

The Normal Christian Life - Diligence

The first step every person takes to become a true Christian is to realise their basic relationship with their Creator God.

Acts 20:28 [New King James] *“Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which **He purchased with His own blood.**”*

We have been purchased by Jesus Christ by His blood sacrifice, we belong to Him as a purchased bondsman. We have no “rights” only responsibilities towards Him as our Master.

The Greek word translated “slave” is “*dōulōs*” and the apostles introduced themselves using the same word, the “*dōulōs of Jesus Christ,*” [**Romans 1:1; James 1:1; 2 Peter 1:1; Jude 1; Revelation 1:1.**]

Romans 12:1 [NIV] *“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God, this is your spiritual act of worship.”*

This is the first step we take in our new life as a Christian. The Greek word translated “bodies” is “*soma*” meaning the whole life, physical body, mind and human spirit, [**Job 32:8; Proverbs 20:27; 1 Corinthians 2:11.**]

It is only after this step is taken that the promised Holy Spirit can begin His work of re-educating us, [Romans 12:2].

This sacrifice also expresses our true gratitude and worship of our Saviour Jesus Christ.

Every person called by God to become a Christian [John 6:44] has a place in the work of witness that God is doing in each generation of human beings.

[Please download and study our article with the title ‘*What On Earth Is God Doing?*’ that is found under the main heading ‘*Kingdom Of God*’.]

To fulfil such a task a person has to have certain qualities. These may be natural, learnt from the example of our parents, or have to be developed with the help of the active presence of the Holy Spirit.

Diligence –

The daily life of every Christian is related to their attitude towards the work they do.

Referring to the Kingdom of God, the created family of God, [Matthew 25:14] Jesus Christ illustrates two different attitudes towards the work given to these potential children in His future kingdom, [Matthew 25:15-23]. These two people had been diligent and received a great reward at their Master’s return.

The third showed a very different attitude, a very negative and lazy attitude, [**Matthew 15:24-30**] and received a different reward that fitted his negative response to the work given him by His Master.

All this man had to do was to add one talent to have received the same reward as the other two, it was **not** a matter of intelligence but of attitude.

Paul reminded his friend Timothy to be diligent in the work he had been given to do in the Church, [2 Timothy 4:2].

The apostle Peter gives us all similar advice as Christians, [1 Peter 8:1, 5-15].

Jesus Christ prompts us to work diligently, [John 4:34-38; John 5:17].

As we seek to become diligent, there are many practical matters relating to our daily life that have to come under review.

Old habits will have to be shed and new habits formed through the process of discipline.

A person may have a real desire to be a diligent servant of Jesus Christ, but lacks the disposition of a true servant.

The trouble with many would-be Christian workers is not ignorance nor ability, it is the person themselves, a lack of diligence in their character, the simple lacking of the will to work!

The man portrayed in **Matthew 25:26** was “wicked” as well as “slothful,” his “wickedness” was manifest in that he dared to call his Master “a hard man.”

Slothful people never seek work, and if work comes their way they seek to evade it.

Alas! Many who profess to be Christians do **not** trouble to go out to search for opportunities to serve alongside Jesus Christ in the work He is doing on earth today. If someone comes to them unsought they look on it as an interruption instead of an opportunity and only hope the person will soon depart and cease to bother them.

1 Peter 3:15-16 [New King James] *“But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed.”*

This is how every true Christian should respond to express their diligence.

A person who regards everything as a burden cannot be a faithful servant of Jesus Christ, they cannot even be a faithful servant of other human beings.

Have you never come across any “go-slow” work people? They take on a piece of work but they dawdle over it and drag it on and on as long as they can preserve any semblance of industry.

Imprisonment might have restricted Paul’s outward movements, but it could not limit the effectiveness of his ministry.

Philippians 3:1 [Amplified Bible] *“... to keep writing to you [over and over] of the same things is not irksome to me, and it is a precaution for your safety.”*

Our character needs to be disciplined until we cease to find work for our Saviour irksome and can delight in spending time, strength and material resources without stint in order to serve Jesus Christ by serving other human beings.

It is tragically possible for us to pass the “human harvest fields” without so much as seeing the ripened grain, [John 4:35]. It is possible for opportunities to be right at hand without our even being aware of it.

Such professing Christians are “unprofitable servants” in God’s eyes.

Diligence is essential if we are to serve our Lord and Saviour, but diligence is primarily an inward matter and is not measured by outward busyness.

Merely to urge ourselves to work a bit harder will be of no lasting value if we are lazy by nature, for after a bout of hard work we are sure to revert to type.

It is a constitutional change that we need.

Jesus Christ showed this diligence as the Son of Man on earth, He came not just to make contact with human beings but to “*save that which was lost*,” [Matthew 18:11] a task that involved every moment of His adult life, [Luke 2:49] and continues to do this same work, [John 5:17; John 17:4].

2 Peter 1:2-8 [New King James] “*Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

Grace of God’s forgiveness through the life and death of Jesus Christ, plus the gift of the Holy Spirit who brings to us the true reason for our existence, [John 16:13] and God’s great promises will only end in the development of Godly character if we give all diligence to this spiritual side of our lives.

This adding to what has been added characterises every diligent person.

We must cultivate a disposition that never ceases to acquire fresh territory in the spiritual realm, for in this way we shall become servants who are profitable to our Saviour and Master.

Some who call themselves Christians seem almost devoid of any sense of responsibility towards reaching all the world with the gospel message, [Matthew 24:11-14] yet this was the commission that Jesus Christ left with His disciples, [Matthew 28:18-20].

For us as Christians we have to be diligent to acquire one Christian virtue to supplement it straight away by seeking another as we were commanded by the apostle Peter under the direct influence of Jesus Christ his Master, [2 Peter 1:1].

2 Peter 1:9-11 [New King James] “*For he who lacks these things is shortsighted, even to blindness, and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.*”

Note that diligence rules out idleness and ensures our abundant entry into God’s Kingdom.

2 Peter 1:12-15 [New King James] “*For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth. Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you, knowing that shortly I must put off my tent, just as our Lord Jesus Christ showed me. Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease.*”

Peter is expressing his own diligence in the preparation for their continual encouragement and support after his death.

Oh that all Christians might awaken to the weightiness of our personal responsibility, the urgency of the human need around us, and the fleeting nature of time!

Let us, like the dying Peter, give ourselves with all the power that the Holy Spirit can provide in and through us to a world that is dying physically and spiritually. We dare not let natural sloth trick us into procrastination.

What is the use of saying we are eager to serve our Master Jesus Christ if we do not rouse ourselves from our lethargy? What will all our knowledge of the truth avail us if it does not save us from our innate indolence?

Let us return to **Matthew 25** to consider the outcome of what we have just been studying, [verse 30]. **Only the diligent servant is of use to Jesus Christ. Let us take this warning solemnly and act on it today and every day from now onwards.**