03 – THE SLUGGARD AND THE DILIGENT

Characteristics of the Sluggard

a.) His Needs and Desires Aren't Enough to Motivate Him to Work

Prov. 13:4 – "The soul of the sluggard craves and gets nothing…" (Why?)

Prov. 21:25 – "Sluggards want many things, but their hands refuse to work."

✓ That's why he gets nothing. Work is too high a price to pay. (It's not worth it, he'd rather do without.)

b.) If Something Is Uncomfortable, He Won't Do It

Prov. 20:4 – "The sluggard will not plow because of the cold …"

✓ It's uncomfortable to work outside in the cold. In his eyes, temporary comfort is more important than having his future needs met. (Most of us wouldn't make that choice, but a sluggard would.)

c.) He Values Sleep Way Too Much

Prov. 6:9 – "Look at an ant, you sluggard. Watch it closely; let it teach you a thing or two. Nobody has to tell it what to do. All summer it stores up food; at harvest it stockpiles provisions."

✓ An ant Is *self-motivated*. That's the lesson he wants the sluggard to learn. Motivate yourself!

"How long are you going to laze around doing nothing? How long before you get out of bed? 'I'll just lie here a bit, rest a little longer, just fold my hands for a little more sleep'. Do you know what comes next? You can look forward to a dirt-poor life, with poverty as your permanent houseguest." (The Bible connects laziness and poverty – Prov. 10:4).

✓ It's Worth Mentioning: There *are* people who legitimately *can't* work (because of physical or other reasons). If you can't work, there's no shame in that! That's not being a sluggard. A sluggard is someone that *can* work – that *needs* to work – they just *won't* – (2 Thess. 3:10).

d.) He's Unfaithful & Unreliable

Prov. 22:13 – "As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him." (He's irritating.)

Prov. 25:19 – "Confidence in an unfaithful man in time of trouble is like a broken tooth, and a foot out of joint." (You can't rely on a foot that's out of joint. You try to put weight on it, and it doesn't hold.)

✓ Here are a few more characteristics: He's Great at Making Excuses (Prov. 22:13); He Doesn't Finish What He Starts (Prov. 12:27); He Covets What Others Have but Won't Do What It Takes to Get It (Prov. 21:25-26a); He Doesn't Take Care of What He *Does* Own (Prov. 24:30–34).

Compare That With the Diligent

a.) He Gets Opportunities That Others Don't Get

Prov. 22:29 – "Do you see a man diligent and skillful in his work? He will stand before kings; he will not stand before men of low estate." (He doesn't have to lower his standards to get a job. Quality men want him.)

b.) Promotion Is in His Future

Prov. 21:24 – "The diligent will be put in charge of others …"

c.) He Makes a Good Living in the Meantime

Prov. 13:4 – "The lazy person craves and gets nothing, But the soul of the diligent is rich and abundantly supplied." (CEV – "Hard work will reward

you with more than enough.")

What the Bible Says About Work

a.) Work Existed Before the Fall; It's Not Part of the Curse

Genesis 2:15 – "The Lord God put the man in the Garden of Eden to work the soil and take care of the garden."

✓ Work existed before the fall. So, what changed when Adam sinned?

Gen. 3:17, 19 – "Since you listened to your wife and ate from the tree … the ground is cursed because of you. All your life you will struggle to scratch a living from it. By the sweat of your brow will you have food to eat …" (It became harder to get your needs met.)

b.) Work Is a Gift from God

Ecc. 3:13 – "Everyone can eat and drink and enjoy the good that results from his work — this is God's gift to man."

✓ There's a satisfaction you get from enjoying the fruit of your labor. That's a gift!

Prov. 14:23 (CJB) – "In all work there is profit …"

✓ I'm Going to Add a Thought: In all work there is profit: *whether you get paid for it or not*. You may not get a paycheque, but you still profit. You gain *experience*; you gain a sense of *self-worth* knowing you've contributed something; you lay up *treasure in Heaven* … There are all kinds of benefits – even if you're not getting paid.

c.) Your (so-called) "Secular" Job is Considered "Serving Jesus"

✓ People often say, "Wow, pastor Ron, you're so blessed. You're serving God and earning rewards every day! I just have this *secular* job!" The Truth Is: Whatever your job is, you're serving God, too!

Eph. 6:5 (MSG) – "Servants, respectfully obey your earthly masters but always with an eye to obeying the real master, Christ … Work with a smile on your face, always keeping in mind that no matter who happens to be giving the orders, you're really serving God."

Col. 3:24 (Phillips) – "Whatever you do, put your whole heart and soul into it, as into work done for God, and not merely for men – knowing that your real reward, a heavenly one, will come from God, since you are actually employed by Christ."

✓ He's talking about your secular job! *You're* employed by Jesus, just like *I'm* employed by Jesus.

d.) That One Fact Ought to Affect Your Attitude and Work Ethic

✓ The Bible has a lot to say about our work ethic. Let's see what else Paul says to the Ephesians:

Eph. 6:6 – "Don't just do what you have to do to get by, but work heartily, as Christ's servants doing what God wants you to do." (CSBA, MSG)

✓ If He's got you at IGA, that's what He wants you to do! So do it heartily. Heartily – (Tromos) – "to work with maximum exertion and effort." (Your boss is paying you to work. Give him your best.)

v. 7 – "With good will (Greek: loyal enthusiasm) …"

✓ "Showing up" is not enough. "Working hard" is not enough. God wants you to be a *loyal* employee. That's a "heart" thing!

Col. 3:23-24– "Servants, obey your masters here below at every point; do not work simply when their eye is on you, like those who court human favor, but serve them with a single heart as a sincere expression of your devotion to God. Whatever you do (whatever job you have) *put your whole heart and soul into it, as into work done for God, and not merely for men." (Moffatt, Phillips)*

- ✓ Does that change how you look at your job? It's easy to believe that your *pastors* will be rewarded for the work they do. But this says "whatever you do" you'll receive eternal rewards!

Titus 2:9-10 (KJV, AmpC) – "Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not talking back or arguing; Not stealing by taking things of small value, but proving themselves truly loyal and entirely reliable and faithful."

- ✓ Why? *"… that they may show the teaching of God our Savior to be attractive in every way." (EHV)*

- ✓ When you work like that, you make the Gospel look good!

But What if My Boss Is Mean To Me?

1 Pet. 2:18-21 – "You who are servants, be submissive to your masters with all [proper] respect, not only to those who are kind and considerate and reasonable, but also to those who are over-bearing and unjust.

Now this is thankworthy, when someone, because he is mindful of God, bears up under the pain of undeserved punishment. You don't gain anything by accepting punishment that you well deserve. But if you do your duty and are punished for it, and you can still accept it patiently, you are doing something worthwhile in God's sight." (AmpC, Phillips, MSG)

- ✓ The KJV says it's "thankworthy", (or literally, "worthy of thanks from God"). When you're treated unfairly, and you go on doing what is right, you'll hear a "Thank you" from God at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

- ✓ So, what *is* diligence? Working hard, having a good attitude, and being faithful. (You can see why the diligent man gets promoted and prospers.)