

The Rewards Motivating the Statesman

Personal Satisfaction. The first reward of the Statesman is personal satisfaction. A survey was done of over 2,000,000 individuals in many different professions seeking to understand how people find meaning in their work. The result was that those who found the most meaning in their work were those whose lives are focused on helping others. As we have looked at the lives of Statesmen versus Politicians, what captures our imagination is that the Statesman is preoccupied with using the resources available to the office in helping people as opposed to being preoccupied with one's own political future. Hence, the Statesman is especially prepared to find satisfaction.

Approval of Our Fellow Humans. There are also rewards among our fellow human beings. Let us consider the rewards of the statesman William Wilberforce. On the occasion of the passage of the Slave Trade Act of 1807 in the British Parliament, culminating 27 years of largely thankless efforts, Romilly, the solicitor-general rose before that body to pay this tribute to Wilberforce, contrasting him with Napoleon:

When I look to the man at the head of the French monarchy, surrounded as he is with all the pomp of power and all the pride of victory, distributing kingdoms to his family and principalities to his followers, seeming when he sits upon his throne to have reached the summit of human ambition and the pinnacle of earthly happiness — and when I follow that man into his closet or to his bed, and consider the pangs with which his solitude must be tortured and his repose banished, by the recollection of the blood he has spilled and the oppressions he has committed — and when I compare with those pangs of remorse the feeling which must accompany my honourable friend from this house to his home, after the vote of this night shall have confirmed the object of his humane and unceasing labours; when he retires to the bosom of his happy and delighted family, when he lays himself down on his bed, reflecting on the innumerable voices that will be raised in every quarter of the world to bless him, how much more pure and perfect felicity must he enjoy, in the consciousness of having preserved so many millions of his fellow-creatures.

In my opinion, this is the finest tribute ever paid to a fellow human being. What was Wilberforce's heart attitude that set the stage for this commendation? In the case of Wilberforce, I know that it was not praise from his fellow man that motivated him. Wilberforce's words as he embarked upon this crusade were:

God Almighty has set before me two great objects — the suppression of the slave trade and the reformation of manners.

Affirmation of Our Ultimate Master. Wilberforce exemplified an even greater motivation than human acclaim. Even if our fellow human beings do not pay tribute to us for the good we do, there is One whose approval we must seek. As we are told:

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad. (2 Corinthians 5:10)

This judgment involves our response to Jesus Himself. It also involves our stewardship over the opportunities presented to us. We know that God has given us a life to live and we want to make sure that it is lived in a worthy manner. God reminds us through His servant:

For we are God's coworkers. You are God's field, God's building. According to God's grace that was given to me, I have laid a foundation as a skilled master builder, and another builds on it. But each one must be careful how he builds on it. For no one can lay any other foundation than what has been laid down. That foundation is Jesus Christ. If anyone builds on that foundation with gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw, each one's work will become obvious, for the day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire; the fire will test the quality of each one's work. If anyone's work that he has built survives, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned up, it will be lost, but he will be saved; yet it will be like an escape through fire. (1 Corinthians 3:9-15)

We can either build with our lives using imperishable or perishable. We all want to live our lives in such a way that we will leave behind that which will last. And this is the heart attitude of the Statesman.

The key is to remember that we are accountable to Almighty God. He is our ultimate Master. We are, first and foremost, His servant by His declaration, regardless of what we think of Him. The danger is when we seek the approval of those whom we see and ignore our ultimate Master whom we cannot see. It is this knowledge that causes us to examine every action against what we know He requires of us.

Approval of our Ultimate Master. Thus, there is our reward as we stand before Him. Even if our fellow human beings do not appreciate the good we may do for them, there is One whose approval should be adequate motivation for us to serve and lift our fellow humans to the exalted place intended by our Creator. Jesus describes the approval of our Master that we all look forward to:

Well done, good and faithful servant... Share your master's joy! (Matthew 25:21).

Can you imagine anything more satisfying than that to summarize our Master's judgment on our lives? May we each serve our Lord and work on behalf of our fellow human beings each day with the confidence of hearing our Master's approval. Let us all live our lives in anticipation of hearing that wonderful approval:

Well done, good and faithful servant.