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| THE REDEEMED CHRISTIAN CHURCH OF GOD |

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| HALLELUYAH ASSEMBLY QUINTON, BIRMINGHAM WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY |

TOPIC: **The Seven Deadly Sins** (PART 6) 28/08/2024

BIBLE TEXT: *Judge. 18:9; Eccl. 10:18; Matt. 25:26, Proverbs 19:15*, Proverbs 20:4, Col 3:23, Proverbs 18:9, 12:24, 13:4, 14:23, 10:4, 24:32-34, 26:13-16, 21:25, 6:6, Eccl 9:10, Gal 6:9, 1 Tim 5:8, Hebrew 6:11-12, 2 Thessalonians 3:10, *James 4:17, 1:22*.

Memorise: “*Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord.” (Romans 12:11)*

**Introduction**

So far, we have looked at 5 of the 7 deadly sins and today, we are starting on the 6th one, SLOTH. Sloth, one of the Seven Deadly Sins, is often misunderstood as mere laziness. However, in a biblical context, it encompasses a deeper spiritual apathy and neglect of one’s duties to God and others. Sloth, or laziness, is a topic that concerns not just secular societies but also religious teachings, including those found in the Bible. It is often associated with a failure to fulfil one's duties and responsibilities. Although the Bible does not address sloth in exhaustive detail, it offers several passages that underscore the importance of diligence, responsibility, and spiritual fervour. We shall be exploring more into this topic in the next few weeks.

1. What is SLOTH?

**(i) The dictionary Meaning of sloth**

1. the bad habit of being lazy and unwilling to work -Oxford

2. unwillingness to work or make any effort -Cambridge

3. disinclination to action or labour, indolence -Webster

Sloth is essentially about an individual being indifference, negligence and unconcerned attitude about getting things done. In other word, a lackadaisical approach to work.

**(ii) Bible Meaning of sloth**

The word ‘sloth’ is derived from the Latin term ‘acedia,’ which signifies spiritual or mental apathy. In the biblical context, it refers to a lack of care or effort in our duties and responsibilities towards God and others. Which means a lack of care or spiritual indifference. It’s not just physical laziness but a failure to act on one’s spiritual responsibilities

**(iii) Other meanings**

It is the most difficult to explain of the seven, with no agreeable definition as to whether is physical or mental. They include,

1) a lack of any feeling about self or others (boredom, rancour, apathy, and a passive inert or sluggish mentation);

2) a cessation of motion (laziness, idleness, and indolence);

3) a failure to do things that one should do;

4) Depression/hopelessness/despair.

1. **Why Is slothfulness a Sin? – Proverbs 19:24; Matthew 25:26-27**

The reason why being slothful is a sin is because slothfulness is equated to waste. The waste amounts to wasted ability, wasted resources, and wasted time. When you add all of this up it equates to a wasted life and this is the real problem with slothfulness.

The slothful person will never become everything that God wants them to be, not because God can’t do it but because they won’t put in the effort. As wonderful and powerful as God is, he will not override your desire. You must do the work necessary to be the person God wants you to be and to do what God wants you to do. There are no shortcuts.

Though, there is need to rest after working but not resting without working. That is against God’s principle -Genesis 2:2

1. **Difference Between Slothfulness and Laziness – 2 Thessalonians 3:10**

Sloth, though, is not the same thing as lazy, and it is not the opposite of busy. Most of us probably do not understand the full difference of what it means to struggle with the sin of sloth versus having moments of laziness. The Greek word using in scripture is akedia, meaning the absence of care. Sloth is more than just being lazy. Slothfulness is a sinful heart condition.

