

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2019: *"The Least of These": Ministering to Those in Need*

Lesson 9 "Ministry in the New Testament Church"

Read for this week's study

Acts 2:42–47; 4:32–37; Matthew 25:38, 40; Acts 9:36; 2 Corinthians 8:7–15; Romans 12; James 2:1–9.

Memory Text

"Pure and undefiled religion before God and the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their trouble, and to keep oneself unspotted from the world" (James 1:27, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. A New Kind of Community
- III. Dorcas's Ministry and Witness
- IV. Giving as a Way of Sharing
- V. Paul's Guide to Living and Loving Well
- VI. James "the Just"
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Read Matthew 28:18-20 in a number of translations. As best you can determine, how many main verbs are there in this passage? How does the concept of "making disciples" relate to the needy? How does this passage relate to the life and mission of individual followers of Jesus? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Read Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-37. According to these two passages, what are the key elements in the life and practice of the earliest church? From what sources did the earliest church draw its guidelines for the "new community" Jesus left behind? Read Acts 6:1-6. What was the role of these "deacons"? How do you square Jesus' repeated statement that "the poor you have always with you" (Matthew 26:11; Mark 14:7; John 12:8) with the promise of Deuteronomy 15:4 (RSV, "there will be no poor among you")? (Sunday's lesson)
3. Read Acts 9:36. According to this text, what does it mean to be a "disciple"? Shouldn't Dorcas have spent more time preaching and giving Bible studies? Dorcas

was deeply missed when she died. How important to you is the idea of leaving a legacy? (Monday's lesson)

4. Read 2 Corinthians 8:7-15. How does Paul link the gospel with giving generously? How should we prioritize giving when we are unable to give to every cause or need presented to us? (Tuesday's lesson)
5. Read Romans, chapter 12, and notice particularly its instructions regarding love and care for others, especially those in need. In the first verses, what does Paul mean by the "pattern of this world"? What is the relationship between the sacrifice of Christ and our mission to the needy? Is the advice at the end on overcoming evil with good practical or is it an unreachable ideal? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read James 2:1-9 and 5:1-5. How is James' attitude toward the rich different from that held in most societies? How are rich and poor to be treated within the church community? What is to be the Christian attitude toward the accumulation of wealth? Why is it easy to prefer the rich over the poor in our everyday relationships? (Thursday's lesson)
7. How can our church communities become more like the one described in the book of Acts? Should they become more like it? How should the world church relate to the earliest church's resource sharing? Is that a model for us today? (Friday's lesson)
8. James 5 uses strong language that echoes the kind of harsh warnings given by the OT prophets. Why are such expressions sometimes appropriate and necessary? (Friday's lesson)

Key Passage

Matthew 28:18-20, Jon Paulien

Bold and *Italics* = main verbs

When Jesus came

He said to them,

"All authority

in heaven and earth

has been given to Me."

Wherever you go, therefore,

make disciples of all nations,

Baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Teaching them to observe (keep) everything

I have commanded you;

And behold

I am with you all the days,

even until the end of the world."

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

“Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution. And the twelve summoned the body of the disciples and said [I thought the twelve were the disciples. No, there were lots of disciples.], ‘It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables [Now, sometimes we think of serving tables as a demeaning task. Then remember Stephen’s speech. He was a table server, but he could also preach.]. Therefore, brethren, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit, and of wisdom, whom we may appoint to this duty. But we leaders will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.” And what they said pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip [and the others that are named. Verse 6;]. These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands upon them [and as a result, because the leaders now were not in charge, things began to fall apart? No!]. The word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.” Which is something to think about in terms of church organization. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Acts, recorded April, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/59MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/60MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

“I appeal to you therefore, brethren,” after all the theology, Paul comes down to the practical affairs of life; and if theology does not affect the way we live, it’s a waste of time. “I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is your ...” What do you have?

