

Diligent thoughts

*The thoughts of the diligent tend only to plenteousness; but of every one that is hasty only to want.
Proverbs 21:5*

The contrast in this proverb makes an interesting connection between thoughts and actions, as they relate to diligence and haste. While haste is not always a bad thing, and can be seen in negative, positive, or sometimes neutral contexts in scripture and in life, diligence is always found in a positive light. In most cases, especially in the Proverbs, haste generally has a negative connotation. Yet diligence is commended with respect to guarding one's heart, seeking good and God, tending to provision and to business, and especially keeping the precepts of God. We can imagine Mr. Aesop perhaps contemplating these contrasts as he composed the fable of the diligent tortoise and the hasty hare.

The contrast in this verse compels us to consider the thoughts of the diligent versus those of the hasty. We can start with the possibility that the thoughts of the diligent are more than of the hasty. Noah Webster told us that diligence is "steady application in business of any kind; constant effort to accomplish what is undertaken; exertion of body or mind without unnecessary delay or sloth; due attention; industry; assiduity." To constantly think through the best steps to a goal will require more thoughts than will reactionary haste between corrections to poorly devised plans, yet in the end will produce better results. Also, the thoughts of the diligent would tend to be deeper, and thus more consistent, whereas hasty thoughts have not enough time to develop.

While this concept has many life applications, let us apply it to one spiritual example, as Hebrews 11:6 tells us that God is a rewarder of the faithful that diligently seek Him. The hasty thinker in this case would come up wanting, as often men refuse to believe in God because they will not seek to understand Him. They instead require instant revelation. Since His ways and thoughts are far above ours, we cannot expect to hastily grasp even what is possible to understand of His ways. Yet, the careful and constant consideration of all that He has revealed to us in His word can yield sufficient understanding to build plenteous faith, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at those things which are not seen. By diligently learning what we can of Him, we solidify our reasons to trust Him who is past finding out. Thus, the apostle exhorts us to study (literally, be diligent) to show ourselves approved unto God (II Timothy 2:15), and we will certainly not be ashamed.