



*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. (Proverbs 6:6-11)*

*10 . . . . if any would not work, neither should he eat. (2 Thessalonians 3:10 (KJV))*

I suppose that each of us possess either the character of the ant, or the slovenly disposition of the sluggard – or perhaps a combination of the two. This contrast in characteristics should not be confused with those of Martha and Mary of Bethany. Martha possessed a Type A personality and constantly felt the need to be about useful labors. Mary, on the other hand, was a thoughtful and reflective lady who considered the matters of the soul of greater need for attention than those of the hands. She loved to sit at the feet of Jesus and hang on His every Word. Martha's fault was not in overworking, but in murmuring disdainfully about her sister. The ant alone was like Martha; but neither was Mary a sluggard. If her hands were not applied to the labors of the moment, her heart was busy digesting the Words of her Lord. Our Lord commended Mary for that dedication of her heart. The issue was reduced to a matter of PRIORITIES!

The Bible is full of meaningful illustrations. The ant and the sluggard represent only two contrasting types of people – those who are industrious and dutiful to meet their obligations; and those who would rather relax and allow others to produce the benefits to society which the sluggard will lay claim to. This is socialism (welfarism) manifested in its purest form. It exists abundantly in the Church. Let's examine, first, the qualities of the ANT.

The ANT is quite inconspicuous in its appearance and size. Many pass under our feet daily without our notice. Their small size, in itself, makes a major point for consideration. Small size is not an impediment to service. From the smallest little girl to the most muscular man, service is measured by determination, perseverance and commitment. The ANT lacks none of these qualities, but the muscular man be desperately lacking in those attributes. We may be insignificant in the eyes of the world, but a small heart, dedicated to the Lord, can achieve more than the world is able to dream. Likewise, an ant may lift up to fifty times its own weight. This qualifies them as the strongest creatures, for size, of God's Creation.

The ANT epitomizes the ideal of industry. They never stop their labors. They traverse great distances in search of provender and, when they have found it, are able to communicate their find, and its location, to the colony. The queen ant does not take precedence over the others, and does not dictate to them. It is not necessary. Each ant performs its God-given duties as a matter of choice and develops a highly refined division of labor within the colony. The younger ants often remain in the nest to care for the queen and other housekeeping chores while the older ants go out in church of food. This division of labor is worthy of emulation in the Church.

Instead of being jealous of the labors and recognition others receive for the talents they share, should we not strive more diligently to invest our own talents in contributing to the overall good of the Church and her work? As well, we should be tireless in sharing the Gospel to every dark corner of the world.

The ant is the most persevering of any creature. Destroy their ant hill, and they will immediately set about rebuilding it. Wash them from their trail on the window sill and they will continue to re-establish the same trail. They are quite the entrepreneur. If you hang a feeder containing sweet juice from the window seal to feed hummingbirds, and any of the juice drips out onto the ground several feet below, the ants will find a way to climb the walls of the house, find the wire from which the feeder hangs, and use it to rappel to the source of the sweets.

The aphids and rollie-pollies you may witness in their company are kept for the benefit of the colony as men keep cattle. They use the milky fluids excreted by these for food. They protect, defend, and house these creatures.

Some species of ant also actually engage in farming. In Arizona, a particular species of ant will carry seed of a certain plant to a point above the colony beneath the ground. There they plant the seed. As the seed sprouts, the root goes deep into the ground and into the enclosure of the ant colony. The root secretes a food product that the ants consume. The ant sets a good example for the Christian. Not only are they busy in the labors of their bodies, but also in their minds to plan and execute the plan. We have received valuable seed from the Lord. We must not be remiss in planning.

Lawlessness in the ant colony does not exist. The laws of the colony strictly apply to every member of it. Work and responsibility are the heralds of behavior there. Were this only so of the modern church! Everyone seems to resist the authority of the church order – even of Holy Scripture. Everyone wants to make the decision for color of carpet or drapes, of the placing of furniture, of the layout of the church bulletin, and of what foods and beverages are served. If 100% consensus were required, the church would be helpless to provide for itself. We are often more hung up on the non-essentials than of the essentials. As long as we have the most imposing structure (which does not define a church) we will abide whatever apostate lies are preached from the pulpit. But the most glorious principle of the church is that we be of One Mind with the Lord our God.

Are we better than the lowly spider? Have we ever lived in a king's palace? Well, spiders do live in the most prestigious of homes, including king's palaces: *28 The spider taketh hold with her hands, and is in kings' palaces.* (Proverbs 30:28) Perhaps we are no better after all. Perhaps we have a far higher opinion of ourselves than we should deserve. In fact, we are worthless without the grace and mercy of God to love us enough to lift us from the lowest parts of the earth and save us.

Do we live in homes as secure and solid as the conie (rabbit). *26 The conies are but a feeble folk, yet make they their houses in the rocks* (Proverbs 30:26) The rabbit home in the rocks of the mountain remain unmoved for centuries after our palatial estates have rotted and fallen into ruin. Maybe the lesson for us is to build, likewise, upon that Solid Rock which is Christ!

Do we require being led about on a tether by some faithless and hypocritical minister? *27 The locusts have no king, yet go they forth all of them by bands.* (Proverbs 30:27) Better to dispense with that false prophet and find a man called of God who does not dictate to you but rather leads you in truth and love. I have argued biblical facts with churchmen who respond, "Well, I know that the Bible says differently, but I must go along with what my my preacher says!" Wow! That kind of logic and deception exceeds my ability to fathom.

If we do not, or do not WISH, to see the truth in the above indictment against SLUGGARDS, there is a high possibility that we are the SLUGGARD. What identifies the sluggard? In the first place, the sluggard never contributes meaningfully to the task at hand. He loves to watch, but not touch. If we are able to shame the sluggard to action, he moves with the agility of an Australian 'Stoner' sloth. He groans and complains constantly of his unfair workload. In the second place, the sluggard loves to stand on the sidelines and criticize the work of all others. He could never be accused of improperly executing a plan for he never attempts to do so; but he is quick to criticize the execution of others. He is very much like the armchair warrior that writes news reports of the battle, but only based on his observations made from a distance to it. As General Robert E. Lee mused after being criticized by news reports for the carnage of Antietam, "It turns out that we should have made our best reporters generals, and our best generals reporters."

I must confess to having been a sluggard about many things that I should have done in my life and did not do; but God wants a ready spirit and a ready mind to obey and do those works to which He has called us. If we do so, our efforts will be minimal for He will do the heavy lifting for us.

Are you an ANT for the work of the Lord or a SLUGGARD for the insatiable leisure of the soul and body?