

CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS STUDIES

GREED

Meaning: Greed is one of the major human negative tendencies. It is a selfish and excessive desire for the good things of life. It means the urge to acquire things beyond ones normal due. Or the desire and effort to covert what belongs to another to one's personal use.

Effects of Greed

It leads to murder, lies, false accusation, false claims, stealing and betrayal of friends and relatives.

Ahab seizes Nabotn's vine- yard (1 kgs 21:1-16)

Ahab was the king of Samaria, the Northern Kingdom of Isreal. His wife was Jezebel. There was a man called Nabotn, a native of Jezreel, whose vine yard was close to the palace of King Ahab. Ahab approached Naboth and expressed his desire to take the vine yard and use it as his vegetable garden. He told Naboth that he would give him a better one, or pay for it in cash. Nabotn turned down his request, explaining that the vineyard was a family inheritance.

Ahab balance disappointed, he went and lay on his bed and refused to eat. When Jezebel his wife learnt of what happened, she consoled and cheered Ahab and promised him of owing the vineyard. She wrote a letter in Aha's name to the elders and nobles of Jezreel and asked them to proclaim a fast and set two base fellows who would bring a charge against Nabotn that he cursed God and the King and then stone him to death. Jezebel's Conspiracy mature and Nabotn for real was stoned to death for the cooked up charge that the curse God and the King.

When he died, Jezebel told Ahab to go and take possession of the vine yard and this he did.

Consequences of Ahab's greed (1 kg 21: 17 -29)

God used Prophet Elijah to announce his punishment on the family of Ahab thus,

In the place where dogs hicked up the stood of Nabotn shall dogs lick Ahab's blood because he did evil in the sight of God.

God would wipe away every male, belonging to his family as he did to the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat and that of Baasha.

Then, as for Jezebel, dogs shall eat her within Jezreal.

Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city, the dogs shall eat and anyone of his who dies in the open country, the birds of the air shall eat.

When Ahab heard those words, he rent his cloths, put on sackcloth, fasted and lay in sackcloth and went about dejectedly. When God saw how he humbled himself, he announced through Elijah that those evils would no more take place during his time but in his son's days.

THE HEALING OF NAAMAN. (2 kgs 5: 1-27).

Naaman was a great commander of the Syrian army. Through him Syria defeated many nations. Because of this, the King of Syria respected him but he was a leper.

When Syria and Israel were fighting a war, Syria captured a Jewish girl. This girl then became a maid to Naaman's wife. She told her mistress that the prophet in Israel could cure Naaman of his leprosy.

Naaman made this known to the King of Syria. The King sent Naaman with a letter to the King of Israel, requesting him to cure Naaman of his Leprosy. When the king read the letter, he was angry and suspicious and asked himself if he were God who heals. He saw the letter as a play for military action against him.

When Elisha, the prophet heard that the King of Israel was angry, he ordered that Naaman should come to him so that he would know that there was a prophet in Israel. On his arrival at Elisha's place, a messenger sent by the prophet told Naaman to go and wash himself seven times in the River Jordan so as to be cured of his leprosy. Naaman became angry. He thought that the prophet would come out himself and call the name of his God and cure him. Rivers in Damascus, like the Abana and Pharpar are superior to the River Jordan. He said, why should he go to wash in River Jordan? He went away angry. But his servants advised him to do what the prophet has asked him to do. So he agreed and went to the River Jordan and washed himself seven times and was completely cured. His flesh became as free as that of a little child and he was clean.

Naaman was very grateful to the man of God. He went back to him with many gifts, but the prophet did not accept the gifts from him. Naaman then requested to be allowed to return to Syria with some Israelite earth (sand or clay) from Israel to worship God on it. He had decided to worship no other god but the God of Israel. He at once asked for forgiveness, should he accompany his King to the worship of Syria god, and may he bow to the god. The prophet then sent him away in peace.

When Naaman was on his way home, Gehazi ran after him and lied to him that his master Elisha sent him to get the gifts for his visitors. Naaman gave him even more than he requested. When Elisha later asked him where he had been, he lied to him, after he had hidden the gifts.

