

Doing The Best That We Can Do

As strange as it sounds, we can accomplish the greatest things in life when we learn to work within the limits that have been set before us. If we expend our energy worrying about our obstacles and complaining about our setbacks and limits, there is very little good that we will be able to accomplish, yet when we accept our limits and begin to work and focus on doing what we can do, productive things start to happen.

Second Corinthians 8:12 reads, “For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.” In reading this verse, there is a realization that God doesn’t expect of us anything that we can’t do, and that should relieve us of a great deal of stress on ourselves. Yet on the other hand, the verse also teaches very clearly that God does expect us to do all that we can do. This verse ought to be a stimulant for us; it ought to be something that will drive us to seek out how we may be useful. When the time for judgment comes, our Judge will look at our lives and He will be concerned with what we’ve done with our abilities, and the possibilities He placed before us. Matthew 25:14-30 is a parable told by Jesus that is a perfect example of this lesson. In this parable a master gives three servants “talents”. To the first, he gives 5, to the second, he gives 2, and to the third, he gives only one. The master then leaves for a time but when he comes back, the first servant had taken the 5 and made use of it to give the master 10 talents. The second servant does the same giving the master back 4, but the third buried his talent instead of increasing it or even putting it to use. Because of this the master becomes angry and casts the servant into “outer darkness”. This parable shows us the harm that has come from failing to do even the “little” things in a timely fashion, things that were certainly doable at the moment we chose not to do them. We should remember that a lifetime is just an accumulation of these moments, and where we spend our eternity just might be determined by the outworking of all these “small” choices we’re making right now.

If we’re serious about making spiritual progress, one of the most helpful things we can do is to meditate on the virtue of “resourcefulness”. One definition of resourcefulness is “figuring out how to do a lot with a little.” In regard to our spiritual lives, we should be more resourceful, shouldn’t we? We need to strive to do what we can, with what we have, wherever we are. If we can learn to grasp the simple, doable things that lie right before us, and resourcefully squeeze the maximum good out of each moment we see, then we can grow toward God by just focusing on doing the little things.

A famous British writer once said in an interview, “It’s idle to strive for things out of your reach, just as it’s utterly immoral to be slothful about the qualities you have.” This principle is as true in the spiritual life as it is in writing. If something we wish we could do is not possible, it is not necessary for us to accomplish the task because it is out of our grasp. However, what is always necessary is the doing of what we can do.

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