

A Double-minded Man

by L.A. Mott

John Clark tells it, so it must be so! “You are the smartest preacher I ever knew,” said the woman, laying it on thick. “You must surely be that double-minded man James wrote about.”

Listen better than she did: *“If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways”* (James 1:5-8). Then note the context of *“...purify your hearts, you double-minded”* (4:8). James had been indicting as “adulteresses” those who try to be married to God while carrying on a love affair with the world (v. 4).

Greek for **double-minded** is *literally* “two-souled” — referring to someone with two souls, two personalities, within him, with conflicting aims and motives. “Ask in faith,” I think, does not mean “believing that you will receive what you ask,” so much as “ask with conviction . . . really wanting what you ask for.” We cannot obtain the wisdom or the spiritual progress that we need until we make up our minds that that is what we want before all else.

A person prays, “Lead me not into temptation,” and then deliberately hurls himself into the path of temptation. He is not being serious, nor even honest. Of course, he will not receive the thing that he is asking. He does not really want it. Will God give it to him against his will?

Someone else sees his marriage in trouble and prays, “Help me to love my wife better.” But he has not made up his mind that that is what he really wants. He really wants to be free; or he really wants another woman. So he does nothing to cultivate the relationship with his wife. He neglects the things that could help. What is the use in such a prayer? If he would make up his mind that he really wanted what he is asking for, God could and would hear him. But how is God going to respond to a double-minded fool who does not really know what he wants?

Someone else reads about Old Testament prophets and New Testament apostles, and is set to dreaming about being such a servant as these great men of old. But when it comes time to “cut the bait” or to “grub for the worms” he is not sure whether he wants to fish or not. How can God make him a servant like Paul when he will not put his life in God’s hands as Paul did? When he will not sacrifice himself on God’s altar? When he will to spend his time and money at the things that cooperate toward making his fantasies a reality? “Oh, if only I could...” “Oh, how I wish I could be ...” Do you really?

We must make up our minds. God wants to do great things for us and with us. But he can do nothing with “a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways” . . . nothing, that is, but dismiss him to whatever place is appropriate for the foolish, the dishonest and the useless.

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EDITOR’S NOTE: The author of this article passed away on August 16, 2016 in Gainesville, Florida at the age of 78 due to cancer. His work lives on through his writings and his workbooks, ***Thinking Through The Bible*** (thinkingthrough.org).

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