

Why Do The Wicked Prosper & Live Long?

The fact that some men who perpetrate wickedness are found among the rich and prosperous people of this evil world make some ask as to why God distributes His blessings indiscriminately. But Christians who understand the ways of God know that it is the devil, the god of this world, and NOT God Almighty, that prospers the wicked. God only permits the wicked to live in order to afford them the opportunity to repent; but where they do not, He visits their iniquities upon them suddenly and sentences them to perpetual destruction.

The wicked in the context of this subject are people who are evil in principle and in practice, or those who offend intentionally against what is right or the law of God. Such people, in the language of the Scriptures, “drink iniquity like water”. They do not acknowledge God. They are shameless and corrupt. In fact, they are a people who are governed by selfish ambition and are without conscience, being filled with every kind of evil. They steal and commit murder directly or through agents; they also commit adultery and fornication without remorse. To them pride is a virtue; they are arrogant and boastful. And they oppress the poor and take away from the needy their right.

It is a common experience among men that many of such wicked people appear to get on well in life: they amass wealth and live long. Their wives and children grow fat being well nourished and they enjoy good health. But in contrast with the case of the wicked, we have seen that many of those who are upright in heart, who love to serve God and who keep peace in the land find life hard; they and their families are often plagued with ill-health and plunged into trouble from time to time. And some of them who are faring well and who are kind, charitable and of immense services to humanity, are often snatched away by death in the flower of their age.

It was such experience as this that caused the well-known novelists and essayist, Daniel Defoe (1661-1731), to write: “The good die early, and the bad die late.”

There are instances in which thieves being pursued ran through places where there were thorns and broken bottles and escaped unhurt while those chasing them were injured at such places to the extent that they were hospitalized and even some, consequently, died! Why such things in which innocent ones suffer should happen in this world is a puzzle to many people.

It was King Solomon who said: “All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that prolongeth his life in his wickedness.” – Ecclesiastes 7:15.

It is a fool that will think that simply because he lives longer than another man he is more righteous or better. The worth of a man's life is judged not by how long he lived but by how well to the glory of God and for the benefit of mankind. In his “The Bee”, Thomas Osbert Mordaunt (1730-1809) stated:

“One crowded hour of glorious life

Is worth an age without a name.”

Character

The character of the wicked, their way of life and prosperity as well as their end are clearly shown in the Holy Scriptures. Concerning them Job said: "Wherefore do the wicked live, become old, yea, are mighty in power? Their seed is established in their sight with them, and their offspring before their eyes. Their houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod (punishment) of God upon them. Their bull gendereth, and faileth not; their cow calveth, and casteth not her calf. They send forth their little ones like a flock, and their children dance. They take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ. They spend their days in wealth; Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve Him? And what profit should we have, if we pray unto Him?" – Job 21:7-15. Some people envy the wicked and are tempted to imitate them when they find that they (the wicked) get on despite their evil deeds. The Psalmist who was a prophet of God was similarly tempted in his days but when he went into the sanctuary of God, then he understood the vanity of the prosperity of the wicked. He stated: "But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth – And they say, How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the most High? Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches." – Psalm, 73:2-12. The Psalmist as an honest and God-fearing man. So when he got to know that the wicked with their wealth were doomed to destruction, he confessed his foolishness and ignorance for envying them. He said: "When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places: Thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! They are utterly consumed with terrors; So foolish was I, and ignorant" – Psalm, 73:16-22.

Corruption

There are people who become rich through stealing. The Bible says, "The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure" (Job 12:6). And there are some who indulge in bribery and corruption and other ungodly acts to acquire riches. But they do not know that such riches are under curse. In Job 15:34-35 it is written: "For the congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery. They conceive mischief, and bring forth vanity, and their belly prepareth deceit."

Moreover, it is also stated in Proverbs 3:33, thus: "The curse of the LORD is in the house of the wicked: but He blesseth the habitation of the just."

Is it not true that certain people also become rich through oppression? They employ the poor to work for them but sometimes refuse to pay the labourers' wages. This is a grievous sin before

God, and when such poor ones who are oppressed cry to Him, He will certainly plead their cause and take vengeance on the wicked. Concerning such rich men, James the apostle stated: "Next a word to you who have great possessions. Weep and wail over the miserable fate descending on you. Your riches have rotted; your fine clothes are moth-eaten; your silver and gold have rusted away; and their very rust will be evidence against you and consume your flesh like fire. You have piled up wealth in an age that is near its close. They wages you never paid to the men who mowed your fields are loud against you, and the outcry of the reapers has reached the ears of the Lord of Hosts. You have lived on earth in wanton luxury, fattening yourselves like cattle- and the day for slaughter has come. You have condemned the innocent and murdered him; her offers no resistance." – James. 5: 1-6. New English Bible.

Also, in Jeremiah 22:13, it is written: "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbour's service without wages, and giveth him not for his work."

The riches of the wicked are not from God but from Satan the devil who is the arch-enemy of God and men. The Bible says that God is angry with the wicked every day and will, in His own due time, make them reap the reward of their doings. – Psalm. 7:9-16; Isaiah. 3:11.

The devil makes the wicked rich and instills in them the feeling of self-sufficiency which induces them to blaspheme and to continue in doing evil. "The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined. For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, whom the LORD abhoreth. The wicked through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts. His ways are always grievous; Thy judgements are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them. He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity. His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity." – Psalm. 10:2-7.

Punishment

The reasons why many people commit acts of wickedness is that those who do such things are not always killed by God immediately. This was lucidly explained by Solomon when he said:

"Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil. Though a sinner do evil an hundred times, and his days be prolonged, yet surely I know that it shall be well with them that fear God, which fear before Him: but it shall not be well with the wicked, neither shall he prolong his days, which are as a shadow; because he feareth not before God." – Ecclesiastes. 8:11-13.

We can understand from the foregoing that though the days of the wicked may be prolonged, he can never escape the punishment of God. "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins. He shall die without instruction; and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray." – Proverbs 5:22, 23.

It is a glaring fact that the riches and joys of the wicked are counterfeit and transitory. Instances of this fact have been seen. In Job 20: 4-9, 29, it is written: "Knowest thou not this of old, since man was placed upon the earth, that the triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment? Though his excellency mount up to the heavens, and his head reach unto the clouds; yet he shall perish for ever like his own dung: they which have seen him shall say, Where is he? This is the portion of a wicked man from God, and the heritage appointed unto

him by God.”

We can appreciate, therefore, why the people of God are admonished not to envy sinners.

(Proverbs 3:31; 23:17) David the Psalmist said: “Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb. Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him; fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.”

(Psalm 37:1-3, 7) David then went on to speak of his experience in his days, saying: “I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree. Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.” – verses 35-37.