

What is the true basis of security? (10:9)

He who walks in integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will be found out.

THE TEXT (NASB)

He who walks in integrity walks securely, but he who perverts his ways will be found out.

*He that walketh uprightly walketh surely, but he that pervertheth his ways shall be known.
Classic KJV - Proverbs 10:9*

INTRODUCTION



Security comes from integrity, not from an abundance of assets.

This proverb has many implications:

First, someone's wealth won't guarantee them more security and safety. Sometimes the very opposite happens. The rich can become more stressed, anxious about losing their vulnerable assets.

Second, there's less need for strategies where there's integrity. An upright walk produces a happy confidence and less fear of calamity. If corners aren't being cut, fewer risks need to be juggled.

Third, the most important aspects of safety training are honesty and integrity.



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COMMENTARY

The text deals with “the walk,” not “the talk.” Talk is cheap. When a person is known to be either honest or perverse, in either case, their actions have spoken louder than their words.

Translation: *Perverts*



The Hebrew verb, “to pervert,” עָקַשׁ (ʿā•qāš, pronounced “ah-qash”), has the primary root meaning of: Crooked, twisted, distorted, or knotted. It’s always used figuratively to denote problems or difficulties that arise from twisting something that was once straight. It’s first used in Job 9:20, where Job praises God’s perfection. Although we appear faultless in our own estimation of ourselves, God sees us as crooked and unreliable.

In this context, money once straight, will not bring security if we twist it crooked. Financial instruments like bonds, stock, and mutual funds may be called “securities,” but if they’re obtained in a perverted, underhanded, or dishonest way, God knows they’re bent out of shape. That’s not surprising. Stolen goods cannot provide the same satisfaction as the same goods honestly gotten. Twisting the truth is distorting our life, and causes bigger problems.

Truth Will Win Over Lies

Perversity and dishonesty can be hidden, but not for long. Time is the test of truth. Twisting or torqueing the facts may be a short-cut to success, but only briefly. “Truth will out in the end.” Certainly, selfishness is embedded in human nature (Mark 7:21, 22). So when perversity moves from thought to action, we spontaneously hide actions we know wrong—proof that they’re wrong and can’t stay hidden.

Ponzi by Berni Madoff

The \$65 billion Ponzi scheme, masterminded by Bernard Madoff, is a stark lesson. His billions were not enough to give Bernie true security. As the Financial Post reported (13 March 2009):



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“In a Manhattan courtroom packed with many of his victims, Madoff said he was ‘so deeply sorry and ashamed’ for perpetrating the biggest fraud in Wall Street history.

“When I began the Ponzi scheme, I believed it would end shortly, and I would be able to extricate myself and my clients from the scheme,” Madoff said, as he read from a statement admitting his misdeeds. “However, this proved difficult, and ultimately impossible, and as the years went by I realized that my arrest and this day would inevitably come.”

Madoff, 70, will likely spend the rest of his life behind bars. The eleven charges to which he pleaded guilty include securities fraud, wire fraud, mail fraud, and money laundering. They added up to a maximum sentence of 150 years.”

A Parable on Security... and Success



A very successful business owner, getting on in years, knew it was time to become chairman of his board and choose a successor to lead his firm. Instead of appointing a director or one of his children, he decided to call the company’s junior executives together.

“It’s time for me to choose the next CEO,” he said, “and I’ve decided to pick one of you.”

The young executives were shocked, but the aged CEO continued. “I am going to give each of you a seed today—a very special seed. Plant the seed, water it, and one year from today bring what you have grown from the seed I have given you. I will judge the plants you bring, and choose our next CEO.”

One young executive told his wife excitedly about the contest. She helped him get a pot, soil, and compost, and he planted his seed. Every day, he watered it and watched to see if it sprout. Soon, the other executives started bragging about their plants. So he kept checking his seed, but nothing. Weeks went by, but still nothing. Everyone else talked about their plants, so he felt like a failure. Six months passed. He concluded he had killed his seed, but said nothing to his colleagues.



