



II Kings 5:20-27 in the Context of Human Corruption

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Abstract

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The present condition of Nigeria economy is seriously perturbing and this needed to be addressed. Many leaders are habitually corrupt, dissipate the resources of this nation and less privilege are wallowing in abject poverty. A lot of lootings have been discovered but still squander by who and who. This work looks into the relevance of the exegetical study of a biblical text and its implications on the issue of human corruption in the Nigerian context. The focus of this study is to consider how good governance can be applied as the best approach to resolving idiocracy of human corruption. II Kings 5:20-27 is therefore examined and critically analyzed in order to discover how covetousness, self-centered and lack of discipline could uprightly endanger an individual and the whole nation through selfish leader. Therefore, this paper, adopted historical, descriptive and exegetical methods to investigate, analyze and peruse various causes of human corruption. Thus, the paper enumerates the nemesis of Gehazi covetousness, if considered and implemented would sustain good governance; Nigerian democracy; freedom from nepotism, bigotry and tribalism. Also, it would permanently establish peace in the nation and inculcate in the mind of the Youths the reverberation of not living right. To this end, the paper concludes that employing II Kings 5:20-27 would help to accelerate democratic sustainability and governance in Nigeria.

Keywords: Nigeria Economy, Human Corruption, Good Governance, Biblical Exegesis, II Kings 5:20-27, Covetousness, Leadership Ethics, Democratic Sustainability, Nepotism, Tribalism, Youth Moral Education, National Peace, Gehazi, Governance Reform.

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INTRODUCTION

It may be well recounted that the genesis of covetousness is the aspiration to acquire everything at all cost. Most of the fraudulent and corrupt acts were in existence because of covetousness nature of both adult and young citizen of any particular nation. The effects of these fraudulent acts in form of covetousness are enormous especially on the victims. No doubt, both developed and developing nations are cozen or hoodwink daily through various means. Meanwhile, this was done to ripping off thousands of dollars, pounds, sterling, euros, naira and all such of valuable things. Having done that, the victims will severely suffer great emotional pain/trauma upon knowing that someone took an advantage of them. With all indication, this fraud is not about money or possession alone, but it talks about stealing away self – confident and self – esteem of an individual (Ellis, 2022 & Suller, 1996). The acts of covetousness are not stereotype to certain set of people,

norms or culture, it cuts across every nook and cranny. The most painful is that, the act is greatly critical in religious setting. Most of the corrupt leaders of both government and non-governmental settings are identified with a certain religious group.

For many years, religion has been a matter of concern to all men. It is well understood that every series of atrocity attached to individual adherent of any religion. Religion has been unarguably a significant aspect of human society and culture since the beginning of human civilization. Throughout the world, as the number of religions reach roughly 4,200, most of the religions teach against covetousness but emphasize on contentment (Taagepera, 2023). But from all indications, diversity of religious practices have seriously influence human activities both positive and negative respectively. Ejiofor (1974) opines that, religion is the complex of belief and behaviour of men in the supernatural sphere and realities and in



the dynamic linkage of supernatural with the natural. He further said, it is the major drive behind human behaviours. Religion has had an important disciplinary effect on the whole social order in any given civilization.

A critical perusal of the above quotation shows that religion has been a very deep factor in the lives of men. Every individual come out from a particular family, and family linked to a particular religion, that could easily narrate the tenacity of corruption in a particular nation. Alamu (2021) expatiates that, it ought to be well understood that religion identifies itself as the first instinct for self – preservation. To him, men take off from religion, march along with religion and they arrive at religion with a minute to minute phenomenon. This buttresses the view that religion is the pride of the mind, the strength of the will, the relish of human emotions coveted object of delicate sentimentality and in general, it is the comprehensive resume of man's spiritual, rational and corporate existence.

The act of covetousness/corruption has gone beyond being devious to the extent that some political leaders in Nigeria for instance succeed at will in finding their way to public offices of trust, and proceed meticulous to strip the public treasury for their own pocket and their boon companion, by abnegation on their promises (Usman, 2014). This clearly narrates that political leadership in Nigeria is often defined along the parameter of the moment, no consideration for less privilege or how to develop and turn things around positively in the society, they are too replete and teeming with selfish ambition. This is greatly infelicitous. Political covetous individual among some leaders joist like a carnival, and strives like scrub in the open field, carousel and squander what belong to trillion of citizens (Mela, Yakubu & Paul, 2024). Having said this, it is of interest to note that some corrupt/covetous leaders turn around to become the beloved, while the hated are those who rebuff the vermin of corruption.