Consequences of Gehazi Greed.

Elisha cursed Gehazi and Naaman's Leprosy was transferred to him and his posterity forever. His sin was exposed with people.

Moral lessons from the passage:

Nothing is hidden before God, no matter how we want to conceal it. Gehazi thought he could hide his evil deal from his master but he did not succeed.

Greed is a social evil that is punishable. Gehazi was struck with leprosy and so he became an outcast. He lost his job.

The consequences of greed affects both the offender and innocent.

Let us be contented with what we have.

No act of sin can escape the notice of God.

THE MEETING BETWEEN ELIJAH AND OBADIAH.

King Ahab married a Sidonian princess, Jezebel and brought her to Israel. She introduced the worship of Baal in Israel contrary to Israel's tradition. Elijah, the prophet, prophesied drought which caused severe famine in Israel and as a result, Jezebel sought to destroy all the prophets of God.

At this time, Obadiah the man in charge of Ahab's house hid and fed one hundred prophets of God, fifty-fifty in a cave with bread and water. The drought which Elijah pronounced soon became severe. Ahab called Obadiah his servant and told him to go and look for grasses so that they would save the animals from dying then Ahab and Obadiah went to different directions in search of food and water for the King's animals while Obadiah was on his way, he met Elijah who recognizes him to be the servant of Ahab, sent him to tell Ahab that he was around and would go to meet him to declare an

end of the drought. Obadiah hesitated to go because he feared that the spirit of God would take Elijah away before the arrival of Ahab and he would then kill him, but Elijah reassured him.

When Ahab met Elijah, he asked him, saying "is it you, you trouble of Israel"? but Elijah turned the question against him saying instead that Ahab is the real trouble of Israel because he forsook the commandments of God and followed Baals.

Elijah then told Ahab to gather his false prophets for a contest on Mount Carmel to find out between God and Baal who was the true God.

The Contest on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18: 20-46)

Ahab assembled all the people of Israel and the false prophets of Baal and Asherah together at Mount Carmel. Elijah accused the people of apostasy and asked them to choose between God and Baal. Elijah stated that he alone is left of the prophets of God while the prophets of Baal were four hundred and fifty. Elijah then suggested that two bulls be given to them one for Baal's prophets and one for him, each party has to kill the bull and set it up on wood but put no fire to it and the prophets will call on the name of their god while Elijah calls on the name of his Lord and the one who answers by fire is the true God. This suggestion was accepted.

The prophets of Baal were the first to set their own and they called on the name of Baal from morning until noon but no response. They performed their ritual to no avail and Elijah mocked them.

When it was Elijah's turn he set up his own sacrifice and even poured water over it and then called on God to prove himself that he is the God of Israel and he, (Elijah) is his servant, so that the people would know that he is the true God and believe in him. Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the whole burnt offering and the people believed in God saying, "The Lord he is God, the Lord he is God" Elijah then ordered for the seizure of all the prophets of Baal and he killed all of them. Immediately, God sent rain in response to Elijah's prayers.

Elijah Flight to Mount Horeb

Ahab went home and told Jezebel what had happened, and she sent words to Elijah threatening to kill him as he had killed the prophets of Baal. Elijah became afraid and fled to Beersheba and left his servant behind. He wandered alone in the wilderness and sat under a broom tree. He asked that he might die asking God to take his life, for he was not better than his fathers. As he slept under the broom tree, an angel touched him saying, "Arise and eat" He was fed with cake and water.

The angel woke him the second time to eat because his journey would be too great for him. He ate and drank, and by the strength of the food, he travelled forty days and forty nights to Mount Horeb. On Horeb, he lodged in a cave and when the Lord asked him what he was doing in the cave, Elijah says that he was jealous for God, for Israel had forsaken God's covenant and thrown God's altar, killed his prophets and he alone was left, yet they sought to kill him. He was asked to go and stand upon the mountain before God. Here he witnessed a great and strong wind, earthquake, fire and then a still small voice. On hearing the voice, Elijah wrapped his face in his mantle and stood at the mouth of the cave.

