

Chico Alliance Church
April 17, 2016

“Fervent in spirit, serving the Lord”

INTRODUCTION

You are saved by grace through faith, and this is not from yourselves; it is God’s gift— not from works, so that no one can boast.

The Bible categorically reveals that God saved us APART from any work of ours. No work of ours could negate the offense of our rebellion. Any attempt at meriting salvation from God only exposes our failure to understand the gravity of our sin. Earlier Paul clearly indicated that our sins and transgression put us in an unreceptive and darkened state unable to do anything about our critical condition on our own. Any rescue must come from outside of ourselves. That rescue, that salvation comes from God at the point of faith. He designed it that way as to eliminate any chance of man taking credit for his salvation. Even faith was a gift.

Does that mean that works have no place in the Christian experience? On the contrary.

For we are His creation, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared ahead of time so that we should walk in them. Ephesians 2:7-10

We are (presently and continuously) HIS intentional creative work. In Rom 1:20, Paul used the term in relation to the wonder of God’s creation of the universe that draws attention to His amazing awesomeness.

For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. Romans 1:20

In this instance, Paul focused on a work of God beyond the wonder of His initial creation of mankind and the universe. He references here a spiritual creative work of God accomplished through Jesus Christ that took place at a point in time (regeneration) resulting in a present status of “special creation”.

Paul also spelled out this amazing act of God in his letter to the Corinthians.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, HE (the person in Christ) has become (and still is) new. 2 Cor 5:17

You are probably used to the translation “all things have become new.”

The problem is the verb “become” is a perfect tense singular verb matching the “anyone” in Christ. Plus, the reality is that “all things” don’t become new at conversion, WE do. The term “new” indicates “new in freshness”.

The focus of these pre-ordained works for which we have been created is a people who function and live (walk) according to a preset way of living. Some see the determination of a particular work for each Christian. By the use of the plural, Paul focused on the entire body of Christ living according to particular God-honoring way of life established by God.

Jesus gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for His own possession who are zealous for good works. Titus 2:14

There is a difference between working FOR salvation and working BECAUSE OF salvation.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but 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 work for his good pleasure. Phil 2:12-13

In one sense, after salvation it is all about serving Christ. It is all about living differently not to earn God's favor but as a result of God's favor and heart-transforming work. The Bible has a great deal to say about work and activity for God.

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31

Both "dos" stem from the same Greek root translated "work". Paul instructed the Romans regarding the fervency of service to God.

Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. Romans 12:11

Examples of fervency can still be found in our culture. Olympic athletes, musicians, professional sports figures etc.

We admire people who train and invest time and energy into their "craft" whatever that may be. There are those who define fervency. Examples of a sedentary society also could be cited. We look of the easy way out. We try not to expend unnecessary energy.

Jesus warned His church to beware of losing our fervency regarding Him and our mission as a redeemed people; fervent for good works. Too often our relationship with God falls short of loving Him with ALL our heart, soul mind and strength. I am not here to scold us but challenge us to considered Scripture carefully. I have become more aware of my own lack of spiritual diligence. Those Christians in hostile situations have no issue with spiritual fervency.

Spiritual diligence is the consistent pursuit of the God's stated directives and the specific tasks He lays before us at the time He direct according to the empowerment and inner motivation of the Holy Spirit with the ultimate purpose of being pleasing to Christ in all we do.

The time is short. God calls us to redeem what time He allots for Kingdom purposes.

I. DIFFERENCIATE AREAS CALLING FOR SPIRITUAL DILIGENCE

1. Our Love for The Lord

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." Deut 6:5 Also Quoted by Jesus in the New Testament.

This stands as the prime directive for every follower of Jesus. God directed that our love for Him occupy not only our emotions and personality but our very physical body as well. What does it mean to love with all our might?

2. Our Character Development

*And for this very reason (God's work in us) applying all **diligence**, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in you moral excellence, knowledge and in your knowledge, self-control, and in self-control, perseverance, and in perseverance, godliness; and in godliness, brotherly kindness, and in brotherly kindness, love.*

For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true

knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

For he who lacks these is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.

Therefore, brethren, be all the more **diligent** to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble.

