

Diligence vs. Procrastination

A Bible Study for Steps 4-7

We need to look at what diligence and procrastination have to do with doing our 4th Step Inventory and with God removing our character defects and shortcomings. Yes, we must be "entirely ready" and HUMBLY ask God for His help, but removing our character defects is NOT something that God does instantly or automatically - it takes work on our part. What is diligence or being diligent? The dictionary defines **being diligent** as "characterized by steady, earnest and **energetic application and EFFORT**" and **DILIGENCE** as "persevering application." There are some things in your Christian walk that require that kind of effort and perseverance, and you need to APPLY God's word to your life and situations. We're not talking about working for your salvation, because **salvation is NOT of WORKS, but of grace** (Eph. 2:8-9). This is concerning the BLESSINGS of God, and rewards both here and in heaven. The blessings and rewards do not come to the lazy, or procrastinators, or the double-minded, or to those who give half-hearted efforts. What is procrastination? The dictionary defines PROCRASTINATE as "to put off intentionally and habitually the doing of something that should be done." Those who put off doing their 4th Step Inventory will NOT find the healing and blessing they need.

God has provided **everything you need** (II Peter 1:3) for healing (physical, mental, emotional), for removal of your character defects and shortcomings, and for VICTORY in your life as a Christian, but if you think there is some "magic potion" or a "super pill" you can take that will make all your problems disappear overnight, you will be disappointed. God provided only ONE instant answer to a problem, and that was **the antidote He provided for the deadly poison of SIN**. When you accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, you were **instantly** saved, redeemed, justified, born again, forgiven, made righteous, sanctified (made holy), given eternal life, and delivered out of Satan's kingdom. Everything else in the Christian life is a PROCESS, and will take some effort and work on your part. Your work will not ADD anything to what Jesus did for you on the cross, and you do NOT have to work to KEEP yourself saved, because you are already completely saved, and you will never lose it or become unsaved. You cannot earn your salvation by works, and you don't have to work to keep it. The effort and work we are speaking of is the **"working out"** or outward manifestation of the salvation that is already inside you, (Phil. 2:12-13). It is your **growing to Christ-likeness** and having His image formed in you.

- **Philippians 2:12-13** "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **WORK OUT** your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is **GOD who WORKS in you** both to will and to do for His good pleasure."

God will reward your diligence, and Jesus said it is proportionate to **HOW MUCH effort** you put into seeking God's will in your life. With the "same measure" you use, which means the **amount of diligence**, effort and perseverance you put into **seeking God's will and obeying it**, the rewards or blessings will be measured back to you. Are you seeking to become more like Christ, and serious about getting rid of the character defects that **BLOCK His working in your life**? If you are, then you must read and take in the word of God, and **DILIGENTLY** apply it to your life.

- **Mark 4:24** "And He said to them, '**Take heed** what you hear. **With the SAME measure** you use, it will be measured to you; and to you who hear, more will be given.'"
- **Read Deuteronomy 28:1-14** "And it shall come to pass, if you shall hearken **diligently** unto the voice of the Lord your God, to observe and to do all His

- commandments..... ALL **these BLESSINGS** shall come upon you, and overtake you, if you shall hearken unto the voice of the Lord your God. Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field....."
- **Hebrews 11:6** "But without faith it is impossible to please Him; for he that comes to God must believe that He is, and that **He is a rewarder** of them that **DILIGENTLY SEEK Him.**"

What does it mean to "take heed" or hearken? It means more than just to listen. It means to listen, **pay attention**, and **then DO it!** To hearken diligently to God's voice, or His word, would mean that you PUT it into PRACTICE in your life. You don't just read it, and let it go in one ear and out the other! Jesus said we must APPLY His word to our lives, or be "doers" of the word, and He said "Take heed what you hear."

- **Matthew 7:24-27** "Therefore, whoever HEARS these sayings of Mine, and **DOES them**, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and **it did NOT FALL**, for it was founded on the rock. Now everyone who HEARS these sayings of Mine, and does NOT do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand; and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and **it FELL**. And **GREAT was its FALL.**"
- **II Peter 1:3-11** "According as His divine power has given unto us ALL THINGS that pertain to LIFE and godliness, through the knowledge of Him Who has called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding GREAT and precious PROMISES (in God's word): that by these (promises) you might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. And beside this, **GIVING ALL DILIGENCE**, add to your faith virtue (moral excellence); and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge self-control; and to self-control patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you to be neither barren or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ....."
- **I Corinthians 3:12-15** "Now **if anyone BUILDS** on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each one's work will become manifest; for the Day (of judgment) will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's **WORK which he has built** on it (on the foundation of Christ) endures, he will RECEIVE a REWARD. If anyone's WORK is burned, he will suffer loss; but he HIMSELF will be SAVED, yet so as through fire."
- **James 1:22-25 & 2:18 & 20** "But **be DOERS of the word**, and not hearers only, **deceiving yourselves**. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and NOT a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and CONTINUES in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but **a DOER of the WORK**, this one will be **BLESSED** in what he does." "But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith BY my works." "But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?"
- **Proverbs 4:4** "...let your heart RETAIN My WORDS; keep my commandments and live."
- **Proverbs 4:20-21** "My son, **GIVE ATTENTION to My words**; incline your ear to My SAYINGS, do not let them depart from your eyes; keep them in the MIDST of your HEART. For they are LIFE unto those that find them, and health to all their flesh."

Notice the blessings and the warnings of the verses above. Jesus said the one who DOES His word will survive and **make it through the roughest "STORMS" of life**, but the one who does not, will FALL. II Peter 1:10 says **the one who diligently works** to have these Christlike qualities in their life will NEVER FALL. James 1:22-25 says the one who DOES the word **will be blessed**, but the one who does not is dangerously self-deceived. In fact, James goes on to say in Chapter 2, that you should really **evaluate your faith**, because if there are

no "works" to show for it, you may not be saved. Real faith is always followed by corresponding action, otherwise it is "dead." And in I Corinthians 3:11-15, we see that **every** Christian is BUILDING**something** on the foundation of their salvation in Christ, but that only those whose works are done with pure motives (gold, silver, precious jewels) will receive a reward. Jesus Himself is the One who searches the minds and hearts and **KNOWS the motives** and secret workings of every heart. Obedience to God's commands is what He considers "good works," but God sees what motive is behind the works we do, and that inner motive and attitude of the heart is as important as the outward deed. Deuteronomy 28:47 says the Israelites were under the curse not only because of their disobedience, but **because they "did not serve God with joy and a glad heart"** and their attitude was wrong. Works done with wrong motives are "wood, hay, and straw" - no rewards! So be careful that in your desire to be diligent, you do not cancel out your rewards by having a wrong attitude in your heart.

- **Revelation 2:23** ".....And all the churches shall know that **I am He who searches the minds and hearts**. And I will give to each one of you according to your works."
- **Ephesians 6:6-8** ".....but as servants of Christ, doing **the WILL of God from the HEART, with GOOD WILL doing service, as to the Lord**, and not to men, knowing that whatever good anyone does, he will receive the same from the Lord...."
- **Revelation 3:2** "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for **I have NOT found your WORKS perfect** before God."
- **Revelation 2:2-3** "**I know your WORKS**, your labor, your patience, and that you cannot bear those who are evil.....and you have persevered and have patience, and have **labored for My name's sake** and have not become weary."

Now let's look more closely at procrastination. Jesus knew that there are some people who **don't really WANT to be made well** and whole, and they blame other people and make excuses for why they are the way they are. That is why He asked the paralyzed man if he wanted to be made well. Sometimes, we're more comfortable with our co-dependencies and character defects, and they've been a part of us for so long, that we do not really WANT to be rid of them. Then, there are those who, like Pharaoh did to Moses, always put it off until tomorrow. They say, "Yes, I want to be rid of my problems, and **my own defects** that may even CAUSE some of the problems, but **I don't want to start working on them yet**. Maybe tomorrow."

