

The Ants Example

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Preacher: Stuart Wilson

[0 : 0 0] well if you'd like to turn back with me to that passage in Proverbs chapter 6 so Proverbs 6 that is 6 verse go to the ant go to the ant there's that interesting expression man was created to have dominion and yet sinfulness has brought him into habits and attitudes that are somewhat below that dignity that we were created for in a fallen condition we can often learn from the animals rather than teach them and in some ways as sinners we act more like animals than animals do you know in children's books you often read about the courage of a lion don't you or the wisdom of the eagle or even the faithfulness of the elephant you know the characteristics of animals but rarely do you hear about the ant the ant and yet

God's book doesn't forget it so the challenge for us is let's master God's book God says go look at the ant and summerly in the old passage you read the Proverence the ants are a people not strong yet they prepare their meat in the summer you know and that's probably a reference to one of the species one of those twelve thousand the harvester ant which was a common ant in Palestine and so God's telling the folks look at the ant take a hint from the ant they're not strong they're mighty you know in fact you know you walk along you don't think anything about treading them on do you and yet the ant he teaches he prepared her food for when they need it and there's two of them six here and in chapter thirty they commend the ant world to us and there's kind of three things that I kind of touched on with the children there that we need to imitate there's industry and hard work there's individual self discipline wisdom and there's wisdom in making preparation you know they store for the heart months ahead they're wise in that way so the challenge is be wise like the ant so the next thing you see an ant colony if you're away in holiday maybe maybe here when it's a bit warmer they'll teach you something if it's warm on the side and you find an ant hill stop and watch it it's a waste of time you see you laugh an ant hill

I've got better things to do with my time well not according to the Lord these observations of course have something to do with man more than the ants what the ants can teach is have a practical application of course but it's also got a spiritual application for this look I'm asking to do with laziness particularly physical laziness of course spiritual laziness look at these three things I mentioned industry and hard work what does Philippians 2 see wherefore my beloved as ye have always obeyed not as in my presence only but now much more in the absence work out your own salvation with freedom trembling he's talking to the Christians work out your own salvation it doesn't just happen and then individual self discipline you know the ant what's without rumour we're told and

Timothy mentions in his fourth chapter of 1st Timothy for bodily exercise profits little but godliness is profitable into all things having promise on the life that now is and that which is to come godliness self self discipline and then wisdom in making preparation is stored for that half of the head but it's Enoch's parents he says prepare to meet thy god o Israel you know they've refused they've just refused prepare to meet your god and of course Paul in Corinthians says behold now is the accepted time now is the day of salvation prepare in other words weightiness is the mark of a fool according to the bible it's not the only mark but it's a real mark laziness is a possible indicator of unbelief now we don't like to hear that do we the world would have us think wouldn't have us think that way the logic of it is not pleasing but it's duplicable it can be a mark or spiritual unregeneracy in your life why

Timothy tells us in his first letter that if any provide not for his own and especially for those of his own house he denies the faith and is worse than an infidel worse than unbelievers you see lazy character indicates they not believe in kids and their hearts are not right with God and we need to be changed to be so first when we look at laziness over and against the ants they should be a model however the first problem is of course can we see the laziness of ourselves you're probably saying I hope you hear this when you say you've got laziness you know probably the laziness of maybe you could teach me about something else some other school thing yeah maybe but laziness

[8 : 19] I know that the question is can you can you really see it the trouble is when we categorise terms like sluggish or lazy when it's all too easy for these to be set apart from us isn't it and set them out there somewhere to you being the observer looking at somebody else and you become the spectator and we are the ones doing the viewing and the pigeonholing but we don't fall out of that slot and if we do kind of lazy tendencies it'll be very difficult for us to see ourselves in that way it's quite difficult to recognise ourselves you'll not see the spiritual poison in yourself that's the tendency Proverbs 26 warns us that 16th verse the sluggard is wiser in his own conceit than seven men that can render a reason pick the seven most wisest people that you know they would struggle to outwit a sluggard who should try to rationalise away his laziness it's a powerful picture we need to take it to heart because it's unlikely that we'll recognise our own laziness but we just want to rationalise it away and we'll fomit that self dissection there's not many lazy people who say no