King James had “reasonable service,” and I remember hearing sermons on the fact that health reform is a “reasonable” thing to do. I believe it is, but that’s not the message here at all. The Greek word for “service” is not the service of a slave, nor the service of a deacon. Those are different words. It is “worship”. It’s the service of a priest. It’s worship. And the word “reasonable” is not the opposite of “unreasonable”. It’s the word that means, well, Peter says, “As newborn babes, earnestly desire the ‘milk of the word’, or spiritual milk, that you may grow thereby.” He wasn’t saying goat’s milk, or cow’s milk, or soy milk. He meant milk that pertains to the mind that you may grow thereby. This word means “intelligent, rational, spiritual” worship. In other words, to present ourselves to God not half dead, but as living sacrifices, is an act of “intelligent worship.” And what Paul is saying is, “Think of all the dead pigeons we used to bring to God. And it was right if we read the right meaning into it. But God is saying now, ‘Don’t bring me any more dead sheep or dead pigeons, but please bring yourselves. And bring

yourselves in the best condition possible. This will be an act of intelligent worship, because I have so much to tell you, if you could just listen. But some of you are in such miserable health you find it very difficult to listen. So please, even this far from the tree of life, look after yourselves. Be living sacrifices, and listen.” “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind [so look after it, please], that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

What I like about this is, the kind of worship God desires is described as rational, intelligent, spiritual worship; not mechanical, not ritualistic, not ceremonial. But we worship an intelligent God. He wants us to worship him in spirit and in truth, Jesus said. So to do something mechanical, learned by rote, is a terrible misrepresentation of the truth about God. Remember Isaiah? “Your worship of me is but the commandments of men learned by rote.” You come into the temple, but your hearts aren’t in it. Remember the Sabbath-keepers in Amos? All that kind of unthinking obedience suggests an unthinking God. So Romans 12: 1, 2 is a magnificent passage. The kind of worship God wants is worship that is appropriate to the kind of God that he is. And I think that really affects the way we worship. You know, when we go through an hour of worship you remember the things we all do in the right and proper order. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Romans, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

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Further Study with Ellen White

All who consecrate soul, body, and spirit to God will be constantly receiving a new endowment of physical and mental power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. Christ gives them the breath of His own spirit, the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth its highest energies to work in heart and mind. The grace of God enlarges and multiplies their faculties, and every perfection of the divine nature comes to their assistance in the work of saving souls. Through co-operation with Christ they are complete in Him, and in their human weakness they are enabled to do the deeds of Omnipotence. {DA 827.3}

Christ has made provision that His church shall be a transformed body, illumined with the light of heaven, possessing the glory of Immanuel. It is His purpose that every Christian shall be surrounded with a spiritual atmosphere of light and peace. There is no limit to the usefulness of the one who, putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart and lives a life wholly consecrated to God. {8T 19.3}

The most powerful evidence a man can give that he has been born again and is a new man in Christ Jesus, is the manifestation of love for his brethren, the doing of Christlike deeds. This is the most wonderful witness that can be borne in favor of Christianity, and will win souls to the truth. . . . {SD 293.4}

Christ brings all true believers into complete oneness with Himself, even the oneness which exists between Him and His Father. The true children of God are bound up with one another and with their Saviour. They are one with Christ in God. {SD 293.5}

We have one Lord, one faith, one baptism. The gospel of Christ is to reach all classes, all nations, all tongues and people. The influence of the gospel is to unite in one great brotherhood. We have only one Model that we are to imitate in character building, and then we all shall have Christ's mold; we shall be in perfect harmony; nationalities will blend in Jesus Christ, having the same mind, and the same judgment, speaking the same things, and with one mouth glorifying God. This is the work the world's Redeemer is to do for us. If we accept the truth as it is in Jesus, national prejudices and jealousies will be broken down, and the Spirit of truth will blend hearts in one. We will love as brethren; we will esteem others better than ourselves; we will be kind and courteous, meek and lowly, easy to be entreated; full of mercy and good fruits. . . . {OHC 171.2}

The promise of the Holy Spirit is not limited to any age or to any race. Christ declared that the divine influence of His Spirit was to be with His followers unto the end. From the Day of Pentecost to the present time, the Comforter has been sent to all who have yielded themselves fully to the Lord and to His service. To all who have accepted Christ as a personal Saviour, the Holy Spirit has come as a counselor, sanctifier, guide, and witness. The more closely believers have walked with God, the more clearly and powerfully have they testified of their Redeemer's love and of His saving grace. The men and women who through the long centuries of persecution and trial enjoyed a large measure of the presence of the Spirit in their lives, have stood as signs and wonders in the world. Before angels and men they have revealed the transforming power of redeeming love. {AA 49.2}