A voice queried why he was there, he replied as before. God ordered him to return to the wilderness of Damascus and anoint Elijah to succeed him, anoint Hazael king over Syria and Jehu King over Israel. Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay, and he who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. He told him that God will save seven hundred in Israel who had not bowed to Baal or kissed him

THE REPAIR OF THE TEMPLE / THE DISCOVERING OF THE LAW BOOK

(2 KINGS 22, 23: 1-30)

Josiah was the son of Amon and his mother was Jedidah. Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign and he reigned for thirty-one years in Jerusalem. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and walked in all the ways of David his father. He removed the evils which his father and Grandfather had done in Judah.

In the eighteenth year of king Josiah, he sent Shaphan, the secretary to the house of the Lord to meet Hilkiah the High priest that he might make available the money collected from the people in the house of the Lord, and give it to the builders of the temple to make the work progress and demand no account from them. It was then that Hilkiah the high priest told Shaphan the secretary that he had found the book of the law in the temple. Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan and he read it. Shaphan came back to the king and reported what happened, that his servants have given the money to the builders and then read the book of law to him.

When the king heard the content of the book, he rent his clothes in anger and he immediately commanded Hilkiah, the priest, Ahikam, Achibour, Shaphan the Secretary and Asaiah to Huldah, the prophetess to inquire of the Lord for him and for Judah, Concerning the words of this book that has been found for great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us. The five people went to Huldah and she told them that the Lord, God of Israel wanted to bring evil upon the land and people because they had forsaken the Lord, burned incense to other gods and provoking God to anger. Therefore, God's wrath was kindled upon the people and could not be quenched. The prophetess also told them that because the king showed penitence and humbled himself when he heard the words of the book, the Lord said he would not witness the evil he would do to that place. They came back and reported to the king.

JOSIAH'S REFORMS

King Josiah gathered the elders of Judah and Jerusalem, priest and prophets and read the book to them, and made a covenant before the Lord. He was humble and started to make amends to avert the impending evil and doom. The reforms are as follows:

Kings Josiah commanded Hilkiah, the high priest and his second in command to bring out of the temple of the Lord all the vessels made for Baal and Asherah, and he burned them outside Jerusalem.

He deposed the Idolatrous priests ordained by his predecessors (all the Idolatrous Priests That encouraged heathern practices like sacred prostitution and burning of incense to Baal, Sun, Stars, and the host of heaven).

He Brought out the Asherah from the house of the Lord, Outside Jerusalem and burned it at the brook Kidron.

He broke down the house of the male cult prostitutes which were in the house of the Lord.

He brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense. He broke down the high places of the gates

He defiled the Topheth to prevent the people from sacrificing the sons and daughters as burnt offering to molech.

He removed the horse that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, at the entrance to the house of the Lord.

He burned the Chariots of the sun with fire.

He pulled down the altars made by the kings of Judah and broke them in pieces and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron.

The king defiled the high places that were east of Jerusalem which Solomon built for Ashtoreth of Sidon and Chemosh of Moab and Milcom of Ammon.

He broke in pieces the pillars and cut down the Asherim, and defiled their places with bones of men.

He pulled down and broke in piece the altar at Bethel erected by Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.

Josiah removed all the high places that were in the cities of Samaria, He slew all the priests of these high places and burned the bones of the men upon them.

He kept the Passover to the Lord in Jerusalem.

He put away the mediums and wizards, the Teraphim and the idols that were seen in the land of Judah.

Ways in which Christians can maintain purity in their Religion

They should avoid idolatry/ occultism

Asking for forgiveness whenever one transgresses

They should always have faith in God

Maintaining peaceful co-existence

Following the moral teachings of the religion, Bible i.e caring for the poor and needy

Avoiding sin of immorality

Proper training of religious leader etc.