I don't want to because I'm too lazy we usually find lots of good reasons you know not to come to the prayer meeting not to do a task for an employer not to fix the lawnmower you know not do the dinner you know we're great at it we convince ourselves and others of course that somehow just can't happen you know but interesting is that the lazy person is not some freak of nature it's not some abnormal specimen versus normal people you know but we can somehow come to the sign and say ah yes the lazy person you know no no the lazy person is just ordinary it's just plain ordinary it's you and it's me you know we make too many excuses too many postponements too many refusals and by doing it we're falling into our life where we just deceive ourselves and we indulge ourselves you know and that character trait it kind of come upon us in an imperceptible way it comes in degrees of a kind of numb pleasantness it's an aesthetic it kind of slowly comes in you don't just fall asleep you can feel it coming it's not a weird you but it's kind of pleasant in a way isn't it when we slide into that comfort you know we we do the same about the whole industrial system about responsibilities in life we know and that transfers over into spiritual life you know the question for you is have you been sleepwalking in here possibly for the last 20 years you know walking in and out getting spiritually more death and a conscience more comfortable untouched as we kind of slumber and slide into spiritual eternal death is that good or you know that character trait this passage runs against go look at the hand you know that character traits can engulfen a nation for years a slave into idleness we do as little as we can slowly self self deceptively you know we step to step falling into a lazy mindset into a lack of industrious spirit and it's no surprise that our output was personally corporately nationally lost we've lost our productivity because of it and our excellence as a nation and I'm not making a political point

I'm making a spiritual point we've become lazy fools that's what the bible describes us you know we daydream about carefree lives of luxury and free kind don't we we live for the weekend and ease and holidays and I'm not saying these things are bad don't get me wrong but when that becomes our principal area life we've lost focus we've lost why we're created we seek after the national lottery as a nation do you know that last year 2018 the UK spent 7 billion pounds buying national lottery tickets you know it should surprise us how therefore our productivity has kind of dropped as individuals and as a nation as we ask how little can I get by with you know and I've kind of paralyzed by that oh I'm waiting for a win kind of a sense in my heads rather than being working like they am and being productive like they am and preparing like they am you know in colleges and even in schools you get the teacher versus the student sitting you know when the student goes that's just too much to do you know all that homework and the attitude is one of

I don't want to learn I just want to pass exams and they quite often hear the lecturers getting asked is it in the exams and he says well no pencils down you know in employment we want more and more for less and less you know we're kind of out in the room like people who are back working we're addicted to that fast food low maintenance life serviced by our multi-channel TV when we don't really read anymore and we just stretch on the telly and stretch off our minds and don't get me wrong I'm not saying these things don't place but when they're in the wrong place they're in the wrong place you know oh I don't need to help the next church activity we take a nap spiritually we say

I'll wait for a minister to do it we lack motivation we always avoid taking anything of an extra nothing beyond the absolute necessary anything requiring perseverance hard work we avoid the plague the Bible we describe as fat and lazy it's a spiritual matter and by contrast then you look at the diligent and the self disciplined and that's the way scripture often describes the sluggard he's usually contrasted with the diligent in proverbs 15 verse 19 it says the way of the slothful man has a hedge of thorns but the way of the righteous man the righteous is made plain and then the proverbs put in he coveteth greedily all the day long but the righteous against his spills not laziness involves by contrast a measure of unrighteousness it's a degree of dishonesty and it's a bit a side stepping of responsibilities it's a form of theft from

[17 : 39] God and God will call us to account for it and when we don't have what he demands he'll call us unrighteous lacking in an upright character dishonest people the way of righteousness is not the way of ease it's not the way of illness in Proverbs 24 it says at verse 30 a light man field of the slothful and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding and lo it was all grown over with thorns and nettles and covered the face thereof and the stone wall thereof was broken down then I saw and considered it well I looked upon it and received instruction yet I took sleep a little slumber a little folly with the hands to sleep so shall thy poverty come as one that traveleth and thy went as an armed man you know it would be as if he'd be stuck by others and that would be what he would get back it was like we see when he was his house is overgrown he's at ease in Zion spiritual pictures so this morning look at the biblical description of the slumber and honestly and clearly evaluate your own life and you're lazy practically are you lazy specially do you lack self discipline you come to church you have your leaders here but what about your out of sin lives do we simply lie down and nap as it were does the bible say that the lazy one in the passage how long will we sleep when will there arise out of my sleep yet a little slumber a little folding of the hands to sleep you know and then other passages in proverbs slothfulness slothfulness casteth into a deep sleep and an idle soul shall suffer hunger and again in chapter 20 love not sleep lest thou come to poverty open thine eyes and thou shalt be satisfied with bread the sloth have lost his sleep you may be saying

I'm going to step on my toes here if you like to nap God says accomplish something go to the ant do you see them taking naps go to the ant the sloth is anchored to his bed you know that word bit in proverbs it's a wonderful picture you know as the door turns upon his hinges so does the sloth upon his bed you know it's always chronic and it's exaggeration it's like the man stuck to you but you know you can hardly move be diligent follow the ant instead the hand of the diligent shall bear rule but the slothful shall be under tribute you know you spend on slavery you end up in debt your sloth doesn't like to work and when he does work he usually does it pretty badly he's negligent or he just quite refuses to work even the desire of the slothful kibber him for his hands refuse to labour he lacks self discipline so we can see the sluggard doesn't prepare he doesn't prepare he doesn't make advanced preparations for his need there's bits in the