Let's break that down:

1. **Intentional**— *sloth,* implies, utter inactivity, an absolute aversion to work; *laziness,* it is an unintentional, an inclination/feeling, but, a fear of trouble and fatigue
2. **Interest**— The *slothful* man, will not work at all, whereas a *lazy* man, is drawn to it, with difficulty.
3. **Consequence**— *slothful man* is a murderer of time, while the *Lazy man,* is its own punishment.
4. **Attributes**— Sloths are careless. They don’t finish what they start. They don’t value things. They don’t take care of items that are important to them.  They don’t take care of relationships. They don’t take care of their bodies. They have dreams, though.  They think that they work “smart,” and don’t realize that they are not living up to their potential.  They are leaving God’s gifts unused. Whereas, lazy man/woman is *sluggish,* often, has to do with physical work and effort. It is about avoiding tasks and responsibilities, which will eventually lead to unproductivity.

1. **Scope**-sloth is broader, affecting both spiritual and physical aspects of life, while laziness primarily concerns physical inactivity.
2. **Impact**-sloth leads to spiritual stagnation, while laziness results in material and personal unproductivity.
3. **Signs of Slothfulness**

The sneaky sin of sloth doesn’t just keep us from stepping to the starting line; it tempts us to give up completely before we finish. There are 7 signs you can look out for to recognise a slothful person:

**1. Apathy**

“Despite their desires, the lazy will come to ruin, for their hands refuse to work. Some people are always greedy for more, but the godly love to give!” - [Proverbs 21](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=proverbs+21): 25-26

Sloth is the root of apathy. It’s to be moved by nothing. To love …nothing. It reminds me so much of the recent phenomenon of the ‘nones,’ a category of people who don’t believe in anything. The ESV Global Study Bible explains, “Laziness leads to constant [greed](https://www.christianity.com/wiki/christian-terms/what-is-greed-definition-and-bible-verses-about-greed.html) and craving. The diligence of the righteous allows them to be generous.” Sloth is the antithesis of [Hebrews 12:2](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=hebrews+12:2). Read [Proverbs 10:4](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=proverbs+10:4)

Apathy is the [absence or suppression of passion, emotion, or excitement.](https://www.dictionary.com/browse/apathy) The sin of sloth removes our motives and replaces them with just an emoji. Christianity isn’t based on works, what we do or don’t do, but the fruit of our lives makes who we follow evident.

**2. Procrastination**

“Lazy people don’t even cook the game they catch, but the diligent make use of everything they find.” - [Proverbs 12:27](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=proverbs+12:27)

The sneaky sin of sloth temps us to leave things unfinished. Whether it’s a job, chore, goal, budget, or relationship, a slothful perspective convinces us that finishing it well isn’t worth our time or even possible. Procrastination is putting something off, and often, we assume it only applies to the beginning of a task. But how many things have we left undone or walked away from? “Quietly quit” is a term that has become popular for describing how we walk away from jobs, people, and tasks without even addressing why. Instead, we ‘ghost’ people and situations without explaining why we are giving up.

“Lazy people take food in their hand but don’t even lift it to their mouth.” - Proverbs19:24

Isn’t that a picture of procrastination? Of sloth? Of laziness? So often in life, we are blind to the solutions that lie before us because we are too stubbornly blinded to remember grace. Grace reminds us to look to the One who has promised to make all things work out for our good when we lack a solution. The [apostle](https://www.christianity.com/wiki/people/what-is-an-apostle-do-apostles-still-exist.html) John wrote,

“Before the Passover celebration, Jesus knew that his hour had come to leave this world and return to his Father. He had loved his disciples during his ministry on earth, and now he loved them to the very end.” - [John 13:1](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=john+13:1)

Jesus knew the outcome of his earthly life, but he didn’t quit. Our goal on earth is to be like Him and follow His lead. We can’t see things from the proper perspective without Jesus, let alone try to forge our own paths and solutions. Walking with Jesus means just that. Instead of quitting …we lean into Him for the next step, the [strength](https://www.christianity.com/bible/bible-verses-about-strength-28) we need, and the knowledge to live in a way that brings glory to God.