Significant of Josiah's Reforms

Josiah's reforms brought about spiritual revival in Israel. The temple in Jerusalem was repaired and established as the center of worship in Israel.

The reforms made the people rededicate themselves to the service of God.

Age is not a barrier to good leadership for God can choose anyone and make him stand.

There is need to change our ways, clear our hearts, so that we can worship God with purity of heart.

Ways in Which the Religious Situation Today is Similar to that of Josiah's Day.

There are many corrupt practices in our society today. Crimes and various vices are prevalent in our churches.

Today many people who claim to be religious are false.

They pay lip service to the worship of God and seek the help of other gods when they face problems

We also have around us so many false prophets and teachers who are like the false prophets of Baal and Asherah.

Nigerians have placed God by the side and have chosen to serve money.

The Death of Josiah.

There was no King in Judah godlier than Josiah. In his days, Pharaoh Neco of Egypt waged war against the king of Assyria. King Josiah who was a vassal king under the king of Assyria, went to intercept him, and Pharaoh Neco slew him at Megiddo. His servants carried his dead body from Megiddo to Jerusalem and buried him in his own tomb.

THE CAPTIVITY/DESTRUCTION OF JERUSELEM

After the death of Josiah, the people of Judah took Jehoahaz his son and crowned him king to succeed his father. Jehoahaz did what was evil in the sight of the Lord. Because Judah is now Egypt's Vassal State, Pharaoh Neco dethroned him and took him into exile in Egypt where he died. Pharaoh Neco then made Eliakim one of Josiah's son king and change his name to Jehoiakim. He was twenty-five years when he began to reign and he reigned for eleven years in Judah (Jerusalem). He as well did evil unto God.

With the defeat of Egypt by Babylon, Judah changed master and became a vassal state of Babylon as Jehoiakim Surrendered to her. After three years, he rebelled against Babylon, Nebuchanezzar promptly reacted by sending his army to Judah. Jehoiakim however died before the army could arrive to punish him for rebellion. On arrival, the soldiers met on the throne Johoiachim the son of Jehoickim and he gave himself up. The valuables of the temple and of the king were voted and many captives were taken to Babylon especially those in the upper classes including the king and his family. Only the poorest of the people were left in Judah.

Nebuchadenezzar made mattaniah, Jehoiachim's Uncle King after changing his name to Zedekiah. He did evil in the sight of the Lord. Later he rebelled against Babylon and Jerusalem was besieged again. As a result of great famine in the city, the king made a breach in the city wall and escaped through it with his family, troops and court members. These were caught, his children and courtiers were killed before him and his eyes were gouged out and he was taken to Babylon with other captives.

Then finally, Nebuzaradan, the captain of the kings' body guard with the Soldiers burnt down the Jerusalem temple, the palace, important houses and Babylon leaving behind only the poorest set of the people.

Effects of War on a Nation

It brings bitterness, famine, Enmity, Suspicion Distrust, Calamity, lose of life and property, Death.

The Condition of the People in Jerusalem after the Deportation.

The people in Jerusalem suffered greatly because the walls of Jerusalem has been broken down and its gate destroyed. The city became exposed to any available enemy.

Secondly, the land was left desolate because important and skilled men carried away into exile leaving behind only the poorest set of people who suffered terribly from hunger. Progress in all its facets was crippled. They lived in shame and unhappy.

With the temple destroyed they cost their place of worship, thus threatening the worship of God. Some lost their faith in God while some tried to adjust by worshipping at the site of the temple runins.

The Effect of the Captivity on the Exiles in Babylon

The exiles in Babylon at first felt some restlessness in living under the Babylon rule. However, they enjoyed considerable freedom of action and association. Some of them established business and became very rich.

CONCERN FOR ONE'S NATION

How Nehemiah received the news about the State of affairs in Jerusalem (Neh 1:1-11)

Nehemiah was in Susa, the capital when Hanani came with certain men from Judah.

Nehemiah asked them concerning the Jews who were still in Jerusalem.

Hanani told him the people there were in great trouble and shame.

