

LESSON 3

Giving All Diligence

“But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith.” (2 Peter 1:5)

God wants nothing but good for His children. He looks down on us with gracious intent. We do not have to wonder about this. He has provided for us countless reasons to trust in His lovingkindness. He expressed through the pen of the Hebrew writer that His decision to not only make Abraham a promise, but to confirm it with an oath – which *“for [men] [is] an end of all dispute”* (Hebrews 6:16) – was out of determination *“to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel”* (Hebrews 6:17). By this He has given us *“strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us”* (Hebrews 6:18).

God has done, and is doing, His part to bring us to salvation (cf. Philippians 2:12-13). Through His divine power He has given to us all things pertaining to life and godliness through the knowledge of Jesus (cf. 2 Peter 1:3). Through that knowledge we can come to partake in the divine nature (cf. 2 Peter 1:4). God has made preparation for our benefit by His grace, has offered us grace, and wants grace to be multiplied to us.

“But also for this very reason...”

This statement is preceded by actions on God’s part. He is the sole source of these blessings which culminate in our salvation. He is the only power capable of bringing those under the corruption that is in the world through lust out of that depraved state and into fellowship with Him. He alone can transform one into the image of His Son. Yet, this statement is followed by an instruction which concerns the readers – us.

That He *“called us by His own glory and excellence”* (2 Peter 1:2, NASB) includes the idea of one being drawn to Him (cf. John 6:44-45) implies what scripture explicitly states

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elsewhere – there is a necessary willingness and corresponding action on our part for these blessings to be imparted. God has ensured us that He will provide everything we cannot, but it will not amount to anything for the one who is not willing to take advantage of it. Because God has made such a grandiose promise for us to become *“partakers of the divine nature,”* we must beware lest we reduce such to vanity through inaction. When God made a promise to Abraham,

it was after “*he had patiently endured, [that] he obtained the promise*” (Hebrews 6:15). If a passive approach to the grace of God was appropriate, we would have seen it in Abraham.

We inescapably conclude that a Christian will never reach their spiritual potential through a passive view of God’s grace. Nowhere in scripture do we read of Christian growth into the image of Christ as an unexplainable transcendent mystical experience. Rather, Paul described it in this way, “*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me*” (Galatians 2:20). The proper response to God’s unmerited favor is to surrender our will entirely to His. A positive response of obedient faith to the provisions of God in no way minimizes the unmerited nature of His grace. However, the passive response cloaked in the claim of humble unworthiness and inability manifests a lack of faith, and therefore refuses the life-changing power of God’s grace.

“...giving all diligence”

Peter connects the promises and provisions of God (cf. 2 Peter 1:2-4) with something we provide ourselves (cf. 2 Peter 1:5). He has given, and now we give “*all diligence.*” “*Giving*” translates the Greek *pareispherō*. Vine gives the definition, “‘to bring in besides’ (*para*, ‘besides,’ *eis*, ‘in,’ *phero*, ‘to bring’).” Thayer adds, “to contribute besides to something.” The idea expressed in the word suggests there is something already present. However, a different party brings something alongside it. Vine references the Revised Version’s translation, “*adding on your part,*” and notes, “the words ‘on your part’ represent the intensive force of the verb; the KJV, ‘giving’ does not provide an adequate meaning.” That is, as much as we depend upon God to supply the necessities for us to partake in the divine nature, and thus increase in His grace, His design includes a required contribution on our part. To neglect this is to neglect His grace.

THERE IS NO EXCUSE FOR FAILING TO PROVIDE WHAT GOD HAS DEMANDED. HE REQUIRES US TO GIVE ALL DILIGENCE.

However, what we are giving is basic. It is described by Alexander Maclaren as a “homely virtue,” also “a very lowly virtue.” In no way does this minimize its importance. If anything, it maximizes the guilt of the negligent. There is no excuse for failing to provide what God has demanded. He requires us to give “*all diligence.*”

“*Diligence*” is the Greek, *spoudē* – “earnest commitment in discharge of an obligation or experience of a relationship, eagerness, earnestness, diligence, willingness, zeal” (BDAG). The word is simple to understand, but general enough to bear various implications given the context of its use. The noun is translated, “*haste*” (Luke 1:39), and “*earnest care*” (2 Corinthians 8:16). The verb form, *spoudazō*, is translated, “*was eager*” (Galatians 2:10), “*endeavoring*” (Ephesians 4:3), “*Do your utmost*” (2 Timothy 4:21), and “*I will be careful*” (2 Peter 1:5). These translations give the powerful sense of the word. The part we play in the multiplication of God’s grace to us is growing in the knowledge of Jesus with haste, and earnest care. We should be eager, always endeavoring, doing our utmost, and being careful to increase in the listed virtues God has provided (cf. 2 Peter 1:5-7). Diligence does not manifest itself in one way. It is something which should permeate our entire existence and be present in every facet of our calling.

