

The Fear Of Consequences

There is a close cause-and-effect relationship between deeds and consequences.

The whole scheme of rewards and punishments is a solid and substantial part of the belief of both Jews and Christians, as well as many moral philosophers and other worldwide religions.

Genesis 2:17 [King James] *“But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”*

At the very beginning of the human race a fear of the consequences of disobedience was presented to Adam and Eve.

The death referred to in this statement was to be cut-off from their Creator, dead spiritually.

Genesis 3:22-24 [NIV] *“And the LORD God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever: Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.”*

The Hebrew word translated “know” is “yâra” that can mean “designation.”

Adam and Eve in this act of rebellion against their Creator were taking on God’s prerogative of deciding what is good and what is evil.

Humanity has in the most part continued to follow this decision made by Adam and Eve.

It is right and good to live our lives reverently in the fear and awe of our Holy Creator God and in view of eternal consequences.

But to live our moral lives in fear of temporal consequences is an evil and injurious to our spiritual growth.

No justification can be found in God’s Word for this fear.

Yet this fear of consequences when we live moral Christian lives is like a shadow across the church today.

Moral decisions as revealed in God’s Word, the Christian Bible, should be made in view of moral consequences, never in fear of the effect such decisions may have upon our economic or social future.

It is doubtful whether we can be a true Christian in anything unless we are Christian in everything.

To obey Christ’s Word in one, two or even ten instances and then to fear the consequences and back away from obeying in another will make us only “*fair-weather Christians*” and **not** true believers at all.

To obey when it costs us nothing and refuse when the results are costly is gross insincerity.

Mark 10:17-23 [NIV] *“As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. ‘Good teacher,’ he asked, ‘what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ ‘Why do you call me good?’ Jesus answered. ‘No-one is good, except God alone. You know the commandments: “Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honour your father and mother.”’ ‘Teacher,’ he declared, ‘all these I have kept since I was a boy.’ Jesus looked at him and loved him. ‘One thing you lack,’ he said. ‘Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.’ At*

this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth. Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, 'How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!'"

The temptation to gear our lives to social consequences is very strong in a world like ours, but it must be overcome.

A Christian businessman when faced with a moral choice must **never** ask "*how much will this cost me?*"

The moment he regards consequences of a right moral action, he dethrones Jesus Christ as Lord of his life.

The only concern should be with the will of God and the moral quality of the proposed act.

To consider anything else is to sin against himself and any who may know him to be a Christian.

The same principle faces all pastors of churches, religious writers and publishers in general.

All these examples point to a grave modern evil, permitting temporal consequences to decide eternal issues.

Sometimes an act, though good in itself, may, in a given set of circumstances, be better held in abeyance.

Only be sure that the reason for waiting is the desire to promote the glory of God and to bless humans involved.

Sometimes a word, though true, would be out of season and injurious to another human. Better to be silent than to speak a harmful word.

Only let the reason for silence be out of love and **not** fear of the consequences.

Motive imparts moral quality.

Without a holy motive there **cannot** be a holy act.