

Learning to be *Idle*

Where and when I grew up (to the extent that I did so), older and perhaps with limited education possibilities folks could be heard talking about “chimley-corner scriptures.” When I asked Dad what that meant, he explained that they were “truths” that sounded biblical, but weren’t actually in the Bible. “Cleanliness is next to godliness” is probably the best-known example. Another one is “Idle hands are the Devil’s workshop/playthings.” Perhaps it comes from Prov.16:27—29, but is not actually found in the sacred Text.

There are, however, passages that warn of the *dangers* of *idleness*:

- Prov.19:15, “*Laziness casts into a deep sleep, and an idle man will suffer hunger.*”
- The *worthy woman/wife* of Prov.31:27, “*does not eat the bread of idleness.*”
- In Eccl.11:6, the *wise man* advises, “*Sow your seed in the morning and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good.*”
- Some of the *philosophers* of Athenians referred to Paul as an “*idle babbler*” (see literal) in Acts 17:18. And,
- Paul warned in 1Tim.5:13 that *younger widows* who *did not remarry* could easily “*learn to be idle, as they go around from house to house; and not merely idle, but also gossips and busybodies, talking about things not proper to mention.*”

One of the very real dangers we’ve faced in the last several months, aside from the virus itself, has been “*learning to be idle.*” Indeed, it’s difficult transitioning from *way too busy* perhaps going and doing to *way too idle* staying at home ALL THE TIME. But this *learned idleness* (remember from 1Tim.5:13 this is NOT a good thing) has consequences:

Psychologically:

1. *Idleness* promotes selfishness of **heart**- we stop *feeling* right and tend to lose heart and become emotionally “down” or depressed and our *countenance*, like Cain’s, *falls*, cf. Gen.4:6-7;
2. *Idleness* promotes selfishness *in mind*- we stop *thinking* right and tend to start thinking only of “me” and “my” aches, pains, and problems;
3. *Idleness* promotes selfishness of *body*- we stop *doing* right and shrink into inactivity, laziness, and the sofa.

Spiritually. But an even bigger issue is that of *spiritual idleness*. Just like Adam in the Garden (see Gen.2:9,15 where God *didn’t* need a “gardener,” but Adam *did* need an occupation!), Christians need to be *active* and *busy* (cf. Luke 2:49, KJV and Rom.16:1-2 relative to the *business* of Phoebe). ***Spiritual idleness*** tends to affect us in the same areas and ways as it does *psychologically*. Note Heb.10:19-31 in these regards.

1. *Heart, v.22. Spiritual idleness affects us emotionally- we tend to become spiritually down or depressed as our hearts begin to leave our first love's excitement and enthusiasm, cf. Rev.2:5. The solution? Draw near (emotionally) and reassure your heart of the purpose for which your conscience and body were cleansed/washed, cf. v.39!*
2. *Mind, v.23. Spiritual idleness affects us mentally- we tend to start thinking poorly or wrongly. We can easily lose our focus and the priority we place on spiritual things, cf. Matt.13:22; 6:33-34. The solution? "...hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering," v.23; and remember and remind your mind who, what, and why you are what you are: a Christian, 2Pet.1:8-11! Then practice some mind-control with regard to your thoughts, Phil.4:8.*
3. *Body, v.25. Spiritual idleness affects physically- though it can affect our health (as it did with David, Ps.22:14-18; 31:10), it has an equally detrimental affect on our activities (what we do or don't do). We can become disengaged, lazy, do-nothings. But overriding lesson of Heb.11 (and Jas.2) is that living faith acts, Heb.12:1-3. It lays aside every encumbrance and sin (that'll keep you busy!), and runs the race before us with endurance so that we don't grow weary and lose heart! Spiritual inactivity is a if not the leading cause of spiritual decay. The solution? Get up and get busy, vv.24-25! It will do you and those you stimulate and encourage an eternal world of good!*
4. *Otherwise, the inevitable result is that eventually, we just give in and give up, v.26. And,*
5. *This has terrifying consequences, vv.27-31.*

Conclusion

Brethren, we can't control what goes on in the world around us, or all the ramifications such may have on our lives. But we can, and must, control how it affects us *personally- on the inside (how we think and feel) and on the outside (what we do)*. Take care of your *hearts, your minds, and your bodies and their activities* lest we "*learn to be idle*" and fall into all sorts of bad **spiritual** habits and sin.

Mark 12:29-31, "*The foremost (commandment) is, 'Hear, O Israel; the Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'* The second is this, '*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*' There is no other commandment greater than these."