2 Pet1:5-10

Are these the things that we think of when we contemplate diligence? Are we doing all we can to see these character qualities permeate our everyday life?

3. Our study of the Scriptures.

"Be **diligent** to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15

So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. 1Pet 2:1

4. Our Obedience

Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul **diligently** lest you forget the things which your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons." Deut 4:9

"You have ordained Your precepts, that we should keep them **diligently**. Ps 119:4

"For it is for this(godliness) we **labor** and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men." 1Tim 4:10

"Be **diligent** to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth." 2Tim 2:15

Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things (new heavens and new earth), **be diligent** to be found by Him in peace, spotless and blameless, and regard the patience of our Lord to be salvation..." 2 Peter 3:4

"Watch over your heart with all **diligence**, for from it flow the springs of life."
Proverbs 4:23

5. Our Walk by the Power of The Spirit

"Let us therefore be **diligent** to enter into that rest (Spirit empowered walk of faith), lest anyone fall though following the same example of disobedience. (the Israelites refused to act upon the promise that God would give them the land). Hebrews 4:11

This rest has to do with resting in the acceptance of Christ and functioning daily in the peace and power of the Holy Spirit. It seems so contradictory to exercise diligence to enter into rest. Work to enter rest. Many trudge around in the wilderness for the rest of their life.

6. *Our prayer life*

"Devote yourselves to prayer, keeping alert in it with thanksgiving." Col 4:2

Do not lack diligence; be fervent in spirit; serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope; be patient in affliction; be persistent in prayer. Romans 12:11-12

Pray constantly. 1 Thessalonians 5:17

Pray prepares the soil for the seed of the Word to germinate, grow and bear the fruit that God intended.

*With all **prayer** and **petition pray** at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints, **Ephes. 6:18***

7. *Our Love for One Another*

*"Above all, keep **fervent** in you love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins." 1 Pet4:8*

*Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, **fervently** love one another from the heart." 1 Peter 1:22*

*"...being **diligent** to preserve (continually) the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." Eph 4:3*

8. *Our Parenting*

*"And these words which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; and you shall teach them **diligently** to you sons and ..." Deuteronomy 6:6-7*

*"He who loves him (his son) disciplines him **diligently**." Pr13:24*

9. *Our Giving to Needs of Others*

*But as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all **diligence**, and in our love for you—see that you **excel** in this act of grace (giving) also. 2 Corinthians 8:7*

10. *Our Ministry in the lives of others*

*"And we proclaim Him(Christ), admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ. And for this purpose also I **labor**, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me." Col 1:28-29*

*And we desire that each one of you show the same **diligence** so as to realize the full assurance of hope until the end, that you may not be **sluggish**, but imitators of those who through faith and long-suffering inherit the promises. Hebrews 6:9-12*

The inheritance of promises includes activity. Faithful and enduring ministry in the lives of others. We lose the assurance of hope in our own life when we stop flowing into the lives of others. Break out of the self-absorbing black hole of fear and touch others. It is a ministry mentality. We are called to be a blessing.

II. DISCERN DISCIPLINE FROM THE ANT

Go to the ant, you slacker! Observe its ways and become wise. Without leader, administrator, or ruler, it prepares its provisions in summer; it gathers its food during harvest. Proverbs 6:6-8

- 1 -- **Priorities.** The ant knows what needs to be done.
- 2 -- **Time Management.** The ant knows when things should be done.
- 3 -- **Motivation.** The ant knows why things need to be done.

III. DEAL WITH ANY TRACE OF MEDIOCRITY & LAZINESS

IV. DEPEND ON THE SPIRIT -- REDEEMING THE TIME

"So teach us to number our days, that we may present to You a heart of wisdom." Psalm 90:12

"Awake sleeper and rise from the dead and Christ will shine on you. Therefore, be careful how you walk, not as unwise men (sluggards) but as wise (diligent) making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.

