart condition. And by virtue of the impartiality and justice of His judgment no one will lose his reward for his well-doing nor will anyone escape the penalty for his wrong doings. For whatever we do in this world we are accountable to God.

It was St. Paul who in his epistle to the Christians at Galatia wrote: "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Galatians 6:7) By this statement of fact the apostle expressed both the principle of retribution and that of the justice of God. It is a clear exposition of the law of cause and effect as to make men especially Christians, know that their new life is that of stewardship for which they shall give account.

This same principle was re-echoed by Dr. S. N. Bremer, author of the famous four-volume work, Successful Achievement, when he in another work of his, Health, Wealth and Happiness, stated: "One of the strangest paradoxes of all time is the thinking that leads people to believe that they can sow weed seed and reap rich harvests of rain with which to fill their granaries of life." "Our rewards in life will be in exact proportions to our contributions. Every act of our lives is like the living seed – it produces after its own kind." – Pages 188 and 372

No husbandman or farmer should be so foolish as to think that he can cheat God. If he sows wheat he expects to reap wheat at the time of harvest. So too if he plants potato he does not expect to harvest rice. He knows that the olive tree will not bear figs nor the orange tree yield apples. The apostle used this common human experience to illustrate what every person should expect from God as a reward for his or her deeds. And because of the seriousness of the matter he started with a caution that one deceives himself for God cannot be cheated, fooled or scorned.

Omniscient God

Indeed, any attempt to pretend to doing well only amounts to self-deceit for there is nothing men do – whether in secret or in the open – that is hidden from God. "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him? saith the LORD. Do not I fill heaven and earth? saith the LORD." (Jeremiah 23:24) One who is a wizard or witch engaged in wicked practices may appear to men as a good Christian, but he or she is completely exposed before the eyes of the Almighty God. So too an unfaithful woman who indulges in adultery secretly may seem ... good a housewife to her husband, yet her secrets are open before God our Maker.

Concerning the omniscient God, St. Paul stated: "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do." – Hebrews 4:13

Even the thoughts of the hearts of men are well known to the all-powerful and just God. He is therefore in a position to reward everyone according to his deeds. As it is written: "I the LORD search the heart, / try the reins, even to give every man according to his ways, *and* according to the fruit of his doings." – Jeremiah 17:10

A person may do some good but his intention may be otherwise evil. For example, a man may be giving assistance to his neighbour and offering gifts to him and his wife as a friend but his intention may be to seduce his neighbour's wife. Though ... human considerations he is regarded as a kind man, God knows that he is a mischievous character. It was King Solomon who observed: "A malicious man disguises himself with his lips, but his heart harbors deceit. Though his speech is charming, do not believe him, for seven abominations fill his heart. His malice may be concealed by deception, but his wickedness will be exposed in the assembly." – Proverbs 26:24-26 New International Version.

No one can escape the consequences of his actions. To the Roman Christians St. Paul wrote: "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God." (Romans 14:12 see also 2 Corinthians 5:10) God Himself said: "Say ye to the righteous, that *it shall be well with him*: for they shall eat the fruit of their doings. Woe unto the wicked! *it shall be ill with him*: for the reward of his hands shall be given him." – Isaiah 3:10, 11

Instances abound in the Holy Bible of good men and women who for their works of faith and righteousness were prospered by the Most High and whose ends were blessed. Take the case of Abraham concerning whom the apostle James wrote: "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? ...And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God." – James 2:21-23 see also Romans 4:3, 18-22

Mention can also be made of men such as Abel, Noah, David and women like Sarah, Rahab, Mary the sister of Martha, Dorcas and so on who were blessed for their good deeds and who shall further "be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." – Hebrews 11:1-40; 1 Chronicles 29:26-28; Matthew 26:6-13; Acts 9:36-41; Luke 14:14 etc.