“We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith. Because of the joy awaiting him, he endured the cross, disregarding its shame. Now he is seated in the place of honour beside God’s throne.” - [Hebrews 12:2](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=hebrews+12:2)

**3. Avoidance**

“The lazy person claims, “There’s a lion on the road!  
     Yes, I’m sure there’s a lion out there!”  
As a door swings back and forth on its hinges,  
     so the lazy person turns over in bed.  
Lazy people take food in their hand  
     but don’t even lift it to their mouth.  
Lazy people consider themselves smarter  
     than seven wise counsellors.” - [Proverbs 26](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=proverbs+26): 13-16

We are masters at avoiding things by silencing the notifications on our phones and negating to commit to what we fear might limit us from doing what we want. Avoidance stays away from things, people, and tasks. I believe a lack of *holy* fear causes us to fear the work we need to do sometimes. When we can’t see how something will fit into our lives, we tend to avoid it with excuses, exaggerated risks, and denial.

Denial is akin to lying. In essence, the sin of [sloth](https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/what-is-the-sin-of-sloth-and-why-is-it-worse-than-laziness.html) causes us to lie to ourselves and others, even to deny the power of God at work in our lives. Remember, [grace](https://www.christianity.com/wiki/christian-terms/what-is-grace.html) is a gift from God. Our efforts don’t do anything to gain or lose grace. It’s free. Sloth can cause us to avoid the very blessings God has given us. Like walking around with blinders on, we may be walking in blessing but be unable to see it.

**4. Aloofness**

“Those too lazy to plow in the right season will have no food at the harvest.” - [Proverbs 20:4](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=proverbs+20:4)

The sin of [sloth](https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/what-is-the-sin-of-sloth-and-why-is-it-worse-than-laziness.html) may cause us to demand our own schedule and become self-absorbed. Things we assume would be obvious to spot and easy to avoid. To be aloof creates emotional distance and avoids being attached to interests in things, jobs, people, and even hobbies. Sloth can slow us to a complete stop, but we were made to move! Scripture tells us there is a time for everything: - [Ecclesiastes 3:6-7](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=ecclesiastes+3%3a6-7)

God’s timing is perfect. He promises that when we search for Him, we will find Him. Sometimes, I can look back at my life and see my aloofness to look for Him! But in His goodness, faithfulness, and never-ending compassion for us, He meets us when we realize we have forgotten Him and is glad! In His perfect time, this happened:  -  [Isaiah 9:6](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=isaiah+9:6)

Missed opportunities are hard to catch up on. Looking back allows us to learn and grow from the mistakes we have made, the hard things we have survived, and the opportunities we have missed. Sloth will convince us to get stuck back there instead of moving forward as we were designed to, ever learning and growing from the past as we walk into our future.

**5. Destructiveness**

“A lazy person is as bad as someone who destroys things.” - [Proverbs 18:9](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=proverbs+18:9)

Laziness may not be literally shattering things around us, but it is just as destructive. In marriage, a spouse who is neglected often experiences physical pain as a result of the emotional abuse. Neglect is doing nothing. Laziness doesn’t do much. We don’t expect it to be so destructive, but it is. It destroys opportunities, livelihoods, relationships, and our health. The [Apostle](https://www.christianity.com/wiki/people/what-is-an-apostle-do-apostles-still-exist.html) Pau wrote:

“Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too. You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.” - [Philippians 2:3-5](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=philippians+2%3a3-5)

Aiming to be humble is doing something. Actively thinking of others keeps us from being idle and turned inward – the ode of selfishness. Looking out for ourselves isn’t a bad habit, but it is destructive when it overtakes all other things. When our priorities are in line, God – marriage- family – friends -job, etc., we protect ourselves from selfishness. Again, [grace](https://www.christianity.com/wiki/christian-terms/what-is-grace.html) is a gift, but our salvation doesn’t put our lives on autopilot. We still have to participate, and we are still living in a fallen world full of sin that still affects us. Seeking God with all our hearts curbs some of the destructive consequences of that sin.

