

**DILIGENCE
IS
REQUIRED**

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Introduction

Under any undertaking “diligence” will be appreciated. If you are diligent on the job your employer is sure to take notice of your efforts. If you are diligent in keeping your lawn manicured your neighbors and everyone who passes by will notice. If you are a married person “diligence” in keeping your marriage vows will be noticed and appreciated by your mate. Regardless of what we are doing or where it is being done “diligence” will be noticed and rewarded.

Exactly what does the word “diligence” mean? I suppose it might mean one thing to one person and something quite different to someone else. One way to settle this is to go to someone whose word can be trusted by everyone; so I will refer to the words of Webster’s dictionary: “**DILIGENCE**, n. [L., to love earnestly; to choose.]

1. 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.

Diligence is the philosophers stone that turns every thing to gold.”

Brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure. 2 Peter 1.

2. Care; heed; heedfulness.

Keep thy heart with all diligence. Proverbs 4.”

By going to an expert in defining words we find that “diligence” means that we give effort to the task at hand. I find it interesting that Mr. Webster says that we don’t delay nor are we slothful. We go about our task with determination to do the best job that we are capable of doing.

Also of interest to me is the fact that Mr. Webster also gives scriptural references and he does so rightfully as God does require “diligence” of each of His children. We cannot expect to inherit the kingdom of heaven if we only make a half-hearted attempt to do God’s will. We must diligently search the scriptures to learn what God requires of us and once we have learned God’s will we must give complete “diligence” to perform what God requires of us.

Do you want to go to heaven? I am sure that if you are interested enough to read this booklet that it is your desire to go to heaven. Therefore, I feel it necessary to aid you in this desire by informing you that “DILIGENCE IS REQUIRED!

Our Perfect Example of “Diligence”

If you were to search for someone who was diligent where would you look? I would begin my search in the word of God; there is one person who stands out above all others in “diligence” and that one person would be God’s own Son, Jesus Christ. We can find Jesus getting up “great while before day” to pray to his father in heaven: (Mark 1:35) *“And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed.”* Jesus did not do this to be seen by men because he went to “a solitary place”. When can you pray to God most diligently? Is it not when you are alone? It is not when there is darkness all around you and you feel as though you are all alone in the presence of God? In his “diligence” Jesus wanted assurance that he was alone with God and that there would be no distractions. Brethren, this is “diligence”.

Jesus' "diligence" began at a very early age; in fact he was only twelve years old when he felt the need to be diligent; (Luke 2:42) *"And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast."* Even at this very young age Jesus knew why God had sent him to this earth and he wanted to be doing his Father's work. Although it was approximately eighteen years before he began his public ministry "diligence" made it proper to do God's work at this early age. Unlike many young people of today Christ's diligence didn't end when he grew older. The business that Christ came to do was to preach the Gospel, and which he afterwards performed with great clearness and fulness, with much power, majesty, and authority, with great constancy and diligence. The main reason that Jesus came to this earth was to provide salvation for sinners and he was diligent to accomplish that; even being diligent in giving his life for the transgressions of others.

Before leaving this point we must notice Jesus' remarks to his earthly parents: (Luke 2:49) *"And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"* Even though this was a time of growth and development for Jesus he was still very alert to the fact that he needed to be about his Father's "business". It seems as though he found it strange that Mary and Joseph did not understand this "diligence" that was displayed by his actions.

God Requires "Diligence"

There are several areas in which God requires "diligence"; first God requires "diligence" when we are seeking Him: (1 Chronicles 22:19) *"Now set your heart and your soul to seek the LORD your God; arise therefore, and build ye the sanctuary of the LORD God, to bring the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and the holy vessels of God, into the house that is to be built to the name of the LORD."* We must seek God with all of our "heart" and "soul"; seek Him for your highest glory and end. No one else can offer

you what Jehovah God offers; therefore; it is sensible to seek Him with all the “diligence” we can muster up. We need to involve our hearts in seeking God as this includes “diligence”.

The Hebrews writer tells us with words that can be understood by everyone that we are to “diligently seek” God: (Hebrews 11:6) *“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.”* Do you expect to be rewarded by God? Only those who “diligently seek” Him will be rewarded. The first part of this passage tells us that we must believe that God exists but it is just as important that we diligently seek Him. Desiring a reward should never be our motive for seeking God; but in all honesty it would be impossible to diligently seek Him if we did not have this belief.

Because of sin we have separated ourselves from God: (Isaiah 59:1-2) *“Behold, the LORD’S hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: (2) But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear.”* When we come to this realization that is when we are motivated to “diligently seek” God. There is nothing worse than being separated from God, but if we carefully read verse one we see that God’s “hand is not shortened”; even though we have sinned and separated ourselves from God [God does not leave us, we forsake Him] He is still able to save us. The sinner must be made aware that he/she is separated from God; then they will “diligently seek” Him. Even though God has hidden His face from us He may be found once again through Jesus Christ. The glorious thing about our Creator is that He has provided means and ways whereby even sinners can “diligently seek’ Him. I would suggest that if you find yourself separated from God that you MUST “DILIGENTLY SEEK” HIM.

Of course there is more than one way that mankind diligently seeks God but probably the method that is most often used by the majority of all people is through prayer. Here we also know that belief is necessary; if

you do not believe that God hears and answers prayer would you ever go to Him in prayer? I have serious doubts that anyone would be found in diligent prayer if you had no hopes of God hearing and answering your prayers! Let us imagine you see a bright shining car sitting on a dealers lot and you desperately want it would you even think of going in and ask the dealer to just give you the car of your dreams? Of course you wouldn't because you know that the dealer is not in business for his health. We only ask for that which we know might be a possibility to receive. We go to God in prayer because we believe that He is able to grant our request. When we diligently seek God in prayer, we have faith it is pleasing to God.

