

Be Diligent¹

Theme: Your reward depends upon your diligence, and your diligence is motivated by your faith.

Purpose: To motivate listeners to diligence in their actions by faith in order that they may have greater rewards.

Text: “But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.” - **Hebrews 11:6.**

Introduction:

1. Just as faith produces excellence, so also it produces diligence.
2. Here are two bible stories that illustrate the relationship between faith and diligence. First, a story and comments about two prophets, then a story and comments about a prophet and a king. After presenting these, we'll make some additional applications.

I. TWO BIBLE STORIES

A. *The Story of Elijah and Elisha - 2 Kings 2:1-15*

1. Elisha accompanies Elijah from Gilgal to Bethel to Jericho to the Jordan River.
 - a. At each place the sons of the prophets say to Elisha, “Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?” So he answered, “Yes, I know; keep silent!” **2 Kings 2:3, 5.**
 - b. At each place, Elijah says to Elisha, “Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to the Jordan.” But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!” **2 Kings 2:4, 6.**
2. After crossing the Jordan, Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?” Elisha said, “Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.” So he said, “You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so.” **2 Kings 2:9-10.**
3. Elisha had already indicated diligence in staying with Elijah. Now, the need for diligence is explicitly declared. And so it happened, “suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!” **2 Kings 2:12.** Two things are noteworthy,
 - a. Elijah’s spirit did fall upon Elisha, for Elisha “took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, “Where is the LORD God of Elijah?” And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over. Now when the sons of the prophets who were from Jericho saw him, they said, “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.” **2 Kings 2:13-15.** Elisha was rewarded for his diligence. His belief led him to be diligent!
 - b. The expression “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!” was a meaningful expression.

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- 1) The chariot was the outstanding weapon of warfare in those times.²
- 2) It seems to have indicated that with Elijah (and later with Elisha) was the host of heavenly power.³
 - a) Elijah predicted the violent deaths of Jezebel and Ahab (1 Ki. 21:20-24), executed the prophets of Ba'al (1 Ki. 18:40), brought fire down on two of Ahaziah's commanders and their men, destroying them (2 Ki. 1:1-12).
 - b) Elisha destroyed boys who mocked him (2 Ki. 2:23-25), instigated the anointing of Jehu as king, which inaugurated a bloody coup in Israel (2 Ki. 9) and resulted in the death of Jezebel and her descendents (2 Ki. 10), supported Israel in its war against Syria, giving the king warnings of the whereabouts of the Syrian army (2 Ki. 6:8-14), struck an army blind, and took them captive to Samaria (2 Ki. 6:15-19).
 - c. That same expression - "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!" – is used later by King Joash of Israel regarding the person of Elisha.

B. The Story of Elisha and King Joash of Israel - 2 Kings 13:14-20

1. King Joash's lamentation seems to imply that with Elisha about to die, there would no longer be a defender of Israel, because no one else could obtain God's assistance as could Elisha. - "Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die. Then Joash the king of Israel came down to him, and wept over his face, and said, "O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!" ***2 Kings 13:14.***
2. Elisha, however, gives King Joash an object lesson which may be just as relevant to us as it was to King Joash then.
 - a. First, King Joash is to shoot his arrows out the window eastward, toward Israelite cities that had been conquered by the Syrians. This would indicate recapture of those cities, and defeat of the Syrians. - "And Elisha said to him, "Take a bow and some arrows." So he took himself a bow and some arrows. Then he said to the king of Israel, "Put your hand on

² "... a very graphic composite can be drawn of the chariot charge in ancient Near Eastern warfare. Two armies face each other. At the appropriate moment the commander initiates the charge with a war shout. The horses lunge forward pulling the chariot which is filled with driver, archer, and shield bearer. As the chariot approaches the enemy the archer shoots his arrows causing those shot at to take defensive action. As the chariot picks up speed, bearing down on the enemy the distance becomes too short for arrows, so the sword and spears are brought out. The riders hack and stab at any and every enemy soldier within reach. Those that cannot take appropriate defensive measures are either hacked in pieces with the sword, or trampled by the horse and chariot. When these elements of the battle are multiplied by fifty (fifty chariots making a squadron), and to this number is added the sounds of dying men, the whine of the horses and the thundering of their hoofs, the rumbling of the chariot wheels, and the stirred-up dust, it is easy to see how the enemy, terrorized beyond imagination, is put to flight—parents abandoning children, officers forsaking posts. It truly was like an earthquake, or storm, which could shake buildings!" Randall C. Bailey, "Images of Chariots and Horses," Chapter III of his unpublished doctoral dissertation. 89.

³To illustrate - "And when the servant of the man of God arose early and went out, there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, "Alas, my master! What shall we do?" ¹⁶So he answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." ¹⁷And Elisha prayed, and said, "LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." ***2 Kings 6:15-17.***

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the bow.” So he put his hand on it, and Elisha put his hands on the king’s hands. And he said, “Open the east window”; and he opened it. Then Elisha said, “Shoot”; and he shot. And he said, “The arrow of the Lord’s deliverance and the arrow of deliverance from Syria; for you must strike the Syrians at Aphek till you have destroyed them” **2 Kings 13:15-17**.

