



CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH
NINILCHIK

SUNDAY YOUNG PEOPLE'S READING

The HEAVENLY FOOTMAN

OR,

The Description of the Person who Gets to Heaven;
Together with the Way One Runs, the Marks by which They Go;
Also, Some Directions How to Run so as to Obtain

by John Bunyan

Retold in Modern English
by Jon Cardwell

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(INTRODUCTION: A Letter *to* All Sluggards & Careless People)

And as they brought them out, one said, "Escape for your life. Do not look back or stop anywhere in the valley. Escape to the hills, lest you be swept away."—Genesis 19:17

Friends, Solomon says: “*The desire of the sluggard kills him, for his hands refuse to labor*” (Pro 21:25); and if so, what will sluggishness itself do to those who entertain it? The proverb is, “*...he who sleeps in harvest is a son who brings shame*” (Pro 10:5). And I dare to be bold in saying: no greater shame can befall a person than to see that he has fooled away his soul and sinned away eternal life. And I am sure this is the next way to do it; namely, to be sluggish, slothful, or lazy—sluggish, I say, in the work of salvation. The vineyard of the lazy man, in reference to the things of this life, is not fuller of briars, thorns, and stinking weeds than the one who is sluggish for heaven, having a heart full of heart-choking and soul-condemning sin.

Sluggishness has these two evils. First, to neglect the time given in this life to possess heaven; and second, to neglect those resources God has provided to bring repentance before one dies. I assure you that anyone who loses his or her soul in this world through laziness will have no reason to be glad when they enter hell.

Sluggishness is usually accompanied with carelessness, and carelessness is, for the most part, born by senselessness; and senselessness gives new strength to sluggishness— and by this means the soul is left without a cure.

Sluggishness shuts out Christ (Song 5:2-4). Sluggishness also shames the soul (Pro 13:4).

Sluggishness is condemned even by the feeblest of all the creatures: “*Go to the ant, O sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise*” (Pro 6:6). The sluggard will not plow because of the cold: “*The sluggard does not plow in the autumn*” (Pro 20:4); that is, he will not break up the unplowed ground of his heart because that means work, and labor means pain, strain, and a little sweat; therefore, “*he will seek at harvest and have nothing.*”—that is, when the saints of God receive their glorious heaven and happiness, the sluggard shall “*have nothing*”—that is, the sluggard shall be never the better for his or her crying for mercy, according to what is recorded in Matthew 25:10-12.

If you want to recognize one who is a sluggard in the things of heaven, compare him with one who is lazy in the things of this world. As, 1) A sluggard is reluctant to labor in the work he or she should be doing; so is the one lazy toward heaven. 2) A sluggard is one who is willing to make delays and put things off; so is the one lazy toward heaven. 3) A sluggard will make any small matter an excuse to keep from engaging in work; so is the one lazy toward heaven. 4) A sluggard works by halves; so is the one lazy toward heaven. They may almost obtain perfect deliverance from hell, but never altogether get it; almost, but without changing his or her ways, they will never be a true saint. 5) A sluggard usually loses the season in which things are to be done; and thus it is also with the one lazy toward heaven because they miss the season of grace. And therefore, 6) a sluggard seldom, or never, produces good fruit; so also it will be with the soul-sluggard. 7) A sluggard is rebuked for the above behaviors; so also will Christ deal with those who are not active for Him: “*I will condemn you*

with your own words, you wicked servant! ... Why then did you not put my money in the bank, and at my coming I might have collected it with interest?" (Luke 19:22-23). *"And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"* (Matt 25:30).

WHAT SHALL I SAY? Time runs; and will you be sluggish? Much of your lives are past, and will you be lazy? Your souls are worth a thousand worlds, and will you be slothful? The day of death and judgment is at the door, and will you be lethargic? The curse of God hangs over your heads, and will you be sluggish? Besides, the devils are earnest, laborious, and seek by all means every day, by every sin, to keep you out of heaven and hinder you of salvation— and will you be sluggish? Also, your neighbors are diligent for things that will perish, and will you be sluggish for things that will endure forever? Would you be willing to be condemned for laziness? Would you be willing the angels of God should neglect to fetch your souls away to heaven when you lie dying, and the devils stand by ready to scramble for them? Was Christ sluggish in the work of your redemption? Are His ministers sluggish in pleading this truth to you? And, lastly, if all this will not motivate you, I tell you God will not be sluggish or negligent to condemn you, whose condemnation, now of a long time, sleeps not— nor will the devils not neglect to fetch you, nor hell neglect to shut its mouth upon you.

