

Why serve others patiently? (27:18)

He who tends the fig tree will eat its fruit and he who cares for his master will be honoured.

THE TEXT (NASB)

He who tends the fig tree will eat its fruit and he who cares for his master will be honoured.

Whoso keepeth the fig tree shall eat the fruit thereof: so he that waiteth on his master shall be honoured. KJV - Proverbs 27:18

INTRODUCTION



Eventually, we all get paid by the one we choose to serve; it's the law of cause and effect. Therefore, let's not bite the hand that feeds us.

By the way, we all have a hand that feeds us, although sometimes the hand is invisible. In caring for a plant such as a **fig tree**, there is a period of planting, tending, cultivating, watering, pruning, and finally reaping. Patience!

The benefits we can gain from others also require patient, dedicated labour.



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COMMENTARY

It takes patience and humility to earn a reward. Consistent dedication to a task will eventually pay back. Loyalty is a virtue. Therefore, it's important to be loyal to someone or something that will in the end, yield good results.

Food Sources

The text compares a **master** to a fig tree—a source of good food. The more a servant helps his master become successful and wealthy, the more the master will have available to share with the servant. Much care yields much future reward. Speak well of your master and it will produce good benefits for both you and your master. The fundamentals in agriculture apply in workplace pursuits. Just as a farmer must cultivate a field - breaking soil, picking rocks, preparing to plant seeds for the intended crop- businesses must also "cultivate" prospective customers and clients.

Classic Comments



Matthew Henry wrote:

This is designed to encourage diligence, faithfulness, and constancy, even in mean [i.e. simple, ordinary] employments. Though the calling be laborious and despicable, yet those who keep to it will find there is something to be got by it. Let not a poor gardener, who keeps the fig-tree, be discouraged; though it require constant care and attendance to nurse up fig-trees, and, when they have grown to maturity, to keep them in good order, and gather the figs in their season, yet he shall be paid for his pains...Nay, let not a poor servant think himself incapable of thriving and being preferred; for if he be diligent in waiting on his master, observant of him and obedient to him, if he keep his master (so the word is), if he do all he can for the securing of his person and reputation and take care that his estate be not wasted or damaged, such a one shall be honoured, shall not only get a good word, but be preferred and rewarded.

JFB Commentary ¹

Diligence secures a reward, even for a humble servant.



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Charles Bridges

The fig tree was a valuable product of Judea. Its cultivation was probably a profitable labor, and therefore illustrated the general reward of faithfulness. The gardener's hard work was compensated by eating its fruit... There are no exceptions to this rule.

Faithful work has inherent dignity and undeniable rewards.

Pick Your Master Carefully

It's the law of the harvest; you reap what you sow.

1. **Similar.** In kind. You don't plant carrots and reap tomatoes.
2. **Later.** Time delay. You must wait until a harvest comes.
3. **Greater.** Quantity increase. You get back more than you planted.

The character of your master will determine the quality of your pay. Good masters pay well and evil masters pay poorly. If we keep jumping around and serving many masters, then likely we will satisfy none, and risk getting no pay whatsoever. We can be sure that faithful consistent service will receive appropriate compensation. The text speaks of a fig tree rather than a thorn bush. No farmer deliberately plants thorn bushes, yet Jesus warns of bad (horribly painful) "fruit".

"Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves. You will know them by their fruits. Grapes are not gathered from thorn bushes nor figs from thistles, are they? So every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. A good tree cannot produce bad fruit, nor can a bad tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 7:15-19). *Choose your master carefully. Your choice has a huge impact on your future harvest.*



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OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus warns that when you choose to serve yourself (self-worship) you will reap from self that which is within self (Mark 7:21,22,23) namely turmoil and trouble. If you choose to lose self and serve God you will gain unending benefits (Luke 9:24). Thus the text does not directly advise on the choice of a good master versus a bad master, but it does imply that all servers will receive payment according to their service.

Jesus also had a master. Jesus did nothing on His own initiative (John 5:30).

He obeyed His Father even to the point of dying an agonizing death—all out of intense and unshakeable loyalty (Philippians 2:5-8).

APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Don't quit your cause if you are convinced of its goodness. Be consistently committed.
- Discern the best way to help your employer, boss, or supervisor.
- Be persistently patient and loyal toward your master. Persistence trumps talent.

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



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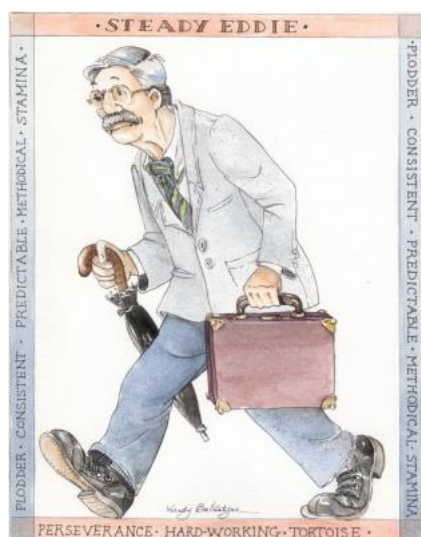
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KEY WORDS

dedication, dignity, employers, honor, humility, loyalty, more assets (quantity), rebellious, retribution, servant, supervision, bf serving others

ILLUSTRATION

Who is Steady Eddie?



Steady Eddie is a rather boring person. In Aesop's fable of the tortoise and the hare, Eddie is the tortoise. He's a plodder; he's consistent; he's predictable; he's methodical. One of the greatest inventors of all time, Thomas Edison, defined genius as "One percent inspiration and 99 percent perspiration." Steady Eddie doesn't have the full one percent of inspiration but he generates perspiration and produces good results.

Charles Walter, a highly-experienced financial planner and insurance agent, said that after decades in the business he has observed the following: It's not the educated and talented who usually win, but the plodder with stamina and perseverance.

Steady Eddie often shows up in financial planning literature to some degree. For example we catch a glimpse of him in that best seller, "The Wealthy Barber." Barber Roy, the main character in the book, "hadn't missed an entire day of work in thirty-seven years for any reason. He even opened on the morning of his daughter's wedding." Wow! I've known people who haven't had a sick day in ten years, but thirty-seven—now that's impressive! (It's also fictional!)



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It boils down to this: In order to make many financial strategies work, we ourselves need to keep working and generating cash flow. Without the steady cash inflow we will continually change our strategies to meet unexpected bumps and potholes in the road. Without the discipline of work we often lose our own health and sharpness.

Steady Eddie won't quit his day job to become a singer. He's not glamorous. He's not intellectual. You might say that he is rather boring—and you're probably right, but I'll tell you another thing about him: Eddie's not broke!



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FOOTNOTES

1. Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary

