

Proverbs 12:27

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting:
but the substance of a diligent man is precious.

Analysis

This proverb contrasts diligence with sloth through vivid imagery. "The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting" depicts someone too lazy to complete what they started. They expended effort hunting (tsayid, תְּאֵיד, game, hunting) but lack follow-through to prepare (charak, חָרַק, roast, scorch) the catch. The lazy person begins tasks but doesn't finish them, wasting their efforts.

"But the substance of a diligent man is precious" presents the alternative. Hon-adam charutz yaqar (הַוְלָאִים חָרָץ יָקָר, the wealth of a diligent man is precious). Charutz (חָרָץ) means diligent, decisive, sharp, industrious. The diligent person's possessions are yaqar (יָקָר, precious, valuable, rare, costly) because they're earned through sustained effort and stewarded wisely.

The proverb condemns half-hearted effort. Sloth doesn't just mean doing nothing—it includes starting projects without completing them. The sluggard in Proverbs makes excuses, procrastinates, and wastes opportunities (Proverbs 26:13-16). By contrast, diligence produces valuable results. Jesus' parable of the talents condemned the lazy servant who buried his master's money rather than investing it (Matthew 25:14-30). Paul commanded: "If any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10). Believers should work heartily as unto the Lord (Colossians 3:23), completing tasks faithfully to honor God.

Historical Context

In ancient agricultural societies, success required sustained effort—plowing, planting, irrigating, harvesting, processing. Missing any step meant wasted work. Hunting provided meat, but game spoiled unless promptly butchered and cooked. The slothful hunter's laziness resulted in loss. Similarly, farmers who planted but didn't harvest, or harvested but didn't thresh grain, wasted their labor. Diligence throughout the process produced valuable results.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. What projects or responsibilities have you started but failed to complete due to laziness or lack of follow-through?
2. How can you cultivate diligence that sees tasks through to completion rather than starting many things but finishing few?
3. In what ways does diligent work unto the Lord honor God and produce 'precious substance' in your life?

Interlinear Text

לֹא יְפַרֵּת רָמִי הַצִּיד וְהַיּוֹן
H3808 **man roasteth** H2760 **The slothful** H7423 **not that which he took in hunting** H6718 **but the substance** H1952

מְאֻמָּן יְקַנֵּת פָּרוֹזֵה
H120 **man** H3368 **is precious** H2742 **of a diligent**

Additional Cross-References

Proverbs 13:4 (Parallel theme): The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.

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