Sluggard, are you asleep still? Are you resolved to sleep the sleep of death? Will neither tidings from heaven or hell awake you? Will you say still, *"A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest"* (Pro 6:10)? Will you still turn yourself in your idleness as the door is turned upon its hinges (Pro 26:14)? Oh, that I was one who was skillful in lamentation! If only I had a yearning heart towards you! How I would pity you! How I would bemoan you! Oh, that I could, with Jeremiah, let my eyes run down with rivers of water for you! Poor soul, lost soul, dying soul, what a hard heart I have that I cannot mourn for you! If you should lose a limb, a child, or a friend, it would not be so much. But, poor man, woman, boy, or girl, it is YOUR SOUL! If your soul was to lie in hell for only a day, for only a year— No— ten thousand years, it would be nothing in comparison. But, oh, it is forever! Oh, this cutting EVER! What a soul-amazing word will that be, which says, *"Depart from me, you cursed, into the ETERNAL fire"* (Matt 25:41)!

Objection. But if I should set in, and run as you would have me, then I must run from all my friends; for none of them are running that way.

Answer. And if you do, you will run into the bosom of Christ and of God, and then what harm will that do you?

Objection. But if I run this way, then I must run from all my sins.

Answer. That is true indeed. Yet if you do not, you will run into hell-fire.

Objection. But if I run this way, then I shall be hated and lose the love of my friends and relations, and of those that I expect benefit from or have reliance on, and I shall be mocked by all my neighbors.

Answer. And if you do not, you are sure to lose the love and favor of God and Christ, the benefit of heaven and glory, and be mocked by God for your folly: *“I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when terror strikes you”* (Pro 1:26). And if you do not want to be hated and mocked, then take heed that your folly does not procure the displeasure and mockings of the great God— for His mocks and hatred will be terrible since they will fall upon you in terrible times, even when tribulation and anguish take hold of you; which will be when death and judgment comes, when all the men in the earth and all the angels in heaven cannot help you (Pro 1:27-28).

Objection. But surely I may have enough time to begin this, a year or two from now, may I not?

Answer. 1) Have you any lease on your life? Did God ever tell you that you shall live half a year, or two months, longer? No. It may be that you may not live that long. And therefore, 2) will you be so stupid and unwise as to gamble your soul upon the smallest chance in the universe— the uncertainty of time? 3) Do you know whether the day of grace will last a week longer or not? For the day of grace passed by some before their life had ended. And if it should be so with you, would you not say, “Oh, if I only had begun to run before the day of grace had been past, and the gates of heaven had shut against me.” But, 4) If you saw any of your neighbors trying to sell their home or property and neglect accepting an offer, saying, “There’s time enough later,” when time is uncertain; and besides, they do not know whether the offer will ever come to them again, or not. I say, would you not then call them fools? And if so, then do you think that you possess wisdom to let your immortal soul hang over hell by a thread of uncertain time, which may soon be cut down by death?

But to speak plainly, all these are the words of a sluggish spirit. Arise, man! Arise, woman! Arise, boy and girl! Be sluggish no longer; set foot, heart, and all into the way of God, and run— the crown is at the end of the race. The loving Fore-Runner also stands there. It is Jesus, our Fore-Runner, who has prepared heavenly provision to make your soul welcome. And He will give you these provisions with a more willing heart than you can ever desire it from Him. Oh, therefore, do not delay the time any longer, but put into practice the words of the men of Dan to their brothers after they had seen the goodness of the land of Canaan: *“Arise,”* they said, *“...for we have seen the land, and behold, it is very good. And will you do nothing?”* or, will you not run? *“Do not be slow to go, to enter in and possess the land”* (Jdg 18:9). Farewell.

I wish our souls may meet with comfort at the journey’s end.

JOHN BUNYAN.

TO BE CONTINUED