

Proverbs 20:4

The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold; therefore shall he beg in harvest, and have nothing.

Lazy people always have reasons for not working hard. The least difficulty or discomfort gives them reason to take another day off. They generally expect a handout or subsidy from others, but instead they should be left hungry! Here is precious practical wisdom, which could benefit every home, business, church, and nation. Proverbs are dark sayings, which the Lord expects us to open up for the sweet nectar of wisdom within them.

Sluggards are lazy people. The Oxford English Dictionary says, “One who is naturally or habitually slow, lazy, or idle; one who is disinclined for work or exertion of any kind; a slothful or indolent person.” Solomon told sluggards to learn diligence from the ant (6:6) and stop sleeping so much (6:9); he described them as irritating to bosses (10:26), always coveting what they will not work for (13:4), and conceited in their excuses (26:16).

The sluggard will not plow by reason of the cold. When soil should be turned in fall or spring, the cool weather intimidates the sluggard. He prefers a warm bed and house. The thought of working in the cold is too much for him. He will not accept anything in his life that is difficult or stressful. Life should be easier, he thinks to himself. But a diligent man does not notice little things like temperature or other circumstances. He has a job to do, and he gets right to it. He creates his own body heat for comfort!

Of course, a sluggard is not easily moved from his excuses or fears. He can give ten reasons why it is not a good time to work. He must defend himself from the shame of being a lazy freeloader. There will always be an excuse, for the problem is his heart, not his circumstances. Though seven men tell him the truth about hard work and reward, he arrogantly rejects their advice (26:16). But the LORD knows how to teach him!

A sluggard must beg in harvest. When others reap a return, he wants some of the wealth, even though he wasted his opportunity. Sluggards are socialists and communists by conviction! But Solomon was a capitalist! Solomon wrote, “The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute” (12:24). And again, “The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat” (13:4).

A sluggard should be given nothing. The Lord’s welfare system is simple – we will help you learn to work by letting you get hungry! Paul wrote the Thessalonians, “For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat” (II Thess 3:10). Hunger cravings help a man work (16:26)! God’s plan is for the diligent to be rewarded with the confiscated assets of the slothful (Luk 19:12-26)!

Christian charity is for true needs, for acts of God; it is never to subsidize laziness (Acts 2:44-45; 11:27-30; Jas 1:27). God expected the poor to glean the corners of fields intentionally left for them ... but they still had to get up and get out in the cold to get it (Lev 19:9-10; 23:22; Deut 24:19-21). Handouts make you an accomplice in the sin of slothfulness. Wise virgins do not share their oil with foolish virgins (Matt 25:1-13)!

Parents! You must crush laziness early in a child. The future pain to a spouse, family, and others is great. You must teach the duty and joy of hard work. You must let them share the blessings of reward. You must praise a job well done. You must require all assignments to be fully and rightly done, and on time. The LORD be with you.