

Sabbath School Lesson #2 – I See, I Want, I Take – 6-12 January 2018

Christ would have us avoid this spiritual trap that Satan has laid for us. First, Christ tells us through Matthew: “He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful” (Matthew 13:22). Second, Christ tells us through Ellen White the trap that Satan has laid, as Satan says to his devils: “Go, make the possessors of lands and money drunk with the cares of this life. Present the world before them in its most attractive light, that they may lay up their treasure here, and fix their affections upon earthly things. We must do our utmost to prevent those who labor in God’s cause from obtaining means to use against us. Keep the money in our own ranks. The more means they obtain, the more they will injure our kingdom by taking from us our subjects. Make them care more for money than the upbuilding of Christ’s kingdom and the spread of the truths we hate, and we need not fear their influence; for we know that every selfish, covetous person will fall under our power, and will finally be separated from God’s people” (*Counsels on Stewardship*, pp 154-155). Our Lesson study this week is taken from: 2 Corinthians 8:1-7; Matthew 13:3-7, 22; Genesis 3:1-6; Isaiah 56:11; Matthew 26:14-16; and 2 Peter 1:5-9.

Sunday: The Prosperity Gospel – The church of Christ occupies a peculiar position in the world. Its members are comparatively few, and are mostly poor; for God has chosen the poor of this world (James 2:5), and not many wise men after the flesh, not many might, not many noble are called (1 Corinthians 1:26); yet this poor company, whose only legacy from this world is tribulations and afflictions (read John 15:19-21; 16:33; 1 Thessalonians 3:3) owe to the world a debt which can scarcely ever think of it. The sentiment that finds expression in the prosperity gospel, that the proof of God’s blessings is the abundance of material possessions that you own and keep to yourself, has insidiously crept into the church, and has affected to a great degree many of its members who are perhaps unconscious of it. Such a sentiment as this is directly opposite to Christ’s character.

Christ gave all the wealth of heaven for the redemption of the world. He became poor, that He might make others rich. He was under no obligation to do this; but we who have received the gift, and who have nothing that we have not received (John 15:5; 1 Corinthians 4:7), owe all we have to Christ; and since He has given Himself and all that He possessed to the world, it follows that what we owe to Christ we owe to the world. We give to Christ by giving to carry the message of His grace to the world. That we owe all that we have is evident from Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20: “Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price;” that price being “the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:18-19). If we are not our own, then of course nothing that we have is our own.

All that we have we owe, in Christ, to the world, that they may learn of the riches of His grace. There was a time in the history of the church when not one of the members said or thought of the things which he possessed was his own (see Acts 4:31-33); and that was a time of great power in proclaiming the message, and of wonderful growth in the church, because “great grace was upon them all.” If every one who professes to be Christ’s in these last days would consider that neither he nor his property is his own, but that he owes all to Christ and to His last message to the world, might we not expect that the message would be given with great power? We may be poor in this world’s goods, yet this does not relieve us from responsibility. We have on record for our example the churches in Macedonia, “How that in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.” Even beyond their power they were willing of themselves; and this they did because they “first gave their own selves to the Lord” (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). Let it not be overlooked that this was the result of the grace of God bestowed on them (see verse 1). We too may be counted “good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

Monday: Blurred Spiritual Eyesight – “Some love this world so much that it swallows up their love for the truth. As their treasures here increase, their interest in the heavenly treasure decreases. The more they possess of this world, the more closely do they hug it to them, as if fearful their coveted treasure would be taken from them. The more they possess, the less do they have to bestow upon others, for the more they have, the poorer they feel. O, the deceitfulness of riches! They will not see and feel the wants of the cause of God” (Ellen G White, 2SG 267.1).

Have you not often thought you saw something that you did not see? Does not your sight often deceive you? Sometimes you thought you saw a thing that you did not see, and then again you saw things that when you came to look at them closely, were not as they really appeared to be. But the word of God never deceives. Therefore I am more sure of the things promised in the word of God than if I could see them. “Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace, to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed; not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham; who is the father of us all” (Romans 4:16). “The things which are seen are

temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:18). We must revise our logic a little in this matter. We think that anything that we can see is all right and sure. Therefore we get hold of a house or a piece of land or other property, and think that we have something, because there is in our possession something that we can see. But the truth of the matter is that the only things that we can depend on are the things that we cannot see. We can see earth and heaven, but “heaven and earth shall pass away” (Luke 21:33). “But the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you” (1 Peter 1:25). With the Psalmist we can say, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea” (Psalms 46:1-3). We need to see beyond houses or land or property. The time is coming when the earth will reel to and fro like a drunkard and be removed like a cottage; the mountains will skip away, and pass over into the ocean. When that time comes, there will be some people who will feel perfectly calm and trustful; but they will not be composed of any person who have never learned to say that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). He that doubts God now will doubt Him then. “He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.”

Tuesday: The Steps of Covetousness – “Out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, ... covetousness, wickedness, deceit, ... all these evil things come from within, and defile the man” (Mark 7:21-23). And how may we get rid of this evil? “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises; that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.” “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world; and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 5:4).

Wednesday: Greed—Having Things Your Way – “Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter” (Isaiah 56:11). These last days are perilous times because “men shall be lovers of their own selves ... lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof” (2 Timothy 3:1-5). Prophecy in the Bible warns us that in the church of God, among those who have been set to be watchmen, to feed the flock of God, and to give warning of danger, there will be those who will feed themselves rather than the flock, and will feed upon the flock (Acts 22:28-30; Ezekiel 34:2-6). Men’s hearts will be overcharged with surfeiting and drunkenness, and so the day of the Lord will come upon them unawares (Luke 21:34). Eating and drinking will be the snare of the last days. Not that people should not eat and drink; that is a necessity of nature, and is designed by God to be the great means by which He is recognised and glorified; God calls men to eat that which is good. But the trouble is that men have perverted the good gifts of God, and as their table has become a snare to them, they have been overcome with a spirit of slumber. “But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day; we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.”

Thursday: Self-Control – The greatest lack of self-control in fellow Seventh-day Adventists is in still eating animal products when they know or ought to know the moral and health dangers! Their bellies have become their gods! “For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things” (Philippians 3:18-19). To those still eating meats, “whose god is their belly,” Ellen White says, “If Seventh-day Adventists practiced what they profess to believe, if they were sincere health reformers, they would indeed be a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. And they would show a far greater zeal for the salvation of those who are ignorant of the truth.” “Greater reforms should be seen among the people who claim to be looking for the soon appearing of Christ. Health reform is to do among our people a work which it has not yet done. There are those who ought to be awake to the danger of meat eating, who are still eating the flesh of animals, thus endangering the physical, mental, and spiritual health. Many who are now only half converted on the question of meat eating will go from God’s people, to walk no more with them.” “Those who indulge in meat eating, tea drinking, and gluttony are sowing seeds for a harvest of pain and death. The unhealthful food paced in the stomach strengthens the appetites that war against the soul, developing the lower propensities. A diet of flesh meat tends to develop animalism. A development of animalism lessens spirituality, rendering the mind incapable of understanding truth.” “Far better give up the name of Christian than make a profession and at the same time indulge appetites which strengthen unholy passions” (Ellen White, *Review & Herald*, 27 May 1902, paragraphs 1, 2, 4, 15). What a pity that even this Lesson cannot be understood if meat has rendered your “mind incapable of understanding truth”!