Former Vice President Yemi Osinbajo during the regime of President Mohammed Buhari said sometime before that, "It is only in Nigeria that those that waste, destroy, kill and do all such of evil will still come back to say we are the only one capable of fixing it." He explained further that, "You cannot wish the country well and vote for someone you do not believe in." (Online Vanguard Newspaper). In a nutshell, some covetous/corrupt leaders explore many avenues to exsanguinate the nation's treasury; they are a class that is accustomed to embezzlement (Ehusani, 2002).

In this paper, covetousness/corruption is not limited to abuse of or discrepancies in public office alone but include any wrong attitude or move to exploit a situation for personal advantage at the expense of the larger community and society. It is no more a hidden issue that covetousness pervade and imbue every nook and cranny of Nigeria Government. The paper however, based on Akindele's theory that corruption/covetousness is behavioural and it manifests in attitude of deviation from formal rules of operation by someone in position of authority; (Akindele, 2005) and it generates to lower level. Everybody runs from one angle to another to accumulate what never belong

to them at the detriment of other. For better explanation and justification, this paper employs descriptive and exegetical methods to examine the nemesis of Gehazi covetousness as found in II Kings 5: 20-27. The paper agrees that covetousness among Nigerians has assumed behavioural dimension in all areas. It however holds that, application and explanation of nemesis behind Gehazi covetousness to the process of governance in Nigeria would greatly influence the mindset of both Government and citizens to develop anti-covetous tendencies among the youth and adult. As a result, the integral situation of covetousness in the nation would be greatly reduced.

The Concept of Covetousness/Corruption and Its Challenges

The term covetousness is not a subject easy to defined, but going by Okechukwu (2024), it is a strong wish to have something, especially something that belongs to someone else. It is a behaviour which deviates from the formal rules of conducts governing the actions of someone in a position of public authority, because of private- regarding motives such as wealth, power or status (Oyesile, 2000). Covetousness/corruption is an act that can be considered to be immoral, dishonest, denying of right, self- centered, inordinate, impure and evil. More often, it implies all forms of tribalism, nepotism, bigotry, bribery, unwarranted exercise of power, intentional neglect of a recognized duty, marginalization, and all forms of favour done with an intention of gaining something advantageous or beneficial (Okechukwu, 2024).

According to section 98 of the Nigerian Criminal Code, a covetous person is the person who being employed in the public service, and being charged with the performance of any duty by virtue of such employment, not being a duty touching the administration of justice, covetously/ corruptly asks, receives or obtain any property or benefit of any kind for himself or any other person on account of anything already done, or omitted to be done by him in the discharge of his duties (Online Law). It can be said to exist whenever a power holder who is charged with doing certain things, or responsible for functionary by monetary or other rewards not legally provided and thereby damage the public interest.

From Osoba's (2014) and Ogbewere (2015) view, covetousness/corruption is a form of anti-social behaviour by an individual and social group which confers unjust or fraudulent benefits on its perpetrators, which is inconsistent with the established legal norms and prevailing moral ethos of the land and is likely to subvert or diminish the capacity of the legitimate authorities to provide fully for the material and spiritual well-being of all members of society in a just and equitable manner Corruption as a practical and realistic concept has many fangs, such as bribery, kickback, nepotism, favouritism among others. In other words, corrupt practices will embrace receiving of kickbacks, misappropriation of funds, nepotism, extortions, employment patronage and so forth. In actual facts, a corrupt individual will be one who defends or who practices corruption (Alemika, 2001).

In Nigeria, the high place of political affairs is corrupt and their practices have affected the masses generally. The politicians live in luxuries, ride flamboyant cars, live in comfortable apartment and those voted for them are jabbering in abject poverty. Corruption turns to be order of the day. The current slang of our leaders is ‘chop I chop’ and this has become their way of life from one regime to another regime (Dzurgba, 2003). This greatly inculcate the ideas or political arena of ‘god fatherism.’ The past outrageous character that can be easily denoted in Anambra and Oyo States that revealed difference between Chris Uba and Chris Ngige in Anambra State and Alhaji Adedibu and Ladoja of Oyo State led to the removal of both Governors from the seat of power. This prompt reasons why many politicians are changing their party just like a cloth and the naïve citizens are suffering greatly.

Background of the Book of II Kings.

The book of Kings was originally one book which was later split into 1 and 2 Kings. This work must have been compiled sometime after Judah was captured by Babylon in 586 B.C. It seems to have been the product of one author, who was an eyewitness to the fall of Jerusalem (Hank, 1971, & Eghe, 2020). Though the authorship cannot be known with certainty, several suggestions have been made. Some have nominated Ezra as the compiler, while others point to Isaiah as the editor. A number of scholars opines that the writer of 2 Kings was unknown prophet or some Jewish captive in Babylon at about 550 B.C. Apparently, the most probable position is that the prophet Jeremiah wrote Kings. This famous prophet preached in Jerusalem before and after its fall, and chapters 24 and 25 appear in Jeremiah 39-42; 52. Aside that, the contents of all but the last appendix (25:27-30) could have been written by Jeremiah, and the final verses added by one of Jeremiah’s disciples (Brown, 1995).

