**Shrewd Toward Salvation**

Based on [Luke 16:1-13](https://biblia.com/books/esv/Lk16.1-13)

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Why to the good suffer and the bad prosper? Several answers. One is they don’t. The good don’t suffer. Only God is good (Luke 18:19), we...we are sinners. We all suffer because we deserve to suffer...because we are all bad. We are sinners by nature.

Also the bad do not prosper. Yes, all people benefit from God’s common grace and His indulgence of us, but virtue is it’s own reward, and sin always ends in ruin. Now, it is true that Jesus, who was without sin, suffered. But he became sin for us to make atonement. He is the only absolutely good man who suffered but he did suffer on account of sin. This problem of evil is only temporary, So in the end God will set all to rights, and the good will prosper and the bad will suffer...that’s the doctrine of heaven and hell.

But there is another reason why, in this temporary world, it seems that the bad prosper and the good suffer. Jesus says, “The sons of this world are more shrewd in dealing with this generation than the sons of light.” It is because christians, who are good only by faith, are not as shrewd in dealing with the world as it is than are unbelievers, and Jesus teaches that we should be.

A man in charge of his master's accounts was charged with mismanagement of funds. He was fired. The man was a son of the world...he was too weak to work and too proud to beg because, like all worldly people, he worshipped money. This means he worshipped a life of ease and of self sufficiency. But, he was fired. So he came up with a plan to secure a new source of mammon. Before his master’s clients knew he was fired, he went and reduced their debts at the owner's expense. The manager was dishonest, but he is not commended for that. The owner, and Jesus who tells the story, commend the manager’s shrewdness.

The owner “gives the devil his due”. You’d think the master would be upset, but instead he appreciates the innovative, thinking outside of the box, third option the manager used to get his way. "Well played". Sure he was dishonest, but honesty was never what was most important. Avoiding work and begging was most important...to have that he needs to have friends.

Why do bad people prosper...not simply because they are dishonest. More to the point, Jesus says, it’s because they know what they want and, when a crisis occurs, they are better at sacrificing things for it. Honesty is the best policy under normal circumstances, but sometimes honesty will lead to suffering. If suffering is in your mind the greatest evil, you will find yourself sacrificing honesty and integrity in order to avoid it.

Today’s inversion of christianity shows this well. Which churches prosper in size and wealth? Those who teach a prosperity gospel of size and wealth. And so they are quick to sacrifice things that get in the way of size and wealth. They are ***shrewd enough*** to sacrifice sound doctrine and faithful sheep for the sake of size and wealth. And one of the most marked aspects of such preachers is not only their promises that faith will make you rich; that God is a cosmic genie waiting for you to rub his bottle with your prayers. That’s definitely a part of it. One of the most common features today is that the prosperity gospel gives people permission to sacrifice their God given vocations and responsibilities in the name of “self-improvement” and “moving on”.

If your parents were negative in your life, cut them out of your life. If your spouse is faithful, but intolerable...walk away. You do not have to take that abuse. If your friends don’t approve of some of your decisions, get new friends...who needs such haters in their life.

Jesus Christ is clear, “Deny yourself, take up your cross, and follow me.” Your cross is your calling, your vocation, the station in life that God has given you...the neighbors that God has surrounded you with, the spouse he has attached to your flesh, the parents who brought you into the world, the government in which he has made you a citizen, the confessional lutheran church that he has placed in your town; the pastor he has sent there to shepherd you in his stead. All these are callings. And when Jesus says “take up your cross” he means stay where you are, love those around you, don’t dodge those he sends your way...take them up, help them, forgive them seventy seven times...that is what your life on earth is for. And they may get more out of the relationship than you do. They may prosper in the relationship while you suffer...so what? You will prosper in eternal life, and your burdensome neighbor may not. What other purpose does your life serve than to help him? If he doesn’t deserve it, he will suffer eternal condemnation. If he does, he will repent, become worthy of Christ by faith, and you will gain a brother who will help you in this life as you help him journey the way of your cross to eternal life. He will deny himself and take you up, even as you deny yourself and take him up. This is so difficult that we resent those who make our lives burdensome. Be sons of light and be pragmatic about it.

Paula white, famous pastorix or priestess or whatever you call the oxymoronic title of a female pastor...famously once said, “Anyone who would tell you to deny yourself is from satan.” The problem is, Jesus said that as the premier calling to those who would follow him. She unwittingly called Jesus satan, and by extension those churches who would faithfully teach what Jesus said.

The dishonest manager was shrewd because he realized that his highest calling from the world was to affirm himself, take off his cross, and follow mammon. In order to do that he readily embraced dishonesty to achieve his goals. He twice betrayed his master with dishonesty, but his resolve was sure...he knew he had to do it to achieve his goal.

As a Christian, your goal is to take up your cross. Not only is the christian forbidden to be dishonest, but dishonesty is never required to achieve that goal. In affirming yourself and avoiding crosses, dishonesty is a useful tool, almost indispensable. But if your goal is to suffer for righteousness sake, honesty is the best policy. Because when you are honest, people will want to hurt you. When you confess your sins, they will want to shame and condemn you. When you call out evil they will want to silence you. Sons of light still have the flesh, and still desire mammon and when they are living comfortably still want to protect that worldly peace and comfort...and dishonesty is the best way. But that’s why Jesus says stay awake, otherwise you will get lulled into a life of comfort, drunkenness and ease and will have trouble serving two masters.

The shrewd life for the christian is honesty. Honesty is the means through which you take up your cross. Dishonesty dodges them. Honesty is the means whereby you confront your neighbor in love when he sins and does evil. He might lash out and try to hurt you...that’s why it’s called a cross.

And finally, honesty is the way that you stand before God to confess your sins and that you are a natural sinner. The Roman Catholic church is right that unconfessed sins need to be paid for. They are wrong that you have to list each and every one. It is enough to confess that you are a poor miserable sinner. It is enough to say “Lord, declare me innocent from hidden faults”. It is enough to be willing to confess the sins you know, and those of which you have been justly convicted. Be honest with God and he will be merciful to you. As for forgiveness, and as many sins as you honestly confess, he will honestly forgive through the blood of his son Jesus christ who has won the right to forgive all sins, and promises to loose them from those who honestly repent.

Make friends by means of unrighteous wealth. Befriend the Confessional church and congregation of Christ, who has been given the ministry and keys to the kingdom to bind on earth what is bound in heaven, and forgive on earth what is forgiven in heaven. This may divide you from father and mother, job and wealth, honor and worldly respect; these worldly things might get in the way. Jesus say

 [**29**](http://biblehub.com/mark/10-29.htm)Jesus said, “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, [**30**](http://biblehub.com/mark/10-30.htm)who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life. [**31**](http://biblehub.com/mark/10-31.htm)But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”