
Words of Truth

Do Righteous People Have It Easier In This Lifetime?

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Several months ago I was asked if righteous people are granted easier living in this lifetime. It is a simple question to answer. Being righteous does not grant you some kind of easy life in this world (I Peter 3:8-4:19). The Scriptures show us that being righteous will likely even cause more difficulties for us in this world (Psalms 37:12, Matthew 5:10-12, Matthew 23:34-35, Luke 6:20-26, John 15:18-20, John 16:1-3, II Timothy 2:11-12, II Timothy 3:12, and Revelation 2:8-11). The life of Jesus, who never did anything wrong (Hebrews 4:14-16 and I Peter 2:21-23), proves that being righteous does not mean physical life will be easy (Matthew 26:26-27:56, Luke 9:57-58, and Hebrews 12:1-3).

While the question that brought about this study is easy to answer, it is also something that should bring about much to consider. Solomon, in his pursuit of understanding all things, thought of this very subject matter. Notice: *“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 longeth his life in his wickedness... And so I saw the wicked buried, who had come and gone from the place of the holy, and they were forgotten in the city where they had so done: this is also vanity. 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. There is a vanity which is done upon the earth; that there be just men, unto whom it happeneth according to the work of the wicked; again, there be wicked men, to whom it happeneth according to the work of the righteous: I said that this also is vanity”* (Ecclesiastes 7:15; 8:10-14).

Like Solomon, many try to figure out if there is a carnal reward for being righteous. Some end up sinfully twisting Scriptures (II Peter 3:15-18) to try and find false comfort in this life. For example, many use Romans 8:28 while ignoring the context that shows “all things work together for good” equals physical suffering with spiritual rewards through a faithful relationship with our Lord (Romans 8:28-39).

So, what’s the point? Why be righteous when there are no guarantees in this life that there will be a carnal benefit from being righteous? There are some benefits to being righteous. Those benefits are not guarantees for better treatment or a good life though.

So, how do we answer the “what’s in it for me” mentality? The fact is, we cannot carnally comfort people who are looking to make being righteous beneficial to them in the flesh. Any such attempt will end in us perverting the truth. Sometimes being righteous makes a person a target (I John 3:11-13). The only guaranteed benefits that we have for being righteous will not come to us in this present world.

The Rewards For Righteousness Are In The Life To Come

Rather than focusing on carnal rewards, we should be thinking about eternal rewards. Paul told Timothy this: *“But **godliness with contentment is great gain**. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and **follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness**. Fight the good fight of faith, **lay hold on eternal life**, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses”* (I Timothy 6:6-12).

When we were converted to our Lord, we put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness (Ephesians 4:24). We should realize that our Savior loves righteousness but hates iniquity (Hebrews 1:8-9). If we know that He is righteous, we should understand that if we have been born of Him (John 3:1-5) we are expected to be righteous (I John 2:29). Just as our Lord will look to what we do to judge us (II Corinthians 5:10), we too should look at our actions to test whether or not we are righteous (I John 3:7-10).

When we think of guarantees, we should think about the faithful word of God. God does not lie. He has given a promise concerning eternal life (Titus 1:2). That promise is that, if we unwaveringly do His will, we will secure our eternal place in Heaven with Him (Matthew 25:31-46, Romans 2:7-13, I Peter 1:3-9, I John 2:25, and I John 3:1-3). Do not be righteous with some expectation that life in this world will have more carnal pleasures for you to enjoy. Be righteous to please our Lord and look forward to the reward that comes at the end of this world (II Peter 3:10-14).

Conclusion

Solomon examined life in this world to try to make sense of things (Ecclesiastes 1:12-13; 7:25; 8:9). Here was his conclusion: *“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil”* (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).