Having said the above, it should be noted that the events covered in 2 Kings spanned a period of almost three hundred years. Second Kings records the turbulent experiences of God’s people from the reign of Ahaziah – the ninth king in the northern kingdom of Israel around 853 B.C., through the fall of Israel to Assyria in 722 B.C., the fall of Jerusalem and the deportation of Judah to Babylon in 586 B.C., and ends with the release of King Jehoiachin in 560 B.C. This was a difficult period in the history of God’s people, a time of great change and upheaval (Henry, 1991). There was struggle from within and pressure from without. The result was a dark moment in the history of God’s people: the collapse and eventual captivity of both nations that could be linked to righteous living of Elisha and greediness/covetous act of Gehazi.

Exegetical Analysis of II Kings 5: 20-27

According to Gorman (2023), exegesis is the process of careful, analytical study of biblical passages undertaken in order to produce useful interpretation of those passages. Ideally, exegesis involves the analysis of the biblical text in the language of its original or earliest available form. In addition, it is a critical explanation or interpretation of a text, especially of

scripture. It is the process of discovering the original and intended meaning of a passage of scripture. The goal of exegesis is to know neither less nor more than the information actually contained in the passage and to also interpret what the author intended to communicate.

In this passage (II Kings 5:20-27), the eight (8) Hebrew words shall be consider, such as: **raats** the root of **rus** with the English meaning “to run,” “make haste by running.” It occurs over seventy-five times in the Old Testament and frequently in post biblical Hebrew. The greater number of occurrences of **rus** are found in Genesis, I-II Samuel and I-II Kings. The root tends to be used less often in the prophetic and later historical books. In most usages, a preposition is used to indicate the place from which or place to which the action takes place, like that of Gehazi. The precise direction of the action is indicated with the following prepositions: against – **al**, away from – **min**, before – **lipne**, behind – **ahare** (Wright, 2012 & Francis, 1997) etc.

Another word is **radap** (English meaning “followed”) and it was found in biblical and later Hebrew but not in other contemporary semitic languages. This occurs over 150 times in the Old Testament (Wright, 2004 & McCarter, 1986). The most frequent occurrences are found in Josuah, I-II Kings and Psalms. The most surprising issue is that, while all the versions translate this verb in similar fashion, there are divergences of understanding, which King James Version (KJV) reads “pursued,” Revised Standard Version (RSV) “went in pursuit,” which is more often than not the meaning in active forms. Usually the term refers to a man or group pursuing another for purpose of making war, for selfish ambition or taking revenge.

The verb **shalah** means “to send,” “to send away,” “to let loose,” “to spread,” used to analyzed strife and discord. It explains how a particular man sends another person somewhere (Gen 28:5; 37:13) or he may send such things as tribute (Jud 3:15) or letters/message (I kgs 21:8; II Kgs 5:5). God is often depicted in a similar way as sending men on official mission as his envoys or representatives, and the same time human being promptly send themselves because of greediness and covetousness and attach it to the name of God, such a case is that of Gehazi, he sent himself to represent his master (**‘adon** – Lord, owner) because of covetousness (Wenham, 2003 & Eibfeldt, 1997).

Another Hebrew word **Kesep** means “silver,” “money.” **Kesep** refers to silver as freshly mined and melted (Prov. 25:4; 26:23; Ezek. 22:18); as material for vessels, trumpets, idols (Gen 24:53; 44:2; Num 10: 2; Exo 20:33; Isa 2:20). It is often used with numbers to indicate Shekels of Silver (with **sheqel** or **sh^cqalim** omitted, Gen 20:16; 45:22), it is also used with minas (Eze 2:69), or talent (Eze 38:27; 1 Kgs 20:29; 1 Chr 19:6) (Ellis, 2006). It may be used for price (of sale, Lev 25:50). God instructed Israelites to leave a contentment life not to be a lover of silver or gold. They were instructed to separate themselves for Him as a unique Nation.

