

The Book of James Being and Doing

Lesson #4 for October 25, 2014

Scriptures: James 1:23-24; Matthew 19:16-22; Luke 6:27-38; Romans 8:2-4; 12:9-18; 2 Peter 1:3-4.

1. Jean Francois Gravelet, better known as “The Great Blondin,” became famous for walking across Niagara Falls on a tightrope. In September of 1860, the Prince of Wales had witnessed Blondin’s crossing of the falls with an assistant on his back. After the walk, Blondin turned to the British prince and offered to carry him across the falls too. Although the prince had heard of the man’s skills, and had even just seen them in action, he was still not ready to place his life in Blondin’s hands.

The point is, of course, that hearing and seeing are not enough when it comes to a relationship with God. *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide* for Sabbath, October 18.
2. Do we really believe that God’s will is better for us than our own ideas? Do we live accordingly? What is the significance of “being and doing”?

God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory [225] of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him. (*DA* 224.5)
3. Read James 1:23-24. Someone once said this about his enemy: “I see him every day—when I’m shaving.” Do we really recognize this fact? Do we agree with it? If so, why is it so hard to change the way we think and act? Or, is the problem that we do not really want to change? Remember that we ultimately do not do the changing; we must allow the Holy Spirit to do it for us. We do not even see ourselves truthfully. See 1 Samuel 16:7, *GNB*. “But the LORD said to him, ‘Pay no attention to how tall and handsome he is. I have rejected him, because I do not judge as people judge. They look at the outward appearance, but I look at the heart.’” In fact, God does not reveal to us all our defects at one time, or we might become too discouraged. Why are we so defective?
4. Look at a couple examples from the Bible. Read Matthew 19:16-22; 26:33-35,69-75. What was the essential difference between Peter and the rich young ruler? Despite his braggadocio, Peter was willing to recognize his need for change. The rich young ruler was not.
5. Read James 1:22. Is there a difference between “doing the word” and being a “doer of the word”? Ultimately, we must become like Jesus, as far as possible—actually becoming “doers of the word.”

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us. (*The Desire of Ages* 668.3) [Bold type is added.]

Can you imagine that?

6. We need to be truly changed to the point where doing what is right becomes natural.
7. Read Luke 6:27-38. Notice some of the things that Jesus was recommending: Love your enemies, give freely, do not retaliate, and be merciful. Are those things possible for naturally-selfish human beings? Paul said essentially the same thing in Galatians 5:19-23.
8. Our only safety is in continually focusing on the life and character of Jesus Christ. When we turn our eyes away from Him and to ourselves for whatever reason, we lose.
9. Can you think of a time when you did something because you were required to do so? How was that different from doing something you really wanted to do? Doing something which comes naturally is a pleasant task; doing something that we are just required to do is never truly pleasant.

The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely--because he is required to do so--will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness [98] is loyalty to our Redeemer. **This will lead us to do right because it is right**--because right doing is pleasing to God. (*Christ's Object Lessons* 97.3) [Bold type is added.]

10. Read James 1:25. **When we come to realize the fact that God's way is the best and we keep on practicing it, it will become natural for us.** (Compare Psalm 19:7; 119:45.)
11. Read Romans 8:2-4 and 2 Corinthians 3:17-18. What needs to be accomplished in our lives--and for that matter, in the larger, great controversy--cannot be done by human beings. God needs to deal with sin not only on the larger scale but also in our individual lives. As we focus on Jesus, we truly become transformed and not just forgiven!
12. Since the days of Martin Luther, Christians have tended to think that Paul emphasized faith while James emphasized works. Do they really disagree? People who say that have not done their homework. Read Romans 2:13 (*GNB*): "For it is not by hearing the Law that people are put right with God, but by doing what the Law commands."
13. For many of us, it may be true that someday in heaven we will begin to realize the full impact of these words; and hopefully, we will be able to go up to God and give Him a big hug and say: "Now I understand why You asked us to do all those things. Now I do them because I want to and because they are the right things to do." Are we truly ready to recognize that God's will for our lives is better than our own will for our lives?
14. Is it really possible that the laws of God are the laws of freedom? (James 1:25; John 8:36; 13:34-35; 15:12) Everyone who gets to heaven will be able to do whatever he wants to do at all times simply because he or she will never want to do anything wrong. We will never reach that goal by trying to force ourselves to keep the law. Our only safety is in allowing the Holy Spirit to make the necessary changes in us.
15. James ultimately laid down his mantra in James 1:26-27. Jesus said essentially the same thing in Matthew 23:35-36,40 as did Paul in Romans 12:9-18. True Christianity developed through faith will produce the results they were talking about.
16. "The strongest argument in favor of the gospel is a loving and lovable Christian."—Ellen G. White, *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 470.1; AG 276.7; HDL 8.1; LDE 191.4; OFC 217.2.

But, "To live such a life, to exert such an influence, costs at every step effort, self-sacrifice, discipline." (MH 470.2) Why is it hard to do that? Does it take all the fun out of life?

