

Notes from Sermon given by Ian Stackhouse - Sunday September 30th 2007 Proverbs 6:1-19

Ian began his sermon by referring to the previous week 'Warning against Adultery' and emphasised how the Bible warns us against sexual waywardness as it leads to disaster and ruination. If we wander down this road of illicit sex, adultery, fornication, prostitutes and even pornography we are playing with fire and we enter a shadow world. In facing these temptations we need to fight for our life.

However in spending all our energies overcoming sexual temptation, we are forgetting that there are other ways in which we can stumble. In chapter 6 of Proverbs we have an interlude about three types of inferior, wayward men: the surety; the sluggard; and the scoundrel. So we must remember that laziness is just as ruinous. Pride and arrogance are just as detestable as the homosexual act; Naivety in financial matters can be just as devastating as spending the rest of our days paying alimony.

- One of the things that the Bible teaches is that God loves a generous giver. His command for the harvesters to leave the gleanings for the poor shows that we should not withhold giving when it is in our power to act *Proverbs 3:27-28*. But what if you don't have it to give? As a guarantor is your own security at risk? Don't be gullible especially if there is a risk of this speculative project going 'pear-shaped'. This is the same as being ensnared by the adulterous woman. The Father charges the son to release himself from the trap. Just because you are a Christian is no excuse for naivety about money. No we should be shrewd, and clever with money, nit crooked or niggardly.

- There is no excuse either for laziness, or the passivity that says that 'the Lord will provide'. Which is not to say that all poverty is a result of laziness. The root of poverty is complex, sometimes deserving and sometimes undeserving. But laziness, procrastination, the kind of daily decisions we make to put off what we know we should do will always lead to poverty. Consider the ant. It is what we would call a self-starter, self-motivated; it has no commander or overseer, but stores its provisions. The ant knows that God provides, but he has to harvest at the right time – such as 'make hay while the sun shines'. We can secure the future by not jeopardising it, but providing for it. The son, like so many youngsters starting university, does not get up till midday. And then fills the rest of the day with movies or eating. But how many people have wasted their potential by the subtle and insidious love of sleep, or TV? How many chambers of our brains are left unexplored? Daily decisions of laziness can so often lead to spiritual decline, a daily neglect of basic spiritual disciplines. That is why sloth is one of the deadly sins.

- While the guarantor and the sluggard are not wicked, however in the naivety of the former and the sluggishness of the latter lie the beginning of that which will lead eventually to the scoundrel, the wicked person. His whole body is consumed with darkness and deceit, neglecting the life of the Spirit within him. Even the wink of an eye, that pleasant gesture of affection and teasing can become one of malicious intent.

Faith needs to be worked at, there are daily decisions to make – let the Spirit work in the soil of your hearts. Above all else guard your heart, it is the most precious thing. The scoundrel shows his heart by his speech. Let God work the soil of your life, and offer the members of your body to righteousness.