The verb **miqqah** means “to receive,” has its root used over a thousand times in the Old Testament, often takes its nuance

from the words with which it is used. As in English one can take vengeance (Isa 47:3), or receive disgrace (Ezek. 36:30), and God receives (accepts) prayer in Ps 6:10 where it is used in parallel with *shama* “to hear.” A similar parallel exists between *laqah* “snatch” and *ganab* “steal.” In the perceive stems (Pual and Niphal), the usage “be taking, carried away” (1 Sam 4:11) or “be brought” (Gen 2:15) suggests that such “taking” is against the will of those taken (Wright, 2004 & Strauss, 1969). These basic meaning are also found in post biblical Hebrew, Aramaic, Moabite, Phoenician, Arabic, Ugaritic, and Akkadian. The instruction of God is that things should be given and received willfully not mandatorily or in a dubious way as that of Gehazi from Naaman.

The word *sara’at* is usually rendered as leper or leprous. The term “leper” is not correct medically, since *sara’at* refers to a wider range of “malignant skin disease.” For convenience, however, the term “leper” can be retained. A person with leprosy, apart from the telltale malignant raw flesh and white hair, was to be otherwise identified by torn clothes, announcement of “unclean” when in the streets and was to leave isolated from the community. Four persons are named in the Old Testament as becoming leprous. Not counting Moses (Ex 4:6), there were Miriam (Num 12:10), Uzziah (2 Kgs 15:5), Gehazi (2 Kgs 5:27), and Naaman, the Syrian (2 Kgs 5:1) (Wenham, 2003 & Rad, 1962).

Another important Hebrew word *zara* means seed, sowing, and offspring. This verb appears fifty-six times: forty six times in the Qal, once in the Paul, six times in the Niphal, and three times in the Hiphil. Literally, *zara* refers to the action of sowing seed in the fields (Gen 26:12; Isa 37:30). It is used with the accusative of the types of seed sown, for example, sowing wheat (Jer 12:13), or with the accusative of the field sown (Ex 23:10; Lev 25:3) (Wright, 2012 & Fohrer, 1968). Occasionally, it is also followed by the double accusative of both seed and field (Lev 19:19; Deut 22:9, “You shall not sow your field with two kinds of seed”). In this prohibition, a reference is made, no doubt, to the Canaanite ritual inducing fertility. Finally, this verb is also used of sowing salt in a captured city (Jud 9:45). The seed of covetousness sown by Gehazi was not for him alone, but his generation after him also took part in it.

The Man Gehazi Versus Covetousness

Gehazi was the servant of Elisha, the prophet. His name means “valley of vision.” He had been so supportive in the ministry of Elisha. He was actively involved when God used Elisha to miraculously solve the Shunemite woman’s barrenness. He ran to inform and ‘protect’ his master from molestation/embarrassment when the woman came to challenge Elisha in respect of her son’s death. He was also the one sent to Naaman when he came for healing from Elisha the prophet. It can be said that he was obviously not the lazy and complaining type. Yet, he had a terrible problem - covetousness (Adeyemi, 2024).

Covetousness had been part of Gehazi. Perhaps, that was the reason he could not raise that dead boy, despite carrying the anointed Elisha’s staff. Is it not likely that he was calculating

that once the miracle was done with, he would have the ground to win the wealthy woman to his side? Like he went behind his master to meet Naaman, left his master without notice, and started his own ‘ministry’ to aggrandize and enrich himself (Klein, 2017).

It was never recorded on the account of Gehazi that he lacked necessary things or ingredients, because Elisha was mentioned as part of well to do prophets, because a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets that ran to meet him (II Kings 4:1) might have done that based on two reasons, either to receive money assistance or divine assistance. Aside that, the procedure to become a minister of God enumerate contentment and self-discipline, but his act of running after Naaman portrayed him as a selfish, indiscipline and unrighteous servant that preferred to make it beyond his master. Gehazi corrupted mind led to greed as he ran after Naaman (Adeyemi, 2024). The passage analyzed that Naaman had promised to make burnt offering to the God of Elisha. To be factual, Elisha’s honesty must have gripped the mind of Gehazi as a surprise. He must have counted on Elisha in high esteem, not just for shallow statement but full of power that resulted in Naaman healing and the refusal of gifts from him. Despite the fact that he was not sent to collect any gift from Naaman, he lied against his master and collected the gifts and hid them. This is obviously a clear chain of greediness. He returned and pretended as if nothing happened. His master asked him of his where about but lied that he was around, even always ready to minister. No doubt, this action portrayed Gehazi as someone that understood the itinerary and programme of Elisha very well. Whatever done by individual, whether positive or negative will surely have side effect not on perpetrator alone but also on family and community as a whole. Gehazi thought of making money from Naaman but was inflicted with leprosy that was inherited by generations yet unborn (Klein, 2017).

