

## WORK YOUR OWN GARDEN

### INTRODUCTION.

- A. Scripture text: **Proverbs 24:30-34**. From Roy H. Enoch (07-10-1994).
- B. When I was ten years old, dad bought a farm that fit this description:
  - 1. An old man had gotten unable to work and let it grow up in briars and bushes.
  - 2. The old man had rented it for a while but they kept backing away from the thickets and fence rows.
  - 3. Out of the 75 acres, only about 6-8 acres could be cultivated w/o cutting sassafras and persimmon thickets.
  - 4. We cleaned it up and developed it into one of the most productive farms in the area.
- C. This field and vineyard was not from the neglect of old age or illness but of laziness.
  - 1. The wise man may have been walking through the country side.
  - 2. There were fields of wheat and barley.
  - 3. There were well-kept gardens and vineyards.
  - 4. Then suddenly he comes upon this glaring ugliness--a blot on the beautiful landscape--crying "failure!"
- E. We study this passage to learn the lesson that he writes about that we may avoid this kind of mistake in our lives.

### I. THERE ARE SEVERAL SIGNS OF NEGLECT AND FAILURE IN THIS PICTURE.

- A. He lost his security and protection when the stone fence fell.
  - 1. His land is open to animals for grazing.
  - 2. Men can take the crops and fruit as they wish.
  - 3. He might have nothing for himself or for the needy.
  - 4. If our lives are not fenced in by God's word, we are open to temptations which will destroy our happiness.
- B. He allowed thistles and nettles to cover his fields.
  - 1. Nature will produce something on productive ground.
  - 2. Weeds and wild grass will cover what is not cultivated.
  - 3. Some of these are not so bad, but some are possessive like the wild thorn and nettles.
  - 4. The land would become a thicket.
  - 5. If we neglect God's word, our lives will become cluttered w/weeds and maybe worse--thorn thickets which are destructive and possessive.

### II. THIS FAILURE WAS IN THE MAN.

- A. It was not because of a defect in the land.
  - 1. If the soil would grow thorns and nettles it would grow wheat, barley, and flowers.
  - 2. All of our lives are full of possibilities.
    - a. We each have the possibility of descending to the lowest depths of sin.
    - b. We also have the possibility of ascending to the heights of godliness and humanitarian.
    - c. We select the fruit our lives will bear by what we plant in our field.
- B. The failure was not in a bad environment.
  - 1. Of course there were natural enemies and pests.
  - 2. Life is always a series of choices and effort.
  - 3. If you cultivate anything worthwhile, you will have to do it in spite of all hindrances.
  - 4. When Joseph was in Egypt, there were choices and opportunity to do wrong.
    - a. It seems both pleasurable and profitable to do evil.
    - b. He kept his fences mended and saved his soul.
  - 5. John was in a prison colony on the Isle of Patmos.

- a. But he "was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day."
  - b. He kept his fences mended.
- C. This man's problem was probably not deciding to go wrong.
  - 1. When he neglected his wall, he probably did not decide to open his field to every destructive influence.
  - 2. He probably did not decide to raise thorns and nettles.
  - 3. He did not tear down the wall and plant nettles.

### III. THIS MAN FAILED BECAUSE OF NEGLECT.

- A. He did not misuse his property--he didn't use it at all.
  - 1. This will always destroy and ruin.
  - 2. No matter how beautiful the garden, neglect will ruin it.
- B. No matter how beautiful your home, neglect will ruin it.
  - 1. Neglect will ruin good children, and a good wife.
  - 2. Neglect will destroy peace and happiness.
- C. No matter how good your business is, neglect will ruin it.
- D. See Heb. 2:3; 2:1.