DILIGENCE REFLECTED IN ATTITUDE

Too often, the perilous times in which we live (cf. 2 Timothy 3:1-5) affect our values, which in turn, have a negative effect on our attitude about the spiritual. We are eager and passionate about entertainment, social activities, politics, exercise, physical health, etc., yet we struggle to produce even a small measure of the same enthusiasm for God's word. No wonder we find it a struggle to make time and prioritize resources and energy to the work of spiritual growth.

The first Psalm describes the blessed man as one who meditates on God's law day and night (cf. Psalm 1:2b). Most would find this as a form of extremism difficult for any to reproduce. Perhaps it is extreme for the spiritual climate in which we now live. However, it is something we can achieve, but it starts with developing a taste for God's word. The Psalmist's meditation was preceded by "*delight...in the law of the Lord*" (Psalm 1:2a). If he had no delight in it, he would not have spent time thinking about it.

Likewise, David expressed an attitude about God's word which would inevitably translate into diligent study. He said of the law, testimony, statutes, commandment, fear, and judgments of the Lord, "*More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb*" (Psalm 19:10). His estimation of the word far exceeded anything else.

If our attitude does not reflect delight, eagerness, and care about spiritual things, then we by no means will grow in God's grace. The very mechanism used by God to shower

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grace upon us was the attraction to His Son (cf. John 3:18-21; 6:44-45; 2 Peter 1:3). Jesus invited, saying, "*Come to Me...For My yoke is easy and My burden is light*" (Matthew 11:28, 30). John assures us, "*His commandments are not burdensome*" (1 John 5:3). Our attitude about growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ should be nothing but positive. If we have the right attitude, diligence will follow.

DILIGENCE REFLECTED IN USE OF TIME

BDAG also defines *spoudē*, translated "*diligence*," as "*swiftness of movement or action, haste, speed*." Diligence has much to do with our use of time. The opposite of diligence is sluggishness, delay, and procrastination. The diligent make haste. Diligence does not take time for granted but acts on what is presently available.

Paul instructed, "*See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil*" (Ephesians 5:15-16). The "*time*" Paul encourages us to redeem is the Greek, *kairos*. This is distinct from *chronos*. Simply put, *chronos* is the span of time, while *kairos* represents the periods within *chronos*. The time spoken of by Paul is a reference to opportunities (cf. Galatians 6:10, "*opportunity*," *kairos*). Within a day there are 24 hours, but within that span may be several opportunities. Diligence makes haste to redeem them.

To redeem the opportunities, we must be aware of them. Paul says, “*walk circumspectly.*” The NASB translates the text, “*Therefore be careful how you walk.*” If we are being careful, we will recognize an opportunity, and if we are being diligent, we will redeem it.

DILIGENCE REFLECTED IN USE OF ENERGY

IT IS NOT SIMPLY THE QUANTITATIVE USE OF TIME WHICH SHOWS DILIGENCE, BUT THE QUALITATIVE. DILIGENCE IS NOT ABOUT CHECKING THINGS OFF A LIST. THE ESSENCE OF TRUE DILIGENCE IS THE EXERTION OF ENERGY.

In a context concerning the universality of death, the writer of Ecclesiastes exhorted, “*Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might; for there is no work or device or knowledge or wisdom in the grave where you are going*”

(Ecclesiastes 9:10). It is not simply the quantitative use of time which shows diligence, but the qualitative. Diligence is not about checking things off a list. The essence of true diligence is the exertion of energy.

One great inhibitor of diligence in spiritual growth is divided energy. We simply have too many irons in the fire. We should remember the powerful words of Moses to the children of Israel, “*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength*” (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). In a land full of idols, the Israelites were to remember that God is one. He would not be content to share the Israelites. He is a jealous God (cf. Deuteronomy 6:14-15). The practical response to the singularity of God is the dedication of one’s entirety, leaving nothing for anyone, or anything else – love Him with **all** your heart, soul, and strength. If God is one, and Christ has the preeminence in our life (cf. Colossians 1:18), they will have our undivided energy. If we do not give our all it will be impossible to please Him (cf. Matthew 6:24). Divided energy given to God is merely diluted energy. Nothing should ever come at the expense of discipleship.

The Israelites had to fend off idolatry as the weapon of the adversary. We must remember that we too are confronted with idolatry (cf. Colossians 3:5). Not that of graven and molded images, but worldliness in general. All our energy is due God – not our jobs, hobbies, or even our families. But whatever we do, we do as disciples who are serving the Lord (cf. Colossians 3:18-4:1). Everything falls subject to the service of God. Our diligence should be applied accordingly, and in turn will drastically affect everything else for the better.

LESSON 3 QUESTIONS

1. What is the proper reaction to understanding the great provisions of God for our spiritual growth?
2. Define the Greek, *pareispherō*, translated “giving” (2 Peter 1:5). Who is giving something, and what does this word indicate in the context concerning spiritual growth?
3. What are we to contribute beside God’s provisions and promises to grow in grace?
4. What is diligence?
5. How might we develop the proper attitude about spiritual growth?
6. What are some antonyms for diligence?
7. How do we show diligence in our use of time?
8. What is a great inhibitor of diligence? Explain.
9. If we are being diligent, how much of our energy will we be focusing on spiritual growth? How might this look considering all the responsibilities we might currently have?

