

Lesson 42 - The Character of Diligence

1. What are we to be diligent doing? **2 Peter 1:5**

EGW: "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. 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." {AA 529.3}

These words are full of instruction, and strike the keynote of victory. The apostle presents before the believers the ladder of Christian progress, every step of which represents advancement in the knowledge of God, and in the climbing of which there is to be no standstill. Faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity are the rounds of the ladder. We are saved by climbing round after round, mounting step after step, to the height of Christ's ideal for us. Thus He is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. {AA 530.1}

God has called His people to glory and virtue, and these will be manifest in the lives of all who are truly connected with Him. Having become partakers of the heavenly gift, they are to go on unto perfection, being "kept by the power of God through faith." 1 Peter 1:5. It is the glory of God to give His virtue to His children. He desires to see men and women reaching the highest standard; and when by faith they lay hold of the power of Christ, when they plead His unfailing promises, and claim them as their own, when with an importunity that will not be denied they seek for the power of the Holy Spirit, they will be made complete in Him. {AA 530.2}

Having received the faith of the gospel, the next work of the believer is to add to his character virtue, and thus cleanse the heart and prepare the mind for the reception of the knowledge of God. This knowledge is the foundation of all true education and of all true service. It is the only real safeguard against temptation; and it is this alone that can make one like God in character. Through the knowledge of God and of His Son Jesus Christ, are given to the believer "all things that pertain unto life and godliness." No good gift is withheld from him who sincerely desires to obtain the righteousness of God. {AA 530.3}

2. What are we to diligently make sure? **2 Peter 1:10**

EGW: "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10). We need not have a supposed hope, but an assurance. To make our calling and election sure is to follow the Bible plan to closely examine ourselves, to make strict inquiry whether we are

indeed converted, whether our minds are drawn out after God and heavenly things, our wills renewed, our whole souls changed. To make our calling and election sure requires far greater diligence than many are giving to this important matter. "For if ye do these things"--live on the plan of addition, growing in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ--ye shall mount up, step by step, the ladder Jacob saw, and "ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." {19MR 351.4}

Let us consider this ladder which was presented to Jacob. The human race was cut off from intercourse with God. They might look at a paradise lost but could see no means of entering it and holding communion with heaven. The sin of Adam cut off all intercourse between heaven and earth. Up to the moment of man's transgression of God's law there had been free communion between earth and heaven. They were connected by a path which Deity could traverse. But the transgression of God's law broke up this path and man was separated from God. {19MR 352.1}

As soon as Satan seduced man to disobedience of God's holy law, every link which bound earth to heaven and man to the infinite God seemed broken. Man might look to heaven, but how could he attain it? But joy to the world! The Son of God, the sinless One, the One perfect in obedience, becomes the channel through which the lost communion may be renewed, the way through which the lost paradise may be regained. Through Christ, man's substitute and surety, man may keep the commandments of God. He may return to his allegiance, and God will accept him. {19MR 352.2}

Christ is the ladder. "By Me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture" (John 10:9). {19MR 352.3}

3. If we are diligent, what will be the result of our character? **2 Peter 3:14 [End of the verse]**

EGW: 2 Peter 3:14, 18: "Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot and blameless. But grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen." {RH, May 6, 1862 par. 24}

Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, or a day. It is a continual growth in grace. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. Satan lives, and is active, and every day we need to earnestly cry to God for help and strength to resist him. As long as Satan reigns we shall have self to subdue, besetments to overcome, and there is no stopping place. There is no point to which we can come and say we have fully attained. {RH, May 6, 1862 par. 25}

Philippians 3:12: "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." {RH, May 6, 1862 par. 26}

It is constantly an onward march. Jesus sits as a refiner and purifier of his people, and when his image is reflected in them perfectly, they are perfect and holy, and prepared for translation. A great work is required of the Christian. We are exhorted to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. Here we see where the great labor rests. There is a constant work for the Christian. Every branch in the parent vine must derive life and strength from that vine, in order to yield fruit. {RH, May 6, 1862 par. 27}

4. What does being diligent encompass? **Deuteronomy 11:13 [End of the verse]**

EGW: "And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, that I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil. And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full. Take heed to yourselves, that your heart be not deceived, and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them. . . . 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. . . . Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day: and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known. . . . Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes." but "ye shall observe to do all the statutes and judgments which I set before you this day." {RH, June 12, 1894 par. 2}

