

Sabbath School Today
With the 1888 Message Dynamic

“Feed My Sheep”*: *First and Second Peter
Lesson 9. Be Who You Are

“For this very reason, *make every effort* to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love” (2 Peter 1:5-7, *New International Version*, emphasis added).

Our memory verse this week can easily be misunderstood if we don't understand the special work of preparing a group of people who will stand through the end of time. People who are inclined to legalism see this text as instruction to try ever harder to do all the things in Peter's list “right,” not realizing that it's impossible for sinful humans to do this. Those who realize that scoff at the impossibility and comfort themselves by thinking that a rational God would never expect perfection from sinful human beings.

A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner, the 1888 “messengers,” saw that genuine righteousness by faith since 1844 is a special experience ministered by Jesus, our High Priest, from the Most Holy Apartment. This special ministry is not concerned primarily with preparing people to die, but preparing a corporate body of God's people for translation at the coming of Christ.

The great controversy between Christ and Satan cannot be concluded until such a demonstration develops. Thus it is evident that the views of popular churches that do not follow Christ by faith in His Most Holy Apartment ministry cannot be “present truth” righteousness by faith.

The message given to the Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1888 has a special, unique understanding of the everlasting gospel entrusted to us. The world must know about the cleansing of the sanctuary and how it relates to practical godliness. It's not our job to cleanse and make ourselves righteous in the Day of Atonement. It is the responsibility of our High Priest. We choose, believe, or “let” Him do it.

After discussing the impossibility of achieving character through the earthly sacrificial system or the law, A. T. Jones explains, “This again shows that though *perfection* was the aim in all the ministry that was performed under the law, yet perfection was not attained by any of those performances. ... Therefore, since the will of God is the sanctification and the perfection of the worshipers; since the will of God is that His worshipers shall be so cleansed that they shall have no more conscience of sin; and since the service and the offerings in that earthly sanctuary could not do this; He took it all away that He may establish the will of God. “*By the which will we are sanctified* through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.” [1]

Perfection is attained only through Christ. “In His coming in the flesh—having been made in all things like unto us, and having been tempted in all points like as we are—He has identified Himself with every human soul just where that soul is. ... He, as one of us, in our human nature, weak as we, laden with the sins of the world, in our sinful flesh, in this world, a whole lifetime, lived a life ‘holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,’ and ‘was made’ and ascended ‘higher than the heavens.’ ... *Perfection*, perfection of character, is the Christian goal—perfection attained in human flesh in this world. Christ attained it in human flesh in this world, and thus made and consecrated a way by which, *in Him*, every believer can attain it. He, having attained it, has become our great High Priest, by His priestly ministry in the true sanctuary to enable us to attain it. ... ‘Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary.’ Psalm 77:13.” [2]

What does that mean? If the sanctuary holds the key to Christian perfection, then it is important to understand. When God opened the sea, making a way for a disorderly group of slaves to leave the wickedness of Egypt, their only requirement was to believe and act on that belief. Clearly, they had misgivings, doubts, and complaints, but they left their slave quarters and followed Moses. Other than that, they had done nothing to earn God’s attention or favor. God had not yet given them His law, so other than participate in a Passover meal and walk away from Egypt, they had no idea what God expected of them.

When God gave them His law, they believed God was making a bargain with them. They were to keep His law, and in return He would be their God and protect them. They overlooked the fact that just before speaking the law to them He reminded them “I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery” (Ex. 20:2, *New American Standard Bible*). He was already their God. He had already worked miracles to rescue them out of their situation. He knew it was impossible for them to keep the law, but He used the law as a mirror to show how sinful they were. Since they could never keep the law in spirit and truth, He gave them the sanctuary service to show them His way of salvation.

In the sacrificial system of the sanctuary, the role of the sinner was to understand they had sinned. Because there is no remission for sin without shedding of blood, they were to bring a sacrifice to the tabernacle. There, they would confess their sins only to God, transferring them to the innocent victim. The sinner was required to take a knife and cut the throat of the animal. This violent act was to impress the sinner of God’s abhorrence of sin, as well as to direct their minds to the ultimate Victim which was only typified by the animal sacrifices.

After the cut, the priest caught the blood in a bowl, and took it into the Holy Place and sprinkled it on the veil separating the two compartments, symbolically transferring the sin into the Most Holy Place. Note that the priest is the one who administers the blood. The sinner did not follow the priest into the tabernacle to see what the priest did with the blood. The sinner had to believe this process provided reconciling forgiveness so he

was set right with God. It was by faith in the ancient tabernacle, just as it is entirely by faith now.

So is that it? Is that all there is to do, just believe? What about Peter telling us to “make every effort” to add good things to our character? Doesn’t that mean our works count for something? The 11th chapter of Hebrews reminds us of people of faith, Noah, Abraham, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, and many others who began a long journey of choices and steps as God disciplined and refined them, settling them into their faith so they could not be moved. For most of them, a great deal of their journey was spent simply waiting, which is rarely easy. The problem happens when we resist God’s voice, we give up faith because we don’t understand why He is asking us to do this or that difficult thing, or why He waits.

Jesus told Nicodemus if He was “lifted up” He would draw all to Him. That includes us as we go through the discipline of trials that our heavenly Father brings to refine our characters. Just as the sinner who brought his lamb to the ancient tabernacle needed faith to believe the priest was carrying out his responsibilities, so we need to lift Jesus up in our lives when we go through trials. The timing of when Jesus is able to add the things in Peter’s list to our characters is up to Him. Our job is not to resist.

—Arlene Hill

Endnotes:

[1] A. T. Jones, *The Consecrated Way*, pp. 84-86; Glad Tidings ed. (emphasis in original).

[2] Ibid, pp. 87-89.

Notes:

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

<https://youtu.be/pWD9uRgJDHM>

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