

# Proverbs 18:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

He also that is slothful in his work is brother to him that is a great waster.

## Analysis

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The Hebrew word 'slothful' (מַתְּרֵפֶה/mitrapeh) means 'slack' or 'negligent'—not merely inactive but failing to apply proper diligence. 'Brother to him that is a great waster' (בָּאֵל מַשְׁחִית/ba'al mashchit, master of destruction) creates a shocking equation: the lazy worker equals the deliberate destroyer. Both produce the same result—loss, waste, ruin. This proverb refutes the notion that passive sins are less serious than active transgressions. Negligence destroys as surely as vandalism. The parable of the talents illustrates this truth—the servant who buried his talent was condemned not for theft but for failing to invest it (Matthew 25:24-30). Reformed theology emphasizes that sin includes both commission (doing wrong) and omission (failing to do right). Sloth violates the cultural mandate to work and steward creation (Genesis 2:15). Believers are 'created in Christ Jesus unto good works' (Ephesians 2:10)—not for idleness.

## Historical Context

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Ancient Israel's agrarian economy demanded diligence. Neglecting fields or flocks brought famine. The harvest season allowed no laziness (Proverbs 10:5). Everyone contributed to family survival—there was no social safety net. The law commanded responsible stewardship: letting an ox gore someone due to negligence brought guilt (Exodus 21:29). By Solomon's time, Israel's increased wealth and international trade created opportunities for some to live off others' labor—making warnings against sloth particularly relevant. The New Testament continues this emphasis: 'if any would not work, neither should he eat' (2 Thessalonians 3:10).

The early church expected believers to work diligently, supporting themselves and helping the needy (Ephesians 4:28).

## Related Passages

## **Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith**

## **John 3:16 — God's love and salvation**

## Study Questions

1. In what areas of your life—work, relationships, spiritual disciplines—have you been 'slack' in fulfilling your calling?
2. How does viewing negligence as equivalent to destruction change your perspective on seemingly small failures?
3. What motivates you more effectively toward diligence: fear of consequences or gratitude for God's grace and calling?

## Interlinear Text

בְּמִלְאָכָת	וְ	מִתְבָּפָה	הִ	אָחָ	הִ
H1571	He also that is slothful		in his work	is brother	H1931
	H7503		H4399	H251	
לְבָבָ	עַל	מִשְׁחִיתָ			
to him that is a great	waster				
H1167	H7843				

## Additional Cross-References

**Proverbs 10:4** (Parallel theme): He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.

**Hebrews 6:12** (Parallel theme): That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

**Romans 12:11** (Parallel theme): Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord;

**Matthew 25:26** (Parallel theme): His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:

**Proverbs 28:24** (Parallel theme): Whoso robbeth his father or his mother, and saith, It is no transgression; the same is the companion of a destroyer.

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