

The Statesman Realistically Confronts the Issue of Corruption

Commonly, an incoming Government greets the population with the assurance “One of our highest priorities is to eliminate corruption.” Paradoxically, that same assurance was made by the previous administration, and the one before that. Why then does this problem exist?

If there is one issue expressed by the voices of the public, it is that those charged with stewardship over the Government’s resources for administering well-being for the people must prevent those resources from being siphoned off for personal benefit. Certainly this is a critical issue. Various studies project that corruption consumes a significant percentage of the GDP and a significant percentage of the federal budget. Suffice it to say that corruption provides a significant obstacle for those honourable officials attempting to employ public resources for good for the people. We must recognize that corruption within the Government a would-be Statesman heads will prevent that would-be Statesman from achieving important elements of the good he intended.

But the total impact goes beyond the financial well-being of the citizens. The U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime has concluded: “In a nutshell, corruption increases inequality, decreases popular accountability and political responsiveness, and thus produces rising frustration and hardship among citizens, who are then more likely to accept (or even demand) hard-handed and illiberal tactics.” Corruption deprives the people of the quality of life that God intended to be delivered through Government as His instrument:

that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity (1 Timothy 2:2).

Realistically, we must take seriously the potential for evil in the human heart and find a way to deal with it. As God reminds us in His instructions:

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23).

The human heart has the capacity to be so devious that it could take multiple investigators and lengthy times to bring to justice the corrupt behaviour of a single person. This is quickly obvious as being impractical in solving the issue of corruption. Hence, we cannot rely on the legal-judicial system. It is within this reality that the Statesman must provide leadership. Let us look at the issue of corruption through the eyes of one king, King David, who, in spite of his own failings, confronted corruption. King David said:

The fool says in his heart, “God does not exist.” They are corrupt; they do vile deeds. There is no one who does good....All have turned away; all alike have become corrupt. There is no one who does good, not even one (Psalm 14:1-3).

Realistically, corruption is within the nature of mankind and is facilitated by a mindset of rejection of our Creator’s desired role in the life of each member of His creation. It is a part of our nature as human beings to have a selfish nature, a nature that must be held in check. It must be recognized and dealt with. In a lengthy conversation King David had with the ultimate King under whom he served, he elaborated:

I will pay attention to the way of integrity... I will live with a heart of integrity in my house. I will not set anything worthless before my eyes. I hate the practice of transgression; it will not cling to me. A devious heart will be far from me; I will not be involved with evil.... My eyes favor the faithful of the land so that they may sit down with me. The one who follows the way of integrity may serve me. No one who acts deceitfully will live in my

palace; no one who tells lies will remain in my presence. Every morning I will ... eliminate all evildoers (Psalm 101:2-8).

King David made clear that he would make dealing with corruption a priority:

I will pay attention to the way of integrity...

Then, we recognize four components in King David's response to corruption. **First**, King David committed himself to fighting corruption in his own life, including:

I will live with a heart of integrity in my house. I will not set anything worthless before my eyes. I hate the practice of transgression; it will not cling to me. A devious heart will be far from me; I will not be involved with evil....

King David had corruption in his own life. The same steps he employed in dealing with and overcoming corruption are even more clearly available to us today as we acknowledge that Jesus' died for our sins as well as to help us deal with them specifically and individually:

I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me (Galatians 2:19-20).

if you live according to the flesh, you are going to die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live (Romans 8:13).

We must avail ourselves of God's presence within our lives to convict us of corruption and then His power available to us to overcome that corruption within. But notice our loving Father's purpose:

that the creation itself will also be set free from the bondage of corruption into the glorious freedom of God's children (Romans 8:21).

And this is God's resource for each of us and everyone who administers with us.

The **second** thing King David did was surround himself with like-minded individuals who dealt with their own corruption and prevented it from influencing their administrative decisions. Notice the type of co-workers he chose to administer with him – those who shared his attitude toward corruption:

My eyes favor the faithful of the land so that they may sit down with me. The one who follows the way of integrity may serve me. No one who acts deceitfully will live in my palace; no one who tells lies will remain in my presence (Psalm 101:6-7).

Third, King David worked to eliminate the culture of corruption. Following the words above, King David's attitude is described:

Every morning I will ... eliminate all evildoers (Psalm 101:8).

King David states how frequently and with what priority he takes the steps to overcome corruption, using the words: "Every morning". This signifies not only the frequency but the priority.

Fourth, what is clear here is his active, ongoing effort to help his co-administrators to fight corruption within their lives. Knowing the way our corrupt nature continually seeks to assert its ugly head, reinforcement of commitment to overcome is essential. He

recognizes, and we must as well, that even the best of humans have a corrupt nature that they must overcome in order to avoid corruption.

The Statesman must lead by clear example and clear communication and by continual action. There are several clear applications for the Statesman:

1. Continually overcoming the corrupt nature within himself.
2. Carefully examining the life and character of everyone who would co-administer with him to ensure they have the capacity to handle their responsibility to serve their people in the face of temptation they will face.
3. Actively fight every hint of corruption.
4. Provide reinforcement in the lives of those co-administering.

What steps can I take to overcome corruption within myself and everyone around me?

What can I do to help deal with the culture of corruption within my society?

In what ways will I need the help of God in fulfilling my promise to the people to eliminate the stealing from their lives due to corruption?

The reality is that it is this effort that could contribute to the leader being viewed as a Statesman. The failure to effectively deal with corruption can be expected to prevent one from fulfilling the greatest of visions.