He went further that the wall of Jerusalem had been broken down, its gates destroyed by fire.

Nehemiah's Prayer when he received the news about the state of the affairs in Jerusalem.

Nehemiah prayed to God to hear the prayer of his servants

He confessed that he and his father's house had sinned.

They had not kept the commandments, and ordinances Moses commanded.

He asked God to remember His words to Moses that if they were unfaithful He would scatter them among the people.

But should they repent and keep His commandments, He would gather them and restore them to the place He had chosen for them.

He reminded God that He had redeemed His people by His great power.

He petitioned God to listen to His servants and grant Him success and mercy.

Virtues that can be learnt from Nehemiah's reactions / lessons.

Virtues That Can Be Learnt from Nehemiah's Reactions.

He was a man of prayer. A prayerful life is necessary for. Success in every situation

Nehemiah was patriotic and it pays to be patriotic

We should always intercede for our nation.

It is important to have faith in God

There is need for national repentance.

The king's commission (Neh 2:9-20).

Nehemiah then went to King Artaxerxes and pleaded that he should be allowed to go and rebuild Jerusalem. The king granted his request and also gave him a letter which would help him to pass freely to Judah through the territory, and also a letter for Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, so that he could supply him timber for the work. But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the servant; the Ammonite, heard that Nehemiah was seeking for the welfare of the children of Israel, they were greatly displeased.

Opposition (Neh. 4:1-23)

When Sanballat heard that the Jews were rebuilding the walls, he was angry and greatly enraged. He ridiculed the builders, by asking what they were doing, whether they could revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish. Tobiah added that if a fox would go up on the wall under construction, it would crumble.

The mockery of Sanballat and Tobiah made Nehemiah pray to God to punish these men severely for they had provoked God to anger before the builders.

The work on the walls progressed and the angry Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and Ammonites and Ashdodites planned to frustrate and confuse the people of Israel but the people of Israel prayed to God and set guards to protect them day and night. When the enemies planned to frustrate their work,

Nehemiah stationed the people according to their families with their swords spears and bows. He persuaded the nobles and the officials and the rest of the people not to be afraid of them and to remember their great terrible God and fight for themselves and their children. They labored day and night to finish the building.

Rebuilding of the temple (Ezra 1-11, 4).

King Cyrus of Persia made a proclamation throughout his kingdom that the Lord God charged him to build Him a house in Jerusalem. He then ordered the people of the Lord to go down to Judah to take part in the rebuilding of the Lord's house, the God of Israel. He ordered that the people of Israel should be assisted by the men of the place where they were with vessels of silver, with gold and goods, with beasts, apart from the free will offering for the house of God in Jerusalem. The heads of the fathers' houses of Judah and Benjamin, priests and Levites, those whom the spirit of God had stirred were prepared to go up to Jerusalem to rebuild the house of the Lord. Cyrus himself brought out the vessels of the house of the Lord which were carried away during the deportation by Nebuchadnezzar, "a thousand basins of gold, a thousand basin of silver, twenty-nine censers, thirty bowls of gold, two thousand four hundred and ten bowls of silver and a thousand other vessels. All those were brought out. The people of Israel in exile went back with them in Jerusalem.

When the adversaries of Judah heard that the people of Israel who had returned from exile were rebuilding a temple to the Lord, they requested Zerubbabel and heads of fathers' houses that they should be allowed to join in the building of the temple because they also worshipped God. The people of Israel refused their request and wanted to act according to the instruction of Cyrus. When they refused, the inhabitants made the work impossible for them throughout the reign of king Cyrus until the reign of king Darius of Persia.

Then, Rehum the commander and Shimshai the scribe wrote a letter to Artaxerxes the king, persuading him to stop the men of Judah from rebuilding the city. They reported that the Jews who returned from exile were rebuilding the religious and wicked city, they had finished the walls and were repairing the foundations, that if they were allowed to complete the work they would stop paying tribute, custom, or toll and the royal revenue would be impaired. It would mean the king's loss of his possession in the province beyond the river.

