

**THE LESSON OF
DILIGENCE, AND OTHER
STORIES, PP. 8-72**

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The lesson of diligence, and other stories, pp. 8-72 by Richard Newton

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THE
LESSON OF DILIGENCE,

And other Stories.

BY THE REV. RICHARD NEWTON.



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great God, whose throne is in heaven, and who governs thousands of worlds, should make a law about so small a thing as a bird's nest! But it only shows how good God is.

This command about birds' nests is not an important one. But when God speaks about more important things, He gives not merely *one* command, but many. The lesson of diligence, of which we are now speaking, is very important. It is important for the body, as well as the soul. It is important for this world, as well as for the next; and so God repeats it in the Bible. In looking through the Bible, I found, in a short time, between thirty and forty different commands that God has given, to teach us the lesson of diligence. We find these commands both in the Old Testament and in the New. They are repeated in different words, in order that we may lay them to heart.

God commands diligence about the affairs of this life, when He says to us, 'Be thou *diligent* to know the state of thy flocks and of thine herds' (Prov. xxvii. 23). In the times when the Bible was written, the

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principal property of people was in cattle. This, then, is an Old Testament command to diligence in our worldly affairs. And the Apostle Paul gives us a similar command in the New Testament, when he says, 'Be not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord' (Rom. xii. 11). This refers to business of all kinds. And it shows how diligent God desires us to be in all things.

And then God commands us to be diligent about our souls as well as our bodies. This is what He means when He says, 'Keep thine *heart* with all *diligence*; for out of it are the issues of life' (Prov. iv. 23). And this is what He means, too, when He says, 'Give *diligence* to make your calling and election sure' (2 Pet. i. 10)—that is, be diligent in trying to save your souls.

And God bids us use diligence in the words of our text—'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.' This is one of God's commands about diligence. It means that we do all things we have to do in the best and most faithful way.

Let me tell you about a Sunday school

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boy, whose name was Abel Baker; how he obeyed this command of God, and the good that came from his obedience.

The Sunday school that Abel attended was in England. One day the superintendent of the school took the words of our text as the subject of an earnest address. He told the scholars that this was God's command to every one of them; and that God wanted them all to learn the lesson of diligence, and do everything they had to do in the very best way they could. Abel listened attentively to every word the superintendent said. He was a steady little fellow, fond enough of fun in a quiet way; but inclined to be lazy, especially in studying his lessons. While listening to the superintendent, he remembered how often his mother had to scold him for only half doing what he had to do; and he made up his mind that she should no longer have cause to find fault. He thought it would not be so very hard to do this, except in his lessons. He was not a very smart scholar. *It took him a long time to learn his lessons, even in the poor way in which he generally*

said them; and if he should undertake to get them perfectly, he thought he would have no time for play. But still his teacher's words pressed hard upon him. On his way home he repeated the text to himself, to fix it in his memory: 'Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.' He thought about this, and said to himself, 'This word "*whatsoever*" is a pretty big word. It takes in lessons, as well as play and work. Geography, spelling lessons, sums, and everything must be done in this way. This is pretty hard; but I'll try.'

And he did try. From that day he began to be diligent. He went to work with a will. He studied his lessons, and did everything with all his might. When he left school, he was bound apprentice to a blacksmith. He remembered this lesson of diligence still, and practised it too. He swung his hammer vigorously, and made the anvil ring again. All the old laziness which he had when a boy was overcome. He was active, industrious, and diligent; not only in his trade, but in all things. He

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became a Christian, and joined the church; and he was just as diligent in his religion as he was in his business. He was known to be the best blacksmith in that part of England. He never slighted anything. 'Whatsoever his hand found to do, he did it with his might.' And now see what came of this habit of diligence.

The London Missionary Society had resolved to build a missionary ship. One of the missionaries, who was going out in her, had been the Sunday school teacher of Abel Baker. He knew what a good blacksmith he was, and he got him engaged to make one of the anchors and chains for the ship; for he knew it would be well made.

The vessel is finished and furnished. She has started on her way, and has nearly reached the end of her voyage in safety. Then she encounters a fearful storm. The wind is driving her on towards a rocky island in the Pacific Ocean. All on board hear the roar of the breakers. Unless the vessel can be kept from drifting, she will soon be dashed to pieces, and all on board must perish. What is to be done? Above