

DILIGENCE ON DISPLAY

Saturday, January 17

Reading: Proverbs 12

Proverbs 12:24 *Diligent hands will rule, but laziness ends in forced labor.*

Proverbs says a lot about diligence. This Hebrew word means to cut or sharpen. It was used to describe sharpening a sword or a farm implement. It came to be used of a person who is decisive and industrious. A sharp person is one who can cut through distractions and get things done.

A diligent person DOES NOT FOCUS ON IMAGE (12:9). This verse says that it is better to humbly accept your low position than pretend to be a big shot when you are actually broke! The person in this proverb is worried about what others think of him, so he lives beyond his income in order to impress them. Too often today we are told that image is everything. That we have to ‘keep up with the Joneses.’ But wisdom says to focus on what God thinks and not what the world thinks of you (12:2-3).

A diligent person DOES NOT TAKE SHORT CUTS (12:11). This verse literally says that those who work will be “satisfied with bread.” They will have plenty; they will be full. In contrast, the senseless person (literally “void of understanding”) will chase after fantasies. This Hebrew word means empty or worthless. Those who follow “get rich quick” schemes or try short cuts to success will fail. A person of diligence has the long view in mind. They work and wait for the reward of the coming harvest (12:14).

A diligent person is SECURE (12:12). The wicked always want what belongs to someone else. They have no security because they always want more. The diligent heart is secure because it is rooted in righteousness. When the storms come they can endure and bear fruit (12:3, 7; 10:24-25). Proverbs 12:21 is not a promise that God’s people will never experience trouble. The word “harm” in Hebrew means emptiness and vanity. The phrase “fill of trouble” means evil or mischief. Believers will never experience emptiness and evil like the unbeliever when they live by God’s wisdom.

A diligent person will be SATISFIED (12:27). This verse is difficult to translate. It could picture a person who is too lazy to cook what he has caught. Or it could picture a person who is too lazy to go out and hunt in the first place. Either way, the lazy person is hungry. In contrast, the diligent finds contentment and pleasure in their efforts. In Hebrew the last line reads, “the substance of a diligent man is precious.” They are satisfied because they have done their best and enjoy and benefits of their labor.

A diligent person will be EXALTED (12:24). A lazy person cannot even rule themselves so how could they rule over others. But one who is a hard worker and does his work well will be promoted. 1 Peter 5:5-6 tell us that “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble” (quoting Proverbs 3:34). The apostle then says that when we humble ourselves “under God’s mighty hand” that He will “lift you up in due time.” If we are faithful and diligent in serving the Lord, He will exalt us to fulfill His ultimate plan for our lives.