### IV. THIS MAN NEGLECTED HIS GARDEN FOR THE SAME REASONS WE NEGLECT OUR XIAN LIVES.

- A. The text says that he was lazy and without understanding.
  - 1. He did not like to work, so he had no harvest.
    - a. God said that we earn our bread by the sweat of the brow (Gen. 3:17-19).
    - b. We must be willing to work hard to receive God's blessings, although that will not earn them.
    - c. Paul commanded that if a man will not work, neither let him eat (2Th. 3:10).
  - 2. No worthwhile achievement is accomplished w/o work.
    - a. Yet, many seek ease and idleness.
    - b. Many would like to go to heaven w/o effort in the Lord's service.
    - c. They seem to think of heaven as a place to loaf and yawn.
  - 3. Jesus said, "My Father works even until now and I work."
  - 4. During the great depression an old man lived in PA who was uneducated, and an Italian immigrant. He lost his job.
    - a. To keep from starving he had to accept welfare.
    - b. He was not expected to work, but he wasn't satisfied.
    - c. He got a broom, and kept the city streets clean.
    - d. He said, "My bread tastes sweeter." There was a man.
    - e. We need that attitude in the Lord's service.
- B. Sometimes one's garden is grown up because it is too large and too fertile to keep clean.
  - 1. Some are given so many great talents that they allow those abilities to handicap them.
    - a. One young minister had a fine musical voice, a clear, strong mind and pleasing personality that he could get by for a while w/little preparation.
    - b. So he allowed these to take the place of hard study.
    - c. So he soon found himself, "letting empty buckets into empty wells and coming up with nothing."
  - 2. We must be willing to use our abilities w/diligence.
- C. Sometimes one's garden and the soil poor.
  - 1. Some men have few talents and dream of doing great things.
  - 2. They may envy others w/more ability and not use their own.

3. Russell H. Conwell used to lecture on "Acres of Diamonds."
  - a. In India lived a man on a small farm who was contented.
  - b. A visitor told him about diamonds and their great value.
  - c. That day he lost his contentment which was valuable.
  - d. He resolved to sell and go search for diamonds.
  - e. He sold his farm for little and searched in vain.
  - f. Finally, in despair, he drowned himself.
  - g. The man who bought his farm was plowing and saw something shine in the light: It was a diamond.
  - h. So began the famous Golconda Diamond Mines, the richest on earth.
  - i. This man made his discovery the same way you and I will probably make ours--by working his own garden.
  - j. Happiness is like a butterfly--you can't catch it by chasing it. But if you get busy with your work, it may lite on you.
- D. We may neglect our garden because we have no goals in life.
  1. For many, life has no high purpose.
    - a. When life grows hard, they are apt to falter.
    - b. Many marriages fail for this reason.
  2. Clarence Darrow was a famous atheist.
    - a. He was courageous--brave--but godless.
    - b. When asked by a young man for advice, he said, "Life has grown so complicated and hard that if I were a young man today, I would chuck the whole business and jump out the window."
    - c. Clarence Darrow's problem was no mission in life--no hope.
  3. Titus was told by Paul to stay in Crete because they were so evil.
    - a. If all had been well, they would not have needed him.
    - b. If all was well God would not need you and me.
    - c. We have a mission--make the world better where we are.
    - d. Never fail because you don't know your mission.
- E. Some fail because they do not feel responsible for doing their best w/what they have.
  1. You are not responsible for ability you do not have.
  2. Your duty is to do your best w/what you have.
  3. When Moses made excuses for not doing God's work, God asked (Ex. 4:2), "What is that in your hand?" And he said, "A rod." (God can use what we have.)

## CONCLUSION.

- A. There are many lessons for us in this Proverb.
  1. Neglect will cause us to lose the blessings that we have.
  2. Failure is in the man, and not in the circumstances.
  3. This man failed for the same reasons that you and I often fail.
    - a. He was lazy and did not understand the consequences.
    - b. He may have thought that he had so much ability that he did not have to work like others.
    - c. He may have had such little ability that he didn't think he could accomplish anything.
    - d. He did not have a mission in life to challenge him.
    - e. He did not feel responsible for doing his best with what he had.
- B. We need to learn from this lesson to work diligently in God's service.