There is nothing good a man does which goes without reward, no matter how little it may be or how long it takes. There is the instance of the captive Jew Mordecai in the Kingdom of Persia. One day when he "...sat within the king's gate, two of the king's eunuchs, Bigthan and Teresh, doorkeepers, became furious and sought to lay hands on King Ahasuerus. So the matter became known to Mordecai, who told Queen Esther, and Esther informed the king in Mordecai's name. and when an inquiry was made into the matter, it was confirmed, and both were hanged on a gallows; and it was written in the book of the chronicles in the presence of the king." – Esther 2:21-23, New King James Version

No reward whatsoever was given to Mordecai then, even for a long time, for so great and loyal an act as saving the king's life. He seemed to have been forgotten. But King Solomon stated:

“The king’s heart *is* in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will.” (Proverbs 21:1) And so it happened that one night the king could not sleep. He called for and had “the book of record of the chronicles” read to him, and discovered that he had not rewarded Mordecai for saving his life.

The king immediately summoned his chief minister Haman – a bitter enemy of Mordecai – who ironically had just then come to the courtyard to ask for the king’s warrant for Mordecai’s death. He without knowing Haman’s mission asked him how one who pleased the king should be honored. Thinking that the king had him in mind, Haman outlined a lavish program of honor. King Ahasuerus then commanded him: “...do even so to Mordecai the Jew... let nothing fail of all that thou hast spoken.” Haman had no alternative but to obey. He clothed Mordecai in regal splendor, sat him on the king’s horse and led him round the public square of the city proclaiming before him: “Thus shall it be done unto the man whom the king delighteth to honor.” – Esther 6:1-11

Retribution

We shall shortly return to the story of Haman and Mordecai for another lesson of how it does not pay to be wicked.

Similarly, there were those who perpetrated wickedness, lived dishonorably and ended up disgracefully. They suffered the penalty of wrong-doing. Thus Adonibezek the Canaanite did not escape the wrath of God for his sadism (that is, unnatural fondness for cruelty to other people). He was captured and had his thumbs and his great toes cut off as he had done to others. And just before he died he confessed: “Seventy kings with their thumbs and big toes cut off used to gather their food under my table; as I have done so God has repaid me.” – Judges 1:7 New Kings James Version

And now to another aspect of the story of Haman, the chief minister to King Ahasuerus of Persia. Out of hatred of the Jew Mordecai who, in keeping with the law of God, refused to bow down to him, he (Haman) plotted to kill Mordecai and all the Jews throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus. In a nutshell the plot backfired and at the end he paid dearly for his mischief. For on the gallows he prepared for Mordecai he himself was hanged. – Esther 3:2-6; 7:7-10

Indeed, King David did say of the wicked: “Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood. He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch *which* he made. His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.” – Psalm 7:14-16. See also Psalm 37:14, 15 Proverbs 26:24, 27; 28:10 etc.

What is more, it is written: “Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same.” (Job 4:8) “He that soweth iniquity shall reap vanity: and the rod of his anger shall fail.” – Proverbs 22:8

We read in the Holy Bible of other wicked people like Pharaoh, King Saul, Absalom, Jezebel, Elymas and so on, who were punished or rewarded with evil for their evil deeds in their days.

Even in our times we have records of people whose retribution for their evils deeds did not delay. Thus the National Concord (July 19, 1984) published: "The law of retribution justice has caught up with a principal ...officer in a state's civil service."

"The officer... was ordered to be compulsorily retired, following the discovery that he influenced the retirement of some of his subordinates on the grounds that they were redundant."

His retirement, which took immediate effect, was said to be part of the steps taken by the State Government to correct some of the injustices which occurred during the purge of the state's civil service.

The Nigerian Observer (January 17, 1984) carried a report from the News Agency of Nigeria (NAN) that a State Military Governor had ordered the reinstatement of a managing director of the state-owned bank whose appointment was terminated on the recommendation of the interim board of the bank. This was consequent upon a careful study of the circumstances under which he was sacked.

Not only did the Governor dissolve the interim board of directors of the bank but he also ordered the dissolution of the management board constituted to run the affairs of the bank after the managing director was sacked.

