

# Better Way Apostolic Church- Bible Class

Subject: RICH MAN, POOR MAN, BEGGAR MAN, THIEF" Proverbs 1:10-19

"Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins." [Psalm 25:18](#)

It is well for us when prayers about our sorrows are linked with pleas concerning our sins--when, being under God's hand, we are not wholly taken up with our pain, but remember our offences against God. It is well, also, to take both sorrow and sin to the same place. It was to God that David carried his sorrow: it was to God that David confessed his sin. Observe, then, *we must take our sorrows to God*. Even your little sorrows you may roll upon God, for He counteth the hairs of your head; and your great sorrows you may commit to Him, for He holdeth the ocean in the hollow of His hand. Go to Him, whatever your present trouble may be, and you shall find Him able and willing to relieve you. *But we must take our sins to God too*. We must carry them to the cross, that the blood may fall upon them, to purge away their guilt, and to destroy their defiling power.

The special lesson of the text is this:--that *we are to go to the Lord with sorrows and with sins in the right spirit*. Note that all David asks concerning his sorrow is, "Look upon mine affliction and my pain;" but the next petition is vastly more express, definite, decided, plain--"Forgive all my sins" Many sufferers would have put it, "Remove my affliction and my pain, and look at my sins." But David does not say so; he cries, "Lord, as for my affliction and my pain, I will not dictate to Thy wisdom. Lord, look at them, I will leave them to Thee, I should be glad to have my pain removed, but do as Thou wilt; but as for my sins, Lord, I know what I want with them; I must have them forgiven; I cannot endure to lie under their curse for a moment." A Christian counts sorrow lighter in the scale than sin; he can bear that his troubles should continue, but he cannot support the burden of his transgressions.

## Solomon's ungodly life style

The author of Kings interpreted these events as tokens of divine judgement for Solomon's serious religious compromises. Note the warning of this possibility in Second's second vision (Proverbs 9:1-9). The book do not chide Solomon for his sensuality or amoral living but for disobedience to Israel's monotheistic ideal. Embracing the religions of his wives, Solomon forsook his Israelite heritage and shirked his royal responsibilities as guardian of the faith.

Like Sau's and David's reigns before him, Solomon's is divided into two phases: Good King and Bad King. Judgement had to come, if not in Solomon's lifetime (he was spared for David sake), then afterward. And come it did.

## Eye Trouble

A friend of mine went into a drugstore the other day and pointed to some toothbrushes on a rack. "Let me have a pink one," she requested. To her surprise, the clerk took down an orange one. "No, pink," she reminded him. This time he selected a lavender one. My friend began to sense the difficulty. "No, I said

pink," she repeated pleasantly; the clerk's finger hovered uncertainly over the rack and neared the desired color, "That one," she declared emphatically. "I see you're colorblind," she remarked as he wrapped her purchase. With a sheepish smile he confessed, "I always call blue 'green.'" But this same friend had a colorblind relative who doggedly insisted that certain colors were a figment of other people's imaginations because he could not distinguish them. Do not be surprised when those who do not know God cannot accept as real the spiritual truths He has revealed through His Word. The "eyes of their understanding" have never been opened.

### **RICH MAN, POOR MAN, BEGGAR MAN, THIEF"**

Money isn't everything," said a wit, "but it does keep you in touch with your children." ... On a more serious level, Paul summarized the Christian philosophy of wealth when he wrote: "Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need" (Ephesians 4:28, NKJV).

According to Paul, you can get wealth in three ways: by stealing it, earning it, or receiving it as a gift, which would include getting it as an inheritance. Stealing is wrong (Exodus 20:15), labor is honorable (Exodus 20:9) and, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

In the book of Proverbs, King Solomon tells us a great deal about these three kinds of people — the thieves, the workers, and the poor who need our help. (Among the thieves, I'm including "the sluggard," the lazy person who never works but expects others to take care of him. That's being a thief, isn't it?) However, wealthy as he was (1 Kings 4; 10), King Solomon emphasized that God's wisdom is more important than money. "How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!" (Proverbs 16:16; see 2:1-5; 3:13-15; 8:10-21) This is Solomon's version of Matthew 6:33; he's reminding us that while it is good to have the things money can buy, be sure you don't lose the things money can't buy.

#### **1. The Thieves**

The book of Proverbs opens with a stern warning against participating in get-rich-quick schemes that involve breaking the Law (Proverbs 1:10-19). These schemes are self-destructive and lead to bondage and possibly the grave. Beware of people who promise to make you wealthy without asking you to work or take any risks. "Wealth obtained by fraud dwindles, but the one who gathers by labor increases it" (13:11, NASB). "A man with an evil eye hastens after riches, and does not consider that poverty will come upon him" (28:22, NKJV). "Ill gotten treasures are of no value, but righteousness delivers from death" (10:2, NIV).

Proverbs 21:5-7 points out three ways not to get wealth: following hasty schemes (v. 5), lying to people (v. 6), and robbing (v. 7). Most if not all get-rich-quick schemes involve some kind of deception and are nothing but scams. Unfortunately, even God's people have been duped by scam artists, and more than one trusting soul has lost his or her life savings in a "sure thing" that turned out to be a sure loser. However, scams wouldn't succeed if there weren't people eager to get rich as quickly and easily as possible. But, as the old adage puts it, "There are no free lunches." You take what you want from life, but eventually you pay for it.