Of course the eleventh chapter of the Hebrews epistle is recognized as the great "faith" chapter there you will find a tremendous lesson as to how we are to seek God. I cannot over emphasize the need to seek God "DILIGENTLY"! God protects and saves those who are willing to "diligently seek' Him. God has not asked us to do anything we are not capable of doing; therefore it is solely up to you whether or not you will find God because as I said earlier God has provided the means and ways whereby we may approach Him.

Obedience Is Required

When it comes to "obedience" once again we find the word "diligently": (Deuteronomy 6:17) "*Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee.*" Moses makes this commandment personal with the word "you". Even though these words that Moses spoke were to a different dispensation [i.e. to Jews and not to Christians] we as Christians should take this commandment just as personal as they were required to. When the preacher speaks God's words of commandments do you take them personally are do you think he is speaking to someone else? We must understand that we cannot be saved without "diligence"!

If we are to be “diligent” in “obedience” we will most certainly “hearken” to him: (Isaiah 55:2) *“Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness.”* Isaiah is speaking on behalf of God and he tells them that God wants us to “hearken diligently” to the commandments; I suggest that God does not want us to just “hearken diligently” to the Ten Commandments rather God expects to “hearken” to all of His commandments. Everything that God has commanded is what we are to “hearken” unto; we cannot pick and choose what we will obey we must “hearken diligently” to all of God’s commandments. The word “hearken” means to listen to, give attendance to, to observe or obey. All too often we hear but don’t obey; friends this is not “hearkening diligently”. How do you suppose God feels about such actions? Here is exactly how God feels about those who do not “hearken” to Him: (Leviticus 26:21) *“And if ye walk contrary unto me, and will not hearken unto me; I will bring seven times more plagues upon you according to your sins.”* I promise that you do not want to be found “contrary” to God on the Day of Judgment. Again I say “It is your choice to make”. If we do not hearken to God’s laws, commands and ordinances we will most certainly be found “contrary” to God. But we do not have to remain in that condition; there is always time to repent before we die: (Acts 3:19) *“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;”* The apostle’s advice here is to “repent” and be “converted” and in doing so we will become committed to Jesus and to the doctrine of the gospel. Even those who are “far from righteousness” can be changed by hearkening to the Word of God: (Isaiah 46:12) *“Hearken unto me, ye stout-hearted, that are far from righteousness:”* The people who are addressed here had always been “stouthearted” stiff-necked and rebellious; but even they could be changed by obedience to the cry to “hearken”. If you are a Christian who has gone astray we need to remember where we came from: (Isaiah 51:1) *“Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye*

that seek the LORD: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged.”

Friends, we must be careful to “hearken” only to those who are proclaiming the truth: (Jeremiah 23:16) *“Thus saith the LORD of hosts, Hearken not unto the words of the prophets that prophesy unto you: they make you vain: they speak a vision of their own heart, and not out of the mouth of the LORD.”* There are many false teachers in the world today and if we “hearken” unto their false doctrines they will make us “vain”.

Striving After Perfection Is Required

(Philippians 3:13-14) *“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, ¹⁴I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”* As Paul begins to wind down this epistle he writes to his brethren in a spiritual relationship to make Jesus their joy while he is in bonds and to strive “for the prize of the high calling of God”. Following Paul’s example of “forgetting the things that were behind him” no doubt would be of great value to everyone while “striving for perfection”. Being able to forget our past life and the sins we once committed just might be the first thing that we must do if indeed we desire to “strive for perfection”. By doing this we would no longer remember the worldly pleasures that once gave us joy. By forgetting the past life we once lived we can now focus on the things of God and concentrate on spiritual things. If God has forgotten our past life and sins why shouldn’t we? It seems as though we are prone to want to go back to things as they once were; even the children of Israel were guilty of this even after they had been delivered out of bondage: (Exodus 16:3) *“And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the LORD in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wil-*

derness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger.” Whenever life gets a little hard we often forget God when we should be approaching Him for divine help. Paul actually considered the things that were “of gain to him in his past life as “dung”: (Philippians 3:7) *“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.”* Brethren this is also required of us if indeed we are to diligently “strive after perfection”.

In a parable Jesus spoke of those who did not bring anything to “perfection”: (Luke 8:14) *“And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.”* This parable makes it very clear that if we ignore the word we are not “striving for perfection”. I pose a question that may be troubling some; “Is it possible for anyone to reach perfection”? In the very same parable Jesus speaks of those who “bring forth fruit”: (Luke 8:15) *“But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.”* Those who have “an honest heart” and have heard the word and keep it” are those who “bring forth fruit”. These are the complete opposite of those of verse fourteen that bring nothing to perfection. Does verse fifteenth not suggest that those who obey the word of God and are obedient are bringing fruit to perfection? If perfection is not possible then the apostle Paul did not know what he was “wishing” for: (2 Corinthians 13:9) *“For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection.”* In the context of both epistles to the Corinthians it is clear to see that there was division in the church at Corinth. The word that has been translated “perfection” is (katartisis) and it

) occurs often; Matthew 4:21; 21:16; Mark 1:19; Luke 6:40; Romans 9:22; 1Corinthians 1:10; 2Corinthians 13:11; Galatians 6:1; 1Thessalonians 3:10. The idea of the word “perfection” as used here means to restore, put in order or to repair the things that were wrong; therefore, if they corrected the division that existed they would have acquired “perfection”.

The Hebrews writer wrote “let us go on to perfection”: (Hebrews 6:1) *“Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,”* In this verse he is admonishing them to a higher state of knowledge and holiness. Evidently the word “perfection” as used here refers to an advanced state of knowledge and piety. We cannot underestimate the benefits of studying: (2 Timothy 2:15) *“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* I warn that you can study day and night; but if you don’t apply what you have learned it will do you no good. It is when we apply our knowledge by obeying that we are “striving for perfection”. It should be pointed out that just because we are “striving for perfection” does not mean that we have fully obtained “perfection”; even though it may not be possible to attain “perfection” is no excuse not to strive for “perfection”!

