

How to Be a Christian Businessman

INTRODUCTION

It's been said that it is nearly impossible to be a godly Christian and a businessman at the same time. The reason cited for such a dim view of Christians is that the business world is filled with corruption and evil. The view is that in order for anyone to have a successful business, he has to be corrupt and be like the world. The well known dictum of "when in Rome do as the Romans do" seems to be the philosophy of almost all modern businessmen. The assumption is that if a Christian wants to be a businessman and a successful one at that, he has to compromise his Christian principles or else he is doomed to fail. The sceptical conclusion is that there is no such thing as a successful, godly, Christian businessman!

What does the Bible say? Is it possible to be a successful businessman and remain a godly Christian at the same time? Success must not be measured in terms of dollars and cents as this is a worldly criterion which has only earthly and temporal impact. Success in business endeavours is measured by the standard of God and that is to bear a godly witness and testimony for Christ. This has eternal significance.

I. The Christian's Mind (understanding) – 28:4-5

Proverbs 28:4-5 (KJV) "They that forsake the law praise the wicked: but such as keep the law contend with them. 5 Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all things." – The law of God must be the Christian's infallible guide. To forsake, i.e. to relinquish, the law of God from the Christian's life is similar to a man trying to walk through a road peppered with pot holes with his eyes deliberately blindfolded. The Christian who relinquishes the law of God to guide his life and thoughts is basically praising the wicked. He does that because he becomes one of them. There are only two kinds of law on this earth, the law of God and the law of man. If the Christian rejects the law of God, then he embraces the law of man. There is no third alternative. It is as simple as that. If the business man rejects the law of God, he embraces the law of man. Therefore, he praises the wicked by being wicked himself. The difference is that he is a Christian behaving like a wicked one. What a tragedy when that happens.

The Christian who keeps the law of God will contend with them. The word "contend" means "to strive with anger." It is not just contending but to do so with righteous anger as his motivation. He will not sin and will also tell others to stop sinning. He will do so with righteous anger and with much conviction. This means that he will neither tolerate nor deal with others who cheat and do wicked deeds. Antithetical parallelism is used in verse 4 to highlight the importance of obeying the law and its impact in the lives of the Christian when he does so.

Verse 5 (antithetical parallelism) -- The contrast between a Christian and a non Christian in his philosophy of business is his understanding. Evil men do not understand judgement. The word "understand" means "to deal wisely" - in his day to day circumstances with all kinds of people. He makes judgements all the time - in business as well as in other areas of his life. Evil men have no ability to understand judgement. How can they, therefore, make wise judgements in life and in business? On the other hand, the Christian is the total opposite (use of antithetical parallelism). Christians seek the LORD their God and they are able to understand all things. They seek the LORD through the study and obedience of God's perfect Word. There is nothing on this earth that is not found in the Word of God to guide the Christian to make the right decisions in all things, which definitely includes his business dealings in this sin sick world!

The word "seek" means "to search out." The Christian will not stop seeking until he finds. If he has a business dilemma, he will spare no effort to find the answer from God's holy Word.

II. The Christian's Life (deeds) – 20:9-12

Proverbs 20:9-12, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin? Divers weights, and divers measures, both of them are alike abomination to the LORD. Even a child is known by his doings, whether his work be pure, and whether it be right. The hearing ear, and the seeing eye, the LORD hath made even both of them." – Talk is cheap. Warm feelings of devotion in the soul are even cheaper, for it is invisible to the naked eye. The LORD is interested in his life, i.e. actions. Many will claim to be Christians today. They are basically saying that they are born again in Christ! But Christ is not interested in sinners paying Him lip service. In fact, many do more harm than good when they say that they are Christians but their lives do not reflect the marks and characteristics of Christ. They bring shame to the Name of Christ by their hypocrisy.