Having said that, this act of Gehazi reveals the nature of well to do people that blindfolded themselves from having pity on less privilege in Nigeria, but dangerously yearning to have more than enough. They behave as someone that lack necessary things. Meanwhile, poverty may be defined as the quality or state of someone that lacks the basic necessities of life such as shelter, feeding, unemployment or lack of means of livelihood. It can also be seen as a low standard of living or perennial problem. According to Bureau of statistics in Nigeria, poverty level is sixty-three percentage (63%), and those who sleep with hunger are more than ten percent (10%). Marshal opines that, “it is an era of hunger unprecedented.” Supporting Marshal’s view, Ehusani in his ‘Nigeria: Years Eaten by the Locust,’ notes that “the blind and deaf can see and hear the angst, squalor and poverty in the land.” (Ehusani, 2002 & Marshal, 2021).

Based on the level of poverty in Nigeria now, some political guerrilla and religious manipulators easily mobilize the less privilege, who are dangerously vulnerable as a result of their unemployed status, and subsequently engage them as thugs and they vehemently become prey in the hands of these political demons to cause violence, while most of their children are schooling abroad. This political demons are purely unstable

people, they easily wear religious grab and disguise. It is most pleasurable and fascinating to them when a handful of people are killed and destroyed in the name of religion. The fact remains that an idle mind becomes the workshop of the devil (Cornelius, (2025)).

It should be well noted that series or forms of corruption/covetousness have grossly affected the political and socio-economic aspects of many lives. The nature, structure and manifestations of covetousness in the historical, legal, religious and social terms are modish issues. Covetousness goes along with greed, poverty, unemployment, moral decadence in the polity, marginalization, privatization of public enterprises, fraud, denial of right, inflation, lack of transparency, betrayal of trust, and unaccountable of what is put in one's custody. Without hiding truth, covetousness could be denoted as a back bone of child trafficking, rape, ritual, insecurity, even political instability because most of the youths that see how politicians spend money want to do the same, and that prompt them to go extra mile. The reality of this are facets in sports, institutions, public and private offices (Aderounmu et.al, 2021).

In connection to the above submission, Yves Meny (1996) said, the causes of corruption/covetousness are sought in wholly different directions, depending on the ideological stance and preferences of the seeker. The neo-liberal school considers covetousness to be one of the effects of the black market caused by excessive state intervention. The more the state intervenes, the more it legislates, and the more it develops interfering bureaucracies, the greater the risks of parallel procedures and markets spawning unlawful conduct. On the other hand, those who are not convinced of the state's intrinsic perversity or the market's unquestionable merits stress another aspect: the erosion of public ethics, the loss of state's legitimate status as the incarnation of the general interest, and the dilution of communal values through the pursuit of profit and the defense of selfish private interests. This is to conclude apparently that social elite and state has a role to play in safe guarding, defending and promoting human welfare in a particular state or environment, together with dignity, security and freedom from excessive spending, removal of saboteur individual that depends on exploring national or state goodies to their personal purse and reassuring citizens of good future.

The Reflection of Covetousness/Corruption on various Parastatals of Nigeria.

When disputable and shaky leaders merge together in a particular nation, it would not be a surprise that everything will turn around to be imbued and pervade with series of covetous/ corrupt acts. A critical consideration of today's endemic of covetousness/corruption, one discovers that major stakeholders, such as governments, unions, businesses, the industrial commissions, the churches, the mosques, and individuals present themselves hesitant, in such a way that it is fabulously belief that Nigerian are corrupt/covetous. Having said that, it is clearly identified and known that there are many paucity and crunch in all facets of Nigeria system, both democratic, business quarters and religious settings. But to say the fact, the spin and mangle in the religious setting and

democratic push are in the strength or weakness of the people eye to eye covetousness/corruption. The above analogy elucidates an opinion of Oketa (1998) that, "the success and otherwise of religious settings and democratic transitions seems to be relatively independent of the democracy and religions in the continent." This quotation elongates what is perceived as a major rebuff in the pace and abyss of religious and democratization together with how they asphalt way for covetousness/corruption.

Undoubtedly, the involvement of corruption in a global picture paves way for rise of social and economic changes. Everybody wants to make it at all cost. Thus, as Bako rightly noted: "it has been well known among sociologist and anthropologist that periods of rapid social change have been marked in many societies by the rise of messianic movement. These have been often seen as confined to a pre-industrial past in Europe or the formally colonized countries under twin impact of colonial rule and of technological change in the 1970's, however, it became obvious that emergence and spread of new movement were in no way confined to pre- industrial societies." (Bako, 1992). Generally, a number of conceptual issues have arisen with regards to the nature and gravity of economic crisis, and the particular religious crisis it generates in the various social formation across the globe. This is because the life history of capitalism to date has produced various types of corruption and atrocities (Bako, 1992).