I feel it also necessary to warn that “perfection” can never be reached through the Law of Moses: (Hebrews 7:11) *“If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?”* The Jews often thought of the system as perfect; if that had been true there would have been need for another system to be established. Don’t you find it strange that even from their scriptures of old that it was evident that another priest was to arise? The writer of this epistle correctly points out the imperfections of this system; if it was imperfect how can anyone expect to reach “perfection” through the Law of Moses? Without the shed blood of Jesus Christ “perfection” is impossible!

Cultivating Christian Graces Are Required

(2 Peter 1:5-11) *“And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; (6) And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; (7) And to godli-*

ness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity.(8) For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.(9) But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.(10) Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall: (11) For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.” I hope that you noticed that the word “diligence” once again appears is the above reference; inferring that the words that follows should not be take lightly. We should connect this verse to (2 Peter 1:3) “According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue:” Since God has “given us all things that pertain to life and godliness” it becomes necessary that we give “all diligence” to add these Christian graces to our lives. We should give all “diligence” to take advantage of these gifts of God.

The first thing that is required of us is to have “faith” once we have faith we are to add these other Christian graces to our everyday way of living our lives. We should not pay any attention to the order of these Christian graces as they are all to be added. The relation that one of these may have to the other is not the aim of this passage; rather as a new person in Jesus Christ this passage is telling us what must be added to the new Christian’s life. We must “diligently” strive to add these virtues to our lives. We must not ever be content to just add one of these Christian virtues to our live as all must be added. The essential idea in the passage before us seems to be, that in our religion we are not to be satisfied with one virtue, or one class of virtues.

If you don’t think that this is important may I remind you that Peter not only wrote that we should be diligent in adding these virtues; his exact words are “giving ALL DILIGENCE”! If Peter was so inspired to write this surely the Holy Spirit felt it necessary that these Christian virtues should be added and so should we.

Paul also wrote about virtues:(Philippians 4:8) *“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things”*. Paul did not suppose that he had given a full catalogue of the virtues which he would have cultivated. He, therefore, adds that if there was anything else that had the nature of true virtue in it, they should be careful to cultivate that also. The Christian should be a pattern and an example of every virtue. One of the wonderful things about the inspired writers of the Bible is that they all agree in what they wrote. The virtues that Paul names could also be called Christian virtues and we should be diligent to add these also.

Diligence Is Required In Keeping Our Hearts

(Proverbs 4:23) *“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life.”* The wells and fountains were watched over very carefully. The heart may be considered as a fountain because out of the heart flow the issues of life. I will quote from Gill; according to him we should keep: “The mind from vanity, the understanding from error, the will from perverseness, the conscience clear of guilt, the affections from being inordinate and set on evil objects, the thoughts from being employed on bad subjects; and the whole from falling into the hands of the enemy, or being the possession of Satan: great diligence had need be used in keeping it, since it is naturally so deceitful and treacherous; a strict eye is to be kept upon it; all the avenues to it to be watched, that nothing hurtful enters, or evil comes out; it is to be kept by all manner of means that can be thought of, by prayer, hearing, reading, meditation; and, above all, by appealing to Christ for his grace and Spirit to sanctify, preserve, and keep it. Or, "above all keeping, keep thine heart" (b); though other things are to be kept, and care taken of them, as kingdoms and cities, and

towns and families, and treasures and riches; yet the heart above all must be kept.

Even those who had obeyed the gospel and became Christians can have a change of heart: (Acts 8:21) *“Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God.”* This statement was made to one who is known as “Simon the sorcerer”: (Acts 8:9) *“But there was a certain man, called Simon, which beforetime in the same city used sorcery, and bewitched the people of Samaria, giving out that himself was some great one:”* Simon was among those who believed the gospel and was baptized: (Acts 8:13) *“Then Simon himself believed also: and when he was baptized, he continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the miracles and signs which were done.”* But Simon failed to “diligently keep his heart” resulting in his not standing true to his commitment which brought about the statement that his “heart was not right in the sight of God”. Simon had done what was right when he was baptized and he evidently was sincere because he was present when Peter and John arrived and he beheld them laying their hands and imparting the Holy Ghost to those whom they laid their hands: (Acts 8:18) *“And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles’ hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money,”* It was at this point that Simon lost control of his heart. If we are not “diligent in keeping our hearts” the same thing can happen to us that happened to Simon.

No one is above losing control of their hearts: (Genesis 6:5) *“And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.”* We all know the tragic conclusion of these many people; they were destroyed by the great flood. They failed to be “diligent in keeping their hearts.”

We Must Be Diligent In Our Labours Of Love

(Hebrews 6:10-12) *“For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have min-*

istered to the saints, and do minister. (11) And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: (12) That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” In this chapter the writer encourages them not to be satisfied with the knowledge they had learned but to put to practice the things they had learned and thusly prevent apostasy. In the above scripture reference he is directly encouraging “labour of love” and that they put forth “diligence” in ministering to the saints. A definition of “ministering” would be of benefit to everyone as most consider the work of ministering assigned to the local preacher. While it is true that the preacher and elders should “minister” it is also the duty of every Christian; the word “ministering” properly means: **“MIN’ISTERING**, ppr. Attending and serving as a subordinate agent; serving under superior authority.

Affording aid or supplies; administering things needful.” [Webster]. As a Christian if you deny your need to “minister” you need to carefully study our scriptural reference. When you read verse eleven does it not say “every one of you”? Let me ask this: “Was this epistle not written to the Hebrews who were believers”? Yes indeed it was written to the Hebrews who had become Christians, therefore everyone who is a Christian should apply this to themselves and not to someone else.