**6. Immaturity**

“A false witness will not go unpunished, nor will a liar escape.” - [Proverbs 19:5](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=proverbs+19:5)

We live in a world that prides itself on bending the truth and hiding mistakes. Camouflaged by the highlight reel of social media, we have become immersed in a sea full of exaggerated circumstances and half-truths. God wants us to see Him, ourselves, and others through the lens of complete truth. “Verse [5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Prov%2019:5) stresses the importance of honest [testimony](https://www.christianity.com/wiki/christian-life/what-does-testimony-mean-in-christianity.html),” the ESV Global Study Bible explains, “In this context, which focuses on poverty and misfortune, ‘false witness’ could relate either to those who exploit the poor in the courts or to poor people who give false testimony in return for money …a false witness is someone who testifies dishonestly against another person.”

The sneaky sin of [sloth](https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/what-is-the-sin-of-sloth-and-why-is-it-worse-than-laziness.html) can make us lazy where truth is concerned. We may repaint our reality to benefit ourselves rather than look at it fully and accurately. Paul wrote,

“Watch out for those dogs, those people who do evil, those mutilators who say you must be circumcised to be saved.” - Phil 3:12

Liars. That’s pretty much what Paul is saying there! Watch out for people who may believe what they are saying is true but, in fact, is a lie. Don’t get caught up in their intentionality; instead, look to see if they are mature. Scripture tells us to pay attention and make sure the things people say to us align with the truth in His Word.

“Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on your new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy.” - [Ephesians 4:23-24](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=ephesians+4%3a23-24)

**7. Exhaustion**

“A lazy person’s way is blocked with briers but the path of the upright is an open highway.” - [Proverbs 15:19](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=proverbs+15:19)

Exhaustion is being [drained of strength and energy](https://www.dictionary.com/browse/exhausted). When we find ourselves worn out, it could be a sign of the sneaky sin of [sloth](https://www.crosswalk.com/faith/spiritual-life/what-is-the-sin-of-sloth-and-why-is-it-worse-than-laziness.html). Rest is essential for our sanity. Spiritual growth is stunted when we neglect to rest in the Lord, spending time with Him in prayer and His Word. Grace is a free gift that allows us to experience the incredibly close relationship we can have with God through Jesus. Quiet time should not be another task we add to our list of things to check off, but something we look forward to resting in. The sneaky sin of sloth distracts us, causing us to mismanage our time, possibly working very hard, just at the wrong things or the right things in the wrong order. Meditating on the following verses can help us remember to rest in Him.

“I listen carefully to what God the Lord is saying, for he speaks [peace](https://www.christianity.com/bible/bible-verses-about-peace-21) to his faithful people. But let them not return to their foolish ways.” - [Psalm 85:8](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=psalms+85:8)

“Be still, and know that I am God! I will be honoured by every nation. I will be honoured throughout the world.” - [Psalm 46:10](http://www.christianity.com/bible/search/?ver=niv&q=psalms+46:10)

Sloths are cute animals, and we marvel at how slowly they move. Moving slowly is okay if we listen to the Lord’s lead. Sloth is only one sin of so many we battle daily. There’s no condemnation if we find ourselves guilty of these things. God, in His grace, allows us to see and turn from these behaviours so that we can enjoy a deeper fellowship with Him.

1. **Seeing Beyond the Myths of Slothfulness**

One reason we're so susceptible to sloth is that we misunderstand it and are often unable to recognize its presence in our lives and habits. Consider these four myths that often cloud our thinking about the sin of sloth.

**Myth 1: Busy people can't be slothful.** We assume that if our lives are filled with activity, then we can't possibly be slothful. But sloth can disguise itself in the form of misdirected activities. Some of the laziest people are busy doing many things and yet evading that which is most important.

**Myth 2: Successful people can't be slothful.** This depends on how one defines *success*. If we look primarily only at a person's portfolio or career accomplishments, we're misunderstanding how God views success. Someone's outer world may look great because all their effort and attention is paid to the areas of life that others see—while their private world gets cheated.

**Myth 3: Neat people can't be slothful.** Just because a person has her kitchen spices alphabetized and really sharp pencils on her naked desk doesn't mean that person isn't slothful in other areas. In fact, it might mean that she's an obsessive, hyper-organized person who is avoiding much-needed emotional, relational, or spiritual growth.