Then king Artaxerxes replied Rehum the commander and Shimshai the scribe and their associates in Samaria assuring them that the contents of their letter had been read before him. He told them that he had made some search and found out as they said from the record, that the city had been rebellious and there had been sedition there. So he made a decree prohibiting them from rebuilding the city. When the king's reply was read before the men, they rushed to the men of Judah and forced them to stop their work and the work stopped.

The work resumed (Ezra 5:1-2)

Prophets Haggai and Zechariah prophesied to the Jews in Judah and Jerusalem in the name of the God of Israel. Then Zerubbabel and Jeshua the leaders of different companies of the Israelites that returned from exile arose and began to rebuild the house of the Lord. The prophets of God were there helping them.

The completion of the temple (Ezra 6:13-15)

According to the word sent by Darius the king of the province beyond the River Shethar – Bozenai and their associates did as king Darius ordered. The elders of the Jews built and prospered through the

prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah. They finished the building by the command of God of Israel and by the decree of Cyrus and Artaxerxes king of Persia.

The feast of dedication (Ezra 6:16-22), 7:1-10)

After building the temple, the priests, and the Levites and the rest of the returned exiles celebrated the dedication of the house of God with joy. They offered at the dedication of the house of God, one hundred bulls, two hundred rams, four hundred lambs and as a sin offering for all Israel, twelve he-goats according to the number of tribes of Israel. They set the priests in their divisions and the Levites in their courses for the services of God as is written in the book of Moses.

On the fourteenth day of their return, the exiles kept the Passover because the priests and the Levites had purified themselves. Passover lamb was killed for all the returned exiles. They ate it along with those who had joined them. They also kept the feast of the unleavened bread for seven days.

After all these, Ezra, a scribe went up from Babylon and got all that he asked from the king because the name of God was upon him. Some of the priests and Levites and singers and gate keepers and the temple servants and some other people of Israel also went up to Jerusalem in the seventh year of Artaxerxes.

Lessons learnt from their concern.

We should always fast and pray for our nation for God's forgiveness as Nehemiah did. Sin is a reproach to any nation and punishable by God.

We should always think of what to contribute for the progress of our nation not just what to gain be patriotic Nehemiah persevered to see the city wall reconstructed Zerubbabel worked hard to see that the temple was rebuilt.

We should always try to acquaint ourselves with both the civil and divine laws so as always being good terms with both God and man for a peaceful society. Ezra knew how vital this was and that was why he persevered to teach the people the law etc.

FAITH AND COURAGE

How the faith of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego was Tested in Babylon (Daniel 3: 1-30)

During the period of the Jewish exile in Babylon, king Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold. In dedicating the image, He ordered that all his subjects should worship the image on hearing the sound of royal music and whoever failed would be cast in a burning fiery furnace. His subjects obeyed the instruction but the three Jewish officials Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego were reported to the king for their failure to obey the king's instruction. The king questioned them and found out that the report was true. The men believed that the God They Served would be able to deliver them and if he would not, they would not serve the image. The king was angry and thus ordered the heat in the furnace increased seven times and the men thrown into it. But the king was surprised when he noticed four men in the furnace and the fourth was like the son of God. The king ordered the men to come out and they were not hurt by the flame. The king recognized the sovereignty of God. He promoted the men. He issued a decree against anyone who blasphemed the God of the men on pain of death.

The Out Come of their Faith

The king issued a decree banning his subjects from blaspheming the God of the Jews on pain of death. 2. The King released them

He also promoted them

The fire did not burn them.

He also promoted them.

Some Cultural practices which are contrary to the Christian faith in our society were:

Traditional festival.

Worship of Idols.

Secret cult.

Female Circumcision.

Polygamy etc.

The Effects of Their Faith on the Babylonians and The Jews.

It helped the Babylonians to know the true God. That their gods are subject to God who is a jealous God. 2. They also noted that they should accept and humble themselves before this God.

Only faith in him saves

It also helped the Jews to understand that God Could protect them anywhere they were only if they could trust in him.