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The day came for the junior executives to bring their plants to the owner for inspection, and the young failure's wife urged him to take in the empty pot, being simply honest about what had happened. It was going to be an embarrassing moment, but he knew his wife was right. His colleagues brought in a jungle of blooms and branches. The young failure brought an empty pot. When some of them laughed, the young man tried to hide at the back.

"What wonderful vines and flowers you've grown," said the retiring owner. He then caught sight of the young man with the empty pot, and brought him to the front—with his empty pot.

"A year ago today, I gave everyone in this room a seed. I told you to take the seed, plant it, water it, and bring it back in a year," he explained. "But I gave you all boiled seeds. They were dead; they could not grow. Almost all of you brought healthy vines and flowers. When you found the seed wouldn't grow, you snuck in new ones. Only one of you had the courage and honesty to bring me a pot with my dead seed in it, the courage to report bad news to me. So meet your new CEO!"

If you plant honesty, you will reap trust. If you plant goodness, you will reap friends. If you plant humility, you will reap greatness. If you plant perseverance, you will reap contentment. If you plant hard work, you will reap success. If you plant forgiveness, you will reap reconciliation. If you plant faith, you will reap a harvest. So be careful what you plant now: It will determine what you will reap later.

Source Unknown

Discontentment makes rich people poor, while contentment makes poor people rich.¹



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OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus told his disciples to be shrewd as serpents and innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16). Their motives must be pure, but the minds must be informed and intelligent.

People often confuse honesty with naiveté, being “just plain stupid.” In seeming harmless, “innocent as the dove,” someone may be simply ignorant of the dangers around them. Ignorance is not bliss. It’s a fool’s paradise, not God’s paradise. Others are smart or “cunning as the serpent,” but also crooked and deceitful. They’re outsmarting themselves; their trickery can’t stay hidden.

Jesus’ goal for us is to possess both integrity and intelligence. This must come from the Spirit of God. Human drive alone is inadequate.

APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Don’t confuse financial security with financial abundance. Make a list of three individuals or corporations who had much wealth, but only for a brief period. Was the wealth lost because of corruption?
- Reject profit opportunities based on incomplete disclosure to the client or customer.
- Distinguish between walking *securely* and walking *luxuriously*. Integrity brings security, not luxury. Decide in your own heart which of the two is most important for you.

Which of these steps, if any, does Jesus want you to take now? Ask Him.



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KEY WORDS

better life (quality), deceit, fraud, insurance, integrity, perverse, safety, security, honesty

ILLUSTRATION

Who is Tax-Driven Ted?



Death and taxes: The only things we can be sure of! Certainly that's the way Tax-Driven Ted sees it. Whereas others pay some or little attention to taxes, he is consumed by tax minimization. Ted is tax obsessed. Why? For many Canadians, if left unmanaged, taxes eliminate over 50% of income. In Canada tax freedom day falls in July.

Tax freedom day is the day of the year when you have paid all your taxes and can now keep the rest of the money you earn. Tax-Driven Ted will spend money just to get a write-off. He fails to seriously evaluate the underlying economics behind the decision and chooses to focus on the tax consequences. He loves to borrow money to invest simply because he can write off the interest costs of amount borrowed. This investment technique is called leveraging and is commonplace.

Ted doesn't believe he should pay any taxes. After all, the government wastes money. It's extremely inefficient. He uses every angle to reduce taxes. He's always looking for loopholes, credits, or write-offs. *His focus is not on customer satisfaction but on tax reduction.*

He goes on trips and conferences so that he can take the tax write-offs. He loves limited



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partnerships investments and other tax shelters. For some investors tax considerations are secondary, but for Tax-Driven Ted, they come first.



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FOOTNOTES

1. *Our Daily Bread*, November 15. 2014 RBC Ministries.

