

The King's Highway

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CHRISTIAN DILIGENCE . . .

A young man who is a Christian, and very conscientious in his daily living, came to his minister and complained that he was a nervous wreck. The minister, upon closer questioning, drew out the cause of the young fellow's physical trouble.

"I'm a supervisor in a war plant," he explained. "I believe in doing a fair day's work for the pay which I receive, and I insisted for a time that all persons working under my direction do likewise. But so many did not think of service in the same way. Their main object in life seemed to be to see how much carelessness, shirking, and downright dishonesty they could get away with, and still draw their large pay checks each week. I worried about it. I felt responsible to my firm, and to my government. I felt that I ought to encourage, even force these people to be honest in their effort. As a result, I am a nervous wreck. I have had to resign my position."

Unusual, you say? Perhaps, insofar as the young man's Christian ideal of diligence is concerned, but not with regard to the other part of the story. Too many people today are shirkers, not workers. They do not seem to think of giving an honest hour's work for a large amount of pay. Some are professing Christians, sad to say—persons who do not appear to connect their Christianity with their daily duties. Perhaps they do not read their Bibles, and do not know that diligence and honesty in daily work and practice are commanded and enjoined.

The Word does have considerable to say on the subject of diligence—and of course the Bible does not divorce the term from the daily living of the Christian!

The business world sets a premium on diligence, and when found in an employee, it is usually rewarded, especially in a time when that virtue seems decidedly scarce. In a lecture to insurance agents, a general manager of a large company related that when his firm brought their leading agents from all parts of the United States to New York for a convention, some years ago, an interesting thing occurred. The convention lasted for several days. On the closing day an excursion by boat was planned, and everybody took the trip down the bay.

"On the return trip," said the general manager, "I noticed a young man, an agent from a midwestern town, talking earnestly to the ship's captain. My curiosity was mildly aroused and I managed to engage this young agent in conversation myself, during which I learned that he was trying to sell the captain an insurance policy. The young agent explained, 'Thought I might as well be busy while in New York.' I found out later that while the youth was in our city he had actually succeeded in selling a policy to the clerk at his hotel, and to the elevator operator in our own building—with whom most of us officials had

ridden for months without thinking to mention insurance to him."

That young agent was diligent in selling insurance. We are not told whether or not his diligence extended to spiritual things, but we trust it did. For the Bible urges us to be diligent in both temporal and spiritual matters. May we examine a few of these?

Financial prosperity comes, the Bible declares, not from "putting it over on the employer," but through diligence in one's work. "He that tilleth his land shall have plenty of bread" (Prov. 28:19). A lack of diligence, or laziness, or shirking, the Bible declares, will lead only to poverty, "The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat" (Prov. 13:4).

And then, it has much to say about diligence in the things that pertain to the spiritual part of one's life.

There is the matter of diligence in keeping one's own heart: "Keep thy heart with all diligence: for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). Keeping one's heart never was more important than today, when so many temptations on every hand beset the Christian.

Diligence in the cultivation of the Christian graces is enjoined: "And * * * giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity" (II. Peter 1:5-7). Who will doubt that diligence is essential in the cultivation of such graces in one's life? How essential are the Christian graces if we would grow in grace and live lives befitting a follower of Christ! Faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, love, and brotherly kindness! Do we possess these? If not, have we been exercising due Christian diligence in our efforts to obtain these virtues? The question is a good one to ask, and to answer in a manner fitting to oneself and to his God.

We need diligence in watching to see that the grace of God does not slip out of our hearts. "Looking diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God; let any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled" (Heb. 12:15). Let us be diligent in watching to keep out of the heart the defiling things which will cause God's grace to leave—the precious gift will not, can not, live with defiling things!

How important is diligence in seeking God through prayer. "But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Heb. 11:6).

Diligence in obeying God is vital. "Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labor for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness" (II Isaiah 55:2).

Christ was our best example of true Christian diligence in action. At the age of twelve, He wanted to be diligently about His Father's business. When, at thirty, He entered His active ministry, He bent every energy toward its accomplishment. He did, faithfully and diligently, the things He had been sent to do until, on the cross, He could and did utter these words, "It is finished!"

Fanny Crosby expressed the idea of Christian diligence when she sang:

"When Jesus comes to reward His servants,
Whether it be noon or night,
Faithful to Him will He find us watching,
With our lamps all trimmed and bright."

"If, at the dawn of the early morning,
He should call us, one by one,
When to the Lord we restore our talents,
Will He answer thee, 'Well done!'"

—Selected

A LOST ART

The Scripture speaks of prayer as toil and labor. Prayer taxes all the resources of the mind and heart. Jesus Christ wrought many mighty works without any sign of effort. There are in His marvelous works the ease of omnipotence, but of His prayers it is said: "He offered up prayers and supplications with strong cryings and tears." All who have shared His intercessions have found it a travail of anguish; great saints have always been the outcome of pain. They wrestled in agony with breaking hearts and weeping eyes, until they were assured that they had prevailed. They spent cold winter nights in prayer, they lay on the ground weeping and pleading, and came out of the conflict physically spent, but spiritually victorious. They wrestled with principalities and powers, contended with the rulers of Satan's kingdom, and grappled with spiritual foes in the heavenly sphere. A lost art! Prayer has become a soliloquy instead of passion. The powerlessness of the church needs no other cause. To be prayerless is to be both passionless and powerless.—Samuel Chadwick.

SOUL WINNING

David Brainerd said, "I care not how or where I live, or what hardships I go through, so that I can but gain souls to Christ."

Matthew Henry wrote: "I would think it a greater happiness to gain one soul to Christ than mountains of silver and gold to myself."

Fletcher of Madeley said to Samuel Bradburn, "If you should live to preach the gospel forty years, and be the instrument of saving only one soul, it will be worth all your labors."

Said Spurgeon, "Husbandman, your Great Employer, sent you out to sow the seed," but if no grain of it would ever come up, if you sowed the seed as He told you, and where He told you, He will never lay the blame of a defective harvest on you."—Selected.