**Myth 4: Non-slothful people never rest.** There is a place for rest in a God-honouring life. That's why keeping the Sabbath is [one of the Ten Commandments](http://nlt.to/Exod.20.8). Rest itself isn't an indicator of slothfulness; the problem is that slothful people don't make good choices about when to rest and when to be diligent.

1. **Facing Our Complacency**

Most of us aren't complete and total sluggards. Instead, we're selectively slothful. We're diligent in a few areas of our lives while we procrastinate terribly in others.

Experts on procrastination describe two different types of procrastination. The first kind is called *maintenance procrastination*. This is putting off activities that are necessary to your day-to-day life, including things like household chores, paying your bills on time, diet and exercise, avoiding clutter. The other category is called *developmental procrastination*, and this involves needless delays in dealing with personal problems or growth issues, such as improving your relationships, career, intellect, and, certainly, your spiritual growth.

We're all complacent in some of these arenas. So, what are we sluggards to do?

**Overcoming Sloth**

This isn't a hopeless situation; we aren't doomed to live in sloth for the rest of our days. But there are also no quick fixes for overcoming sloth. Battling the lure of sloth in our lives requires effort and intention.

**Admit your sin.** We cannot end laziness in our lives until we acknowledge that it exists. People who are the most slothful are often the least aware that they have trouble in this area (read [Proverbs 26:16](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+26%3A16): "Lazy people consider themselves smarter than seven wise counselors). Don't make the mistake of assuming that because you're busy, successful, or organized, sloth doesn't lurk in some pocket of your life.

**Change your thinking.** We have to radically alter the messages we allow to control our minds. For example, how often do you think:

* *I'm too tired right now*.
* *I've got plenty of time to do it later*.
* *I've already eaten one cookie, so I'll have six more and start my diet tomorrow*.
* *I've been working so hard I deserve a break*.
* *I'll sleep just 20 more minutes and catch God later in the day*.
* *I'll wait until I'm inspired*.

[Second Corinthians 10:5](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=2%20Corinthians+10%3A5) tells us to take every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ. We must take control of our self-talk and replace our excuses with positive, truthful words.

**Decide what matters.** Many of us have far more good intentions than we could possibly carry out, and we need to focus on just a few areas of growth and improvement. If we don't prioritize and focus our efforts, we'll inevitably become discouraged.

**Declare your plan.** Experts agree that people are far more likely to get things done when they make an agreement with someone else to do so. Tell trusted friends or family members about your efforts. We all need help and accountability in our slothful areas.

**Create consequences.** Do you ever hear of a teacher who tells her students to go ahead and study whenever they feel inspired? Of course not! All of us need consequences to get us to do what we say we want to do. Implementing compelling reasons to follow-through on your plan (such as a positive reward or even a punishment you'll give yourself) will help move you to action.

**Pray for strength and discipline.** We can look to God for help when the inevitable obstacles come our way. God wants to help us defeat the sin of sloth and he will strengthen us to do so, but we must do our part and not simply wait for God to do all the work.

**An Enthusiastic Life**

Do you know what the opposite of sloth is? It's not work—it's *enthusiasm*. That word comes from the Latin *entheos* and means "one with the energy of the divine." God never does anything with mediocrity. And as his children we are told by the apostle Paul, "Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically" ([Romans 12:11](https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Romans+12%3A11)).

The battle against sloth is going to be fought every single day of our lives. I've come to learn that this sin has the power to shipwreck my soul, maybe more than anything else. I don't want to get to the end of my life regretting not only things that I did, but things I didn't do because they required some discomfort!

We all have choices about how we're going to live, and ultimately our choices determine who we are. They determine the quality of our relationships, what we can contribute to this world, and how much we're becoming like Jesus Christ. We're going to have to move out of our comfort zones. But if we do that with God's strength, at the end of the day we're going to have few regrets and deep joy.