Now let’s consider the phrase ‘labour of love’. There are some translations that omit the word “labour”. Such implies that our love is to be directed to God; which is certainly true. But when we consider all that God had given to us and done for us should we not want to be workers for Him? I realize everything that God has done for me and I certainly want to do that which pleases Him. There is no way that I can imagine that God would not want me to help those who are in need; both physically and spiritually. Attention should be given to verse twelve to ascertain who it is that will “inherit the promises”. Those who are not ‘slothful but are “diligent” to perform “labours of love” are those who shall “inherit the promises”. Verse ten tells us that “God is not unrighteous to forget our “labour of love”. Don’t you want God to remember your good deeds? If you have not done any good deeds what will God remember about you? Verse ten also

informs us to whom it is that we are to perform our “labours of love”; it is to the “saints”. This certainly does not exclude every one else as we learn from Galatians 6:10 *“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”* When we do “labours of love” we do so when there is no hope of recompense. If you are truly benevolent you will have no intentions of being repaid. This is the “labour of love” that will be remembered by God. Brethren let us not forget the poor: (Galatians 2:10) *“Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.”*

Paul also wrote of their “labour of love”: (1 Thessalonians 1:3) *“Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;”* Paul remembered their “work of faith” and their “labour of love”. This would be labour that was produced by love and it would indicate that they were motivated by love. It speaks well of their kindness to the poor, the oppressed and the afflicted and that in turn showed their love for the souls of people. Love to the saints will exert itself by serving them in temporal and spiritual matters. This may be simply done by praying for and with them; serving others does not always involve giving them money or the things needful to survival. There may be times when all they need is a shoulder to cry on. What I am trying to say is that we should always be there for those who are in need whenever and for whatever they may need.

Along this same line of thinking we should “diligently follow after every good work”: (1 Timothy 5:10) *“Well reported of for good works; if she have brought up children, if she have lodged strangers, if she have washed the saints’ feet, if she have relieved the afflicted, if she have diligently followed every good work.”* Granted the word “diligent” does not appear in this verse could we even imagine that anyone would be “well reported of” if they were not “diligent” in performing “good work”? When Paul wrote that they were “well reported of” he is implying that they were well reported of by those in the church and those who were outside of the church. If we eliminate those outside of the church from any “good works”

how can we ever expect to convert them to Christianity? Although this was written especially to women who brought up children it should be applied to all mankind in all applications of life; not just to raising children. This is in addition to avoiding sin. The subject here is that of a suitable outward upright way of life. Paul is not writing about their relationship to God; he is writing about their public testimony. Although we are to love and serve God with all our hearts and souls we must never neglect to serve and aid one another.

Diligence Is Required In Guarding Against Defilement

(Hebrews 12:15) *“Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;”* This epistle now exhorts upon the doctrinal instructions it contains by making reference to the dangers the Hebrew Christians were facing. “Looking diligently” implies that close attention be given. Great concern should be given not only to live a moral life but we must also be on the alert for false teachings. We must be “diligent” because the temptations of the world are many and there are many who fall and fail to retain “the grace of God”. We are under constant pressure of apostasy; therefore the need to be “diligent”; in other words we must be on constant guard. We are all subjected to backsliding so we must be constantly be on the look out.

The people of old were warned not to defile themselves: (Leviticus 11:44) *“For I am the LORD your God: ye shall therefore sanctify yourselves, and ye shall be holy; for I am holy: neither shall ye defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.”* They were to be “holy” in a moral sense; they were to avoid mixing with the Gentiles; we as Christians are to avoid mixing with the worldly. By avoid mixing with the Gentiles they were preserving themselves from idols. We as Christians by avoiding to mix with the worldly we preserve our-

selves against apostasy. There is little wonder that the Hebrews writer used the word “diligent”.

We can defile ourselves with idols: (Ezekiel 20:7) *“Then said I unto them, Cast ye away every man the abominations of his eyes, and defile not yourselves with the idols of Egypt: I am the LORD your God.”* We do not have to worship a graven or carved image to worship an idol; many things can become idols to us. Money has become an idol to many today; sad to say this is true of many of our brethren because they have not used “diligence” in guarding against “defilement” of idols of one kind or another.

Jesus said that the words that we speak “defile the man” (Matthew 15:18) *“But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.”* Jesus does not mean physical things that can come out of the mouth [such as spittle or vomit] but he is referring to words. The words that we speak usually come from the heart. We usually speak the words that we mean; sometimes we are misunderstood then it would be proper to say “That is not what I meant”. But generally we say exactly what we mean and we must be “diligent” to guard against those words because they can very well defile us.

Because Christians are the temple of God they must be “diligent” not to defile that temple: (1 Corinthians 3:17) *“If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.”* Perhaps some don’t realize that they are defiling the temple of God when they put alcohol or drugs in their mouths; but they are defiling the temple of God. When very young one of my grandsons told everybody he saw smoking that they should not be smoking; he didn’t care whether or not he knew that person. I wonder if maybe we can take a lesson from the young in warning those who are “defiling the temple of God” that God “shall destroy him”.

Diligence Is Required In Being Found Spotless

(2 Peter 3:14) *“Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and*

blameless.” What things were they looking for? Has it ever seemed to you as though mothers required spotlessness? I could not begin to tell you how many times my Mother stood behind me and said; “Wash behind your ears”. I could not see the need to wash there because I couldn’t see behind my ears; but she could. Well we should realize that God requires spotlessness in our lives; in our service to Him. Not only was Peter aware of this he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write this exhortation so that everyone who will ever read his epistle will be aware that God requires everyone to be “spotless”.

This is an exhortation that should not be taken lightly because once again we find the phrase to “be diligent”. Those who are found in Christ are those who have a right to the new heaven and the new earth not because of their own righteousness but through the righteousness of Christ. If we are truly clothed in the righteousness of Christ we will most certainly be “without spot and blameless”.