- b. Second, King Joash was to strike the ground with the arrows he held in his hand. However, the king apparently failed to realize the significance of what he did. He struck the ground only three times, indicating lack of initiative, diligence, etc. Therefore, he’d not gain victory to the extent Israel needed the victory. - “Then he said, “Take the arrows”; so he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, “Strike the ground”; so he struck three times, and stopped. And the man of God was angry with him, and said, “You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck Syria till you had destroyed it! But now you will strike Syria only three times” **2 Kings 13:18-19**.

II. SOME APPLICATIONS OF THESE STORIES FOR US

- A. **Be diligent**: On the one hand, for his diligence Elisha received his request. On the other hand, for his lack of diligence Joash failed to achieve desired victory over the Syrians. Elisha believed! Joash’s belief was insufficient to grant him the desired victory!
1. God commands his people to be diligent: “You have commanded us To keep Your precepts diligently.” **Psalms 119:4**. ““You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you.” **Deuteronomy 6:17**.
 2. Precept about diligence: “The lazy man does not roast what he took in hunting, but diligence is man’s precious possession.” **Prov. 12:27**
 3. Definition of diligence: Greek: spoude, spoo-day’; from G4692; “speed”, i.e. (by impl.) dispatch, eagerness, earnestness:--business, (earnest) care (-fullness), diligence forwardness, haste.
 4. God’s promise to the diligent: “I love those who love me, And those who seek me diligently will find me.” **Proverbs 8:17**. “If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you.” **Exodus 15:26**.

B. **Specific Ways We Must Be Diligent**

1. Be diligent in guarding your heart “Keep your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life.” **Prov. 4:23**. ““Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren” **Deuteronomy 4:9**.
2. Be diligent in your national obedience, ““Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth.” **Deuteronomy 28:1**.
3. Be diligent in your service to God, “For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full

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assurance of hope until the end, that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.” *Hebrews 6:10-12*.

4. Be diligent in leadership, “he who leads, with diligence;” *Romans 12:8*. Like Josiah, “Thus Josiah removed all the abominations from all the country that belonged to the children of Israel, and made all who were present in Israel diligently serve the LORD their God. All his days they did not depart from following the LORD God of their fathers.” *2 Chronicles 34:33*.
5. Be diligent in training your children, ““You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” - *Deuteronomy 6:7*. “
6. Be diligent in adding to your Christian graces, “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love.” *2 Peter 1:5-7*.

Conclusion:

1. Note the relationship between faith, diligence and reward. Much faith produces greater diligence and greater diligence results in more rewards.
2. So it is with life, generally. So it is with specific activities in life.
3. Therefore, be diligent.

Scriptures:

2 Kings 2:1 - 15

¹And it came to pass, when the LORD was about to take up Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal. ²Then Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!” So they went down to Bethel. ³Now the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha, and said to him, “Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?” And he said, “Yes, I know; keep silent!” ⁴Then Elijah said to him, “Elisha, stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to Jericho.” But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!” So they came to Jericho. ⁵Now the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho came to Elisha and said to him, “Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?” So he answered, “Yes, I know; keep silent!” ⁶Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here, please, for the LORD has sent me on to the Jordan.” But he said, “As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!” So the two of them went on. ⁷And fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood facing them at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan. ⁸Now Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water; and it was divided this way and that, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground. ⁹And so it was, when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask! What may I do for you, before I am taken away from

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you?” Elisha said, “Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.”¹⁰ So he said, “You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so.”¹¹ Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.¹² And Elisha saw it, and he cried out, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen!” So he saw him no more. And he took hold of his own clothes and tore them into two pieces.¹³ He also took up the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and went back and stood by the bank of the Jordan.¹⁴ Then he took the mantle of Elijah that had fallen from him, and struck the water, and said, “Where is the LORD God of Elijah?” And when he also had struck the water, it was divided this way and that; and Elisha crossed over.¹⁵ Now when the sons of the prophets who were from Jericho saw him, they said, “The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.” And they came to meet him, and bowed to the ground before him.

2 Kings 2:1 - 15

2 Kings 13:14-20

¹⁴Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die. Then Joash the king of Israel came down to him, and wept over his face, and said, “O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!”¹⁵ And Elisha said to him, “Take a bow and some arrows.” So he took himself a bow and some arrows.¹⁶ Then he said to the king of Israel, “Put your hand on the bow.” So he put his hand on it, and Elisha put his hands on the king’s hands.¹⁷ And he said, “Open the east window”; and he opened it. Then Elisha said, “Shoot”; and he shot. And he said, “The arrow of the Lord’s deliverance and the arrow of deliverance from Syria; for you must strike the Syrians at Aphek till you have destroyed them.”¹⁸ Then he said, “Take the arrows”; so he took them. And he said to the king of Israel, “Strike the ground”; so he struck three times, and stopped.¹⁹ And the man of God was angry with him, and said, “You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck Syria till you had destroyed it! But now you will strike Syria only three times.”²⁰ Then Elisha died, and they buried him. And the raiding bands from Moab invaded the land in the spring of the year.

2 Kings 13:14-20