

When should you walk away from easy money? (12:12)

The wicked desires the booty of evil men, but the root of the righteous yields fruit.

THE TEXT (NASB)

The wicked desires the booty of evil men, but the root of the righteous yields fruit.

The wicked desireth the net of evil men, but the root of the righteous yieldeth fruit. Classic KJV - Proverbs 12:12

INTRODUCTION



Sometimes money is corrupted. Avoid it. Reject it. Spurn it.

Three sorts of people are mentioned in the text: The wicked, the evil, and the righteous. The wicked seek what the evil have. The third sort has a different source, producing a better result.

What is the booty of evil men? Dictionaries define booty as “the spoils of war and plunder.” So this proverb teaches that it’s better to create wealth—“grow fruit”—with our own hands, even if only with a little yield, than crave the holdings of others, especially when it’s gained by vicious methods.

The text says that it’s wrong even to desire the wealth of evil men. Why?



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COMMENTARY

The Tool or the Treasure



The Hebrew word translated here as “plunder” is **מַצוֹד** (*mā•şôd*, pronounced “mah-tsöd”), meaning literally “net” or hunting implement. A net is used for capturing a fish, a bird, or a beast. So this text conveys that the evil have used “snares” on people, human beings, and the wicked want what they’ve snared.

A net, be it a snare or fishing net, is not evil in itself. It all depends on when, where and on what it’s used. Translating this word as “booty” or “plunder” implies that the net is used in an evil fashion to grab riches. Shoppers use a shopping bag innocently enough for groceries, but shoplifters use the same bag to steal the same merchandise. The net itself is not the object of desire, but its contents.

Watch Your Desires

The text speaks of coveting, yearning for another’s wealth, as a sin. This agrees with other scriptural admonitions: Psalm 37:1: “Do not be envious because of evil doers.” Proverbs 24:1: “Do not be envious of evil men.” Psalm 49:14: “Do not be afraid when a man becomes rich.” We are begged to cultivate deliberately our contentment and deliberately to suppress our frustrating desires. The wicked are naïve, creating their own discontent and forgetting that God punishes the evil for their snares. Their loot will do them no good, since “the arms of the wicked will be broken,” Psalm 37:17. What good is any money when the ability to enjoy it and all health have vanished?

Patience Promotes Good Growth

A root is a living organism. The word “yields” implies growth, and growth requires time. A net or a trap used in hunting produces faster results. Impatience with natural financial growth may indicate a kind of wickedness. A lack of patience reveals a lack of wisdom. A friend was asked recently to take over the presidency of an oil company, but he did not seek the position: It was the natural fruit of the diligent and honest work that he’d done for them as an independent



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consultant. You never know what yield will come from righteous roots.

Root and Fruit



We might normally think that the stem of the plant yields the fruit, but the emphasis in this text is on the root. If the fruit comes from the root and not the stem, then the righteous stem is like a conduit. The effectiveness of a conduit depends on the absence of obstructions, its capacity to carry sustenance and the security of its connection to the source. The Master uses a similar analogy when He speaks to His disciples.

When Jesus' followers give Him complete attention, love Him with their whole heart, and stay close to Him, they are filled with His divine wisdom and power. We see an example of such devotion in the life of Mary, who chose the "better part" and did not lose it (Luke 10:42).

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

Jesus said, "I am the vine and you are the branches," John 15:5.

Jesus identified Himself as the source of life—the ultimate energy outlet. The Gospels also describes Him as the "root of Jesse who will rule over the Gentiles (Romans 15:12)—not only over Israel, but over all nations." He is also called the One "through whom all things came into being," John 1:3.

In fact, Jesus is the only "root of the righteous." All fruit, all lasting wealth ripens "from Him, and by Him, and in Him," Romans 11:36.

APPLICATION



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- Memorize the text in your favourite Bible translation and think about it often.
- Just as “all that glitters is not gold” it’s also true that “all gold is not good.” Don’t be fooled by the appearance of people enjoying wealth obtained illicitly. The aftertaste will be awful.
- Enjoy what you have now.
- Distinguish between *booty* and *fruit*. Both words connote assets to be enjoyed, but the methods used to generate such assets are vastly different. Don’t just think about “how much,” but also consider *how* the *much* is generated.

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



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KEY WORDS

thrift, contentment, envy, cravings, greed, haste, more assets (quantity), naive, patience, productivity, righteous, wicked

ILLUSTRATION

Who is Quick Buck Betty?



Quick Buck Betty wants to make money fast, and is always looking for “hot tips.” Researching and understanding investments takes too long; she just cares about the returns—especially the short-term returns.

It doesn't matter how the money is earned—in fact she'd rather not know at all! Betty is just eager to “make it” or, even better, have someone else make it for her. She has little time for Steady Eddy and Diligent Daniel—their methods take too long.

Betty views the stock and bond markets like the lottery and casino. She doesn't invest; she gambles. She likes to “play” the markets. Day trading is one of her passions.