*And do not get drunk with wine (Be under the influence of, don't escape by means of wine) but **be filled with the Holy Spirit** (be under the influence of, find meaning in life by means of)...always giving thanks for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God even the Father; and be subject to one another in the fear of Christ. Eph 5:14-21*

PROCESS TOWARD DILIGENCE

- Wake up and Christ will shine on you
- Make wise use of your time
- Understand God's will
- Don't succumb to fleshly escape methods
- Experience life through the Spirit
- Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ

WALK IN THE SPIRIT

Paul instructs that we are to continually seek filling by the Holy spirit. We are to come under the direction and empowering of the Holy Spirit. To be in full cooperation with the Spirit. To allow the Spirit to fill every longing and void with His presence. This filling is evidenced by ministry to people by encouragement and communication of truth in love. It is further evidenced by joy, peace, patience, self-control, gentleness, goodness.

Dependence on the Spirit is a decision I make by faith to trust **Him** to enable **me** to obey what I know is right. This obedience is in spite of any fleshly feelings of fatigue, selfish desires, or any other selfish attitudes or thoughts threatening to derail my diligence. I do what is right at the right time for the right motives because of my faithful love for my Lord. And in response to my obedience, He floods my soul with His supernatural enabling grace. The fallen condition of our flesh does requires an additional element on occasion. That is why God designed the body to function as His arm on earth.

V. DRAFT THE HELP OF OTHERS

Developing diligence may involve the input of another for encouragement and as a reminder of my ultimate accountability.

God instructs the church on how to help in the area of diligence.

- 1 -- Encourage him.
- 2 -- If he doesn't work, don't let him eat.
- 3 -- If he continues to lead an unruly (undisciplined) life, put him to shame.

Is the adoption of diligence worth the "effort"? Would it be worth trading a hand full of sand grains for a handful of diamonds? Only if I had the right perspective on sand and diamonds. No matter how hard I try to be a diligent servant of Christ, it will never last until I have a change of mind on the level of values. Until the Holy Spirit enlightens my mind I will forever struggle to maintain the fire of my first love for Christ.

VI. DISTINGUISH THE REWARDS OF DILIGENCE

1. ***A Rich Life***

*"The hand of the **diligent** makes rich." Proverbs 10:4*

2. ***Authority, leadership***

*"The hand of the **diligent** will rule." Proverbs 10:24*

"He who overcomes (mediocrity) I will grant to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne." Revelation 3:21

3. ***A Satisfied Life***

*"The soul of the **diligent** is made fat (satisfied)." Proverbs 13:4*

4. ***Creativity and Resourcefulness***

"The plans of the diligent lead surely to advantage." Proverbs 21:5

5. ***Honor and Respect***

*"Do you see a man skilled in his work (**diligent**)? He will stand before kings; He will not stand before obscure men. Proverbs 22:29*

6. ***Approval***

*"Be **diligent** to present yourself **approved** to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, handling accurately the word of truth." 2 Timothy 2:15*

Run a diligence check. Diligence can generally be measured by time invested and energy expended. Evaluate those two factors on a scale of 1-10 for each of the ten areas listed above.

JIM ELLIOT (slaughtered by the Auca Indians **age 29**.)

He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain what he cannot lose.

God, I pray Thee, light these idle sticks of my life and may I burn for Thee. Consume my life, my God, for it is Thine. I seek not a long life, but a full one, like you, Lord Jesus. Saturate me with the oil of the Spirit that I may be aflame. But flame is often short-lived. Canst thou bear this, my soul? Short life? In me there dwells the spirit of the Great Short-lived, whose zeal for God's house consumed Him. Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God.

May the words of this old hymn be our prayer and cry this morning.

Spirit of God Descend Upon My Heart

*Spirit of God, descend upon my heart;
Wean it from earth, from all its pulses move;
Stoop to my weakness, mighty as Thou art,
And make me love Thee as I ought to love.*

*I ask no dream, no prophet ecstasies,
No sudden rending of the veil of clay,
No angel visitant, no opening of the skies:
But take the dimness of my soul away.*

*Hast Thou not bid us love Thee, God and King?
All, all Thine own soul, heart and strength and mind!
I see Thy cross - there teach my heart to cling;
O let me seek Thee, and O let me find!*

*Teach me to feel that Thou art always nigh;
Teach me the struggles of the soul to bear,
To check the rising doubt, the rebel sigh;
Teach me the patience of unanswered prayer.*

*Teach me to love Thee as Thine angels love,
One holy passion filling all my frame;
The filling of the heavenly descended Dove
My heart an altar, And thy love the flame.*