

# Don't Trip Over LAZINESS

Proverbs 24:30-34 1 John 2:15-17 Luke 17:11-19

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A **sloth** is a slow moving mammal that hangs upside down in trees using its long limbs and hooked claws. They live in the tropical rain forests of South America. They are related to anteaters, and are known for their very slow and deliberate movements. Their very name, “**sloth**”, is an Old English word for “**slow**”.



The word **sloth** has also become a synonym for the word **lazy**; a “**sloth**” is someone who is reluctant to do any work or even make an effort. I doubt very many people want to be known as a **sloth**. 😊

The Good Lord certainly does **not** want you to be a **sloth** in your Christian faith and life either! In fact, the Lord desires you to be **zealous**: a word that means to be “**hot; burning, on fire**”.

Do not be slothful in **zeal**, rather, **be fervent in spirit**, serve the Lord.

Romans 12:11

“I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. **Would that you were either cold or hot!** So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. Revelation 3:15-16

Although the Lord desires you to be **zealous** in your faith; “**hot and on fire**”, too many times we tilt to the **slothful** side of the scale. **Slothfulness**, or

**Laziness**, can tangle you up and hurt, damage, and even extinguish your faith in Christ. It is a dangerous sin that the Bible strongly warns us about!

**Spiritual laziness, apathy and slothfulness is when you neglect Christ and His Word.** The Bible teaches us that it is easy for us to get tangled up in the things of the world and we end up *neglecting spiritual things*. It's a big deal because it's the beginning of *apostasy*; and if left unchecked, it will kill your faith.

When you think about your own Christian faith and life, would you describe it as *zealous* or *slothful*?

- ⇒ Is there a spiritual laziness in you?
- ⇒ Are you sloppy in your faith?
- ⇒ Are you apathetic about God?
- ⇒ Do you neglect God and His Word?
- ⇒ Are you disinterested in His Kingdom

One of the dangers of this sin is that it is **unnoticeable** .... Your faith dies very slowly and you don't even realize it. Pretty soon you don't know right or wrong; and you can't discern truth from error. Your relationship with Christ ends and you don't miss it. Spiritual laziness is like having termites in your house.

Termites *slowly and quietly* move into your house; and they start to eat at the wood. It is unnoticeable at first, but eventually, you have a big problem. Termites eat the heart of out of the wood --- the damage grows worse and worse, but yet you never see it, because their destructive activity is hidden from view. Pretty soon, all that is left is a worthless, empty shell.

**Spiritual slothfulness, that is, laziness, apathy, and neglect, is like having termites in your soul.** Maybe you are seeing signs of this:

- ⇒ *Slowly and quietly you are drifting away from the Lord*

- ⇒ Failing to listen and take to heart God's Holy Word <sup>1</sup>
- ⇒ Having a hard heart when it comes to God and His Word
- ⇒ Lagging behind and keeping your distance from the congregation of God's People
- ⇒ Intentional and ongoing disobedience and deliberate sin
- ⇒ Letting yourself get bored with God and His Word <sup>2</sup>
- ⇒ Having an immature faith that has not grown in knowledge over the years
- ⇒ You don't study, you don't pray, you don't serve --- you do nothing, you make no effort.
- ⇒ You surround yourself with more and more secular and worldly influences -- and pretty soon there are precious few, if any, Christian influences in your life.
- ⇒ Publicly shrinking back from your faith because you are embarrassed or afraid of insults, exclusion, ridicule, or persecution.

These all are signs of spiritual slothfulness! If this describes you, then pay attention to it and turn away from it!

We have all been challenged with this since the Pandemic hit. For over a year now, you have had to work much harder at your faith. Covid-drift is a real thing – maybe we could call it “Covid-slothfulness.” **Covid is not an excuse to be slack in your faith.** This pandemic has

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<sup>1</sup> **Here is an easy test:** Here in worship, right now, are you just going through the motions -- and your heart is far away? Are you fully engaged in worshipping the Lord or is your mind somewhere else? Do you believe what you are hearing? If you are just going through the motions? If your heart and mind is not engaged, then you may be in danger of spiritual laziness and apathy.

<sup>2</sup> Martin Luther describes this in the Large Catechism: Likewise, those fussy spirits are to be rebuked who, after they have heard a sermon or two, find hearing more sermons to be *tedious and dull*. *They think that they know all that well enough and need no more instruction*. For that is exactly the sin that was previously counted among mortal sins and is called **akadia** (i.e., apathy). This is a malignant, dangerous plague with which the devil bewitches and deceives the hearts of many so that he may surprise us and secretly take God's Word from us.

Large Catechism, 3rd Commandment. ¶199

really shook the Christian Church the hardest; there is much more danger to believers than unbelievers. Covid-slothfulness can rob you of your eternal salvation. Remember that your goal is not to survive Covid; your goal is to remain faithful to the Lord through Covid! Don't let Covid be an excuse for your spiritual slothfulness!

**Spiritual slothfulness, that is, laziness, apathy, and neglect of Christ and His Word is a sin that you must deal with.** As with all sin, the only way to combat it is to turn away from it and confess it to God. Confess your spiritual slothfulness to God, and know that He forgives you.

**Ironically, it is the very thing you have been neglecting that is the only thing that will help you.** Christ and His Word is the good news of salvation for you. Christ, and His zeal to save you, took Him to a cross for you. Christ gave His life for you, sacrificed on a cross, so that you are forgiven. In His life, death, and resurrection, you are forgiven all of your sins, renewed in faith, filled with the Holy Spirit.

In the forgiveness of your sins, God renews you and gives you a new and vigorous life. **The old life of spiritual laziness, apathy, and neglect is gone; you have been given a new life of zeal for Christ, a passion for His Word, and a desire for His Kingdom!** **IN CHRIST, you are sanctified: made holy;** you are given a **servant's heart;** **a zeal, a passion, and a desire, to serve the Lord and help other people.** *You are sanctified by the Holy Spirit: declared righteous in Jesus Christ!* **The very thing you have been neglecting that is the only thing that can save you.**

In essence, **“sanctification” turns spiritual laziness upside down!** **Rather than being lazy, you are busy . . . busy with Christ, busy with His Word, and busy serving others.** Christians **worship & pray, they learn & obey Scripture, they live holy & Godly lives, they love & serve others** out of zeal for Christ. Instead of being spiritually lazy, you are spiritually alive. You are engaged. You are active. You are diligent. You are interested. The Holy Spirit creates a hunger and a thirst for Christ and His Word within you!

There is nothing admirable with laziness; it is not a compliment to be known as a sloth. Don't let that happen in your spiritual life!

God's Will is that you are *zealous*: that you are “*hot; burning, and on fire*” for Christ, His Word, and His Kingdom! Amen!