

Lecture 1 – The Sin of Laziness

Focus Verse:

“The soul of the lazy man desires and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich” (Proverbs 13:4 KJV).

Introduction:

The book that instructs us about righteousness of character has nothing complimentary to say about indolence. The honor of hard work is extolled by the Scriptures and the shame of laziness is made equally clear. Christians are observed by others. The work ethic of a jaded society must not become the standard for God's child.

God calls the lazy man a "sloth" (Proverbs 12:27) and a " sluggard" (6:6). Webster says a sloth means "disinclination to action or labor" and that sluggish means "indisposed to exertion." Some people are in want because of circumstances beyond their control; such people deserve the assistance of others, including God's people (Ephesians 4:28). Other people are in want because they are "indisposed to exertion" and they deserve no help from anyone. The wise man says of the sluggard, "So shall thy poverty come as a robber, and thy want as an armed man" (Proverbs 6:11). What should be the fate of the man who can, but will not, exert himself -- who continually says, "Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands" (6:10)? He is entitled to every bit of the poverty he has earned.

The results of laziness are obvious. Many people's lives and surroundings are in shambles, simply because they will not get up and do something about it. Solomon says, "I went by the field of the sluggard, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding; and, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, the face thereof was covered with nettles, and the stone wall thereof was broken down" (Prov 24:30-31). Lazy people may have their house falling in around them, their yard grown waist-high in weeds, their children ill-clothed and ill fed -- yet they will merely keep watching TV. Jesus called the slothful man in Matthew 25:24-26 a wicked man (in spite of his excuses) and Paul said, "This we command you, if any will not work, neither let him eat" (1 Thess 3:10).

Solomon said, "By slothfulness the roof sinketh in, and through idleness of the hands the house leaketh" (Ecc 10:18). Paul said, "But if any provideth not for his own, and specially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim 5:8).

The lazy man is his own worst enemy. He misses one of life's richest experiences -- the satisfaction of a job well done. "The desire of the sluggard killeth him; for his hands refuse to labor" (Prov 21:25). It kills his spirit and his self-respect; how can he have any? And it actually kills him a day at a time, for he has no worthwhile purpose for living.

Newton's first law of motion states that an object in motion tends to remain in motion, and an object at rest tends to remain at rest. This law applies to people. While some are naturally driven to complete projects, others are apathetic, requiring motivation to overcome inertia. Laziness, a lifestyle for some, is a temptation for all. But the Bible is clear that, because the Lord ordained work for man, laziness is sin. "Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider her ways and be wise" ([Proverbs 6:6](#)).

The Bible has a great deal to say about laziness. Proverbs is especially filled with wisdom concerning laziness and warnings to the lazy person. Proverbs tells us that a lazy person hates work: "The sluggard's craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work" (21:25); he loves sleep: "As a door turns

on its hinges, so a sluggard turns on his bed” (26:14); he gives excuses: “The sluggard says, ‘There is a lion in the road, a fierce lion roaming the streets’” (26:13); he wastes time and energy: “He who is slothful in his work is a brother to him who is a great waster” (18:9 KJV); he believes he is wise, but is a fool: “The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who answer discreetly” (26:16).

Proverbs also tells us the end in store for the lazy: A lazy person becomes a servant (or debtor): “Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in slave labor” (12:24); his future is bleak: “A sluggard does not plow in season; so at harvest time he looks but finds nothing” (20:4); he may come to poverty: “The soul of the lazy man desires and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich” (13:4 KJV).

There is no room for laziness in the life of a Christian. A new believer is truthfully taught that “...it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)). But a believer can become idle if he erroneously believes God expects no fruit from a transformed life. “For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” ([Ephesians 2:10](#)). Christians are not saved by works, but they do show their faith by their works ([James 2:18, 26](#)). Slothfulness violates God's purpose—good works. The Lord, however, empowers Christians to overcome the flesh's propensity to laziness by giving us a new nature ([2 Corinthians 5:17](#)).

