

What are two penalties for bribery? (15:27)

He who profits illicitly troubles his own house, but he who hates bribes will live.

THE TEXT (NASB)

He who profits illicitly troubles his own house, but he who hates bribes will live.

*He that is greedy of gain troubleth his own house; but he that hateth gifts shall live. Classic KJV
- Proverbs 15:27*

INTRODUCTION



Dishonesty brings down trouble upon the whole family and ultimately death!

We must learn contentment: True contentment is never an excuse for laziness or complacency.

Contentment is a safeguard against profiting unjustly; unjust profits can cost us both our assets and our life!



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COMMENTARY



The first clause of this proverb has various translations. The *Tanakh* (Jewish Publications Society, 1985), renders it, “He who pursues ill-gotten gain makes trouble for his household.” *The Living Bible* (Tyndale House, 1971) puts it this way: “Dishonest money brings grief to all the family.”

The evil described in the text is not in the desire for profit, as such. The desire becomes evil when it crosses the bounds of responsible behaviour. There’s nothing wrong with ambition, hard work for the sake of gaining wealth. The trouble comes when we want something for nothing and eagerly break the rules to get it.

The Scope of Evil

The Hebrew word for “house” here, בית (bă•yit, pronounced “ba-yith”), refers not only to the external domicile, but the household in general. The dishonest or illicit profits bring trouble to the entire household, not just the member cutting the corners. The sorrowful consequences extend beyond the responsible agent; so this warning is directed at the head of the household: The responsible father.

The text does not say that he who hates bribes will not be poor, but that he will live. Bribes may make a person richer in the short term. A person who hates bribes may feel that he is losing out, since he turns away easy money, but easy money brings a high cost.

The Story of the Russian Bribe



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In late August 2004, a terrorist bomber, one Ms. Dzhbirkhanova, bribed her way aboard a Russian airliner with 1,000 rubles and then downed Sibir Airlines Flight 1047, murdering the forty-five people on board. We can only wonder how the responsible security officer could have accepted such a bribe, without suspecting that something much more serious was afoot.

According to the Globe and Mail report (16 Sept 2004):



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Prosecutor General Vladimir Ustinov said the two Chechen women had been detained in the airport shortly before boarding, but both were released by a police supervisor, and one had bribed her way onto the aircraft she would later destroy. The woman had a ticket for a flight the next day, but paid a bribe to board Sibir Airlines Flight 1047, with 45 other people on board...

The police captain controlling passenger registration had at first detained the terrorist and then was bought-off by the bribe worth approximately \$34 US.

We don't know what the Russian courts did to the bribed officer, but if "he who hates bribes will live," we can well imagine what happens to those who love bribes. The very offer of a bribe should always indicate that some much more serious evil is in play.

Hiring for Honesty

The Sibir Airlines story carries a lesson to all employers about our hiring practices. We need to select workers carefully, not simply for their cleverness, but also their honesty, and we need to pay them enough so that they'll never feel justified in taking a bribe. Sadly, in many countries, bribery is deeply ingrained in the culture as standard business practice. Yet the papers regularly report about business executives who are later prosecuted under the anti-corruption laws back home, for their shady practices abroad. We need to listen to the message of the text. When God Almighty condemns a business practice like bribes, those who ignore Him cannot and will not escape punishment. Normal business policies, if they clash with the laws of God, lead to trouble and—ultimately—doom, everywhere.

The word "live," in the expression "he who hates bribes will live," does not mean "merely exist," but rather, "live life to its fullest"—with the joy, enthusiasm, and confidence of a clear conscience.

OUR CREATOR, REDEEMER, AND FRIEND

It was said of Jesus, even by his enemies, that he taught the "way of God in truth and deferred to no one," Matthew 22:16. Jesus could not be bribed.

The gospels show that Jesus placed no confidence in money. But the false disciple Judas Iscariot, the most famous traitor in history, was bribed with a mere thirty pieces of silver, the customary ransom for a slave, to betray Him who would have been his Saviour. The fate of Judas further demonstrates this truth. Death comes to those who love bribes.



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APPLICATION

- Memorize the text in your favourite translation and think about it often.
- What are the current moral dilemmas you are facing?
- Have you been confusing abundance of assets with abundance of life?
- Is someone subtly trying to bribe you now?

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



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KEY WORDS

bribe, contentment, deceit, greed, honesty, house, Human Resources, life, money laundering, profit, trouble, worse life (quality), bf sharing

ILLUSTRATION

Who is Self-Centered Sam?



Self-Centered Sam looks out for number one. Who's that? It's Sam, of course! Sam doesn't consider himself to be self-centered. One of his favourite books is ["The Richest Man in Babylon."](#)

What does Sam do with his income? The cream, the very best goes to his own long-term growth fund. His motto is 'pay yourself first.' Some call him Stingy Sam. But he's not stingy; he's just making careful preparation for his own future, comfort, and well-being. He is part of the "me" generation. He typifies the Maslow's hierarchy of needs with self-actualization as apex of all values. Sam is a dedicated humanist. He doesn't recognize any higher power than himself. He's a tough negotiator.

Sam doesn't ignore charity. But how could he possibly help anyone one else unless there was something in it for him? Therefore any and all charitable donations must have full and public credit given to the donor. The more people are aware of his generosity the better. After all, a little bit of advertising is good for business. When his corporation gives a gift it comes as a percentage of profits, not revenues.

His financial hero is the multi-millionaire, whose assets once exceeded the entire US treasury:



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The great Railroad and Steamship Baron [Cornelius Vanderbilt](#).