No man or woman is of themselves “spotless and without blame”. Even the very best of Christians will from time to time slip and sin. Am I inferring that it is impossible to be found “spotless and without blame”? Certainly not; Christians are washed in his blood: (Acts 22:16) *“And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.”* Ananias told Saul to be baptized to wash away his sins because it is through baptism that we come in contact with the blood of Christ and as Ananias said our “sins are washed away”. When our “sins are washed away” is when we are clothed in Christ’s righteousness. If our sins have been “washed away” and we are cleansed by his righteousness when he comes again or we die that Jesus will find us “spotless and without blame”.

Under the Old Covenant God would not accept a lamb with a spot on it as an acceptable sacrifice: (Numbers 28:9) *“And on the sabbath day two lambs of the first year without spot, and two tenth deals of flour for a meat offering, mingled with oil, and the drink offering thereof.”* When Jesus offered himself as a sacrifice for our sins he was a sacrifice without spot:

(1 Peter 1:19) *“But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:”* Jesus was a spotless sacrifice because he lived a sinless life: (1 Peter 2:22) *“Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:”* Because of this perfect sacrifice our sins are “washed away” [Acts 22:16] and we can be found “spotless and without blame”: (Hebrews 9:14) *“How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?”* Brethren without the shedding of Christ’s blood not a single one of us could be found “spotless and without blame”.

Just because Jesus has provided the perfect sacrifice does not mean that there is nothing left for us to do; you see we are to keep the commandments “without spot: (1 Timothy 6:14) *“That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:”* What commandment do you mean Paul? It could mean the commandment to fight the good fight of faith that he had just given or it might mean all of the commandments that he wrote in this epistle. To be on the safe side we need to consider that all the commandments given to the church are to be kept “without spot”. Let us look to Paul as an example. Paul preached the gospel with sincerity, and without any adulteration, he preach the pure Gospel of Christ; and that he would so behave in his life and conversation, that his ministry might not be justly blamed by men, or he be rebuked by the church here, or by Christ hereafter: and he would have us to do the same.

Jesus gave himself as a perfect sacrifice so that he might present the church to himself as “a glorious church” without spot or wrinkle”: (Ephesians 5:27) *“That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”* Since the church has been established in such a manner it is up to you and I to keep her that way. The only way this may be accomplished is for each of us to conduct a self-examination; the writer of the seventy seventh Psalms examined himself: (Psalms 77:6) *“I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and*

my spirit made diligent search.” When was the last time you made a “diligent search” of your actions? Don’t you think this is something you should do daily? You just might find that you have sinned and it would be tragic if you were to die with sins you have never repented of. Beside this if you don’t keep yourself “without spot” the church could never be kept pure if you are a part of the church and you have sins that have never been forgiven. We are even commanded to “examine” ourselves: (2 Corinthians 13:5) *“Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?”*

Diligence Is Required In Teaching Our Children

(Deuteronomy 11:18-19) *“Therefore shall ye lay up these my words in your heart and in your soul, and bind them for a sign upon your hand, that they may be as frontlets between your eyes. (19) And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.”* Not only should a Christian have the words of God in their hearts they are to teach their children that which they possess in their hearts. Moses sets for us three rules here: [first] let our hearts be filled with the word of God: Lay up these words in your heart and in your soul. The heart must be the treasury or store-house in which the word of God is stored. [second] Let our eyes be fixed upon the word of God. [third] Let our tongues be employed about the word of God. Let it be the subject of our familiar discourse, wherever we are; especially with our children. As fathers we have obligation to teach our children: (Ephesians 6:4) *“And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.”* Our children are to be instructed in divine things which may be found in the word of God. We do this to prevent them from falling in with the wrong crowd which can lead to them losing their souls. We should go to the worship services with them; all too often we find children being

dropped off at the church building. Too often we find fathers who are instructed by Paul to “bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord” leaving this responsibility solely up to the mothers. Fathers, you cannot and must not neglect your God given duty to bring up your children with love and respect to God and His word. Fathers must take care not to unjustly provoke their children to and anger as this can lead to discouragement; (Colossians 3:21) *“Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.”* Discouraging a child is the last thing that any father would want to do.

A qualification to become a deacon requires the potential deacon to rule their children well: (1 Timothy 3:12) *“Let the deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.”* This same qualification is required of an elder. Regardless of whether you have any desire to become a deacon or an elder would you not agree that this would be a good goal for any father?

We would do well to look to the example of Abraham: (Genesis 18:19) *“For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.”* We have God’s own testimony of what He knew about Abraham; what does God know about you?

Children also have a God given obligation: (Ephesians 6:1) *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right.”* Obedience to parents is pleasing to the Lord: (Colossians 3:20) *“Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.”*

One of the things that I really love about the apostle John is that he treated and thought of all his brethren as little children: (1 John 2:1) *“My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous:”* John’s first concern was that that they “sin not” but he also wanted them to know if they did sin they had “an advocate”. John may have addressed them as his “little children” because of his advanced age or he might have

been the one who taught them the gospel and thusly he considered himself as a spiritual father as Paul thought of Timothy. Regardless of what his motive for such thinking might have been we certainly see his concern for all his brothers and sisters. Should we not have the same concern for all our brothers and sisters? We realize what motivated John when we read verse twenty eight: (1 John 2:28) *“And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming.”* He was concerned about how Jesus would find them when he shall appear from heaven; we must have this same concern for all mankind; especially our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Children don't always realize that their parents tell them things to do or not to do for their own good; but be assured Christian parents love and are concerned about the welfare of their children. Children, if your parents insist on you going to church and study your Bible they do so for your own good: (2 Timothy 2:15) *“Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.”* Christian parents are familiar with this verse and they know that it is through studying God's word that one is found “approved. They are motivated with the desire that you may be “approved” by God. Parents often tell you to choose your friends carefully; children if you choose those who are evil and sinful there are a good chance you will not comply with the words of John: (3 John 11) *“Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God.”* Choose your friends carefully lest you be tempted to join in the sinful acts of others.