Fundamentally, economic issues related to the state of Nigeria, have contribute immensely to corruption/covetousness in Nigeria. It has been noted that since the late 1970, at the inception of this contemporary world capitalist recession, Nigeria witnessed the starting point of the national religious crisis and corruption. This causal connection between the economic crisis and religious intolerance in Nigeria has manifested itself in the deterioration of the economy from one level to the other, and the various ways in which managers of the state tried responding to the situation starting with the General Obasanjo's austerity measures, Shagari's ethical Revolution, Buhari's economic stabilization decrees with the ultimate in the Babangida IMF and World Bank – sponsored Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP), (Agi, 1987) this was in collaboration with seven points agenda of Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, unsettlement Leadership of Goodluck Jonathan because of ethnicity, bigotry and unknot disturbance of Boko Haram. The second tenure of Muhammed Buhari hitched with marginalization, together with cash crisis from Central Bank of Nigeria in the tenure of Godwin Emefiele. Nigerians are still combating seriously with the issue of cash crisis in the present Government of Bola Ahmed Tinubu, because his administration started with selfishness and self-centeredness, not minding what citizens that voted for them are passing through but went ahead to buy car that worth 126 million naira for each 36 senators in the upper chamber of the legislative house, when our economy is seriously facing turbulent challenges.

The pathetic issue related to the above, the dramatic effect of the economic policies which marks a watershed in the history of this nation with its resultant consequence in all spheres of life in Nigeria, is the Structural Adjustment Programme which was introduced in 1986. Most significant of the effect of this

programme was that it resulted in the outright collapse of Nigeria as a Welfare State (Enwerem, 1995). Another striking feature of the pattern is the religious intolerance that unfolded in relation to the economic recession, was the unevenness of the conditions of development among the religious – cum – ethnic nationalities which lead to domination, oppression, segregation and depression (Bako, 1992). It is rooted in the ethnic inequality and their unequal access to political, economic and cultural powers and values in the society.

Presently, the level of corruption/covetousness has gone beyond limit because of bribery, extortion, nepotism, tribalism, dishonest in business, mismanage of government property, just to mention few. Bribery is giving money illegally or unethically to influence a person's behavior or lobbying in form of gift. It influences the act of giving or receiving anything of value with the intention of inducing a person to act on a reward he/she has received. Exodus 23:8 and Deuteronomy 16:19 vehemently teaches that, "Do not accept a bribe, for a bribe blind the eyes of the wise and pervert the words of the righteous." Indubitably, Nigeria citizens have sunk in the grubby of bribery. Bribery is generally conducted in various forms. It is hard to get to the top or reach one's destination without bribery. The worst part of the issue is that, most students use their body as a bribe in order to get good grades or marks in some higher institutions. You have to give petrol attendant bribe in order not to be delayed in petrol station. Policemen and women have even attenuated the matter, it is written widely in most police station that bail is free, but the matter is purely opposite, nothing go for free in Nigeria police station. Nigeria policemen will even go beyond official protocol to check people's phones, laptops, bags and baggage in search of money. This issue gave birth to End Sars conflict of 2020 where thousands of Nigeria Youths died in Lekki Toll Gate on 20th October, 2020. It is a purely unforgettable effect, the blood of Nigeria Youths flowed like water because they spoke for their right. Alack, many citizens are in police custody today because they are unable to provide the money required by the police.

Bribery is not only limited to Africa or Nigeria, it is a widely spread disease, only that it takes different forms in each country. Bribery is wrong, both the giver and the receiver are completely guilty. Plato once said, "if a particular person behave right, he would be able to produce ten people, and within ten years the society would turn around to be better, because of authenticity of perfect behavior." (Online Quotation). Bribery has dangerously placed negative effects on society, such as inflation on the cost of goods and services. Every business man and woman will like to recover every penny spent on bribery in order to get their products back, and this prompts them to increase the prize of the product. Just as adultery leads Judah to lose the staff and mantle of his glory when a woman disguised as harlot and caught him, so also, bribery has made our society morality to rust away and vulnerable to more evil practices (Usman, 2014).

Having said the above, another pedigree of corruption/covetousness is extortion. Extortion may be defined as the practice or act of obtaining something by force or threats. In a simpler sense, it denotes that, when a person at the realm of authority is using force to get something from his subordinate to him, it is purely an act of extortion (Yerokun, 2023). The

major background toward extortion is greediness and some people defend themselves that they extort others because of family challenges, economic melt-down, dubious ambition to be successful like others, just to mention few. There is no word to justify sin or evil atrocity, though people may be hiding behind one finger, still what is wrong remains wrong (Ake, 2024).

