

Gleanings from the Book of Proverbs: A Productive Life – Part 4

Scripture Reading: Proverbs 29:18

There has been a lot to say concerning work ethics and setting priorities in the use of our time, strength, and resources. Every generation needs the admonitions and exhortations found in the book of Proverbs on these themes. However, at this time in history, our world is especially in need of a wake-up call to get focused and redeem our time, so that we can apply ourselves to the precious tasks of providing for ourselves, for others, and for the work of the kingdom of Christ. Some are curling up and seeking comfort / entertainment while they can. Others are making frenzied efforts to have financial and political security / freedom. Without centering ourselves on Christ and His promises / instructions, there is no rest, peace, or prosperity in this present evil world (John 16:33; Galatians 1:3-5; Philippians 4:4-9; I Thessalonians 5:2-3; I John 2:15-17).

“Where there is no vision, the people perish:” (KJV) This vision is the revelation of God’s word (a prophetic / divine vision). Without such vision / insight, people perish (i.e. they throw off all restraint and follow their false wisdom and fleshly passions (Proverbs 14:12; 16:25; Ephesians 4:17-19). Without the light of Christ, people are blind – groping in the dark, not knowing over what they are stumbling (Proverbs 4:18-19; John 1:4-5; 8:12; 12:35-36,46).

“But happy is he who keeps the law.” (NKJV) Happiness / blessedness is promised those who wish to keep God’s law / His word / His will (Proverbs 13:13-16; 28:13-14; 29:1; John 8:30-36).

Now for a look at the book of Proverbs to learn of “The Sluggard and the Slothful” and “The Diligent and the Righteous.”

The Sluggard and the Slothful

These two English words have roots that refer to two different creatures: A slug and a sloth. A slug is a worm-like creature that creeps around, in and under the dirt. They are like a snail without the shell, maybe having some crude form of shell. The Hebrew word for “sluggard” is sometimes also translated “Slothful.” The English word for “*Slothful*” directs our attention to the sloth. This is a slow-moving tree-dwelling mammal that has a very slow metabolism. They not only move extremely slowly. They sleep about 15-20 hours a day. One of the Hebrew words, translated “*slothful*,” means “*slack, negligent, idle, and deceitful*.” So, the Book of Proverbs is certainly giving us a simple but clear view of this kind of character, of which God disapproves.

Sluggard

Proverbs 6:6-11
Proverbs 10:26
Proverbs 13:4

Proverbs 20:4
Proverbs 26:16

Slothful

Proverbs 12:24,27
Proverbs 15:19
Proverbs 18:9
Proverbs 19:15,24

Proverbs 21:25
Proverbs 22:13 (cp. Ecclesiastes 11:4)
Proverbs 24:30-34
Proverbs 26:13-15

The Diligent and the Righteous

The root word of “righteous” is “right.” The book of Proverbs reveals what right behavior looks like. Diligence, discipline, faithfulness, and perseverance are qualities that are associated with those who are righteous. These qualities do not give you righteousness with God. That can’t be earned. Only Christ can give us His righteousness (Romans 3:10-26; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 3:7-9; Titus 3:5). Some people, who are not followers of Christ, can have these qualities, at least to some degree. Nevertheless, righteous behavior should be the evidence of those who are right with God through Jesus Christ our Lord (II Corinthians 5:14-17; Galatians 5:13-26; Ephesians 2:10; Titus 2:11-14; 3:8 | John 2:1-6 cp. Psalm 15:1-2; 24:3-6).

Diligent Behavior

Proverbs 10:4-5
Proverbs 11:27
Proverbs 12:24,27
Proverbs 13:4

Proverbs 21:5
(*hasty / make haste* cp. Proverbs 28:19-20,22)
Proverbs 22:29
Proverbs 27:23-27

Righteous Behavior

Proverbs 10:16,21
Proverbs 11:18,30
Proverbs 12:10-14 (*stewardship / kindness / honesty*)

Proverbs 12:12; 21:26
(*Greed / Covetousness* cp. Proverbs 1:10-19)
Proverbs 15:19

The value and blessing of Labor – Before sin came into the world, work was a blessed privilege. It’s harder now (Genesis 1:26 – 3:24). Nevertheless, work is still a blessing. Solomon asked and answered the question, “*What profit has a man from all his labor in which he toils under the sun?*” (Ecclesiastes 1:3; 3:12-13; 5:12; 12:13-14). Let us close with a few statements from the Book of Proverbs on good, honest labor.

See Proverbs 10:16; 13:11; 14:23; 16:26; 21:25; 23:4-5.