

INTRODUCTION

The following story is from Aesop's Fables.

In a great field lived the ants and the grasshoppers. The ants were busy little people. They worked all summer getting grain for the winter. "We shall need it to eat," said the wise ants. "I'd rather hop in the sun!" said a grasshopper. "But there will be snow in the winter. Then we can get no food!" answered the ants. "But the sun is so nice and warm!" chirped the grasshoppers.

By and by winter came. Oh, how cold it was! The grasshoppers' legs were stiff with cold. And they were so hungry. "Please give us some grain, dear ants," begged the grasshoppers. "We do not have any extra," answered the ants. "But we have none at all!" cried the grasshoppers. "What were you doing all summer?" asked the ants. "Why did you not store away some grain then?" "Oh, we could not! We danced and hopped and sang all summer long!"

So the lazy grasshoppers, who took it easy all summer long, singing and playing, instead of gather food, died from the wintery cold.

Let's now look into the Scriptures: Prov. 6:6-8; 30:24, 25. First of all, we want to deal with the spiritual tone of these passages rather than the physical. Grant it, the Scriptures say, "If anyone will not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thess. 3:10b), and "If anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Tim. 5:8).

But the spiritual sluggard (spiritually lazy person) is a picture of a person who loves his ease, lives in spiritual idleness, sticks to nothing when it has to do with the work of God, and is very careless in the things of the Lord.

Let's attend the school of the ant. Let's consider and ponder her ways, and be wise. We learn:

HUMILITY

While ants are active, they do their work without drawing attention to themselves. Consider Rehoboam, Solomon's son, who became king. A child of the king with a high and lofty position called for humble and lowly service. But when Rehoboam became king, instead of listening to the elders, he listened to his contemporaries as to how to run the kingdom. In turn he threatened the people, and the ten tribes revolted and made Jeroboam king of the northern kingdom. So the words of Solomon were fulfilled in-and-through his own son, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18). A Japanese Proverbs says, "Nothing preaches better than the ant, and she says nothing."

SUBMISSION (v. 7)

They have no leader, overseer or ruler. So how do they get the work done? They submit themselves to one another. They rank themselves under one another.

WISDOM (6:6b; 30:24, 25)

Where does their wisdom come from? It comes from God. Paul wrote to the Corinthians:

But of Him [God] you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—that, as it is written, “He who glories, let him glory in the LORD. (1 Cor. 1:30, 31)

In [Christ] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. (Col. 2:3)

James writes:

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (Jas. 1:5)

Such divine wisdom is practical living directed by the Word of God.

COOPERATION

They work together in harmony and unity. For instance, weaver ants build their nests by weaving together leaves using larvae silk. Colonies can consist of more than one hundred nests spanning numerous trees and contain more than a million workers. Driver ants have been known to drive off herds of elephants. Soldier ants can form a ladder as they stand on top of each other (rank under one another) getting to food.

ORGANIZATION

They have a well-planned and highly organized labor force and do it without a leader! Each ant knows its job and carries it out. Not everyone can be a queen, a male, or a worker. There must be diversity, yet unity, for the colony to survive.

Some workers enlarge and repair the nest. Others are soldiers and defend the nest. Some are designated to care for the young while others gather food.

BURDEN BEARERS

Ants have been known to carry up to fifty times their weight! However, what was once a burden becomes a blessing.

A biologist tells how he watched an ant carrying a piece of straw, which seemed a big burden for it. The ant came to a crack in the earth which was too wide for it to cross. It stood for a time as though pondering the situation, then put the straw across the crack and walked over upon it.

Our burdens can actually be made a bridge for our spiritual progress. How long has it been since you asked God for a burden and, in-turn, saw it turned into a blessing?

BURDEN SHARERS

If one has a grain of corn too big for her to carry, her neighbor will come and assist. Paul wrote to the Galatians, “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Gal. 6:2). Paul said, “For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself’” (Gal. 5:14).

When is the last time you genuinely helped to share a brother’s or sister’s burden?

PERSEVERANCE

They are hardest at work during the hottest part of the day. They are a model of unwearied labor. Have you ever seen what ants can do to a cookie? Little by little, bit by bit, they keep coming and going until the entire cookie is gone!

Think of all the projects we face that seem too large or impossible. But man’s extremity *is* God’s opportunity. What might appear to be insurmountable obstacles can become unlimited opportunities.

Whatever happened to faith when it comes to the work of God? When did natural abilities ever become a substitute for the gifts of the Spirit? Faith begins where probabilities and possibilities cease. William Carey, who is recognized as the “father of Protestant missions,” and founder of the Baptist Mission Society in 1793, wrote: “Expect great things from God; attempt great things for God.” Philips Brooks wrote, “Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men. Do not pray for tasks equal to your power. Pray for power equal to your tasks.” We serve a God who truly does delight in impossibilities.

Consider the ant, her drive, her determination, and her perseverance. How much could be accomplished in-and-through the church today if we just had the perseverance of an ant?

PROTECTION

Soldier ants protect the colony from enemies. They even lay their lives down for the protection of others.

WITNESSING

They communicate to other ants where to find food.

THE NEST IS A PICTURE OF THE CHURCH

When we look at an ant nest, we discover what the church is to be. Most ant nests have a number of chambers. When new ants are born into a colony, the worker ants move the growing young into a chamber that serves as a nursery. They immediately accept and assimilate the young into the family.

When believers come among our ranks, they should have a sense of belonging. Never should they feel like an intruder or an outsider, no matter where they come from: their past, their last name, their social status, or their educational level. A biblical New Testament church is a church regularly filled with new people, new names, and new life in Christ, because it regularly brings others to Christ.

We should immediately assimilate new believers into the local body, training them, and equipping them for various roles of ministry. Keep in mind, those young ants will one day become workers, caring for the young themselves.

The nest also includes chambers for food. God has entrusted the church with His Word. He has deposited it into our trust.

There are also chambers where workers gather and rest.

There are also new chambers which are unoccupied. Why? They are expecting and preparing for growth!

CONCLUSION

Think about it. The ant has no guide, overseer or ruler. It's the nature of the ant to carry these things out, because God has placed it in them. May I say that all of these characteristics we find in the ant are also characteristics of the new nature we have in Christ.

If these characteristics are not being express through our lives, obviously there is a problem. I realize when Solomon sends us to the school of the ant, especially if we have become spiritually sluggish and lazy, we are to learn from her and be ashamed. But we should also learn from her in order to be taught wisdom; to awaken us and activate us in service of the King.

Many of us have had godly parents as our guides, overseers, and rulers. We've had Sunday School teachers, preachers, and pastors. As believers, we have a new nature, the Word of God, the Holy Spirit, and one another. We are without excuse.

As a Christian, are you willing to do the work of the Lord without drawing attention to yourself?

What about submission?

Are you living out the Word of God practically?

Are you working together in harmony and unity with other believers?

Do you know your place in the body of Christ and fulfilling your God-given ministry?

Are you a burden bearer?

Are you a burden sharer?

Are you working while it is called day?

Are you helping to protect other believes from the enemy?

Are you telling others about the Bread of Life and directing them as to how they can receive Him too?

Are you thinking of ways we can enlarge and expand our ministries so to reach our community and others for Christ?

Are you laying up treasures in heaven?

Are you thinking and living only for the present or are you focused on things eternal?

Which would you rather be: the ant or the grasshopper?

Don't wait too late.