Verse 9 (synthetic parallelism) is a rhetorical question that describes what it means to be a Christian. His heart has been made clean by the blood of Christ. He is pure from all his sins, for blessed is the man in whom the LORD will never again impute any sin. This is only true of a genuinely born again believer (cf Psalm 32:1-2; Romans 4:7-8). Verses 10 to 12 answer the question asked in verse 9. Divers weights and divers measures must never be found in anyone who is doing business. The sole purpose of anyone who has in his possession divers weights and measures is to cheat. He should be carrying with him only one measure and one weight, the accurate measure and weight! There is no legitimate reason for anyone to carry with him different weights and measures as he sells his goods. Both of these kinds of weights and measures are abominations to the LORD. The word "abominations" means "something disgusting". This is often used to describe the sin of idolatry. Here it is used to describe a cheat! By using synthetic parallelism, Verse 10 reveals vividly the reaction of the LORD. He finds such sins absolutely disgusting; much more so in one who professes or claims to be a Christian.

Verse 11-12 (both are synthetic parallelism) – The LORD said that even a child is known by his doings, whether his work is pure and right. The meaning is that the adult will be judged just like the child. The honest child will show himself honest by his honesty. The lying child will show his dishonesty by his lies! This manner of judgement has not changed even for the adults. They will be seen by their deeds rather than their talk. The LORD is the One who made our ears and eyes which are designed for their respective purposes. In business, be honest. The ears and the eyes are given to us by the LORD to conduct ourselves in truth and righteousness, not to cheat. The LORD has the best ears and the best eyes, which are all seeing and all hearing; for He sees and knows all things, all at the same time. The deeds of the Christian businessman reveal the reality and truthfulness of his confession to be a Christian.

III. The Christian's Stance – 22:29

Proverbs 22:29, "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men." (synthetic parallelism) - The word "see" means to contemplate with the mind. The man who seriously considers being honest and being diligent, i.e. a skilful and quick businessman, will stand before kings. How does a man stand before kings unless he is the

best in the land? His service becomes indispensable to the king; the king will accept or at least tolerate his faith in the LORD in order to retain him in his kingly service for the betterment of his country. This was true of young Joseph who was a prisoner before being promoted to Prime Minister, the second most powerful man in Egypt, second only to Pharaoh. He and his entire family were extremely well treated by Pharaoh and were given the choice portion of Egypt to dwell in. The Bible says that the LORD was with Joseph. That was the only basis and reason for his "success" and "promotion."

Christians must trust in the LORD at all times and never forget who the LORD is. He is all powerful and is the only One who can give him his business and bless all his business endeavours. The Christian businessman is always a Christian first and businessman second. The moment he reverses the order, he will inevitably fall into sin. He ceases to trust in the LORD to prosper his business. He resorts to the ways of the world to stay afloat. Soon he becomes like the world in his behaviour and conduct and his testimony is in ruins. The Name of Christ is shamed by his many sins. He stands before mean men, i.e. men of no repute. He becomes obscure and insignificant and he tries all the more to be well known. Do you have faith to trust God to bring that to pass in your life?

IV. The Christian's LORD – 16:11

Proverbs 16:11 "A just weight and balance *are* the LORD'S: all the weights of the bag *are* his work." (synonymous parallelism) - These three verses in Prov 11:1; 20:10 and 23 are similar but they are stated negatively: **Proverbs 11:1** "A false balance *is* abomination to the LORD: but a just weight *is* his delight." **Proverbs 20:10** "Divers weights, *and* divers measures, both of them *are* alike abomination to the LORD." **Proverbs 20:23** "Divers weights *are* an abomination unto the LORD; and a false balance *is* not good." When the Christian businessman conducts his business honestly and with integrity, he is actually doing the work of the LORD. His business endeavours reflect the nature and character of God. Weights and balances that are just, i.e. true and honest, testify that the LORD is with him. It is as if the LORD Himself is conducting the business! The Christian's honesty and integrity is the LORD's honesty and integrity! What an honour and privilege bestowed by God upon His children.