Man is not to presume to put aside God's great moral standard and erect a standard according to his own finite judgment. It is because men are measuring themselves among themselves and living according to their own standard that iniquity abounds, and the love of many waxes cold. Contempt is shown to the law of God, and because of this many presume to transgress, and even those who have had the light of truth are wavering in their allegiance to the law of God. Will the current of evil that is setting so strongly toward perdition sweep them away? or will they, with courage and fidelity, stem the tide and maintain loyalty to God amid the prevailing evil? Will they not with zeal and pure-hearted devotion say, "I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God. For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me. I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity"? The Lord has plainly stated what kind of devotion is acceptable unto him. He says, "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke?" Those who profess to serve God are to do the work of relieving the oppressed. They are to bear the fruit of the good tree. Those who are truly Christ's will not bring oppression in the home or in the church. Parents who are following the Lord will diligently teach their children the statutes and commandments of God; but they will not do it in such a way that the service of God will become repulsive to their children. Where parents love God with all their hearts, the truth as it is in

Jesus will be practiced and taught in the home. Fretfulness and impatience will be avoided, because they shut away the light of the Sun of righteousness from the soul. Those who manifest impatience, who are faultfinders, exacters, and accusers will have to be converted and become as little children, or they will never enter the kingdom of heaven. {RH, June 12, 1894 par. 3}

5. What should everyone be diligent at doing? **Zechariah 6:15, Jeremiah 17:24**

EGW: On one occasion, by command of the Lord, the prophet took his position at one of the principal entrances to the city and there urged the importance of keeping holy the Sabbath day. The inhabitants of Jerusalem were in danger of losing sight of the sanctity of the Sabbath, and they were solemnly warned against following their secular pursuits on that day. A blessing was promised on condition of obedience. "If ye diligently hearken unto Me," the Lord declared, and "hallow the Sabbath day, to do no work therein; then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain forever." Jeremiah 17:24, 25. {PK 411.2}

6. In all things, what are we to be diligently seeking after? **Proverbs 11:27**

EGW: (no comment)

7. What did the prophets search diligently for? **1 Peter 1:10 [Beginning of the verse]**

EGW: Trials are Christ's workmen to perfect the Christian graces.... These tests are not to sink the believers' faith, but raise it equal to the occasion, that unto all it may be made to appear more precious than gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire. Every trial permitted is designed to exalt the truth to a higher appreciation, that praise to God alone shall be upon the lips of the true disciple of Christ. And the growth in grace is to the honor and glory of God at the appearing of Jesus Christ, "whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you" (1 Peter 1:8-10). . . . {UL 324.5}

8. What can people fail at if they are not diligent? **Hebrews 12:13-16**

EGW: All who claim to be Sabbath-keeping Adventists, and yet continue in sin, are liars in God's sight. Their sinful course is counterworking the work of God. They are leading others into sin. The word comes from God to every member of our churches, "And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: 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; Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright. For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected; for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears" [Hebrews 12:13-17]. {19MR 177.1}

9. When we diligently seek God, what is He towards us? **Hebrews 11:6**

EGW: The "honest and good heart" of which the parable speaks, is not a heart without sin; for the gospel is to be preached to the lost. Christ said, "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." Mark 2:17. He has an honest heart who yields to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. He confesses his guilt, and feels his need of the mercy and love of God. He has a sincere desire to know the truth, that he may obey it. The good heart is a believing heart, one that has faith in the word of God. Without faith it is impossible to receive the word. "He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." Hebrews 11:6. {COL 58.2}

10. What is one reward of being diligent at observing all that God commands? **Exodus 15:26**

EGW: Christ had been the guide and teacher of ancient Israel, and He taught them that health is the reward of obedience to the laws of God. The Great Physician who healed the sick in Palestine had spoken to His people from the pillar of cloud, telling them what they must do, and what God would do for them. "If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of the Lord thy God," He said, "and wilt do that which is right in His sight, and wilt give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of these diseases upon thee, which I have brought upon the Egyptians: for I am the Lord that healeth thee." Exodus 15:26. Christ gave to Israel definite instruction in regard to their habits of life, and He assured them, "The Lord will take away from thee all sickness." Deuteronomy 7:15. When they fulfilled the conditions, the promise was verified to them. "There was not one feeble person among their tribes." Psalm 105:37. {DA 824.3}

These lessons are for us. There are conditions to be observed by all who would preserve health. All

should learn what these conditions are. The Lord is not pleased with ignorance in regard to His laws, either natural or spiritual. We are to be workers together with God for the restoration of health to the body as well as to the soul. {DA 824.4}

