

Pilgrim's Conflict With Sloth

by John Piper

Pilgrim rejects Sloth's offer of false rest and finds true rest in co-making with God under the yoke that Jesus makes light.

Duration: 8:42

Scripture: Matthew 11:28

Topics: "Christian Diligence", "Spiritual Warfare"

Description

This sermon is a powerful allegory about the encounter between Pilgrim and the enemy Sloth, highlighting the temptation to seek false rest and leisure instead of embracing the yoke of Christ's rest through grace and good works. It emphasizes the importance of being diligent in our work and creativity, understanding that we are made to make and fulfill our purpose in Christ, not succumbing to the deceitful promises of idleness and sloth.

Transcript

My name is Pilgrim. Yesterday, at dusk, I met along my way an enemy. His name was Sloth.

He tried to lure me, like a moth exhausted to his idle flames. As always, he used other names, Relief, and Respite, and Repose, and Rest, and Leisure. These, he knows, are worthy seasons in this age, worthy names to make a sage out of a scoundrel.

Look, he said to me, affecting praise. You've led your church for thirty years, and I'm glad that you at last comply with my advice. I'm willing still to help you rest, though my good will, I must admit, has withered from all your unwillingness to come when I've provided you before.

But I replied, I still deplore your ways, and your deceitful snares. What makes you think that all my cares would suddenly transform your mirth and your amusements, as if worth were made of ease and emptiness? My urgent prayers do not express compliance with your old advice. No more today does it entice than it has ever done.

Then why, said Sloth, do you retire? Should I not hear this as I'm knocking at my door? Come now, my welcome mat is out. Are you not standing there? No, I replied, I'm not, and where I stand you cannot comprehend. I do not aim with you to spend a single hour, though I confess you are a subtle cheat, and dress your house with promises your name can never keep.

Sloth, to my shame, I've visited your rooms enough to know you are not rest. You bluff your way into the lives of drained and weary men, with pity feigned and promised life, as if the soul of man were made to sit and roll the dice until some happy pair make him a champ or millionaire. You cannot understand my aims.

I do not live for wealth or gains. Sloth felt the sting and said, I know your kind, a workaholic. Oh, sleep not, play not, throw to the wind God's gift of leisure days, rescind the work of Christ who bought your rest.

Oh yes, I know your kind. Invest, invest, invest, and never take your dividends on earth. You make your way to heaven by your work, your precious work.

Oh, do not shrink a moment from your service of this holy God, your life, your love. Perhaps, I said, had I not heard this censuring before conferred from better lips than yours, I would just thank you for the warning. Good and useful outcomes flow from such rebukes when love is in the touch.

But you have never loved. Along with wrath and greed and pride and strong desires for sex and food and eminence, you seven deadly sins dispense destruction everywhere. And then you cover treachery again and smile as you condemn the heart that wars to quench your flaming dart.

You cannot grasp in part or whole the glory of a Christian soul at work at rest. The sun had set and Sloth said, night comes pilgrim. Let me now keep your book while you sleep.

Will not your tireless Jesus keep your going out and coming in? Come pilgrim, rest. It is not sin to sleep. That's true, I said, but it is sin to sleep for Sloth.

I will not sit or lie while you are near, but stand and take this book in my right hand and in my mouth until you are no longer in my way nor bar my path of industry in this next season of my life. You missed the mark, old Sloth. You do not know what Jesus bought.

Oh yes, I'll show you, Sloth replied. Come unto me all you who labor now and see the rest that I have bought for you. That's what he bought.

Quotes that are true, I said, do not make truth. Old sins like heretics build vice on spins from true half-sighted texts. How gives the Lord this rest? As my God lives, I'll tell you, Sloth, he gives his rest under a yoke.

His sweet bequest, blood bought and suited to the back of every weary saint, the knack of all our plowing. Jesus makes the weighty burden light and takes the yoke beams in his hand and lifts and carries us, our works, our gifts, and Jesus is the giver. Grace bought and powers every pace and every enterprise.

Sloth, we were made and made again to be co-makers with the maker of the world, to see the world above and then to make the world below more beautiful, to learn, to know, and then to make, to shape, adorn, compose, produce, and turn a thorn into an etching tool, to write, to say what never has been said that way, to sing, to draw, to paint, to build, to stitch and weave until we fill the world with truth. For this God spoke and Jesus died. This is our yoke, our happy yoke.

You will not take my work. Sloth, we were made to make. So, pilgrim, Sloth replied, you'll earn your heaven with your arts.

Go learn your Bible better. Save by grace, not works. The book is clear.

Go chase your heaven laboring. That's not my taste. My heaven, Sloth, I answered, chased me long before I found my way to it.

Grace to be sure. The day will show again the half-text you left out. Sloth, we are made to do.

We are workmanship in Christ, made for good works. He sacrificed his life that we might live in them. He the vine, we the stem, and they the fruit.

Is not the fruit of love our life? Pointless dispute, Sloth muttered to himself. He turned to go and said to me, you've spurned my offer of sweet rest. Go waste your life.

You are a fool. You'll taste your sorrow. Mark my words.

And he was gone. And so one victory obtained. My weary soul was kept.

And I laid down my head and slept.

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