May I suggest that parents not only encourage their children to study their Bibles but that they join them in their study? A good place to start is to pray with the family. Do you pray before each meal? Do you join your children in their bed time prayers? It has been said; “A family that prays together stays together”. Try it, it will work.

Diligence Is Required In Teaching Religion

Look at Paul's advice to Timothy: (2 Timothy 4:2) *"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine."* Please do not allow the word "preach" to confuse you; you do not have to stand behind a pulpit to be a preacher. Anyone who publicly discourses on religious matters is preaching. You can preach on the first day of the week behind a pulpit, you can preach a public Bible class and you can preach privately at home or anywhere you may happen to be. As I see it there is very little difference between a teacher and a preacher. Many may read 2 Timothy chapter four and verse two and conclude that it does not apply to them as they are not preachers; but this is far from being correct as it is the obligation of every to tell others about the gospel of Jesus Christ and when they do so they are preaching.

Let us now give our attention to the instructions that Paul wrote to Timothy. In verse one Paul warns Timothy to take this charge seriously because it was made "before God and the Lord Jesus Christ": (2 Timothy 4:1) *"I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;"* Paul further stresses the importance of this charge by reminding that Jesus ""shall judge the quick and the dead". No doubt this got Timothy's complete attention! If Timothy had not realized it before this statement would make him fully aware of his accountability for his ministry.

As far as I can tell Timothy was a public preacher or an evangelist; but these instructions must be applied to every Christian. The one thing that can clearly be understood by all is that Paul told Timothy to PREACH. When was Timothy to do his preaching? Paul wrote "in season out of season". As a public evangelist Timothy was to be constantly at the task of preaching. This might be while publicly speaking or in preparation for that speaking. I understand the phrase "in season out of season" to mean when it was convenient or not convenient. There is little doubt that Timothy was confronted with persecution and he was not to hesitate to preach even at these times. We do not face the same persecutions today that

Timothy faced then so what is our excuse for being reluctant to be ready to preach at every opportunity? You say I am not prepared to preach; whose fault is that. "In season" would certainly pertain to the worship service but definitely not confined to the worship service. I am fully aware that those who are not paid evangelists do not have as much time to prepare to preach but I wonder if these don't find extra time to do the things they want to do. I can remember when I worked full time on a job and I still found time to prepare to preach. At one time during my working years on a job I spent at least forty hours a week on the job; preached two sermons every Sunday and recorded five radio fifteen radio sermons every week; friends we can find time to do what is required of us. Be honest don't you find enough spare time to do what you want to do?

Paul even charged Timothy as to how he was to preach. First we find that Timothy was to "reprove". In other words Timothy was to give arguments that would convince men of their lack of religion and their need for it. Timothy could do this by using examples from the scriptures which tell of mankind's sin and their need to repent and be conformed from their sinful ways. There may be times when such reproofs may have to be given with sharpness; this is not done to hurt their feelings nor is it done to make them mad; to say it bluntly we may speak with sharpness to bring people to their senses. Jesus was not always polite with the Pharisees.

Next Paul told Timothy to "rebuke". The word "rebuke" implies that we speak forth our conviction that there is something wrong with the one whom we "rebuke". This may be done privately or publicly, often times we will have better results if we "rebuke" privately; as done in this manner may avoid embarrassment. The whole idea of "rebuke" is to convince.

Timothy is also told to "exhort". The meaning of the word "exhort" is to encourage, to cheer and to advise. The primary sense seems to be to excite or to give strength, spirit or courage. Needless to say we have many in the Lord's body today who need to be encouraged to be more faithful in attendance and to be better servants of Jesus Christ. Some preachers spend a lot of time beating people over the head and too little time encour-

aging. I for one believe that we need to show love through encouraging words. Did Paul not charge Timothy to preach with “all long suffering”? Timothy when you are preaching to do so with patience. It must be realized that you are preaching to people at all levels of spirituality; some are “babes” while others are “full grown”. Some people have hearts of stones while others have their feelings easily hurt; love and patience must be used while at the same time we must preach the truth. Just as the husbandmen are patient for the fruit of the earth so must the preacher be patient for the fruits of his preaching.

Finally Timothy is told what it is that he should use in his preaching; yes I am referring to the last word of this verse which is “doctrine”. No doubt Paul is making reference to the doctrine that can be found in the scriptures. In years gone by church of Christ preachers were known for their use of book, chapter and verse. This is not so true today. Looking back in the history of the church we find when book, chapter and verse was the norm is when the church was growing at its fastest. Since this practice has been dropped by many preachers today we have stopped growing; instead we are declining in number and we are wondering why. Have we forgotten the profitableness of the scriptures? (2 Timothy 3:16) *“All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:”* It is through God’s grace that we have the scriptures and we should diligently make use of all that has been given to us. We should never be found guilty of preaching our fancies or convictions we should always preach that which God has provided. In a nut shell our preaching should be a warning of sin; calling upon them to believe, to repent of their sins and to obey all commands. It is through preaching the truth that we can reclaim some from evil and win the alien sinner to Christ.

Our Service To Others Should Be Performed Diligently

What I'm attempting to say is that we should take our service to God seriously. (Galatians 6:9) *"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."* This may be understood of doing good in general. It is God's will that we do these good deeds to others; therefore we are talking about service to God. No one would deny that doing good to others is agreeable to God. All the good deeds that we do are to be done to bring glory to God. The exhortation of the inspired writer is that we "not be weary in well doing" so I conclude that we are to be diligent in doing "well". It is true that doing good deeds can become tiresome because there is so much to be done and so few to do the work, but we must not use this as an excuse; we must forge ahead in helping those less fortunate as we are.

