



*24 The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute. 25 Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad. 26 The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour: but the way of the wicked seduceth them. 27 The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious. 28 In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death. (Proverbs 12:24-28)*

Diligence is an important virtue of the Godly. ***24 The hand of the diligent shall bear rule: but the slothful shall be under tribute.*** We have contrasted here the two sides of the coin – one facing upward to Heaven (diligent), the other down to Hell (slothful).

**SPIRITUAL DILIGENCE:** Without diligence, we may never come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. *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.* (Heb 11:6) *Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall* (2 Peter 1:10) If there is a safe and dependable passage through the snow-laden mountains, why should we not diligently seek it out if our very survival depends upon it? A man whose compass is set on True North, and he follows it, shall not be lost in the wilderness or the raging seas. Our hope rests entirely upon the things that are above, so we must be more diligent to make our souls secure than our own bodies. The soul lasts for eternity – the body for only a passing vapor. Men guard their greatest treasure with their very lives, do they not? If we will save our lives, we must diligently seek the Giver of all life.

**ENTERPRISING DILIGENCE:** If we are diligent regarding our souls, we will almost certainly be diligent in our daily labors and commercial interactions with others. ***29 Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men.*** (Prov 22:29) We must be diligent not only in making a profit at business, but diligent as well in rendering an honest measure for all with whom we have dealings. If we care for our children with diligence, we shall also care for those other lives that are placed under our dominion: *Be thou diligent to know the state of*

*thy flocks, and look well to thy herds.* (Prov 27:23)

**JUDICIAL DILIGENCE:** 58 *When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison.* (Luke 12:58) *And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness be a false witness, and hath testified falsely against his brother* (Deut 19:18) The legal and social values of a nation are vested, collectively, in her people. Each Christian citizen must be diligent in exercising his duties and responsibilities under the laws of his nation just as he is diligent in obeying, first and foremost, the laws of God.

**SLOTHFULNESS:** Heaven has no room for this trait of the sinner. The Hebrew word used here for 'slothful' is *R(a)miyah* which means, lazy, deceitful, and treacherous. The lazy idler is usually treacherous because he earns no living for himself and must live parasitically on others who do labor. He is treacherous in always seeking advantage by some means other than by merit. There will be no lazy, deceitful, or treacherous people in Heaven. God will not tolerate such either then, or now!

25 *Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad.* Friend, what is it that makes your heart merry and your step light? Isn't it a good conscience and a happy disposition uncluttered by sinful thoughts? It is near impossible to drive down a country road in Alabama without being greeted even by on-coming vehicles. The rural people are untainted by the immorality of the city and are happy to see others and greet them. Heaviness of heart is brought upon a man for his lack of hope and faith. If a man has no faith, he has no reason to believe that tomorrow will be any better than today. His hope is fastened on things earthly which keep them very low to the ground. Sin weighs the heart down and responds to the magnetism and gravity of Hell. His heart is too heavy to be lifted up in the sunshine of God's love. But good men and women, filled with the love and joy of God, have only sweet words and kind to share with others at every meeting. Should we not seek out the heavy-hearted and reveal to them the same joy that we have and how they, too, may have it?

26 *The righteous is more excellent than his neighbour: but the way of the wicked seduceth them.* Who are the righteous? How can we understand this verse in view of the following words of St. Paul? *As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one* (Romans 3:10) (see also Psalms 14:1, 53:1-3) Every man has inherited the sinful nature and disposition of Father Adam. With that diseased blood in our veins, we can only die and plunge to Hell. But there was a second Adam who has not sinned at all. He died a sacrificial death as the only sinless man ever to live. But He was more than man. He was also God the Son. With the covering of HIS blood, we are deemed righteous in the eyes of the Lord. We are not righteous by our own merits, but by the IMPUTED righteousness of the one whose gift of redemption and salvation we claim. The wicked are seducers. The father of the wicked, Satan, was a seducer and beguiler of Eve at the Garden in Eden. The wicked tell subtle lies and lay snares in the path of the righteous. Just as the righteous do the work of their Father in Heaven, so do the wicked do the work of their own father, the Devil. (John 8:44) I might add that the devil never takes vacation, either, nor does he retire. I do not believe any Christian layperson or clergy should ever retire from serving the Lord who called them.

27 *The slothful man roasteth not that which he took in hunting: but the substance of a diligent man is precious.* The man who earns his bread honestly and by the labor of his hands or mind is a man who values whatever the Lord has placed in his

hands. When we labor for something, we can easily place a value of hours and fatigue on the object. If it comes to us by gift or by stealth, its value is very low because we have sacrificed nothing to obtain it. This is the fallacy underlying socialism. Men are encouraged to take whatever they can get without labor. The system finally cannot sustain itself and brings all of its adherents to poverty. Work is honorable AND Godly. *For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.* (2 Thess 3:10-12) Socialism is evil in the sight of God. PERIOD!

28 In the way of righteousness is life; and in the pathway thereof there is no death. Do you believe this wonderful promise of God? There is only one way to righteousness – through the redeeming blood of Jesus Christ and His Righteousness. He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. You could actually make the argument that these three terms – Way, Truth, Life – are synonymous in Christ. His **WAY** is **TRUTH**, and HIS **TRUTH** is **LIFE**! There is no death to those who know and believe Christ. There will be a transfiguration, but no death – just as in the twinkling of an eye. *Believest thou this?* Yes, there shall be always, in this valley of life, the Shadow of Death, but shadows have no substance – they have no power at all. The shadow of death to the righteous is merely an illusion that fades with the moment of our falling to sleep in Christ. Do you, Friend, have that assurance?