This is the duty and honour given by God to all His children especially to those who do business. Just weights bring joy to the LORD. Honesty and integrity of every Christian businessman bring joy and praise to the LORD. Conversely, divers weights, divers measures and a false balance are an abomination to the LORD. If diabolical ways are employed, evil men will applaud and approve because they do likewise and they are happy that you have become like them. Their deeds of darkness have covered up your light, for you have compromised and turned off the light of Christ in your life. How can such a one have the audacity to call himself a Christian when he fellowships with Belial and finds consolation in deeds of sin and wickedness? Sadly, this is more common than the witness of the godly businessmen!

V. The Christian's Choices – 28:6, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22

Proverbs 28:6 (KJV) "Better *is* the poor that walketh in his uprightness, than *he that is* perverse *in his* ways, though he *be* rich." (synthetic parallelism) – WHICH IS BETTER?

Proverbs 28:18 (KJV) "Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved: but *he that is perverse in his ways* shall fall at once." (antithetical parallelism) – WHO IS UPRIGHT?

Proverbs 28:19 (KJV) "He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread: but he that followeth after vain *persons* shall have poverty enough." (antithetical parallelism) – WHO IS DILIGENT?

Proverbs 28:20 (KJV) "A faithful man shall abound with blessings: but he that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent." (antithetical parallelism) – WHO IS FAITHFUL?

Proverbs 28:21 (KJV) "To have respect of persons *is* not good: for for a piece of bread *that* man will transgress." (synthetic parallelism) – WHO RESPECTS PERSONS?

Proverbs 28:22 (KJV) "He that hasteth to be rich *hath* an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him." (synthetic parallelism) – WHO WANTS TO BE RICH?

APPLICATION

Psalms 75:6-7 (KJV) "**For promotion *cometh* neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. 7 But God *is* the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.**"

Let the words of the psalmists be our concluding thoughts as we think on the duties of the Christian businessman.

- God is sovereign -- he must trust in the LORD to promote him in God's time;
- God knows us better than we know ourselves -- God knows how much the Christian businessman can cope so that his faith and service unto the LORD is not jeopardized by too much material blessings. When the Christian focuses on the LORD all his days, he will not allow material success to ruin him. When he aims for material blessings, he will fall into the sins of idolatry;
- The Christian's mind – the law of God must be your guide. Know your Bible well. There is no short cut to the knowledge of God's precious and perfect Word. Study and memorize His Word as milk and meat to your hungry soul;
- The Christian's Life – your life is a life of testimony for the LORD. This life is seen by your deeds. Your conduct and behaviour reflect the kind of heart you have. The Christian's heart reflects a life of honesty and righteousness;
- The Christian's Stance – the Christian stands before the LORD so that he can stand before kings. God can make him indispensable to his country if He so chooses. The question is: does the Christian have faith to allow God and to trust God to accomplish such goodness in his life?
- The Christian's LORD – the life of the Christian is the LORD's life. When the Christian is honest and true in all his dealings with men, it is the LORD who is working through him such that the work he does becomes the LORD's work; and
- The Christian's Choices – the Christian has to make important choices for himself and his loved ones. He can choose to be a godly Christian businessman or he can choose to be an abomination to the LORD. It is his choice. Bear in mind that choices have consequences! Amen.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1.** For every Christian businessman, what should be the biblical motivation that pleases the LORD? Is there an alternative motivation that pleases the LORD?
- 2.** When should Christian principles begin to be formed and shaped in the heart of the Christian - while in school or when he begins working life, assuming he became a believer at the age of 12? Please give reasons for your answer.
- 3.** What are some of the business practices in the world that Christians are confronted with on a daily or regular basis? When a Christian takes matters into his own hands and succumbs to these worldly practices and sins against God, what steps can he take to get himself out of his sin? (For example, he bribed someone to get his business through in a foreign country.)
- 4.** Do you think that a married Christian businessman (with three young children) ought to stay overseas alone in order to enlarge his business? This mentality of entrepreneurship is very much promoted today. Should Christians jump into the band wagon if this opportunity arises? If you are his child, would you want your father to accept? As his wife, would you want your husband to accept? As a stay home husband, would you want your wife to accept?
- 5.** In the list of choices above (Prov 28: 6, 18-22), which choice is the most critical and which is the most difficult to live out on a daily basis? Please explain your two choices.