

Chapter 9. DOING AND KNOWING

But He [Jesus] said, "More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it!" – Luke 11:28

"If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know..." – John 7:17

Some time ago I received a letter from one who was evidently an earnest Christian, asking me for some hints to help him in Bible study. My first thought was to answer that there are so many addresses and booklets on the subject, that he would find all I could say, better said already. After a little while, certain experiences in my own immediate circle made me feel how needful instruction was on this all-important subject, and I found there were points to which it appeared desirable that special prominence should be given. I take up my pen with the earnest prayer and hope that what I write may be from God, the fountain of Light and Life, to help His children to see how they may draw from His precious Word all that Divine instruction and nourishment, all that abundant joy and strength which He has there laid up for them.

I suppose myself addressing a young Christian who has said to me, "*Help me to study my Bible. Give me some rules to guide me as to how to begin, and how to go on, so that I may know my Bible well.*" The very first thing I have to say to him, the thing that comes before all else, is this: "*In your Bible study everything will depend upon the spirit in which you do it, upon the Object or the End you set for yourself. In worldly things a man is ruled and urged on by the End or Aim he sets before himself. It is no different than with the Bible. If your aim is simply to know the Bible well, you will be disappointed. If you think that the thorough knowledge of the Bible will necessarily be a blessing, you are mistaken. To some it is a curse. To others it is powerless, it does not make them holy or happy. To some it is a burden, it depresses them instead of quickening them or lifting them up.*"

And what ought then to be the Aim or the End, the real disposition of the Bible student? God's Word is food, bread from heaven. The first need for Bible study is: **A great hunger after righteousness**, a great desire to **do all God's will**. The Bible is a light. The first condition of its enjoyment is: **a longing from the heart to walk in God's ways**. Is not this what the texts I placed above teach us? "*Blessed are they*

*who hear the word of God **and keep it.***" There is no blessedness in hearing or knowing God's Word apart from **keeping it**. The Word accomplishes nothing if it is not kept, obeyed, or done. *"If any man wills to **do His will**, he shall **know.**"* According to this saying of our Lord, all true knowledge of God's Word depends upon there being first **the will to do it**. Is not this the very lesson we are enforcing? God will refuse to unlock the real meaning and blessing of His Word to any but those **whose will is firmly set upon it to doing it**. I must read my Bible with one purpose: *"Whatever He says to you, **do it.**" (Joh.2:5).*

Why this is so, is easily explained when we think of what **words** are meant for. They stand between the will and the deed. A man wills to do something for you: before he does it, he expresses his thought or purpose in words; then he fulfils the words by doing what he has promised. The same with God. His words have their value from what He does. In creation His Word was with power; He spoke, and it was done. In grace He does what He says. David prayed: *"Now, O LORD God, do as You have said."* (2 **Sam.7:25**). Solomon said at the consecration of the temple: *"Who fulfilled with His hand what He has spoken with His mouth." "Who has kept that which You had promised;" "Who spoke it with your mouth and fulfilled it with Your hand." "Let Your word come true, which You have spoken."* (2 **Chr.6:4, 10; 15, 17**). In the prophets God says: *"I the Lord have spoken it; **I will do it.**"* (**Ezek.22:14**). And they say, *"What You had spoken, **is done.**"* The truth and the worth of what God promises consists in this, that **He does it**. His word of promise is meant to be done.

This is no less true of His Word of command, of things which He meant **us to do**. If we do not do them, if we seek to know them, if we admire their beauty and praise their wisdom, but do not **do them**, we deceive ourselves. They are meant **to be done**; it is only as we do them that their real meaning and blessing can be unfolded to us. It is only as we do them, that we can really grow in the Divine life. *"That you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work (first this, then) and increasing in the knowledge of God"* (**Col.1:10**). It is only when we approach God's words with the same aim which God had in view **that they should be done**, that we can have any hope of blessing.

Is this not what we see all around us in the pursuit of knowledge, or in any branch of trade? The apprentice or pupil is expected to put the lessons he receives into practice; only then is he prepared for further teaching. And it is the same in the

Christian life. Bible study is mere theory, a pleasing exercise of the mind and imagination, worth little or nothing for a life of true holiness or Christlikeness, until the student is ready never to open or close his Bible without making God's purpose his very own, and obeying when He says: "***Do all that I say.***"

This was the mark of the saints of old. "*So Abram went, as the Lord had spoken to him,*" "*As the Lord commanded Moses, so he did,*" is the description of the man who as a servant was faithful in all his house. And of David we read: "*I have found a man after My own heart, who shall do all My will.*" In **Psalm 119** we hear him speaking with God about His word, and praying for Divine light and teaching, but always accompanied by the vow of obedience, or some other expression of love and delight. It is the doing of God's will, that even with God's own Son, is the one secret of entrance into the favour and the mind of God.

I have just been reading Mr. Moody's new book, "Pleasure and Profit in Bible Study." I doubt that many will apply the suggestions it contains. They will think correctly: 'What has helped a man like Mr. Moody, can help me too.' And yet they may be disappointed. They must be, unless they bring to the Bible what Mr. Moody brought: **An honest desire to do whatever he saw God wanted him to do.** Christian! I beg of you by the mercies of God, when you ask God to lead you into the treasures of His Word, into the palace where Christ dwells, do it as one who presents himself as a living sacrifice, **ready to do whatever God says.** Do not think: 'Of course!' It is of more importance than you know. This is more frequently absent from Bible study than you think. Seek for it with deep humility. The first need for enjoying your food is hunger. The first requirement for Bible study is **a simple, determined longing to discover what God wants you to do, and an unshakeable earnest resolve to do it.** "*If any man wills to do His will, He shall know...*" – to him the Word of God will be opened up.

Prayer: Lord Jesus, I have read much of your Word without the desired effect in my life. I gained a lot of knowledge but now I earnestly desire to do your will, to obey all your commandments, to walk in your ways. Reveal to me what I must do and then help me to obey. Amen.