

- 12 Seest thou a man wise in his own conceit? there is more hope of a fool than of him.
- 13 The slothful man saith, There is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets.
- 14 As the door turneth upon his hinges, so doth the slothful upon his bed.
- 15 The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth.
- 16 The sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason.

Introduction:

1. This sermon is for everyone, especially me. I hardly ever preach with being self-convicted, but I have never failed to preach a text even if I felt the conviction. I have always thought that if it would be good for me to hear it, then it would be good for others to hear it. This is something of what I think Paul meant when he wrote to Timothy: "1Ti 4:16 Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee."
2. The word "conceit" means "eyes" or "imagination." A conceited person is wise in his own eyes, or in his own imagination. He is too clever by a half and has a reason for everything.
3. Solomon gives an example of a particularly conceited person, a lazy person, who will not go to work. He has many reasons why he need not perform, and can give you more reasons than a committee of seven wise men can.
4. He is particularly adept at turning the argument back on his accuser. In this case he is saying that you would be cruel and inhumane to expect him to go out in the street to go to work. There is a lion in the street. In chapter 22:13, the same proverb is quoted, with the addition "I shall be slain in the street." How unreasonable of you to suggest that I put my very life in danger by going out the door today. There is a lion in the way.

We will see this morning the conceit itself, the cause of the conceit, and the cure for the conceit, and then make an application

I. The Conceit itself.

- A. There is a great contest before us: a man and a lion. People have laid out great sums of money to bring such encounters before us: They have gone on Safari and travelled through the jungles. Some famous encounters are in Scripture: David as a youth met a lion and a bear and over came them. Samson tore one to pieces with his bare hands. Benai-ah, one of David's mighty men slew a lion on a snowy day, scripture says.
- B. But just as we are thinking that we might see another famous encounter between a man and a lion, the battle is over. The lion has won.
- C. We are not even sure that there is a lion in the way; all we know is that the slothful man says there is one. But the thought is enough; the man is defeated. Defeated by what?
- D. He is defeated by his own conceit. He sees himself in his imagination, torn and bleeding and broken, food for a lion. And the battle is done. The lion has won the day without even a roar.
- E. The man has fallen prey to a wicked imagination; to an empty dream. There have been other such things:
 1. The twelve spies in the days of Joshua. Ten of them had a wicked imagination. They saw giants in the land and great walled cities. They saw themselves and Israel being

broken upon those walls and crushed beneath the feet of those giants. To them the battle was over. "We are not able to overcome them. We were grasshoppers in their sight." But Joshua and Caleb had a different spirit, the Bible says. They saw themselves as giants and the giants as grasshoppers. "Let us go up," they said, "We are well able to overcome them." But the people adopted the conceit of the ten spies, began to moan and weep, and God turned them back and did not let them inherit the land because of their unbelief.

2. Another example was in the days of Joash, the king of Israel, the apostate descendant of Jehu. Elisha was old and on his death bed and Joash went to see him to find the fate of Israel and her horsemen. Elisha told him to take his bow and shoot out the window. "Thus shall you smite the Syrians prevail. This is the arrow of the Lord's deliverance." Then Elisha said, "Take the bundle of arrows and smite upon the ground." The king did and hit the ground three times. Elisha was angry and said, you should have smitten the ground five or six times, then you would have utterly defeated Syria; now you will have only victory in three battles. The king probably thought the whole thing was stupid and only struck with the arrows halfheartedly; his conceit was shallow and he forgot who it was who commanded him, not recognizing the man of God. He was wiser in his own conceit than the man of God and paid a heavy price for it.
3. Other scripture:
 - a. "The thoughts of the diligent *tend* only to plenteousness; but of every one *that is* hasty only to want." (Pr 21:5 AV)
 - b. "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean *men*." (Pr 22:29 AV)
 - c. "The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute." (Pr 12:24 AV)
 - d. "He becometh poor that dealeth *with* a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich." (Pr 10:4 AV)

II. Let us see what the cause of the conceit is.

A. The wicked imagination is the result of sin:

1. The sin in this case is slothfulness.
 - a. We are commanded not to be slothful in business; Rom. 12:11;
 - b. Matt. 25:26. The sin of the man who hid his one pound was slothfulness. He accused his master of being unreasonable. Just as this man who had a lion in the street.
2. Kinds of slothfulness:
 - a. Physical: slack hand. Pr 10:4 He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.
 - b. Mental: gird up the loins of your mind.
 - c. Spiritual "Labor to enter in at the strait gate" "Labor to enter into rest."

B. Ignorance

1. Ignorance of God and His promises
2. Ignorance of lions as the creatures of God.
3. Ignorance of himself. He is in the image of God. He has a mind.

C. Unbelief. The spies could not enter in because of unbelief.

III. Let us see what the cure is:

A. Keep your heart Proverbs 4:23:

1. Rule your spirit: Walk in faith
2. Walk in hope, in the promises of God.: Do not give in to wicked imagination. Do not imagine your defeat.
3. Walk in love: for the kittens, and dogs, and children, and wives, the old, the feeble, who are in danger by that lion. Go to work, people are depending on you.

B. Keep your brain: Plan ahead. You have a brain

- a. Ropes and nets should have been prepared
- b. A neighborhood watch with men prepared.
- c. Lions would be overcome even in those days by men prepared and working together.

Application.

1. There was one who faced a most ferocious Lion, who described in I Peter 5:8,9 8 Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: 9 Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.
2. There was that day many years ago when a man was called of God to encounter that lion who was destroying God's creation.
3. That man sweat great drops of blood in the agony of his soul as he contemplated the struggle that was coming. He knew he would be overcome and his body would be broken and his blood shed in the encounter and he would die on a cross outside the streets of Jerusalem.
4. But this man, the Man of man, who was also the Son of God, by faith saw not his defeat, but he saw His seed, the ones who would be redeemed by his broken body and shed blood.
5. We can thank God that our Lord Jesus did not waver from the conflict but went to work that day, for He had been sent into the world to do that work of redemption and save His people from their sins.
6. And He reaped the rewards of his day's work. By his death he left Satan defeated and overcome, and saved His people, and God raised him from the dead and paid his wages, the riches of his grace and mercy which he would pour out upon his people.
7. We also are to resist this lion in the faith, and our work is also afflictions and trials that are appointed for all the people of God that are in the world until the final resolution of all things, that was made certain by the blood of the cross.
8. And so we are left with faith, that believes the promises of God; hope, that sees not vain conceits but the things reserved in heaven for us; and love, whereby we bring forth the fruit of faith, for faith works by love.

May God bless you.