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God's Law of Use and Disuse

By Bill Lockwood

"To every one that has, it shall be given, and he shall have abundance; and from him that has not, it shall be taken away even that which he has" (Matthew 25:29).

Note the significance of the above statement in the parable of the talents. It might be referred to as a general principle of God's government, for Jesus restates it in the parable of the pounds (Luke 19:26) as well as at the conclusion of the parable of the lampstand (Luke 8:18). It applies in Matthew 25 to the one-talent man who refused to use his talent for the Lord. The general rule is this: If a man has a talent and *exercises it*, he is progressively able to do more with it. But, if he has a talent and fails to utilize it, he will inevitably lose it. It is a law in the spiritual as well as physical world.

One has stated that we could paraphrase Jesus' law this way: "There is virtue in regularity." In other words, use what God gave you—on a regular basis—and your abilities as well as opportunities multiply. This is the reason you get a busy man to do the job we want done. Those who are not busy never seem to have the time. Consider:

1. *The Physical World.* Those who make schedules for their work, and keep it, get much done. Others wonder how. Physical exercise is helpful, but only if we maintain a steady schedule. Solomon said, *"By much slothfulness the building decays, through idleness the house drops through"* (Ecclesiastes 10:18). Better to allow someone to live in the house than for it to sit idle.
2. *The Mechanical World.* A machine works best if it is regularly used. Intermittent use tends to break things down more quickly. Taking a spark-plug wire off of a car (older models, of course) corrupts its power.
3. *The Spiritual World.* Many believe they can "come to church" only once in a while and keep up their spiritual strength. It cannot be done. They find very little joy in religion, or in worship services. Why? For the same reason that the automobile runs roughly when all pistons do not fire. There is no regularity to their attendance. The Lord's Supper on a weekly regular basis (Acts 20:7) seems pointless to some, but if we break its regularity our strength depletes.

Memorization of the Scriptures is precisely the same. If one were to quit quoting the Bible at all, then the bulk of the verses committed to memory would be gone in five years. It must be regularly used.

Some have said, "I should not obey Christ in baptism until I can live successfully as a Christian." This is wrong. We learn by doing, by practicing regularly. Of the Jews in Nehemiah 4, whom Nehemiah encouraged to build the wall of Jerusalem, the inspired writer noted, *"The strength of the bearers of burdens has decayed; we cannot build the wall"* (v 10). Sad, isn't it? Through idleness the strong become weak. Jesus knew it was

the same with us. Therefore he commanded, "*If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me*" (Matthew 16:24). Without daily exercise real discipleship does not exist. A cross borne regularly is easier to bear.

If you are not *regularly* employed in Christ's kingdom, you are dying. This is an inexorable law. We must be constantly about our Father's business or we will wither.