



As a snail which melteth, let every one of them pass away: like the untimely birth of a woman, that they may not see the sun. (Psalms 58:8)

⁶ Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: ⁷ Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, ⁸ Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest. ⁹ How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard? when wilt thou arise out of thy sleep? ¹⁰ Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep: ¹¹ So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth, and thy want as an armed man. (Prov 6:6-11)

The term 'sluggard' derives from the Swedish word, '*slogga*,' meaning slow and lazy. Because of that nature described, it is also a term used to designate a snail. The sluggard is very much like the snail. He is lazy, he is slimy, he sleeps all the day long, he loves going out at night, he doesn't work but rather lives off the labor of others, and he hates the Light of Wisdom. Proverbs 6 contrast the ant with the snail. The ant is industrious and stores up food for the months of famine and cold. The sluggard, like Aesop's grasshopper, fiddles around all summer and lifts not a finger to prepare for the coming winter. Proverbs 12:24 & 27 describes the slothful sluggard as not caring for his responsibilities. He lacks wisdom, for the wisdom of the ant compels it to make preparation always for the future.

During my many years of military experience, I have known a great host of sluggards and snails. They are the malingerers who are constantly on sick call. They constantly make excuses as to why a task cannot be performed. They apply little effort to remove obstacles while they allow their comrades to lift the heavy loads. During the Revolutionary War, there was a caisson that became stuck in the mire near Valley Forge. The caisson had been entrusted to a private soldier and a corporal. The corporal was supervising the private's super human efforts to push the caisson from the muddy ruts in the road, but offering no physical assistance. At that time, a stranger road up and dismounted. He lowered his shoulder beside the private and, together, they pushed the caisson onto solid ground. The gentleman then remounted and told the corporal, "Next time, you help your fellow soldier to accomplish the task." The corporal indignantly responded, "And who are you?" to which the mounted figure responded, "General George Washington!" It is this quality of enterprise and mutual reliance that built America into the nation that it once was. Today, however, we are over-populated by snails.

So why does God use the terms He does in describing the snail in Psalm 58? What is the nature of the snail? The snail loves dark places. He cannot, in fact, tolerate the light of the sun. He is a creature of DARKNESS just as is the sinner. *“19 And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. 20 For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov’d. 21 But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God.”* (John 3:19-21) The snail is just like the reprobate sinner. If a snail were human, he would probably belong to the ACLU! *“4 But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. 5 Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.”* (1 Thess 5:4-5)

Snails hate light! When the first rays of the sun peep over the horizon, you will find the snail making its way to some dark sanctuary. They love large rocks under which to hide. Why do these slothful creatures love darkness and hate light? It is because they are thieves. They love to come out in the darkness and eat the garden labors of others unseen. They also hate the light of the sun because the sun actually melts them away just as public light on politicians, or the sinner, causes them to shrink from unbounded corruption and wicked deeds. Sinners hate light with equal vigor. If you place a snail on the side walk at noonday, that is where he shall remain, and that is where he will be buried. Sin hates light. How does this relate to our character as Christians? Jesus told us: *“Ye are the light of the world.”* (Matt 5:14) If we bear our testimonies daily as we are called to do, the sinner will shrink from the public arena. I do not believe we have lived up to this standard in America for many decades.

Snails leave tracks! What is another mark of the snail? Like sin, the snail leaves tracks of slime everywhere he goes. Sin cannot be hidden – it is always revealed by the slimy tracks of the sinner. If I go out in the early morning, I can see exactly where the snail has been on my driveway, because there will be silvery tracks of slime there. The sinner may present a figure of honor and good works for half a day, then his true colors are lifted in the afternoon. Character is revealed in light.

Snails are parasites! They only devour and destroy the garden crop for which the gardener has labored. Sin does the same. In virtuous society, all labors are rewarded, but when the thief sneaks in, an unequal measure and balance are found.

Snails hate salt! Sprinkle a few grains of table salt on a snail and he will melt away before your very eyes. The sinner, too, hates the salt of God’s people. They are constantly trying to remove moral standards from society, to prohibit public prayer and bible reading, and encourage immodest dress. *“Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.”* (Matt 5:13) Salt is a compound of Sodium and Chlorine Gas - NaCl. But sodium (man) is never found in his pure state as a element in nature. He will, like sodium, always be joined to some other element of the world. But when man is joined to God (Chlorine Gas) he becomes something essential for life and health. Both elements, Sodium and Chlorine, are poisons when not joined together. When we take a bag of salt and place it on the ground for a prolonged period, what happens? The sodium begins to release its bonding to the chlorine and then to absorb other elements of the soil such as carbon, hydrogen, etc. That is what happens to the salt of a Christian when he comes in too close contact with the world. He begins to lose his virtue and Christian character and attains those things of the world with which he has been in long contact.

Snails are insidious in their motion! They crawl slowly, but surely, to the cover of darkness, or to the midnight garden. Sinners are the same. Sinners avoid quick movements that may reveal their positions and expose their deeds. They slowly embezzle the funds from the store's treasury. They slowly seduce the young virgin with subtle charms. When the consequences of their sins are manifested, they slowly slink into the shadows from whence they came.

Snails, like sinners, have no backbone! As a matter of fact, snails have no unyielding character at all. Sinful man lacks courage and backbone. Even our pulpits lack backbone when sins proliferate and the pulpit remains silent – fearing to call a sin a sin and hiding behind the false interpretation of the counsel of Christ: *“Judge not that ye be not judged.”* In avoiding strong judgment in the Church, they love to quote that verse, but not the one following; or that counsel of Christ found in the Gospel of John: *“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”* (John 7:24) I believe, unless I failed my elementary English class, that Jesus is telling us that we MUST judge – “. . . *judge righteous judgment.*” What is righteous judgment? It is calling ungodly behavior what God has called it – SIN! When we judge with righteous judgment, we do not judge out of our own opinions or desires, but we judge behaviors in the same way the Holy Bible judges them. If we say that a practicing homosexual is a sinner, we are simply echoing the judgment of God. It is not a sin because WE say it is; it is a sin because GOD says it is. The same is true of abortion, of adultery, and of the immoral use of mind-altering drugs.

We need to often examine our souls to see if we find any snail-tracks there. Do we hate the Counsel of God's Word (Light) when we are trying to compromise with the world? Do we seek reward for the labors of others? Do we love to “mix it up” with the world and attempt to bring the things of the world into the Church instead of carrying the Gospel Christ has given us into the world? Are we good salt that keeps away from contact with the soil of the world? Or do we lose our savor as well as our bonding with God by adopting the world's dress, the world's music, the world's entertainments, or the world's behavior? Do you find that you are trying to hide your sins previously committed from others while you yet linger in them – leaving those unsightly tracks? Do you fail to note sin in others by attempting to justify it with failure to judge by God's Word? Has your light grown dim, or does it burn brilliantly from high ground? Have you looked into the mirror of God's Word and discovered a man or a woman that does not live up to their testimony in the Lord? If so, the Lord is kind and patient to forgive and restore if we hurry to His Mercy Seat.