17. James went on to talk a lot about our words. True Christians will not be using vulgar or slang words. And they will not be using words that are hurtful to others.
18. Clearly, doing all those things for widows and orphans is not natural for human beings. But, it is exactly what God has asked us to do. And when we do those things, the rewards are amazing. (Luke 6:35; 14:12-14; Matthew 5:44)
19. Is it feasible to carry out such actions in Loma Linda? San Bernardino? Redlands? Grand Terrace? Or, Riverside? Is it possible to live that way in your city or town?
20. James went on to say we must keep ourselves "unspotted from the world." (James 1:27) John and Peter agreed. (1 John 2:15-16; 2 Peter 1:4) Looking at the world around us, is that really possible? The atmosphere in which we hope to live in heaven is one of pure unselfishness. Everyone will be totally loving. How do we become like that?

With this truth Christ connects the lesson of self-sacrifice that all should learn: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." [John 12:25] All who would bring forth fruit as workers together with Christ must first fall into the ground and die. The life must be cast into the furrow of the world's need. Self-love, self-interest, must perish. **And the law of self-sacrifice is the law of self-preservation.** The husbandman preserves his grain by casting it away. So in human life. To give is to live. The life that will be preserved is the life that is freely given in service to God and man. Those who for [624] Christ's sake sacrifice their life in this world will keep it unto life eternal.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages* 623.5. Compare COL 86.3. [Bold type is added.]

21. Some think that it is impossible to keep oneself "unspotted from the world" while being surrounded by the world in which we live. The secret is not moving away from all other humans although that may be helpful in some ways in resisting sin. But, the true battle comes from within.

The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 64.2; OFC 90.3; OHC 27.2; RH, February 17, 1885 par. 17.

22. Let us not misunderstand what Ellen G. White was saying. She was not saying that the closer we get to Jesus the faultier we actually become. She continued:

The more our sense of need drives us to Him and to the word of God, the more exalted views we shall have of His character, and the more fully we shall reflect His image.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ*, p. 65.2.

23. Jesus called that real religion. "Happy are those whose greatest desire is to do what God requires." (Matthew 5:6) Doing good for others and teaching them about the gospel was such an enjoyable task for Jesus that He preferred that to eating. (John 4:28-35)

24. If we follow this plan for our lives:

A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits. The contrast will be clear and decided between what they have been and what they are. **The character is revealed, not [58] by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and**

acts.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* 57.2. [Bold type is added.]

Instead of releasing man from obedience, it is faith, and faith only, that makes us partakers of the grace of Christ, which enables us to render obedience.—Ellen G. White, *Steps to Christ* 60.1.

As Jesus was in human nature, so God means His followers to be. In His strength we are to live the life of purity and nobility which the Saviour lived.—Ellen G. White, *Our Father Cares* 69.1-2; *FLB* 93.6-7.

25. Police were trying to place electronic eavesdropping devices in an office where they suspected criminals were working. The only problem: vicious Dobermans surrounded the compound. So, the police, each night, would feed the dogs hamburgers. At first they would toss about five or six between the bars. Before long, the dogs were not only eating the burgers out of the officers' hands, but they were licking the officers' hands when done. Thus, with the guard dogs tamed, the police were able to infiltrate and plant the devices. What lesson can we take from this story about how we, if we are not careful, can let our own guards down? *Adult Teacher's Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, p. 47.
26. Are we prepared to: 1) Recognize that the root of temptation comes from our own lusts and desires? 2) Discern that God's ways are better for us than our own natural ways? And 3) Admit that in our own power it is impossible to resist temptation, but with God all things are possible?
27. Are we prepared to experience God's power in our lives? Have you experienced the joy of actually being able to conquer some of your natural evil tendencies in God's power? James 1:21 suggests that it is only by having God's Word implanted in our hearts that we can successfully live the Christian life. Romans 10:17 and 2 Corinthians 4:6 agree.
28. Faith is the key to God's plan of salvation. He will transform us, and our behaviors will demonstrate what God has done in our lives. Those behaviors will be the basis on which God carries out His final judgment. (Matthew 16:27; 1 Peter 1:17; Revelation 20:12; 22:12)
- It is not possible for us to drift into heaven. . . . Those who refuse to co-operate with God on earth would not co-operate with Him in heaven. **It would not be safe to take them to heaven.**—Ellen G. White, *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 280.2. [Bold type is added.]
29. In the past, Seventh-day Adventists have often been characterized as hopeless legalists. In our day, some seem to have gone to the opposite extreme and do not even want to talk about keeping the law. Do we really believe that it is a law of liberty, a law that sets us free? (James 1:25; 2:12; John 8:31-32)
30. So, where are we on this spectrum? Which seems to be the greater danger in your Christian community: Legalism? Or, a lax attitude toward obedience? Do you know people who are "so heavenly minded that they are of no earthly good"? By contrast, do you know some who are so wrapped up in their activities on this earth that God cannot use them?
31. We have to recognize that—as Paul said in Romans 6:6—as long as we allow our natural human selfishness to rule, we will not make progress. The old man must be crucified. Are we ready to allow God to make those necessary changes in our lives?

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