

Chico Alliance Church
April 24, 2016

“The Malady of Mediocrity”

INTRODUCTION

We spent some time last week on the place of service (work) for the Lord. Romans addresses both sides of the issue.

Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Romans 12:11

One can recognize fervency by the amount of **time** invested and **energy** expended.

To claim fervency for something you do not invest time or energy is fantasy. What things in your life would you say you are fervent about? How do you know? What differentiates things you fervently follow and those you don't? There are several aspects of life where the Bible calls for fervency, diligence, time and energy.

I. DIFFERENTIATE AREAS CALLING FOR SPIRITUAL DILIGENCE

1. *Our Love for The Lord*
2. *Our Character Development and spiritual growth*
3. *Our study of the Scriptures.*
4. *Our Obedience*
5. *Our Walk by the Power of the Spirit*
6. *Our prayer life*
7. *Our Love for One Another*
8. *Our Parenting*
9. *Our Giving to Needs of Others*
10. *Our Ministry in the lives of others*

God created animals to illustrate life. Two of God's animals illustrate this concept; the ant and the sloth.

II. DISCERN DISCIPLINE FROM THE ANT

Last week we urged you to gain insight by observing the ant as instructed in Proverbs.

Go to the ant, you slacker! Observe its ways and become wise. Without leader, administrator, or ruler, it prepares its provisions in summer; it gathers its food during harvest. Proverbs 6:6-8

- 1 -- **Priorities.** The ant knows what needs to be done.
- 2 -- **Time Management.** The ant knows when things should be done.
- 3 -- **Motivation.** The ant knows why things need to be done.

From the ant we learn to work without constant supervision.

From the ant we learn to plan and work for the future without the constant need for immediate gratification.

The sloth is a most interesting animal. It is a wonder that they even survive. It is a good thing they are vegetarian and have a very low metabolism.

III. DEAL WITH ANY TRACE OF MEDIOCRITY & LAZINESS

Webster defines the adjective lazy as follows:

Disinclined to action or exertion; adverse to labor; indolent, idle, slothful.

We normally view laziness from a purely physical aspect regarding someone who won't work. This is only one aspect of laziness. Just as God calls for diligence and zeal in a number of areas of spiritual life, He condemns laziness in some of those same spheres. Laziness describes the failure to exercise a conscious effort to move ahead in my Christian growth. Such a failure never remains static; we actually slide backwards. The writer to the Hebrews lamented the fact that he could no longer address many of the deeper concepts of the spiritual world because they had BECOME dull of hearing. That means they were once able but now no longer able to deal with the meatier issues of the word. They should have been teachers but now needed to return to kindergarten. They should have been feasting on porterhouse but now could only handle Pabulum. Spiritual laziness describes a laze fare attitude toward the things of God. Who knows what opportunity I may not have the time to tackle tomorrow simply because I refused to accomplish today's tasks.

A. *The characteristics of laziness*

1. **He doesn't think he is lazy and has ample justification for his lack of diligence. He can always think of good logical excuses.**

The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can give a discreet answer. Prov 26:16

The sluggard says, "There is a lion outside; I shall be slain in the streets." 22:13

EXCUSES

Had a long day. There will be time later. Too busy for Lord now. I put in my devotions last week. I'll pray tonight.

2. **He gets to be a sluggard gradually through small unchecked concessions to laziness.**

"A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest-- and your poverty will come in like a vagabond, and your need like an armed man." 6:12

It won't hurt to miss reading one day. I'll start Monday.

3. **He fails to value the importance of time and seasons.**

"The sluggard does not plow after the autumn, so he begs during the harvest and has nothing." 20:4

Why doesn't God do something? Why doesn't He bless me? When did I stop sowing and preparing the soil for harvest? We must do things when instructed.

If you are slack in the day of distress, your strength is limited. Proverbs 24:10

4. **He loves sleep.**

"As the door turns on its hinges, so the sluggard upon his bed." 26:4

"Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep; and an idle soul shall suffer hunger." 19:15

"Love not sleep, lest you come to poverty." 20:13

"How long will you sleep, O sluggard? When will you arise out of your sleep. 6:9

Sleep is used as a means of escape from responsibility. There are many other ways we find to avoid our responsibilities. Sometimes it may be just business with the urgent rather than the important. It's called tyranny of the urgent.