Some people may be using money to get promotion at the place of work, government official may not sign or proceed on necessary requirement of his/her job to citizen without extortion, illegal collection of state or local government revenues may be all over, extortion remain greater sin against God and humanity. Despite the fact that extortion has been in existence since Bible time, God lamented terribly on it and encourages His people to run away from such act. In Habakkuk 2:6, prophet taught the people of his day to run away from extortion, "won't all these take up a parable against him, and say, woe to him who increases that which is not his, and who enriches himself by extortion." Isaiah also teaches in chapter 16:4 that, "let my outcasts dwell with you, as for Moab, be a hiding place for him from the face of the destroyer. For the extortioners is brought to nothing. Destruction ceases. The oppressors are consumed out of the land." In the New Testament, Paul elucidates on extortion by sounding warning to Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 6:10, "nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor extortioners will inherit the Kingdom of God." Apostle Paul continues in 1 Corinthians 5:11 on how to disassociate from extortioners, "But as it is, I wrote to you not to associate with anyone who is called a brother who is a sexual sinner, or covetous, or an idolater, or a slanderer, or a drunkard, or an extortioners. Don't even eat with such a person." Extortion is a dangerous case, and it must be completely eliminated, in order to save nation from being collapse.

In addition to the above, nepotism is another unnerve issue that has eaten deep the fabric or structure of Nigeria economy, politics and religion. Nepotism is an act by which one bestows mercy or kindness or favour on particularly ones relatives, friends, and association at the detriment of others (Ake, 2024). The regime of President Muhammed Buhari dangerously nepotistic towards this nation. He was purely an ethnic oriented leader. He sabotaged the efforts of other tribes and elevate Hausa (Fulani precisely). Permissions were given to cattle rearers to walk anywhere with their flocks and destroy farmlands and farm produce. He established Ruga policy with the intention to reduce herder-farmer conflicts. With this policy, Fulani's can occupy any place of their choice in Nigeria. The questions from reasonable mind are: Do we need something like this in a multi religious, ethnic and tribal nation? Are they also practicing something like this in developed nation, such as Germany, France, etc? Is it not possible or even necessary for cow, sheep, goat rearers in the country to get a secluded areas for nurturing of their flocks? Is it compulsory they must be paraded on the streets, schools, farm and eat another person's farm produce, or even working in Government house? This gave birth to serious rivalry that Nigerian are still battling with till today. Thousands of people are dying every day in the North because of this Fulani; churches got burnt and properties were wasted. Apart from being mentioned, it must come to mind that,

the case of unemployment, criminality, kidnapping, just to mention few got increased every day because certain tribes believe that leadership of the nation belongs to them and that other tribes are inferior to them. They distribute the goodies of the nation between themselves and left other tribes starving. The worst part of this issue is based on the fact that this matter is connected with religion. Muslim or Christian brethren in any organization make sure that nobody is awarded contract except their fellow religious brethren. Admission to any higher institution is now rated on religion. It is wholly believed by certain set of people that nothing can be achieved on a platform of good certificate or normal morality. This is terribly an act of corruption (Usman, 2014).

One of the qualities of a good leader is to treat everybody equally. No specification or preferential for any family member or employee, not to mention ethnicity or tribes. Everybody prefers to be relevant or identified as a unique person. In the Bible, Rebekah, Isaac, Eli and Samuel practiced nepotism (Gen. 27:21-24). Isaac was interested in Jacob, while Rebekah was interested in Esau. With the help of Rebekah, Jacob received the blessing that belong to Esau and ran away from home. If not for the help of God, Esau would not have made it again (Gen. 33:12-20). Nepotism is not a welcome idea, even under any circumstance. It paves way for hatred, disunity, killing and retrogression.

Moreover, another corruption/covetousness attached to this research work is tribalism. Tribalism is the opposite of nepotism narrated above. Tribalism is the act of committing oneself or showing loyalty towards a particular family, tribe and tribe lifestyles. It leads on to advocating for a particular tribe (Gordon et.al, 2022). Nigeria as a nation since inception of independence in 1960, records have it that Hausa/Fulani ruled Nigeria than other tribes, both in military and civilian system of Government. This has greatly affected the economic situation, education background, and security of the nation. In the Bible record, tribalism domiciled the nation of Israelites and prompted Apostle Paul to speak in volume to the people of Galatians in chapter 3 verse 28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ." He proceeded in his statement when he was talking to Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 3:6-7, "I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planted anything, neither he that watered; but God that gives the increase." Religion should be in the forefront in fighting tribalism. All politicians hide under the umbrella of religion to perform their dubious act. Religious leaders should emulate and preach peace at all times, enough of corruption/covetousness under the shadow of religion.

