

What Does the Bible Say About Bribes and Extortion?

Bribery

A common practice in business, as well as in government, is the payment of bribes.

A bribe is defined as “anything, especially money, which is given, or promised to cause a person to do something illegal or wrong.”

Sometimes business officials will not grant a person the help he is entitled to have unless the person pays a sum of money. This payment is in addition to the fees charged by the business man for his services.

Or, perhaps a man might want to build a building in his backyard, however, he knows this is against the city ordinances. In order to get around (break) these rules, the man will offer a sum of money to the inspector, in hopes that the inspector can pocket the money and overlook his crime. Both are guilty, one is guilty of taking illegal money the other is guilty of offering money for illegal gain.

Indeed, he has committed

the sin of bribery, which is stealing (1 Corinthians 6:9,10; Ephesians 4:28).

The Bible strongly condemns the evil practice of bribery. God commanded Israel: “*And thou shalt take no gift: for the gift blindeth the wise, and perverteth the words of the righteous.*” (Exodus 23:8).

In the book of Job, it is written: “... *and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery*” (Job 15:34).

The writer of Proverbs says: “*A wicked man taketh a gift out of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment.*” (Proverbs 17:23).

Extortion

Another sinful practice which is related to bribery is extortion. The meaning of extortion is: “taking money from someone by violence, threats, or the misuse of authority.”

The one who demands a bribe, and is prepared to take it by force is an extortioner.

For example, several years ago, some Christians had to travel through a certain nation on their way to preach the gospel. The government officials of that nation are known for their corrupt practices. The Immigration and Customs officials with whom they dealt demanded

money to let them pass through their nation.

They had armed soldiers with them. It was clear they were willing to use force to take what they demanded.

Even though the amount they demanded was far higher than the small fee required by their government, the driver paid it. He had no other choice.

His two fellow Christians rebuked him afterward. They accused him of paying a bribe. He replied, “No, it was not bribery. It was extortion!”

He was forced to give the money, or else their lives could have been in danger!

The New Testament has some very strong statements against extortion.

Paul wrote to the Corinthian Christians:

“*Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.*” (1 Corinthians 6:9,10).

In Chapter 5 of First Corinthians, Paul deals with church discipline.

He mentions certain sinful individuals: members of the church, who were not to be received into fellowship unless they repented.

He said: *“But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not ye judge them that are within? But them that are without God judgeth. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person.”* (1 Corinthians 5:11,13).

The Bible teaches that God’s people are to be honest. They must not lie, steal, take bribes or use extortion. Any Christian who is guilty of doing any of these things must repent if he hopes to go to Heaven.

If he does not repent, the church must refuse to fellowship him as a brother in Christ until he does repent.

The Holy Spirit commands: *“Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands*

the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth.” (Ephesians 4:28).



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