Under the former dispensation it was the priest who performed service to God: (Hebrews 9:6) *"Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God."* But that dispensation has ended and we are now under a new dispensation. Under the new dispensation service to God is not restricted to the priests; it is now the duty of every Christian. What some may have forgotten is that Jesus Christ is fully aware of what we are doing: (Revelation 2:19) *"I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience, and thy works; and the last to be more than the first."*

Even those who were slaves were to perform service to their believing masters; (1 Timothy 6:2) *"And they that have believing masters, let them not despise them, because they are brethren; but rather do them service, because they are faithful and beloved, partakers of the benefit. These things teach and exhort."*

In his first epistle to the Corinthians Paul wrote about a very good motivation: (1 Corinthians 15:58) *"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye*

stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.” We should “always abound in the work of the Lord and as I have already stated doing good unto others is a work for God. Included in this statement is the idea of promoting the glory of God and advancing the kingdom. The phrase means not only to be engaged in this, but to be engaged diligently, laboriously; excelling in this. “The “work of the Lord” here means that which the Lord requires; all the appropriate duties of Christians. Paul exhorts them to practice every Christian virtue, and to do all that they could do to further the gospel among people.” [Barnes] The motivation that I wrote of is found in the words; “ye know that your labour is not in vain”. Think about this. ‘Your labour is not in vain’ you will be rewarded! If you run a race and come in first you want to be reward with that blue ribbon don’t you? Paul assures us that if we are “stedfast, unmoveable and always abounding in the work of the Lord” we will be rewarded by the Lord. The good works that we do for others may soon be forgotten but God will not forget what you do for Him. So work brother, work.

Conclusion

Besides being diligent in spiritual matters we should be diligent in temporal matters as well. I’ll list some of them at this time:

Diligence can lead to “favour”: (Proverbs 11:27) *“He that diligently seeketh good procureth favour: but he that seeketh mischief, it shall come unto him.”* I think everyone can see the difference between seeking good and seeking mischief. For me there is no hesitation in making a decision. I want to receive “favour”.

Diligence may also lead to “prosperity”: (Proverbs 10:4) *“He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.”* The person with “a slack hand” is either remiss in giving to the necessities of others, according to his abilities, and as cases require;

or he is negligent and slothful in his business. Or it could even refer to anyone who works with a deceitful hand. But the person that is “diligent” in doing God’s will “maketh rich”. It could be argued that there are thousands of faithful Christians who have never been nor will ever be rich. Materially speaking this may very well be true; but they are rich in blessings from God: (Proverbs 10:22) *“The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.”* I can only speak for myself but I know which riches I choose.

This same thought of “prosperity” is also stated in different words: (Proverbs 13:4) *“The soul of the sluggard desireth, and hath nothing: but the soul of the diligent shall be made fat.”* If you are diligent you shall at last arrive to that state where there will be no more hunger and thirst nor want of any kind.

And being diligent may also bring “honour”: (Proverbs 12:24) *“The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.”* “Shall bear rule” has been translated by some “to be rich” and they refer back to Proverbs 10:4. I believe them to be correct in their translation. Through diligence men get riches, and through riches they arrive to power and authority over others. “Under tribute” refers to those who are in subjection to those to whom they pay tribute. Here is another reference: (Proverbs 22:29) *“Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.”* Regardless of whether a man is in business for himself or for his master “diligence” is required.

I will conclude by giving a few illustrations of those who were diligent in doing the Lord’s will.

We begin by referring to a pesky insect that seems to always be present when we have a picnic: (Proverbs 6:6-8) *“Go to the ant, thou sluggard; consider her ways, and be wise: (7) Which having no guide, overseer, or ruler, (8) Provideth her meat in the summer, and gathereth her food in the harvest.”* One idea of this passage is that it is intended to discourage idleness. Idleness can turn into ruin of families; but idleness is al-

most sure to lead to sin. The ant is a remarkable creature for foresight, industry, and economy. The slothful would do well to “go to the ant and imitate their style of life. The ant is wise enough to store up food for the time of shortage. We may think they are storing up for winter; but this is incorrect as they sleep in the winter and do not eat. Nothing is more industrious than the ant; not even the bee. Nothing cares more about their young than the ant; as they take better care of their young; yes better than any loving mother. Spring, summer, and autumn, they are incessant in their labor; and their conduct affords a bright example to men. Look to the ant to learn about diligence!

Jacob illustrated “diligence”: (Genesis 31:40) *“Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes.”* Jacob faced severe heat from the sun in the day time and bitter cold at night from the frost. Through “diligence” he did not forget nor neglect the flock; in fact he did not allow himself to sleep at night so he could keep watch over them; which is often required when tending the flock: (Luke 2:8) *“And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.”* A lesson that might be overlooked here is that we need to be “diligent” in the needs of the day and that which is necessary.

Ruth was diligent in gathering barley: (Ruth 2:17) *“So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley.”* This is certainly a display of her “diligence” and industry; working from morning to night. She did not bundle it up and carry it home; instead she beat the barley grains out. As tired as she may have been from her gleaning she did not quit until the job was completely finished. In one day Ruth got enough to last her and her mother-in-law at least for five days. Like Ruth we must be diligent and not become weary in “well doing” because: (Galatians 6:9) *“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”* The substance of the diligent man or woman is “precious”: (Proverbs 12:27) *“The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious.”* Perhaps one of Boaz’s servants would have carried her

gleanings but Ruth was even diligent to carry it home herself; we must also be diligent to take care of that which we have wrought: (2 John 8) *“Look to yourselves, that we lose not those things which we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward.”*

Hezekiah is another good example of “diligence”: (2 Chronicles 31:21) *“And in every work that he began in the service of the house of God, and in the law, and in the commandments, to seek his God, he did it with all his heart, and prospered.”* In this chapter we learn that all the remnants of idolatry were destroyed and abolished: (2 Chronicles 31:1) *“Now when all this was finished, all Israel that were present went out to the cities of Judah, and brake the images in pieces, and cut down the groves, and threw down the high places and the altars out of all Judah and Benjamin, in Ephraim also and Manasseh, until they had utterly destroyed them all. Then all the children of Israel returned, every man to his possession, into their own cities.”* The chapter closes with praise to Hezekiah; wherein we see him being praised for his “diligence”. Hezekiah saw his duty to God and to his people, and performed it with zeal and diligence. The one thing about Hezekiah that really stands out to me is his desire to please God and his desire to be approved by the Lord. We need to stress to all Christians the necessity of pleasing God. We have become selfish people who desire to please self with little regard to pleasing God. When we read of Hezekiah’s accomplishments in chapter thirty one and verse one we cannot help to notice his “diligence” in attempting to be pleasing to God. His actions were not selfish; he wanted all people to have an opportunity to worship God in God’s way.

