

## A Shady Deal

**Ill-gotten gains do not profit,  
But righteousness delivers from death.**

--Proverbs 10:2

Some translations read, “Treasures gained by wickedness,” or something similar. So, what exactly is Solomon talking about?

The term ‘gains’ or ‘treasures’ is not referring to a hidden treasure or gold mine. It is literally, ‘that which you store up.’ So, you might think about your savings account, your retirement account, your Swiss bank account. (You get the point.) Your ‘gains’ might also be material possessions that you have collected and stored up.

The Hebrew term for ‘ill-gotten’ is rooted in the idea of ‘wickedness.’ So, the idea is that of possessing money or things which you have accumulated through dishonest means. Perhaps it was a white lie, fudging some numbers on your income taxes, taking supplies from your workplace, withholding information on the sale of a house or car (a shady deal); perhaps something more serious.

On the surface it would appear that you beat the system. You may have even eased your conscience by rationalizing that you were not caught; or it was so small it really did not matter; or other people do it all the time, or \_\_\_\_\_ (fill in the blank with your favorite rationalization).



It would appear that you have benefited from your gain, but consider the contrast found in the proverb: Profit is set in contrast with . . . death.

The brutal reality is that while there ‘appears’ to be a profit (benefit), there is death.

In stark contrast: Righteousness (doing what is right in God’s eyes) delivers from death.

We know the opposites: life and death. We would never choose death over life. However, Solomon sets things in a more practical language:

There is *life* and, in contrast, there is *wealth gained through dishonesty*.

Be wise.

Choose life.

Do right.