

Battling the Challenge of Drudgery

by

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“When it comes to taking the initiative against drudgery, we have to take the first step as though there were no God. There is no point in waiting for God to help us— He will not. But once we arise, immediately we find He is there.” Oswald Chambers

If you are like me, you began life with being taught that the entire responsibility to become what you hope to be in life falls on you. Being “self made” is a responsibility that accompanies going to school, getting a higher education, learning to work as a child with chores, and then as an adult, to be diligent and hard working as well. As an athlete, my coaches taught me that the responsibility fell on me to self-train, to show up for practices, to work hard and learn the game if I hoped to succeed. I often saw good athletes who didn’t heed this instruction, for they had poor work ethic and low commitment. If practice was easy, then they were in. If it practices were hard, they goofed off. Guess what? Games are hard, and a coach wants on his field the man who is willing to pay the price for success, and the guys willing to work hard got the nod. Many a good athlete with natural abilities was eventually passed up athletically by guys with less natural abilities because they wouldn’t work hard to improve, and they fell behind. Some of them made it in high school but didn’t go to the next level because they lacked desire and personal discipline. They hit their ceiling athletically because of it. The point I am making is that it didn’t take much to convince me when asked if I felt I carried the load to make myself a better man and to accomplish what I wanted. But that thing of making myself a better man, well there was more needed than just my effort. Try as I may, I couldn’t get beyond the “self thing” as I tried to make myself be better and I saw quickly that I hit the ceiling on that limitation like an athlete does when he doesn’t advance. You see “self” gets in the way of becoming a better man. On the other hand, when “self” becomes less of an issue and walking with Christ in unhindered fellowship with Him does become the issue, then a better man begins to emerge. Have you connected this dot yet?

I have discovered that Christ must increase in me and I must decrease in order for a transformation of becoming a better man to have a chance to succeed. This is where my self-help efforts must be seen in a different light. ***But***, there are some things that I still have a personal responsibility for with managing my life, and Oswald Chambers mentions it. The thing I see at the top of my list that is essential is my attitude when I am challenged with things that are just downright unfair, or inconvenient, or I see no reason for. As I grow older, as you will also discover, there are many things in life that we are unable to change or prevent. We will discover that we have less control over our life than we would like to admit. But, there is one thing that we can control, and in fact God has given us the responsibility to control it. That which we can control is **how we respond** to those challenges that come our way. Here are some examples:

- *Do we have self-pity that things are unfair, or thankfulness that things are not as bad as they could be?*

- *Do we rage with anger because of something or someone done against us, or do we find peace in God's love for us because He doesn't show His anger because of things we have done against Him?*
- *Do we fear a loss of something, or do we take joy that God could be streamlining our life by taking unnecessary things away to bless us with something else?*
- *Do we complain about our bad circumstances, or do we rejoice in them while trusting that God can make good of even those bad things?*

Each example above is an antithesis, and represents a choice of an attitude that we must take responsibility for with either choice. Of course there are many other examples I could use, but you get the gist of what I am saying. We cannot cast the responsibility off to God or others with how we respond, for it is our choice to make. But, which way do we choose?

As long as we are in this life, we will still have a responsibility for our attitude, and those who are challenged the most are men like myself in the first 40 years of my career in sales who have to go to work every day, and those mothers like my wife who stayed at home to work in the home. The challenge a person like this consistently faces is **drudgery**. My wife once said that when children are from diapers to high school the days go so slowly, but the years pass so fast. I remember those days quite well for both of us and I agree. But what she didn't say it was because the days were filled with **drudgery**. Has **drudgery** gotten a hold of you at this time in your life?

Drudgery is the *doldrums* of life when the wind has gone out of our sails, so to speak. We are *becalmed* in the waters of life, and nothing interesting is happening. "We are going nowhere," we think. We have no force behind us, like the wind in the sails of a sailboat are needed to keep it from floating aimlessly in the water. We languish in a sluggish state with little ambition and diminished hope that anything will change. **Drudgery** is not depression, but we can see that dreaded condition is not far down the road if things don't change. We feel powerless to change our circumstances. But, the big question is, "*Are we without the power to change them?*" Don't believe the lie that your life will continue to rot before your very eyes and you can do nothing about it. It will rot if you do not take responsibility for that which you can do, and in fact must do. If you want God to intervene and *part those waters before you*, you have to do like the Levitical priests were required to do to see the water before them parted. Look what the Word says:

And as soon as the priests who carry the ark of the LORD--the Lord of all the earth--set foot in the Jordan, its waters flowing downstream will be cut off and stand up in a heap." So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the Ark of the Covenant went ahead of them. Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the Ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge, the water from upstream stopped flowing. Joshua 3: 13-16

What do we see here? The priests were told by God to take the initiative. It required their faith to wade into the swollen waters of the Jordan River to see God hold the waters back so the people could cross over. Likewise, you and I must wade into the swollen waters of our **drudgery** with our attitude of praising God for this time in our life. We praise Him and trust that He is attentive to our needs, and is at work even though we do not see it. Our attitude is like the feet of the priests. We wade in and do our part, as we trust the Lord to do His part. Remember, our attitude is one sure thing God has said that we must take responsibility for.

Our initiative is to respond to the clear call of God by trusting Him, and to remember the *drudgery* we are in will not ruin our life unless we allow it. Instead, we should celebrate the calm waters we currently have by remembering the storms of life that have made us long for the calm times we are currently in. Could something be worse than the *drudgery* we are dealing with? You better believe it could be. Just imagine the many examples of how much worse it could be, and you will find a reason quite quickly for praising the Lord in this season of your life.

Along the path of my life, I was taught the great benefit of positive thinking. As an athlete, I found that I could not succeed without it. I've also seen it to be a great help to me in just about every challenge in life that I've faced. At times it has been a kind of "fake it til you make it" mentality. But it works. I hear professional golfers share all the time how they visualize a shot before taking the swing. It is one of those critical intangibles that can't be explained without sounding mystical or just plain nuts. But there is a great benefit for it, even if it is only to help one make a better swing. In fact, golf teachers make it part of a swing routine, when they teach a new student. Why would it be any different for us in combating *drudgery*? Wouldn't the act of having a positive mental attitude be a choice that we must make to see things in a different light? Would not seeing things from a positive perspective begin a change of perspective that would be critical for dealing with *drudgery*? Not to mention, it might be what God is waiting for from us before He *parts the water* before us in our life? Give God a chance to do this for you by wading in first. We do this with our attitude. You do what you can do, and watch what God will do.