God demands that we be honest in all our business dealings. Dishonesty is robbery. "Dishonest scales are an abomination to the Lord, but a just weight is His delight" (11:1, NKJV; see 16:11; 20:10,23). Moses

commanded in the Law that the people use honest weights and measures (Leviticus 19:35-36; Deuteronomy 25:13-16); since Israel didn't have an official Department of Standards to check on these things, the law wasn't always obeyed. Amos accused the merchants in his day of "skimping the measure, boosting the price and cheating with dishonest scales" (Amos 8:5, NIV); Micah asked "Shall I count them pure with the wicked balances, and with the bag of deceitful weights?" (Micah 6:11)

Another dishonest way to get wealth is to use your resources selfishly and disregard the needs of others. "A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed. People curse the man who hoards grain, but blessing crowns him who is willing to sell" (Proverbs 11:25-26, NIV). In times of drought and famine, a prosperous farmer could corner the grain market and become rich at the expense of his needy neighbors (see Nehemiah 5). We need to realize that everything we have comes from God (1 Corinthians 4.7; John 3:27) and that we are but stewards of His wealth. While everyone expects that a businessman will make a profit, nobody wants him to "make a killing" and hurt others.

The biggest thieves of all are the lazy people who could work but won't, the people who consume what others produce but produce nothing for others to use. The " sluggard" and the "slothful man" are mentioned at least seventeen times in Proverbs, and nothing good is said about them.

We need to recognize the fact that work is not a curse. God gave Adam work to do in the Garden even before sin entered the scene (Genesis 2:15). Before He began His public ministry, Jesus worked as a carpenter (Mark 6:3); the apostle Paul was a tentmaker (Acts 18:1-3). In that day, rabbis had vocations and supported themselves but didn't accept payment from their students. When we engage in honorable employment we're cooperating with God in caring for and using His creation, we're helping to provide for others, and we're growing in character. The work God has called us to do ought to nourish us (John 4:34), not tear us down; "the laborer is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10:7; 1 Timothy 5:18).

What are some of the marks of sluggards? For one thing, they love to sleep. "How long will you lie there, you sluggard? When will you get up from your sleep?" (Proverbs 6:9, NIV) "As a door turns on its hinges, so does the lazy man on his bed" (26:14). Lots of motion — but no progress!

Sleep is a necessary element for a healthy life, but too much sleep is destructive. Wise people enjoy sleep that's "sweet" (3:24) because they know they're in God's will, and the laborer's sleep is "sweet" because he or she has worked hard (Ecclesiastes 5:12), but the sleep of the sluggard is a mark of selfishness and laziness. "Laziness could run a competitive race for the most underrated sin," write Ronald Sailer and David Wyrzten in *The Practice of Wisdom* (Chicago: Moody, 1992). "Quietly it anesthetizes its victim into a lifeless stupor that ends in hunger, bondage and death" (p. 82).

Put the sluggard to work and he's more of a nuisance than a help. "As vinegar to the teeth, and as smoke to the eyes, so is the sluggard to them that send him" (Proverbs 10:26). Vinegar on the teeth and smoke in the eyes aren't necessarily lethal, but they do irritate you; so does a sluggard who won't get the job done. All he does is dream about the things he wants to enjoy, but he won't work hard enough to earn them. "The sluggard's craving will be the death of him, because his hands refuse to work" (21:25, NIV). Dreams become nightmares if you don't discipline yourself to work.

Another mark of the sluggard is a know-it-all attitude. "The lazy man is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly" (26:16, NKJV). He lives in a fantasy world that prevents him from being a

useful part of the real world (13:4; 21:25-26), but he can tell everybody else what to do. He's never succeeded at any-thing in his own life, but he can tell others how to succeed.

#### Proverbs 7:21-27

Sluggards are good at making excuses. Either the weather is too cold for plowing (20:4), or it's too dangerous to go out of the house (22:13; 26:13). "The way of the sluggard is blocked with thorns, but the path of the upright is a highway" (15:19, NIV). The diligent man or woman can always find a reason to work, but the sluggard always has an excuse for not working. Evangelist Billy Sunday defined an excuse as, "the skin of a reason stuffed with a lie," and he was right. People who are good at making excuses are rarely good at doing anything else.

What finally happens to the sluggard? For one thing, unless others care for them, sluggards live in poverty and hunger. "Laziness casts one into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger" (19:15, NKJV; see 10:4; 13:4). "If any would not work, neither should he eat" was the standard for the New Testament church (see 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15). The saints were happy to care for those who needed help and couldn't care for themselves, but they had no time for freeloaders who lived by the sacrifices of others (Acts 2:44-47; 1 Timothy 5:3-16). The sluggard gets so lazy, he won't feed himself even when the food is brought right to him (Proverbs 19:24; 26:15)!

The sluggard loses his freedom and is enslaved to others. "The hand of the diligent will rule, but the lazy man will be put to forced labor" (12:24, NKJV). His debts accumulate to the point where he has to become a slave and work off what he owes (see Leviticus 25:39-55; Deuteronomy 15:12-18). The "easy life" of leisure turns out to be very costly as the sluggard exchanges his pillow for a plow and has to work off his debts the hard way.

The sluggard wastes God-given resources. "He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster" (Proverbs 18:9). The lazy person may be "working" but not doing a very good job. Consequently, what's done will either have to be thrown out or done over; this means it will cost twice as much.

The sluggard also wastes God-given opportunities. "He who gathers in summer is a wise son; he who sleeps in harvest is a son who causes shame" (10:5, NKJV). When the fields are ready for harvest, the reapers have to go to work, because the opportunity won't be there forever (John 4:27-38). Diligent people are alert to their God-given opportunities and seek to make the most of them.