

CAPITOL STUDIES

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SEVEN DEADLY SINS AND CIVIL SERVANTS

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Verse of the Week

Hebrews 2:1-3

For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable... how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?

Sloth Sins Against God (Part II)



IN THE MID-1980s, AROUND THE TIME Steve Jobs was ousted from Apple Computer, he met a computer consultant named Tina Redse and later described her as “the first woman [he] truly loved.” They lived together for years through swings of intense passion and severe emotional detachment. After one epic fight, she scrawled the words “NEGLECT IS A FORM OF ABUSE!” on the wall of their apartment.¹ Over time, Jobs tried to woo her back. Later, she was to reject his proposal for marriage. She felt that the self-absorbed genius, with his laser focus and passion to create “insanely great products,” would never give her the time and attention she so desired in a marital relationship.

Neglect in relationships is a form of abuse. This is true of our relationship to God. We must give close attention to His Word and the great salvation He provides. Our anti-sloth theme verse is Hebrews 2:1-3, “For this reason we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away from it. ²For if the word spoken through angels proved unalterable... ³how will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?”²

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(This study is adapted from an earlier series by Rev. Gauthier, 1960–2020.)



INTRODUCTION

Let us study six scriptural ways in which sloth sins against God. Sloth, theologically, is more deeply about spiritual laziness than laziness at work or home. The spiritual sluggard forsakes and neglects his relationship with God. He is spiritually sleepy and refuses to “rise and grind.” He neglects God in relational abuse.

1. SLOTH NEGLECTS A RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

The first and greatest commandment is to love God with everything we possess (heart, soul, strength, and mind³). Most Presbyterians in the Capitol probably know that “the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.”⁴ If this is true, then spiritual sloth is surely a chief sin and is deadly to our religious well-being. This is particularly important in America, as founder and President John Adams said:

“OUR CONSTITUTION WAS MADE ONLY FOR A MORAL AND RELIGIOUS PEOPLE. IT IS WHOLLY INADEQUATE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF ANY OTHER.”⁵

For the Christian senator sworn to uphold the Constitution, the slothful neglect of spiritual duty and a real relationship with God should be of utmost concern in all of culture as well as in his or her own life. Have you walked a road paved with good spiritual intentions like the people in Joshua’s day? Note how he warned them about forsaking and neglecting God:

Joshua 24:16, 19-20

The people answered and said, “Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods.”¹⁹ Then Joshua said to the people, “You will not be able to serve the LORD, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God...²⁰ If you forsake the LORD and serve foreign gods, then He will turn and do you harm and consume you after He has done good to you.”

The next passage chronicles the history of a political leader’s life. Here, a prophet brings a God-given warning to a king, infusing moral theology into the state and the constitution of the king’s conscience.

2 Chronicles 15:1-2

Now the Spirit of God came on [the prophet] Azariah the son of Oded,² and he went out to meet [King] Asa and said to him, “Listen to me, Asa, ...the LORD is with you when you are with Him. And if you seek Him, He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.”

2. SLOTH NEGLECTS LISTENING TO GOD’S WORD

Our triune God loves relationships and communication. He has not left us groping in the dark but has communicated to mankind perfectly through the Bible. Proverbs says the sluggard will not even lift his spoon to his mouth to eat his food. Spiritually speaking, God’s Word is a feast.



Jeremiah said he found God's Word and ate it.⁶ In 1 Peter 2:2, the Apostle Peter said all Christians should long to suckle on "the pure milk of the Word."⁷ Holy Writ is food; the slothful sluggard neglects this feast. The apostles were role models, hungering for the Word:

Acts 6:2

So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables."

Even the apostles were tempted to let physical needs cause them to neglect God's Word. They were eminently teachable. These leaders ate up the feast of God's Word and were a good kind of F.A.T. (¹Faithful, ²Available, and ³Teachable)! Good leaders are teachable, and leaders read God's Word daily.

USE YOUR OPPOSABLE THUMBS AND OPEN UP THE BIBLE!

3. SLOTH NEGLECTS TALKING TO GOD IN PRAYER

Nebraskans work hard. We are known nationwide for our good work ethic. Research shows that Nebraskans and probably most State Senators fall asleep in seven minutes after a hard day's work. Rest is good. Sleep is God's gift. It is amazing, though, how often sleep and prayer conflict. Listen to what God's Word says about talking to God in prayer.

Jesus in Gethsemane asked His apostles to talk to God in prayer on His behalf since His soul was grieved deeply, to the point of death. He exhorted:

Matthew 26:41-43

"Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak." ⁴²He went away again a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done." ⁴³Again He came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy.

Even the apostles were tempted and then fell asleep when they should have been praying. They learned a big lesson about sloth and the cost of prayerlessness. That Maundy Thursday night, they proved to be lazy guardians at temptation's gates. They should have flown like spinning cannonballs to heaven in alert and fervent prayer. Instead, they slept like bumps on logs and dozed like lazy frogs.

**DO NOT BE A SPIRITUAL COUCH POTATO:
WORK OUT IN THE WORD; PUMP IRON IN PRAYER.**

Sloths like sleep, but powerful prayer is like pumping iron in "God's Gym." The early church was buff in their spiritual workouts, devoted to spiritual fitness.

Acts 2:42

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.