11. What type of people are we to be if we are diligent after the full assurance of hope? **Hebrews 6:11-12 [Answer in verse 12]**

EGW: "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labor of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end: that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." {RH, March 7, 1893 par. 1}

Let no one permit himself to be unhappy and repine because his talents are few, and he cannot glorify God with that which has not been bestowed upon him, and for the use of which he is not responsible. If you can do but little, you are responsible only for the doing of that little with fidelity. If you have but one talent, use it well, and God will accept your effort to make the most of what he has given; he will approve of you as he sees you faithful over a few things. We have all been intrusted with some gift of God, and for its use we shall be held accountable. Whether saint or sinner, we shall be required to render an account for the use of the talents God has given us, according to our several ability. Christ has made an infinite sacrifice that the sinner may come to him, and behold him whom his sins have pierced. The only hope for the perishing is to believe in him who has loved us and given himself for us. "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." When the sinner comes to God confessing his sins, he receives pardon, and becomes a child of God, an heir of heaven. He then realizes that his talents are the gift of heaven, and that through faith in his Redeemer he is under obligation to God to fulfill his requirements. He knows that he is justified by faith, but judged by his works, and that life is a day of trust wherein he is preparing for the final reckoning. {RH, March 7, 1893 par. 2}

12. What are we to be diligent about towards others instead of just providing answers carelessly to questions asked of us? **Acts 18:25**

EGW: It was at this time that "a certain Jew named Apollos, born at Alexandria, an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus." He had heard the preaching of John the Baptist, had received the baptism of repentance, and was a living witness that the work of the prophet had not been in vain. The Scripture record of Apollos is that he "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." {AA 269.2}

While in Ephesus, Apollos "began to speak boldly in the synagogue." Among his hearers were Aquila and Priscilla, who, perceiving that he had not yet received the full light of the gospel, "took him unto them, and expounded unto him the way of God more perfectly." Through their teaching he obtained a clearer understanding of the Scriptures and became one of the ablest advocates of the Christian faith. {AA 270.1}

13. What are we to diligently watch over spiritually being applicable to pastors but most often parents?
Proverbs 27:23

EGW: (no comment)

14. What should we be diligent about in public? **Proverbs 23:1-2**

EGW: We inquire: What will the husband of Sister A do? Will he, like Esau, sell his birthright for a mess of pottage? Will he sell his godlike manhood to indulge a perverted taste which only brings unhappiness and degradation? "The wages of sin is death." Has not this brother the moral courage to deny appetite? His habits have not been in harmony with the truth and with the Testimonies of reproof which God has seen fit to give His people. His conscience was not altogether dead. He knew that he could not serve God and indulge his appetite; therefore he yielded to the temptation of Satan, which was too strong for him to resist in his own strength. He was overcome. He has assigned his want of interest in the truth to other causes than the true one in order to cover his own weak purpose and the real cause of his backsliding from God, which was uncontrolled appetite. {4T 31.2}

15. In addition to religious matters, what else ought we be diligent about? **Proverbs 22:29**

EGW: "Whosoever hath not [put to the best use his ability and means], from him shall be taken away even that he hath." Those who are too indolent to realize their responsibilities and exercise their faculties will fail of receiving the blessing of God, and the ability which they had will be taken away and given to the active, zealous workers who increase their talents by constant use. "Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men." A person who diligently labors under the direction of the Spirit of God will possess power and influence, for all may see in him a spirit of untiring devotion to the cause of God in any department

where duty calls him. {4T 458.3}

16. What is the opposite of being diligent? **Proverbs 12:27, Proverbs 13:4**

EGW: In the laws of God in nature, effect follows cause with unerring certainty. The reaping will testify as to what the sowing has been. The slothful worker is condemned by his work. The harvest bears witness against him. So in spiritual things: the faithfulness of every worker is measured by the results of his work. The character of his work, whether diligent or slothful, is revealed by the harvest. It is thus that his destiny for eternity is decided. {COL 84.2}

17. What are we to diligently guard? **Proverbs 4:23, Deuteronomy 4:9**

EGW: "Keep thy heart with all diligence," is the counsel of the wise man; "for out of it are the issues of life." Proverbs 4:23. As man "thinketh in his heart, so is he." Proverbs 23:7. The heart must be renewed by divine grace, or it will be in vain to seek for purity of life. He who attempts to build up a noble, virtuous character independent of the grace of Christ is building his house upon the shifting sand. In the fierce storms of temptation it will surely be overthrown. David's prayer should be the petition of every soul: "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me." Psalm 51:10. And having become partakers of the heavenly gift, we are to go on unto perfection, being "kept by the power of God through faith." 1 Peter 1:5. {PP 460.1}

