

Go to the ant, you sluggard! Consider its ways, and be wise.--Proverbs 6.6 NIV
TEV: Lazy people should learn a lesson from the way ants live.

1. I see by the paper this morning (15 May 86) that, in light of Chernobyl, 4/5ths of us (humans, ie) wouldn't make it through a nuke war: some, nuked food (by radiation); the rest, no food (by reduced sunlight). Before the paper, devotion; after the paper, I went out into the garden, sat in the full sunlight, and watched an ant horizontally trying to pull a dead-drying earthworm 25 times its length vertically over the curve (3/4" radius) of a garden tie. Why was it impossible? The ant could (1) hold on for almost any length of time, (2) move either way along the garden tie, seeking an easier pull, and (3) tug enough so as to move his weight 1/4" backward away from the curve. (I say "he" for two reasons: (1) Lady ants are, I think, off somewhere taking care of their sexual role assignments; and (2) Better use the generic than reduce human identification by "it"ing our fellow creatures.) But he had against him an inexorable law, gravity, synergistic with another inexorable law, radius weight: since the worm was dried enough to be stiff, the more the ant pulled the heavier (by that synergism) got the worm. And as if that weren't enough, he lost the teeter-totter battle: the more the worm's lower extremity was lifted away from the garden tie, the lighter (relatively) the ant got, till he was lifted off the tie and hanging in the air (except, always, for one foot!). Like I said, impossible. Sad, but impossible. Heroic try, but impossible. Sometimes it's like that. For all us creatures. "With God all things are possible" said Jesus (Mt.19.26; "looking straight at them"). With God. Not with ants and people.

2. I discovered, however, that--granted God can't lose--people will lose before ants do. For one thing: While their tonnage is about the same as ours (I was told in entomology class 1/2 c. ago), there're untold billions more of them. For another, their food is not as open to radiation as is ours. And for still another, billions could die of nuked food without making a dent on their world population statistics. Us? A mere five billion corpses and we'd have gone poof. How much more fragile we are than the ants! Not to mention the roaches, even older survivors on this precarious planet than are the ants. (Why, then, am I not using the roach instead of the ant for this early-morning meditational thinksheet? Because it was an ant I saw, not a roach; we don't have roaches at our house, which is built on sand--but oh how ants love sand!....Which leads me to say that it's the major entomological distinction between urban and rural living: city, more roaches; country, more ants. Things are tough all over.)

3. Can you, you antlike worker, imagine the luxury of having the time I have to write such devotional drivel as this thinksheet? Well, I don't have the time, I take it; same for you if you've gotten this far with the reading of this thinksheet. But writing it is for me a form of prayer: is reading it, for you, a form of prayer?

4. My ant lost, right? So what's the evidence--for this morning's scientific observation and mullings--that the ants will be around for more days-years-eons than we'll be? This: As Moses kept looking at the burning bush long enough to notice that it was "burning, but not burning up," I kept looking at the ant long after I knew he didn't have a chance (a prayer?) of getting done what he was doing. To make the situation even more hopeless: Just when he'd manage to get the worm's rear end up off the garden tie, a small fly (always the same one) would land on that end of the teeter-totter and have a few bites! Now, my ant was not a US Marine, but he believed "The impossible will take a little longer." His perpetual trying and failing sawed just enough off the bottom side of the worm to let it bend. And SUCCESS!