4. SLOTH NEGLECTS SPIRITUAL SERVICE TO GOD

Some saints are not slothful when it comes to Bible study and prayer. They run faster than the Gingerbread Man to take in “the pure spiritual milk of the word.” However, the spiritual warfare into which the believer has been enlisted involves more than making it to the mess hall. A well-fed believer who does not serve the Lord with active duty will become spiritually obese. All food and no work make Jack a fat boy. Without active service for Christ, the saints get flabby back arms and noticeable spiritual cellulite. Loving God first, we serve Him diligently. The Bible rebukes lethargic laborers for the Lord.

Jeremiah 48:10

Cursed be the one who does the LORD'S work negligently.

The Apostle Paul tells the melancholy Timothy to serve Christ in the ways in which God gifted him.

1 Timothy 4:14-15

Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you, which was bestowed on you... ¹⁵Take pains with these things; be absorbed in them.

2 Timothy 1:6 (NIV)

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you...

All believers have spiritual gifts and, like Timothy, are not to sink into the sloth of melancholy moods, serving Christ “when we feel like it” or “when it is convenient.” Was it convenient for Christ to leave heaven’s glory to suffer and die for us? *Clinomania* is the excessive desire to lie in bed all day. *Sleeping Beauty Syndrome* is a rare sickness that causes people to sleep for up to 10 days at a time. Spiritually speaking, we are not to be sleepy servants. Christ is coming soon.

Romans 13:11-12

Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep; for now salvation is nearer to us than when we believed. ¹²The night is almost gone, and the day is near...

5. SLOTH NEGLECTS FULL OBEDIENCE TO GOD

Through salvation, God calls Christians out of the deep sleep and nightmare of sin to the daytime of new life in Christ and diligent, dutiful obedience to Him. As an intentional disciple-maker in the political realm, I am not merely concerned with getting people “saved.” No, mere evangelism is not the “chief end of man.” Nor is evangelism the sum total of the Great Commission. The Great Commission has three parts.

Matthew 28:19-20

Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, ²⁰teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.



My goal is not to make converts. My commission is to “make disciples” who will prove their conversion and genuine entry into a life of discipleship by the often-frightening public act of baptism. Baptism is the (rather genius) first act of obedience (after the obedience of faith). The sequentially third aspect of discipleship is not to teach them “to think about some of the things I suggested.” It is to teach the baptized believers “to observe everything [else] I commanded.” This first takes true conversion. Second, this commission requires the obedience of public baptism. Third (doing third things third) is obeying everything else Jesus commanded. This takes (true saving) faith, God’s grace, and also obedience-oriented discipline. Note Paul’s charge to timid Timothy:

1 Timothy 4:7-8

Discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; ⁸for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come.

Unsaved unbelievers and slothful saints share the shame of disobeying Christ’s commands. Looking at their lives, we can hardly see a difference.

6. SLOTH NEGLECTS RELATIONSHIPS WITH GOD’S PEOPLE

Public baptism is a sign of genuine conversion. So too, *loving God’s children* is one of the signs that you are truly *one of God’s children*, truly born again.

1 John 5:1

Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him.

1 John 4:7

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.

When you love people, *you want to be with them*. Sloth slows down the love of fellowship. It deadens disciples to their need for constant connection with the body of Christ. Again, note the signs of devoted, loving hearts and spiritual health in the early church.

Acts 2:42

They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.

We saw last week that some slothful saints want “too much rest” at worship. Unlike media ministries, public assemblies keep you accountable and life-connected in an age of shallow cyber relationships.

Hebrews 10:24-25

And let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.





If you know people in the reclusive habit of forsaking the assembly, call them, Facebook them, send them this study, or even this short but sweet Tweet:

DO THE PEW!

CONCLUSION & ADMONITION

Sloth is a deadly sin. To use King James English, sloth “goeth” too slowly, or “it moveth” at a painful snail’s pace. The word sloth is actually just the King James version of the word *slow*. The animal Sloth⁸ (originally spelled **slowthe**) got its name in the 1400s from explorers seeing it “**move slowly.**” Sloth is the sin of slowness, but especially in the things of God.

Sloth is a perfectly sinister solution that Satan uses to numb our solid, spiritual sensitivities. Dulling duty, sinful sloth tells the believer, “Hey, don’t worry about it! Someone else who has more time can handle it. You’re tired, overworked, and underpaid. Really, it’s time to kick off your shoes, sit back, relax, and say, ‘I just don’t care. I give up!’”

The greatest thing I can tell you, Honorable Senator, is that it is God’s will for you to love Him with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind. Concluding our study on sloth, the greatest admonition I can give you is to beware of the deadly sin of sloth. It wants “too much rest” in the most vital of all relationships—that of glorifying God and enjoying Him forever.

On the alert for Christ’s sake,

Rev. Perry M. Gauthier

FOOTNOTES

1. Walter Isaacson, *Steve Jobs (Unabridged Audiobook)*, Simon & Schuster, 2011.
2. All Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard Bible 1995 Update* unless otherwise noted.
3. Deuteronomy 6:5 – “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might”; Matthew 22:37-38 – “And [Jesus] said..., ‘You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’”³⁸This is the great and foremost commandment”; Mark 12:29-30 – “Jesus answered, “The foremost is, ‘...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.’”
4. *The Westminster Shorter Catechism* of 1647, Question #1.
5. John Adams, “Letter to the Officers of the First Brigade of the Third Division of the Militia of Massachusetts,” October 11, 1798, in *The Works of John Adams* (Boston, 1854), Vol. 9, pages 228-229.

