

## Proverbs of Solomon – Proverbs 26:13-16

Most of **Proverbs**, following the early chapters, have been individual statements – a collection of proverbs. *“A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold. The rich and poor meet together: the LORD is the maker of them all. A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished.”* This is the style we find throughout most of the **Proverbs** – quick, pithy, individual pairs of thoughts. When we came to **chapter 26** last week I was surprised to find a single theme linking together 12 verses. But then again I wasn’t surprised, because the Lord knew I needed that subject – *“The fool and his ways.”* Yesterday as I opened my Bible, asking the Lord for a devotion for this evening, I thought I had our subject in the next verse – *“The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets.”* I immediately thought that the Lord wanted us to consider the subject of excuses. But then, I noticed the continuation of the subject of the slothful man in the next few verses. *“The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets. As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed. The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth. The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.”* The excuses of the sluggard then became only one point in a subject which went for 4 verses. I then looked up the word *“slothful,”* reading all the scriptures which use that word and taking notes. There are 17 verses which use the word *“slothful”* and 6 others which speak of *“the sluggard.”* And along with them there are 3 verses in the New Testament. Most of the Old Testament verses use variations of a single Hebrew word. Sometimes that word is translated *“slothful man”* and sometimes *“sluggard”* – so they are the same man. We have both translations here in the verses of our text. We might say that this Hebrew word speaks of someone who is *“lazy”* – as do the 3 Greek verses. But there are two verses in the Old Testament where the word speaks of *“deliberate deceit”* – perhaps we might think of it as someone who **pretends** to be disabled – but in reality is only lazy. And once it speaks of feebleness – someone who is incapable of doing much work because of a genuine disability.

### **Let’s start our study this evening with Proverbs 18:9 –**

*“He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.”* The lazy person wastes more than he produces – he is brother to a *“great”* waster. Let’s say he works for a really wonderful employer. He gets a good salary, eats in the company cafeteria at discount prices, receives company stock, etc. But he only does a quarter of the work others do. He’s a sluggard; he’s slothful. Obviously he wastes the company’s time, salary, benefits – even the station or computer where he works. He deserves to be fired. He probably would be fired, but affirmative action, or his relationship to the boss’s wife, keeps him employed, wasting the company’s resources. And he creates waste as well as well as wasting. What he produces is substandard, and because he sits at that work station, he keeps a better man from actually doing some good.

**Prov. 24:30-31** – *“I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.”* One of the things I admire in people is self-motivation. No where is this more important than in a farmer. He cannot afford to sit back and rest too long – there is always a field to till, fence to mend, weeds to kill or a machine to maintain or repair. You can see where a sluggard lives by looking at his front yard, or his garden, or his broken down fences.

I will come back to this, but let me say at this point, slothfulness is not a Christian characteristic. When you drive by a yard which is drying up, overgrown with weeds, and unmowed, do you say, *“Oh, there is the home of a Christian man?”* I usually think – *“disgusting.”* Then I wonder if he is someone needing my help because he is too old or injured to maintain his property.

Just like every other evil in this world, the propensity toward laziness lays in us all. Without the Lord, it is hard to live the way a Christian should live. I am as guilty as anyone in looking for an excuse not to mow my lawn or to knock on doors for the Lord. It is part of the nature of the sluggard to look for excuses, and it is easy for him to find them.

**Prov. 20:4** – *“The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest and have nothing.”*

**Prov. 22:26** and **26:15** – *“The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets.”* How often is there a mountain lion walking down your street? Not very often. Is it possible? Yes, it is slightly possible, but that is no reason not to get out your lawn mower. **Prov. 15:19** – *“The way of the slothful man is as an hedge of thorns.”* The sluggard will always find an excuse to avoid his responsibilities.

But slothfulness is hurtful in so many different ways. That employer would be far better off firing that man – even if it means facing a discrimination law-suit or having to explain things to his wife. **Prov. 10:26** – *“As vinegar to the teeth,*

*and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him.”*

**Solomon declares that not only is slothfulness hurtful to others it is SELF-destructive.**

**Prov. 26:14** – *“As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed.”* Remember – these illustrations and lessons aren’t mine, they come from the Lord. Doors swing open and then closed, and some can swing 240 degrees – both in and out. But they hang on two or three hinges and never leave the door frame – *“So doth the slothful upon his bed.”* He may be very restless and active in bed, but he’s still in bed, and doing nothing productive.

**Proverbs 9:15** – *“Slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger.”* I don’t want to over simplify what is a genuine problem – but I have to ask – How much poverty is there in this country due to people’s unwillingness to work? How many are hungry while waiting for handouts, because they constantly find excuses to work. Of course there are genuine exceptions, but I don’t think there aren’t as many as it appears. **Proverbs 13:4** – *“The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.”* **Proverbs 20:4** – *“The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.”* **Proverbs 12:27** – *“The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting.”* In other words – he isn’t roasting anything at all. **Proverbs 19:24** and **26:15** – *“A slothful man hideth his hand in his bosom, and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again.”* He is hurting no one but himself, unless of course he is married and injuring his family.

It is not just hunger that this man’s slothfulness creates. **Proverbs 21:25** – *“The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labor.”* **Ecclesiastes 10:18** – *“By much slothfulness the building decayeth; and through idleness of the hands the house droppeth through.”* I have known marriages that have teetered on the brink of divorce because one of the parties was lazy. Houses fall through neglect; cars fail because they aren’t properly maintained. Marriages are often destroyed through lazy neglect.

Think about **Proverbs 12:24** – *“The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.”* Slothfulness and laziness creates slaves – *“the slothful shall be under tribute.”* The man who can’t work because he abuses his body could become a productive person, if he would make some changes in his life. The man, under these circumstances, who willingly accepts government money becomes a slave to the government who owns him. Productivity means a certain kind of freedom. That man is free to change jobs, because he has something to offer an employer. He usually has more money than the well-fare recipient and can do more than the other man. *“The hand of the diligent shall bear rule”* – if over nothing more, at least over most of his own life.

**As I have already suggested, slothfulness is not a Christian characteristic.**

In one of our Lord’s parables, talents were given to three servants – one got 5, one got 2 and one received 1. The master of the servants then went away, expecting his employees to work with those talents and improve upon them. When the third was required to give an account, he replied that he had buried his talent to keep it safe. *“His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant... Thou oughtest ... to have put my money to the exchanger, and then at my coming, I should have received mine own with usury. Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth”* – **Matthew 25**. The servant of God who is not serviceable to God is *“wicked and slothful.”*

In **Romans 12** when Paul is describing the general characteristics of the saint of God, he included the condemnation of laziness. *“Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.”* And he didn’t stop there. But notice, *“Not slothful in business”* – not just in the Lord’s business, but in business generally. Because how we live our general lives, reflects upon our Saviour.

In **Hebrews 6** he says much the same thing – *“God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”* Notice that we are not to be slothful, because the Lord is not slothful or unrighteous to forget our work or labour of love.

**Let’s close with some additional commentary and Solomon’s exhortation.**

**Proverbs 6:9** – *“How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man.”*

And his exhortation? **Proverbs 6:6** – *“Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.”* Might we logically say that the slothful man, the sluggard, the lazy man has less character than an ant? I could say that the sluggard is lower than a slug, but it’s probably best to stick to the scriptures.