To boot more, there is no home, organization, political arena and church today without dishonesty. Dishonesty may be defined as a behavior or prone in attitude to untrustworthy, deceitful, and insincere way or lifestyle (Alemika, 2001). Some people believe that honesty and business cannot be merged together. This gave birth to pirated music, video, fake name on various goods, false measurement in market places or petrol stations, manipulation of account, yahoo fraud, Facebook/WhatsApp scam just to mention few. Without hiding the truth, these should be categorized as theft that spring out from the act of covetousness/corruption. Meanwhile, Bible

teaches in Leviticus 19:11 that "Ye shall not steal, neither deal falsely, neither lie one to another." Also, in Proverb 12:22, "Lying lips are abomination to the Lord: but they that deal truly are his delight." Ephesians 4:25 says, "Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another." Religion leaders must be honest in their dealings in order to lay good example and teach honesty to the adherents of their religion. "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people." (Prov. 14:34).

Last but not the least is the misuse of Government properties. This has become the nature of any incumbent government to misuse or sell properties that ought to have been of benefits to future generations. It must be established that any property in a particular state belongs to citizens of that environment and nobody has the right to claim the ownership or decide on what everybody owns (Ake, 2024). In actual fact, Nigerian Government are rendering this nation to zero point every day through the misuse and sales of valuable companies. The lists of Federal Government national properties that were privatized/sold are: Nigerian Telecommunication (NITEL); Power Holding Company of Nigeria (PHCN), former NEPA; Nigeria Airways; Ajaokuta Steel Melting Company; Eleme Petrochemicals Company; Coal Mine, Enugu; Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (FRCN), Lagos Complex; Anambra Automobile Manufacturing Company, ANAMCO; Jos Steel Rolling Company; Kastina Steel Rolling Company; Nigeria Machine Tools Limited (NMTL), Oshogbo; Port Harcourt Refinery; Warri Refinery; Kaduna Refinery; and National Library. The most unfortunate is the use of this company for personal gain and diversion of public funds to build private houses and buy cars.

The Bible warns against this dubious behaviour in Ephesians 4:28, "Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needed." Until we realize that we are all reliant, a simple mistake of a particular person will tell on a whole community. Government and those in power should not use federal or state properties for their own gain because of corruption/covetousness. This nation's tomorrow is greatly paramount to and interconnected with that of today. Incoming generation must be proud of this nation.

CONCLUSION

Nigeria can only move forward and overcome covetousness/corruption by exposing every corrupt activity; by keeping the public sector honest, transparent and accountable. Nigeria Government should stop dishonest practices and encourage public sector with good salary, social amenities, in order to be faithful at their place of work. Corruption is not only about bribes only, people especially the poor get hurt when resources are wasted and pave way for series of atrocities. In addition, effective law enforcement is essential to ensure that corrupt individuals are punished and break the cycle of impunity, or freedom from punishment or loss. Freedom of the press should be allowed together with transparency, access to information and openness. Nigeria is our home, collective work will reduce leakages of funds, and improved the quantity and quality of public services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As useful and occupied as this paper is with vital information, it will not be complete without making some valuable recommendations. Therefore, the following are the researcher's recommendations:

1. Individual will be advised to work on their state of mind, nothing goes beyond the state of mind, from it the issue of life and death spring out. Gehazi ran after Naaman to collect money and gold because he made up his mind to do so in the content of covetousness.
2. Nigeria is a multi- religion and ethnic nation; bribery, nepotism, tribalism will not bring peace but disunity, insecurity and retrogression. Every tribe is unique and needed to be recognized for peace to reign.
3. Government should give a verdict (Law) that will minimize the property acquired by every citizen, and it must start from those in power. This law should go beyond god-fatherism or ruling party red carpet of safety, like in the case of Akpabio and some others politicians. He squander public money when he was with PDP and ought to be sanctioned, if not jail but the moment he join APC he was pardoned, and he's now the senate president under APC umbrella.
4. Nigerians should desist from voting for whoever that will sell Nigerian properties. Most of these properties were acquired or bought by their family members, for example Atiku Abubakar bought off NEPA and started to determine the nation's Electricity. This same man said it fiercely in his Presidential primary campaign that if he was elected, he will still sell Nigerian National Petroleum Corporation (NNPC) in 2023. Nations cannot grow/move forward like this. Enough of acting like prodigal son.

Individual business man and woman, lecturer, petrol attendant, religious leaders etc should stop being hesitant in their various offices. Nigeria can only grow through individual contribution of faithfulness and righteous living.

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