The gospel invitation is not to be narrowed down and presented only to a select few, who, we suppose, will do us honor if they accept it. The message is to be given to all. When God blesses His children, it is not alone for their own sake, but for the world's sake. As He bestows His gifts on us, it is that we may multiply them by imparting. {MH 102.1}

The truth will have the same molding influence upon hearts whatever the nationalities. Every human heart that accepts the truth will bow to the majesty of its sway, and when Christ is abiding in the heart by faith they will be of one mind, for Christ is not divided. They will be strong in His strength, happy and united in His peace. The truth is the same in its subduing power upon all hearts. It will refine and ennoble the heart of the receiver. {OHC 171.5}

Christ recognized no distinction of nationality or rank or creed. The scribes and Pharisees desired to make a local and a national benefit of the gifts of heaven, and to exclude the rest of God's family in the world. But Christ came to break down every wall of partition. He came to show that His gift of mercy and love is as unconfined as the air, the light, or the showers of rain that refresh the earth. {RC 27.2}

The life of Christ established a religion in which there is no caste, a religion by which Jew and Gentile, free and bond, are linked in a common brotherhood, equal before God. No question of policy influenced His movements. He made no difference between neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies. That which appealed to His heart was a soul thirsting for the waters of life. {RC 27.3}

He passed by no human being as worthless, but sought to apply the healing remedy to every soul. In whatever company He found Himself, He presented a lesson appropriate to the time and the circumstances. Every neglect or insult shown by men to their fellow men only made Him more conscious of their need of His divine-human sympathy. He sought to inspire with hope the roughest and most unpromising, setting before them the assurance that they might become blameless and harmless, attaining such a character as would make them manifest as the children of God. {RC 27.4}

All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, ... that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. {TMK 99.5}

There is no caste with God. He ignores everything of the kind. All souls are of value with Him. Laboring for the salvation of the soul is employment worthy of the highest honor. It matters not what may be the form of our labor, or among what class, whether high or low. In God's sight these distinctions will not affect its true worth. The sincere, earnest, contrite soul, however ignorant, is precious in the sight of the Lord. He places His own signet upon men, judging, not by their rank, not by their wealth, not by their intellectual greatness, but by their oneness with Christ. The unlearned, the outcast, the slave, if he has made the most of his opportunities and privileges, if he has cherished the light given him of God, has done all that is required. The world may call him ignorant, but God calls him wise and good, and thus his name stands registered in the books of heaven. God will fit him up to do Him honor, not only in heaven, but on the earth. —*Gospel Workers*, p. 332. (1915) {Ev 566.1}

It is not possible for the heart in which Christ abides to be destitute of love. If we love God because He first loved us, we shall love all for whom Christ died. We cannot come in touch with divinity without coming in touch with humanity; for in Him who sits upon the throne of the universe, divinity and humanity are combined. Connected with Christ, we are connected with our fellow men by the golden links of the chain of love. Then the pity and compassion of Christ

will be manifest in our life. We shall not wait to have the needy and unfortunate brought to us. We shall not need to be entreated to feel for the woes of others. It will be as natural for us to minister to the needy and suffering as it was for Christ to go about doing good. {COL 384.3}

The opinion is held by many that God placed a separating wall between the Hebrews and the outside world; that His care and love, withdrawn to a great extent from the rest of mankind, were centered upon Israel. But God did not design that His people should build up a wall of partition between themselves and their fellow men. The heart of Infinite Love was reaching out toward all the inhabitants of the earth. Though they had rejected Him, He was constantly seeking to reveal Himself to them and make them partakers of His love and grace. His blessing was granted to the chosen people, that they might bless others. {PP 368.1}

The angels of heaven are sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. We know not now who they are; it is not yet made manifest who shall overcome, and share the inheritance of the saints in light; but angels of heaven are passing throughout the length and breadth of the earth, seeking to comfort the sorrowing, to protect the imperiled, to win the hearts of men to Christ. Not one is neglected or passed by. God is no respecter of persons, and He has an equal care for all the souls He has created. {DA 639.1}

When Christ abides in the heart, the whole nature is transformed. Christ's Spirit, His love, softens the heart, subdues the soul, and raises the thoughts and desires toward God and heaven. {SC 73.1}

When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the joy of heaven. No one sees the hand that lifts the burden or beholds the light descend from the courts above. The blessing comes when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then that power which no human eye can see, creates a new being in the image of God. {ML 46.3}