The word of God is always true. As king Solomon was inspired to state: "If you witness in some province the oppression of the poor and the denial of right and justice, do not be surprised at what goes on, for every official has a higher one set over him, and the highest (God Almighty) keeps watch over them all." – Ecclesiastes 5:8, New English Bible, compare Daniel 4:17

Let us go a step further with contemporary records. In the Nigerian Observer (June 17, 1985) was published the confession of a house wife who having worked hard to promote her husband in all his undertakings, and to make him feel happy, though he would never on earth dream to marry another woman. She said: "But my husband disappointed me by marrying a graduate lady whom he thought can give him more social and marital satisfaction." She found the development intolerable as she felt she could not work for another woman to come and enjoy. This ungodly notion goaded her into mooted the idea of killing her husband so that both of them might become empty. Being a tool of the devil she also felt that if she succeeded at that point in time, many people would then associate his death to his new wife.

Here is her confession: "I approached a witch doctor who prepared a black powder for me to put into his food. I did so without any effect on him. Rather all my intentions boomeranged on me.

Instead of my husband dying, I was the one afflicted.” The bane of many women who would otherwise have been good wives is the lack of fear of God that breeds selfishness, ungodly jealousy and other diabolical tendencies.

The foregoing instances are enough to drive home to one and all the lesson that oftentimes retribution meets the evil doer even in this present life. The renowned English playwright William Shakespeare was quite right when he observed:

“But here, upon this bank and shoal of time...
We still have judgment... that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which being taught, return
To plague the inventor, this even-banded justice
Commends the ingredients of our poisoned chalice
To our own lips.”

Some people, who do not believe in the world hereafter, think that it is only in this world one can suffer for one's evil deeds. And as some wicked people get away with their wicked acts without being detected, perhaps until they die, some think that such ones had escaped punishment or that that was the end with them. Those who think so are ignorant of the purpose of God.

It is clear in the Holy Bible that those who do not receive their punishment now, though they did not repent to serve God before their death, shall be resurrected by God through Jesus Christ in His Kingdom to suffer for their sins. Even those who have suffered one form of punishment or another among men are yet to face God's judgment. And the Bible talks of the judgment of the dead; as it is written: “And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.” – Hebrews 9:27

And Jesus Christ said, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” – John 5:28, 29

Sowing to the Spirit

The need to serve God faithfully, sincerely and in truth and love cannot be over-emphasized. In our dealings with our fellow men, be they those in authority, our parents, husbands, wives, children, servants and anyone else, we should take great care that we do no evil. It is futile to indulge in evil-doings such as robbery, murder, bribery, oppression of the poor, false accusation, backbiting, adultery or fornication, witchcraft, lying, seditions, and so on, which according to St. Paul, are manifestations of the flesh. – Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:3-7; Colossians 3:5-11 etc.

As a follow-up to his statement that a man reaps what he sows, St. Paul added, “For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.” – Galatians 6:8, 9

To sow to the flesh is to do things to satisfy our sinful nature and live under the dominations of sin. Such is the life of unbelievers whose tendency is to please the world rather than God. And to sow to the spirit is to do things in conformity with the law of God who is a spirit and to His pleasure.

Another point we must bear in mind is that a good return at harvest is usually proportional to what is sown. In other words, a man who sows little expects little yield whereas the one who sows much hopes to reap much. St. Paul also confirmed this when he exhorted the Christians at Corinth as regards the blessing in being liberal in the service of the Lord. Said he: “...He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.” – 2 Corinthians 9:6

A good farmer, therefore, does not economize his seeds; he works hard to sow as much as he is able or as his arable land can contain. Similarly, we need to be industrious and generous in giving support to the work of God by all means at our disposal – our influence, our money, the wisdom with which God has blessed us – our substance or possession and even our bodies. So shall we be abundantly rewarded by the Lord.

In Hosea 10:12 it is written: “Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for *it is* time to seek the LORD, till he come and rain righteousness upon you.” It pays to fear God and do righteousness.

And St. Paul admonished: “And whatsoever ye do, do *it* heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.” – Colossians 3:23-25

Now that we are in the of the Lord when Christ Jesus has returned in glory to give divine rewards, we ought to be more zealous in promoting righteousness in all our thoughts, words and deeds so that we may be in favor with him and be saved. For him he had said: “And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward *is* with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.” – Revelation 22:12; See also Matthew 16:27; Romans 2:5, 11 etc.