As Christians, we know that our labors will be rewarded by our Lord if we persevere in diligence: “Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers” ([Galatians 6:9-10](#)); “Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving” ([Colossians 3:23-24](#)); “God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them” ([Hebrews 6:10](#)).

Those who are Christians must determine to be productive, responsible disciples of Christ in every area of their lives. They must be, as Paul said to the Romans, "in diligence not slothful" (Romans 12:11).

Lecture 1 – The Sin of Laziness Meditation Guide

1. Identify the lazy habits that you have in your life.
2. Why do these habits exist? Think about your lifestyle, the choices you've made and the result of those decisions.
3. Now that you have identified the problem, what do you need to do to overcome it? Think Practically! Think of what you are capable of committing to.

Lecture 1 – The Sin of Laziness - Saint Anthony the Great

Life of St. Anthony

Anthony was born near Herakleopolis Magna in Upper Egypt in 251 to wealthy parents. When he was eighteen years old, his parents died and left him with the care of his unmarried sister. In 285, he decided to follow the words of Jesus who had said: "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasures in heaven; and come, follow Me." (Matthew 19:21). Anthony gave his wealth to the poor and needy, and placed his sister with a group of Christian virgins, a sort of proto-nunnery at the time.

The moniker "Father of Monasticism" is misleading, as Christian monasticism was already being practiced in the deserts of Egypt. Ascetics commonly retired to isolated locations on the outskirts of cities. Anthony is notable for being one of the first ascetics to attempt living in the desert proper, completely cut off from civilization. His anchoritic (isolated) lifestyle was remarkably harsher than his predecessors. By the 2nd century there were also famous Christian ascetics, such as Saint Thecla. Saint Anthony decided to follow this tradition and headed out into the alkaline desert region called the Nitra in Latin (Wadi El Natrun today), about 95 km west of Alexandria, some of the most rugged terrain of the Western Desert.

Also note that pagan ascetic hermits and loosely organized cenobitic communities that the Hellenized Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria described as the Therapeutae in the first century, were long established in the harsh environments by the Lake Mareotis close to Alexandria, and in other less-accessible regions. Philo understood: for "this class of persons may be met with in many places, for both Greece and barbarian countries want to enjoy whatever is perfectly good." (Philo, *De vita contemplativa*, written c. 10)

According to Athanasius, the devil fought St Anthony by afflicting him with boredom, laziness, and the phantoms of women, which he overcame by the power of prayer, providing a theme for Christian art. After that, he moved to a tomb, where he resided and closed the door on himself, depending on some local villagers who brought him food. When the devil perceived his ascetic life and his intense worship, he was envious and beat him mercilessly, leaving him unconscious. When his friends from the local village came to visit him and found him in this condition, they carried him to a church.

After he recovered, he made a second effort and went back to the desert, further out, to a mountain by the Nile, called Pispir, now Der el Memun, opposite Arsinoë in the Fayyum. There he lived strictly enclosed in an old abandoned Roman fort for some twenty years. According to Athanasius, the devil again resumed his war against Saint Anthony, only this time the phantoms were in the form of wild beasts, wolves, lions, snakes and scorpions. They appeared as if they were about to attack him or cut him into pieces. But the Saint would laugh at them scornfully and say, "If any of you have any authority over me, only one would have been sufficient to fight me." At his saying this, they disappeared as though in smoke, and God gave him the victory over the devil. While in the fort he only communicated with the outside world by a crevice through which food would be passed and he would say a few words. Saint Anthony would prepare a quantity of bread that would sustain him for six months. He did not allow anyone to enter his cell: whoever came to him, stood outside and listened to his advice.

Then one day he emerged from the fort with the help of villagers to break down the door. By this time most had expected him to have wasted away, or gone insane in his solitary confinement, but he emerged healthy, serene, and enlightened. Everyone was amazed he had been through these trials and emerged spiritually rejuvenated. He was hailed as a hero and from this time forth the legend of Anthony began to spread and grow.