Proverbs it says he that gather from the summer is a wise son but he that sleepeth in the harvest of the son that causes shame do you cause shame does that apply to you what do you gather like a wise son the sluggard will plough by reason of the cold the sluggard will not plough by reason of the cold therefore shall we beg and harvest and have nothing I'm not plough I'm not getting out there because it's too cold excuses excuses you know again it's a spiritual application here doesn't take care of what he even has Proverbs 24 he says I went by the field of the sloth of the man and the thorns nettles covers the face of it stone walls broken down doesn't take care of his property doesn't take the opportunities to repair and again you get these kind of almost chronic illustrations in the

Proverbs the slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting but the substance of a diligent man is precious you know he catches the catch and he's so lazy he doesn't even cook it a half of our legs actually you know we can't pull him half hearted a slothful will hide his hand in his bosom and will not so much as bring it to his mouth again the slothful hides his hand in his bosom and it grieves him to bring it against again to his mouth it's almost like look at the comedy in the it's like oh I could hardly even bring my hand I'm so lazy I can hardly even do that to be fed you know he can't even muster that strength to lift his hand to eat he's afflicted with sin of inertia he's no advanced preparations he's taken no care of his stuff and he takes no opportunities and then he rationalises that he's lacking activity and refusing to make his preparations for the test ahead you know he says he won't plough for the you know because it's too cold you know it'll be a harvest any excuse will do it's too cold out there

I'm going to put in that can't come freeze to death you beg and he even crazy excuses you know that becomes the MO of the lazy man you know the slothful man says there's a lion outside I shall be slain in the streets you know you get comedy in that but in God's birth it's it's a sombre comedy don't get me wrong but it's mocking there's a lion out there I'm getting oh I can't go out there there's a lion in the way a lion is in the streets something might happen oh if I got a buck I might die go look at you how many others do do how man will do anything but engage with the preparation of his heart to meet

[26 : 05] God you'll come up with any old excuse no matter how crazy and you'll convince yourself that refusing to deal with God is entirely virtuous you'll not make preparation for that test on that day you'll be a beggar and you'll have nothing nothing to sustain you in that day no Christ no saviour because of your refusal to prepare and Paul tells 2nd Peter wherefore the rather brethren give diligence to make your calling and election sure but if you do these things you shall never fall make that calling election sure he had works away under trial under the heat of the day makes his provisions for the hard time to come will you do that provision will you make that provision stretch you will you do that where the opportunity exists will you store up that faith that life in

Christ you see the sluggers tyrannized by just unsatisfied desires it's just a daydreamer a wish I wish I had this and I wish I had that you know the proverb tells us the soul desires and has nothing but the soul of the religion should be fat a sluggard craves against nothing his soul is left empty it's vanity the righteous is described as blessed fat nothing of us being a fool the sluggard substitutes wishing rather he substitutes working wishing for working you know he gets it the wrong way round oh wish wish doesn't work he's affected what can be his own cravings and unsatisfied desires he wants heaven can he get help have we learned anything about ourselves looking at that world are we lacking preparation are we lacking care are we missing opportunities both practically and spiritually are we sad people who just wish wish wish what are consequences if we don't go to the act and then poverty hunger forced labour don't be surprised if you become a slave whether it's a slave to sin or a slave to debt or slavery constant dissatisfaction coveting becoming exacerbating to people you know you've got a bit of vinegar in people's eyes a destroyer never accomplishing anything useless embarrassing to those over you know he causes shame he'll shame his family nobody wants to be associated by him he just brings disgrace a hedge of thorns is there for us you know every which way we turn we're kind of pricked and so it ultimately says what hell doesn't we don't make these preparations so what do we learn the arts industrious the bible condense idleness it's death to man in culture what about our output practically we work you know will we work spiritually will we just have good intentions which remain undone as it were resolutions life unachieved sloths stems from unreachess if you're not christ today and you are saying well what can I do

Paul says for where is workmanship creating christ these are into good works which god hath before ordained that we should walk in them you know you're not saved by good works be careful because you don't have any good works if it's not motivated if you don't have that work motivated by faith and do that under the influence of the holy spirit for the glory of god and the advancement of his kingdom if it's not motivated by faith and love then no matter what you do it's not good in the eyes of god it's vain what can you do you can take one to christ confess your sins to him recognise that you're his creature for his workmanship created in christ jesus unto good works or saved for good works you need your mind renewed transformed romans tell us if you don't see it in your life you need to then become a christian trust in christ if you're a believer and you see some of these traits in your life repent repent these sins and ask christ that he'll make you his workmanship it will become productive not in your own strength of course or your own resolve no never but depending upon christ we need to confess we need to confess him as a christ he alone he alone can make you do good works he can make you work for him he can make you disciplined for him he can make you prepared to love for him and be ready to meet him so go to the ant consider a raise and be wise amen may the lord bless you bless you let us may the know for him thank you