

No Good Deed

Playwright and US Congresswoman Clare Boothe Luce (1903–1987) once said, “No good deed goes unpunished.” Sadly, it sometimes seems as if this aphorism is true.

David, soon to be king of Israel, had an experience that verifies this idea. While hiding from Saul, he and his men watched over the property of a rich landowner named Nabal. But later, when David asked a favor of Nabal, he was met with scorn. “Surely in vain I have protected all that this fellow has,” said David. “He has repaid me evil for good” (1Sam. 25:21). Before David could carry out revenge, Nabal’s wife intervened and kept David from acting rashly. Soon, God struck Nabal dead (v.38). Then David praised God for keeping him from evil and for returning “the wickedness of Nabal on his own head” (v.39).

We’ve all had experiences when kindness was repaid with ingratitude, a generous gift was treated as an entitlement, kind actions were interpreted as an attempt to control, or well-intended advice was received with scorn. David’s story reminds us that even when it seems as if we’re being repaid with evil for doing good, we don’t have to take matters into our own hands; we can trust God with the outcome. (J. Link)

The Eye of God

The Hubble Space Telescope has taken photos of the Helix Nebula. Some astronomers describe it as “a trillion-mile-long tunnel of glowing gases.” At its center is a dying star that has ejected dust and gas stretching toward its outer rim. Remarkable photos of it look like the blue iris of a human eye complete with eyelids. Because of this, some have called it the “Eye of God.” Although this nebula is not literally the eye of God, the Scriptures do talk about God’s gaze on our lives. The seer Hanani said, “The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him” (2Chron. 16:9).

This proclamation of God’s all-seeing eye was given in response to King Asa’s reliance upon another ruler for military security. Asa seemed to have forgotten that it was the Lord God, not mere soldiers, who had given him past victories over his enemies (14:11-12). This spiritual disloyalty did not escape the notice of God, who seeks to pour out blessing on acts of obedience to Him.

Although we cannot see the eyes of God, we can be assured that He sees us. His desire is to show Himself strong to those who are loyal to Him with their whole heart. To know that God sees us brings both conviction and comfort. (D. Fisher)

Criticizing Lincoln

Abraham Lincoln knew what it meant to face criticism. He is quoted as saying, “If I were to try to read, much less answer, all the attacks made on me, this shop might as well be closed for any other business. I do the very best I know how—the very best I can; and I mean to keep doing so until the end. If the end brings me out all right, what’s said against me won’t amount to anything. If the end brings me out wrong, ten angels swearing I was right would make no difference.”

Lincoln, against huge opposition, went on to reunite the fractured United States, win the Civil War, and abolish slavery in the US. Had he allowed his critics to defeat him, Lincoln would not have accomplished what he did.

The apostle Peter understood the dangers of unfounded criticism. He wrote, “Having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God” (1Peter 2:12).

Criticism can consume our lives to the point of emotional paralysis, or we can set our hearts to serve God faithfully undeterred by that criticism and put our God on display. When we do that, we won't need to answer our critics with words—our lives will say all that is needed. (B. Crowder)

Building Walls

The 4,000-mile-long Great Wall of China was built to keep out invaders from the north. The first wall was constructed by Shi Huangdi, the first emperor of China, who lived between 259 and 210 BC. But in AD 1644, the Manchus broke through the Great Wall and overran China. They did this by bribing a general of the Ming dynasty to open the gates.

During the reconstruction of ancient Jerusalem, Nehemiah understood the acute danger posed by those who opposed the rebuilding of the city's ruined walls. So he commanded constant vigilance. Half of the workers were to stand watch while half rebuilt the walls (Neh. 4:13-18).

As Christians, we must be vigilant that nothing breaches our spiritual defenses. Even the most mature believer can never afford to let down his guard. The apostle John warns us of enemies from three quarters. He identifies them as "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life" (1John 2:16). These enemies lure us away from God and His Word and leave a gap for the enemy to sneak in. Let's be alert to what entices us today. A lapse opens the door to sin, which in turn may develop into a habit that overwhelms us. Don't permit a breach in the wall. "The world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever" (1John 2:17). (C. P. Hia)

Einstein's Faith

When the great physicist Albert Einstein was asked if he believed in God, he responded: "We are in the position of a little child entering a huge library filled with books in many languages. The child knows someone must have written those books. It does not know how... That, it seems to me, is the attitude of even the most intelligent human beings toward God. We see the universe marvelously arranged and obeying certain laws but only dimly understand these laws." Although Einstein marveled at the design he saw in nature, he did not believe in the Creator.

The Psalmist shared Einstein's sense of awe about nature but took the next step and believed in the Designer behind the design: "The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1).

The wonder we feel as we behold the universe should serve as a road sign pointing to the One who created it. The Scriptures tell us, "All things were made through [Christ], and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:3). If one is struggling with his faith, he should look up at the stars. In the sky is crafted an amazing road sign pointing to the Designer behind the design. Creation's design points to the Master Designer. (D. Fisher)

A Moments Wisdom

- He who conquers others is strong; He who conquers himself is mighty.
- Take time to deliberate; but when the time for action arrives, stop thinking and go in.
- Nothing will ever be attempted if all possible objections must first be overcome.
- I avoid looking forward or backward, and try to keep looking upward.
- Much tongue and good judgment seldom go together.