5. He fails to complete tasks or maintain what he has.

"I passed by the field of the sluggard, and by the vineyard of the man lacking sense; and behold it was completely overgrown with thistles, its surface was covered with nettles, and its stone wall was broken down." 24:30-31

"Through indolence the rafters sag, and through slackness the house leaks." Ecc 10:18

6. He lives in an unreal world of wishes and unfulfilled dreams.

"The desire of the sluggard puts him to death, for his hands refuse to work. All day long he is craving while the righteous gives and does not hold back." 21:25-26

"The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing... 13:4

7. He cannot be trusted to carry out responsibilities.

"Like vinegar to the teeth and smoke to the eyes, so is the lazy one to those who send him." 10:26

"He who is slack in his work is brother to him who destroys" 18:9

8. He wastes resources by neglect.

"The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; he is weary of bringing it to his mouth again." 26:1

"A slothful man does not roast his prey but the precious possession of a man is diligence." 12:26

How often we waste opportunities for spiritual growth that God brings our way.

Don't take advantage in studying any further.

So much is available for our building. Too weary. Heard it before.

9. He doesn't realize his state or sense any need to change.

I (Jesus) know your deeds (work) that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will vomit you out of My mouth (you make Me ill). Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. Rev 3:15-17

The mediocrity addressed here has to do with a failure to pay attention to the need for Jesus. The recommendation is to REPENT and diligently seek the resources that come from Jesus. Jesus stands outside of our life longing for intimate relationship.

10. Loses fervency through complacency.

"I know your works, your toil and your patient endurance, and how you cannot bear with those who are evil, but have tested those who call themselves apostles and are not, and found them to be false. I know you are enduring patiently and bearing up for my name's sake, and you have not grown weary. But I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first. Remember therefore from where you have

fallen; repent, and do the works you did at first. If not, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place, unless you repent. Revelation 2:2-5

Here the problem is a lack of demonstrated love. The instruction is to remember what it was like at the beginning and go back to doing what came naturally at the beginning. It happens to most relationships. Over time the fervency wanes. What shines bright in a dark word? It is a demonstrable love for Jesus.

B. The consequences of Laziness

1. A difficult life

"The way of the sluggard is as a hedge of thorns" 15:19

2. Poverty

"Poor is he who works with a negligent hand." 10:4

"Laziness casts into a deep sleep, and an idle man will suffer hunger." 19:15

"The sluggard does not plow after autumn, so he begs during the harvest and has nothing" 20:4

3. Forced to always work for others

"The hand of the diligent will rule, but the slack hand will be put to forced labor." 12:24

4. Greater susceptibility to sin

Example of King David who was sitting around when he should have been fighting. It was the prelude to adultery.

"We hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies." 2Thess 3:11

Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: she and her daughters had (1) arrogance, (2) abundant food, and (3) careless ease, but she did not help the poor and needy. Thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them when I saw it. Ezekiel 16:49-50

5. Matthew 25 – 10 Virgins

Foolish procrastination -- failure to prepare diligently

Foolish passivity -- failure to perform diligently

Foolish priorities -- failure to prioritize diligently

IV. DEPEND ON THE SPIRIT -- REDEEM THE TIME

V. DRAFT THE HELP OF OTHERS

VI. DISTINGUISH THE REWARDS OF DILIGENCE

1. *A Rich Life*

2. *Authority, leadership*

Whoever is faithful in very little is also faithful in much, and whoever is unrighteous in very little is also unrighteous in much. So if you have not been faithful with the unrighteous money, who will trust you with what is genuine? Luke 16:10-11

3. *A Satisfied Life*

4. *Creativity and Resourcefulness*

5. *Honor and Respect*

6. *Approval*

Run a diligence check.

Evaluate those two factors on a scale of 1-10 for each of the ten areas listed above.

How would you characterize your spiritual walk? Lazy --- Diligent

We must see mediocrity as rebellion and confess it as such.

The key to conquering spiritual apathy, laziness is a little seven-word prayer.

"LORD HELP ME TO DO IT NOW."