

Sabbath School Today

With the 1888 Message Dynamic

Stewardship: Motives of the Heart

Lesson 2. I See, I Want, I Take

The subtitle to this quarterly's lessons on stewardship is "Motives of the Heart." The most important aspect of the 1888 message is that everything depends on our heart motives. Unless we have accepted that we can do nothing to save ourselves, our attempts to ingratiate ourselves to God present a false gospel that is constantly infused with self. Without the union with and continued indwelling of the Holy Spirit, any righteousness we may think we have is considered by God as filthy rags.

The solution is a new heart, as David yearns for in Psalm 51: "Create in me a clean heart ..." He doesn't ask for God to patch up the bad spots on an otherwise pretty good heart. We must accept that God gave us the first body He created for us in the first Adam (see Paul's argument on the two Adams in Romans, chapter 5) and He "rebirths" us in the second Adam (Christ) and will give us a completely new body at the resurrection. The human race needs a Creator, not more "works" programs to make us think we're getting better.

God created bodies for us and everything that we need to support them physically and emotionally. Paul summarized the entire subject of our stewardship to God in Romans 12:1: "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship" (*New American Standard Bible*). Using this passage, Ellet J. Waggoner reasons that because of God's infinite power and wisdom, "Nobody can add anything to Him. No one can put God under obligations to Him. No one can give Him something for which He should receive something in return." [1] It is only what God has given us that we can give back to Him.

In further analyzing this passage in Romans, Waggoner reaches the conclusion that since God created us and provided all we need, and He needs nothing—it is "reasonable that all should yield their bodies to Him, for Him to control. He alone has the wisdom and the power to do it properly." [2]

The logical extension of giving Him our bodies includes everything else He has given us to support our bodies, the most important of which is faith. In essence, God created us and equipped and empowered us to be good stewards of everything He has given us. The idea of stewardship has become associated only with financial responsibility, but it's much more than that.

Waggoner describes a complete attitude shift from what sin has given us. After the first Adam fell, our birth inheritance from him is embodied in the title of this lesson, "I see, I

want, I take.” We are born with self-centered pride as our motivation for everything we do. That sounds hopeless but God has consecrated a new and living way that starts with rebirth. It seems a simple solution, but our pride doesn’t let go easily. We are not naturally inclined to be humble. Pride is always rearing its ugly head, mainly in figuring out ways to improve on what God has called “good.”

“Pride Is the Enemy of Faith.—The two cannot live together. A man can think soberly and humbly only as the result of the faith that God gives ... The man who has confidence in his own strength and wisdom, will not depend upon another. Trust in the wisdom and power of God comes only when we recognize and acknowledge our own weakness and ignorance.

“Faith a Gift of God.—That faith which God deals to man is indicated in Revelation 14:12: ‘Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.’ God does not give faith to the saints only, any more than He gives the commandments to them alone; but the saints *keep* the faith, and others do not. The faith which they keep is the faith of Jesus; therefore it is the faith of Jesus that is given to men.” [3]

“Keeping” is generally what stewards do. They keep what they have been given. The unrighteous steward (Luke 16:13) was told that he was going to be fired for squandering his master’s means. The unrighteous steward said, “I see, I want, so I take.” When the master found out, he shrewdly granted discounts to the master’s debtors, not to guarantee some return on potential “bad debts” for his master, but to generate good will so the debtors would take him in when he was fired. This steward was not “keeping” anything for his master, he was manipulating him. The master complimented him for his shrewdness, missing the steward’s ulterior motives.

What is Jesus illustrating with this parable? We have learned that all people, not just believers are given faith. God gives us the freedom to keep it or use it for selfish purposes. Many make the mistake that since we are only given a “measure” of faith, it is our responsibility to grow it by exercise. In other words, God has not given us enough faith, so we must do our part. This is another way to deny God’s power and sufficiency.

“In What Measure?—We have seen that faith is given to every man. This may be known also by the fact that salvation is given to every man, and placed within his grasp, and salvation is only by faith. ...

“The question is, in what measure has God given every man faith? This is really answered in the fact already learned, that the faith which He gives is the faith of Jesus. The faith of Jesus is given in the gift of Jesus Himself, and Christ is given in His fullness to every man. He tasted death for every man (Heb. 2:9). ‘Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ’ (Eph. 4:7). Christ is not divided; therefore to every man is given all of Christ and all of His faith. There is but one measure.” [4]

So our stewardship is based on keeping the faith of Jesus, which has been given to us in full measure without need for our improvement. There is no need for us to do anything but keep and cherish what God has given us. No one has this inclination of “motives of the heart” naturally, but if we lay hold on His promises by faith, we will have the mind of Christ gradually replace our hearts, which can only See, Want, and Take.

—Arlene Hill

Endnotes:

[1] Ellet J. Waggoner, *Waggoner on Romans*, p. 177.

[2] Ibid.

[3] Ibid., p. 179; emphasis added.

[4] Ibid.

Notes:

Pastor Paul Penno’s video of this lesson is on the Internet at:

<https://youtu.be/SUGAa76s9Gs>

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