- **Exodus 8:8-10** "Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, 'Entreat (pray to) the Lord that He remove the frogs from me and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may sacrifice to the Lord.' And Moses said to Pharaoh, 'The honor is yours to tell me: **WHEN** shall I entreat (pray, ask) for you and your servants and your people, that the frogs be destroyed from you and your houses, that they may be left only in the Nile?' **Then he said, 'TOMORROW.'** So he (Moses) said, '**May it be according to your word**, that you may know that there is no one like the Lord our God.'"

Could it be that you are really not WILLING to have God remove the "frogs" from your life? Making excuses is a form of procrastination, because you are putting the blame on something or someone else, and you are attempting to avoid the responsibility of changing yourself. Some typical excuses are: "I have a chemical imbalance in my body, so therefore I'm more prone to alcoholism" or "I have a chemical imbalance in my brain, so therefore I'm not responsible for my depression" or "I have a slow metabolism, so I gain weight no matter what I eat" or "I was abused as a child, so I have to find my validation by doing such and such...." or "hot tempers just run in my family."

- **Read Luke 14:16-20** "Then He said to them, 'A certain man gave a great supper (feast, banquet) and invited many, and sent his servant at supper time to say to those who were invited, "Come, for all things are now ready.'" But they ALL with one accord **began to MAKE EXCUSES**. The first said to him, "I have bought a piece of

- land, and I must go and see it. I ask you to have me excused." And another said, "I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I am going to test them. I ask you to have me excused." Still another said, "I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come."
- **John 5:5-7** "Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity thirty-eight years. When Jesus saw him lying there, and knew that **he already had been in that CONDITION a LONG TIME**, He said to him, "**Do you WANT to be made WELL?**" The sick man answered him, "Sir, I have no man to put me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me."

Procrastination is dangerous, whether you are procrastinating in not doing your 4th and 5th Steps, or making excuses when it comes to character defects in Steps 6 and 7. God has given us an example and **a warning** from the Old Testament, in Numbers 13:25-14:38. The Lord says in I Corinthians 10:1-11, "Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition..." so let's see what happened to the Israelites:

God gave them the Promised Land, but they had to go into battle and TAKE IT from the enemy (Deut. 11:8 & 23-25). God promised them they would be victorious by His power (Num. 13:30, 14:8-9), but the majority doubted God's promise, whined, complained, and **made excuses**, and as a result, **wandered in the wilderness** for the rest of their lives (Num. 14:1-3 & 27-36). Those who doubted, saw themselves as weak and helpless, and saw the enemy as giants - that was their primary EXCUSE for not entering the promised land (Num. 13:33). Caleb and Joshua were the only ones who believed God's promises, and they were the only ones who entered the Promised Land (Num. 14:29-30 & 38).

How does this apply to us as Christians? God gives us victory in Christ, but we have to go into battle and TAKE IT from the enemy (Rom. 8:37, Mark 16:17-18, II Cor. 10:3-5, Eph. 6:10-18).

God promises us we will be victorious by His power in us (Eph. 6:10-13, Eph. 3:16-20, I John 4:4, I John 5:4-5). Those who doubt, see themselves as weak and helpless, and see Satan as having authority over them (I Peter 5:8, II Cor. 11:1-4, Matt. 17:19-20). The Christians who doubt God's promises in His word, procrastinate, whine and complain, and as a result, spend most of their lives in bondage or defeat (Heb. 3:16-19 & 4:1-2, James 1:6-8, Matt. 13:22). Some Christians believe God, do the work, and walk in victory (Mark 9:23, Rom. 8:37, Phil. 4:13, Matt. 13:23).

Finally, we must be diligent because God has created us in Christ Jesus **for the purpose of good works**, which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them, and He wants us to be fruitful in every good work. He has prepared a banquet table and a Promised Land FULL of BLESSINGS for us, but it takes diligence and obedience to enter the Promised Land and to eat at the banquet table (see Psalm 23:5-6).

- **Ephesians 2:10** "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus **for good works**, which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them."
- **Colossians 1:10** "That you may have a walk WORTHY of the Lord, fully PLEASING Him, **being fruitful in every GOOD WORK.**"