Yet we have a work to do to resist temptation. Those who would not fall a prey to Satan's devices must guard well the avenues of the soul; they must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts. The mind should not be left to wander at random upon every subject that the adversary of souls may suggest. "Girding up the loins of your mind," says the apostle Peter, "Be sober, . . . not fashioning yourselves according to your former lusts in . . . your ignorance: but like as He which called you is holy, be ye yourselves also holy in all manner of living." 1 Peter 1:13-15, R.V. Says Paul, "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." Philippians 4:8. This will require earnest prayer and unceasing watchfulness. We must be aided by the abiding influence of the Holy Spirit, which will attract the mind upward, and habituate it to dwell on pure and holy things. And we must give diligent study to the word of God. "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to Thy word." "Thy word," says the psalmist, "have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against Thee." Psalm 119:9, 11. {PP 460.2}

18. What have we been diligently commanded to keep? **Psalms 119:4, Joshua 22:5**

EGW: "The language of the Psalmist may be adopted by the commandment keeping people of God: 'Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments. I will praise thee with uprightness of heart when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.' 'Thy hands have made me and fashioned me; give me understanding; that I may learn thy commandments.' {GCDB, February 27, 1893 par. 9}

19. If we obey those things, what is the promise given to us? **Deuteronomy 28:1-2**

EGW: The curse did not come all at once. It was first felt at Adam's fall, and increased at the murder of Abel, and greatly increased at the flood. Since the flood, as the human family have forgotten God, and have followed in a course of disobedience, and have transgressed his commandments, the curse has rested heavier and heavier upon men and upon the beasts. The trees and all vegetation also have felt the effects of the curse. All through the inspired history are exalted blessings promised upon the people of God on conditions of obedience, and curses threatened for disobedience. {4aSG 122.1}

"And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the Lord thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth." {4aSG 122.2}

20. Again, if we obey those things, what spiritually will result in our lives? **Deuteronomy 11:22-23**

EGW: In the reigns of David and Solomon, Israel reached the height of her greatness. The promise given to Abraham and repeated through Moses was fulfilled: "If ye shall diligently keep all these commandments which I command you, to do them, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, and to cleave unto Him; then will the Lord drive out all these nations from before you, and ye shall possess greater nations and mightier than yourselves. Every place whereon the soles of your feet shall tread shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the river Euphrates, even unto the uttermost sea shall your coast be. There shall no man be able to stand before you." Deuteronomy 11:22-25. {Ed 48.3}

But in the midst of prosperity lurked danger. {Ed 48.4}

The experiences of Israel were recorded for our instruction. "All these things happened unto them

for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come." 1 Corinthians 10:11. With us, as with Israel of old, success in education depends on fidelity in carrying out the Creator's plan. Adherence to the principles of God's word will bring as great blessings to us as it would have brought to the Hebrew people. {Ed 50.4}

21. What are we to diligently be active doing towards our children? **Deuteronomy 6:6-7**

EGW: It was Christ who directed the education of Israel. Concerning the commandments and ordinances of the Lord He said, "Thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates." Deuteronomy 6:7-9. In His own teaching, Jesus showed how this command is to be fulfilled--how the laws and principles of God's kingdom can be so presented as to reveal their beauty and preciousness. When the Lord was training Israel to be the special representatives of Himself, He gave them homes among the hills and valleys. In their home life and their religious service they were brought in constant contact with nature and with the word of God. So Christ taught His disciples by the lake, on the mountainside, in the fields and groves, where they could look upon the things of nature by which He illustrated His teachings. And as they learned of Christ, they put their knowledge to use by co-operating with Him in His work. {COL 23.2}

So through the creation we are to become acquainted with the Creator. The book of nature is a great lesson book, which in connection with the Scriptures we are to use in teaching others of His character, and guiding lost sheep back to the fold of God. As the works of God are studied, the Holy Spirit flashes conviction into the mind. It is not the conviction that logical reasoning produces; but unless the mind has become too dark to know God, the eye too dim to see Him, the ear too dull to hear His voice, a deeper meaning is grasped, and the sublime, spiritual truths of the written word are impressed on the heart. {COL 24.1}