The apostles were diligent in their teaching and preaching Jesus Christ: (Acts 5:42) *“And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.”* Is there a word in this verse that stands out to you? What about the word “daily”? Teaching and preaching cannot be limited to Wednesday evening or to Sunday mornings and evenings. If you will notice the boards out front of many denominational buildings you will notice that there are a great number who have dropped the Wednesday evening service and some don’t even worship

Sunday evening. While I agree that we do not have a commandment in the New Testament to have a prayer meeting or Bible study on Wednesday evening does not the word “daily” include Wednesday. Fault can be found with many gospel preachers for limiting their preaching and teaching to once or twice a week. Such might be approved by the brethren but I wonder how our Creator will judge them.

Looking at the example of the apostles they were diligent to preach Jesus Christ whenever [daily] and wherever the opportunity arose. They preached publicly [in the temple] and privately [in every house]. We wonder why we are not growing; could it be that we preachers and teachers have not taken opportunity to preach and teach wherever and whenever we have opportunity. I understand that preachers deserve and need a day off to rest but do they need five or six days a week to recuperate from their labors? How many days of rest did God take when he created everything? (Genesis 2:2) *“And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made.”* The churches of Christ claim to pattern their self after the early church; if that is true should we not also follow their example of “diligence” in preaching and teaching daily and do so daily?

There was a man by the name of Apollos who was diligent in teaching: (Acts 18:24-25) *“And a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the scriptures, came to Ephesus. (25) This man was instructed in the way of the Lord; and being fervent in the spirit, he spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.”* Here was a man who had not been taught all the truth of the gospel; even so he taught “diligently”. He spoke out freely and fully everything he knew. When Aquila and Priscilla saw that he did not know the complete truth they took him aside and taught him that which he was lacking: (Acts 18:26) *“And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue: whom when Aquila and Priscilla had heard, they took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly.”* Did being told that he was wrong discourage him and cause him to be silent? Not at all: (Acts 18:28) *“For he mightily convinced the Jews, and that pub-*

licly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ.” We must be just as diligent in preaching the truth as some are who preach and teach in error.

In his second epistle to the Corinthians Paul mentions a man by the name of Titus: (2 Corinthians 8:16) *“But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you.”* One of the reasons Paul was so thankful for Titus was his “diligence”: (2 Corinthians 8:22) *“And we have sent with them our brother, whom we have oftentimes proved diligent in many things, but now much more diligent, upon the great confidence which I have in you.”* Titus had proven himself to be a very diligent and industrious man, and as such he was fit for this service; he had been tried and proven, and was found to be diligent, not only once or twice, but oftentimes; and that not in a few instances, but in many; and in nothing did he ever show more diligence than in this matter. Paul was greatly comforted and had a sense of confidence seeing the “diligence” of Titus in the past and he felt very good in sending Titus to them.

Paul had a friend who was a slave whom he describes as being diligent: (2 Timothy 1:16-17) *“The Lord give mercy unto the house of Onesiphorus; for he oft refreshed me, and was not ashamed of my chain: (17) But, when he was in Rome, he sought me out very diligently, and found me.”* Not only was Onesiphorus diligent in seeking to find Paul he was “very diligent” in his search for Paul. At this time Paul was not in a Roman prison; he was in what was called “house arrest” with a chain fastened to his right arm and the other end was attached to a Roman soldier. It is thought that he was at liberty to visit with friends while confined to the soldier. So he may have been any place within the city of Rome. So Onesiphorus went “diligently” throughout the city until he located Paul. Onesiphorus will be one of those who will hear Christ say I was *“Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.”* (Matthew 25:36). Wouldn't it be great if people would be so diligent in looking for the Lord?

Lastly, the apostle Paul was also “diligent” when he preached “the gospel of God”: (1 Thessalonians 2:9) *“For ye remember, brethren, our la-*

bour and travail: for labouring night and day, because we would not be chargeable unto any of you, we preached unto you the gospel of God." The Vulgate Latin version renders the word "travail" reads as "weariness". We cannot question the truthfulness of Paul's statement because he said they would remember how diligently he labored in preaching the gospel. Not only was Paul diligently preaching he was also working with his hands as a tentmaker. (Acts 20:1) *"And after the uproar was ceased, Paul called unto him the disciples, and embraced them, and departed for to go into Macedonia."* Night and day Paul could be found working with his hands to support himself and those with him or preaching the "gospel of God". The ministry of the word is a work, and a laborious one, when closely attended to; a preparation for it by prayer, reading, meditation, and much study, are wearisome and fatiguing; and to preach the word in season and out of season, with all longsuffering and doctrine, is very laborious. Like Paul anyone who works both night and day will become tired; but it is a very rewarding labor.

As the title suggests and as I have stated throughout this booklet "diligence is required". "Diligence" is required in all areas of our Christian lives. I will not even pretend to tell you that the Christian life is an easy life. The statement that Jesus made when he instructed us to "take up your cross and follow me" does not in any way suggest that it will be easy to be a Christian. But with the help of God and "diligence" on our part we can be victorious!

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