

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2014: *The Book of James*
Lesson 5 “Love and the Law”

Read for this week’s study

James 2:1–13; Mark 2:16; Lev. 19:17, 18; Rom. 13:8–10; John 12:48.

Memory Text

“For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:13, NASB 1995).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Man in Gold
- III. Class Struggle
- IV. Loving Our Neighbors
- V. The Whole Law
- VI. Judged by the Law
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Daniel Duda

1. “Though it’s not easy, and often goes against our nature, true love involves a substantial amount of risk and calls us to tear down barriers that separate us as people, both outside and (especially) inside the church. This week we’ll see what James has to say about this crucial truth.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. James talks about not allowing the world to leave its dirty smudge on us. In chapter 2:1-13, he goes on to explain what he means. The world is always assessing people, sizing them up, putting them down, establishing a pecking order. God loves everyone and wants the behaviour of His church to reflect that generous and universal love.
3. “In the Greco-Roman culture of the first century, one’s public image and position were all important. Those with wealth, education, or political influence were expected to use these assets to enhance their reputation and benefit their personal interests. Any large gift to public or religious projects obligated the receiver to reciprocate to the giver in some way. Kindness was repaid with loyalty and generosity with public appreciation. The few upper-class people who attended Christian services expected privileged treatment. To ignore these expectations

would have brought disgrace on the church. A failure to be ‘politically correct’ or to reject societal values was a recipe for offense and a cause for division.” (Sunday’s lesson)

4. “Persons of lower class, who were thought to act from economic self-interest, could not bring accusations against persons of higher class, and the laws prescribed harsher penalties for lower-class persons convicted of offenses than for offenders from the higher class.”—Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL.: InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 694. (Monday’s lesson) Verse 7 indicates that these people who were rich and considered themselves “in charge”, were anxious about the dangers of the new Messianic movement of Jesus followers, and became the persecutors of the church. But James shows that in reality, King Jesus is in charge! In His presence, all human status, all pride of wealth and fine clothing pales into insignificance.
5. Why did Jesus emphasize “Love your neighbor as yourself”, making it central to His teaching? James not only spells it out, but also applies it to a specific situation.
6. “Jesus’ teaching also shows that obedience cannot be done in a vacuum. It is always *relational*, or it is meaningless. In other words, if I tithe because it is the right thing to do or because I am afraid of being lost if I don’t, it is not relational. On the other hand, if I tithe out of gratitude for how much *God* has given *me*, then my actions are based on my relationship with God.” (Wednesday’s lesson)

What if we make the decision to do something because *it is the right thing to do*, how valuable is such a motivation? How does motivation determine the value of our deeds?

7. If we are going to be judged by the royal law, the ‘law of freedom’ (2:12 cf. 1:25) what are the implications of the fact that law cannot be only “partly broken”, just as one cannot be a little pregnant or a sheet of glass a little bit broken? James cautions that already in the early days of the Christian movement, some people were trying to drive on the flat tire of social prestige rather than creating a new type of community, loving one’s neighbor as oneself.
8. “Nothing is clearer than the teaching that we will be judged by the law based on what we have done, whether for good or for evil. (...) If we thought about it long enough, we could become so paranoid about the judgment that we would give up in despair. But that is *not* what it means to ‘fear God . . . for the hour of His judgment has come’ (*Rev. 14:7, NKJV*)! Instead, we must always trust in the righteousness of Jesus, whose merits alone are our only hope in the judgment.” (Thursday’s lesson)

What does it mean to trust the merits of Jesus’ righteousness? How is this trust a solution to the problem?

9. James ends with the thought that God’s mercy will triumph over judgment (2:13). What are the implications of that? In what ways can that inspire us, and in what ways can it be abused? God forgave our arrogance, corruption and lawbreaking of all

kinds, and was merciful to us—will we want to respond similarly, and treat the poor, the helpless and the victims as God treats us?

10. Immature people talk about their beliefs; mature people live out their faith. Hearing God's Word (1:22-25; Lesson 4) and talking about God's Word can never substitute for doing God's Word. Jonah had wonderful fundamental beliefs, but ended up hating people and being angry with God (Jonah 4). One of the tests of the reality of our faith is the way we treat other people.

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Jesus eating with tax collectors and sinners. How extraordinary! What a risk to His reputation! And He suffered because of it, didn't He? They said He was a winebibber, and He associated with these immoral people. How are you going to help people if you don't meet them where they are? Which He has always done. And it's very dangerous to do that. That is, harsh critics will misunderstand. But we admire it, don't we? How marvelous that He was willing to go out and eat with these people who were regarded as the dregs of society, even stopping under the tree and saying, "Zacchaeus, I want to have dinner with you today."

Can you imagine, though, the Lord turning up at your front door and saying, "Could I have dinner with you today?" What would you say? Zacchaeus was overcome, wasn't he? He came down out of that tree, and he promised, not just restitution. He said, "I will give four times as much! He was really overwhelmed. He never got over it. And that was a very wonderful occasion. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Mark, recorded April, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/53MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/54MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

As you know, this idea that "love is the fulfilling of the law" was certainly not new with Paul. Jesus had said the same thing to the inquiring lawyer. But the first one to say it was Moses. Jesus and Paul quoted the man who was instrumental in giving the Commandments in the first place. Look at Deuteronomy 6:5: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength." (NIV)

That is one half of it. Then look in Leviticus 19:17, 18: "Do not hate your brother in your heart . . . But love your neighbor as yourself." (NIV)

Jesus quoted that from Moses, right from the beginning. But you cannot really command things like love, and "not hating your brother in your heart," can you? But when people are misbehaving, you may say so as an emergency measure. But that is all it is. It doesn't provide the lasting motivation that God desires.

Then, since even love is not clearly understood, and think how it has been grossly perverted through the years, Paul added 1 Corinthians 13:4-6. This love that we're talking about that is the fulfilling of the law, "is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right." (RSV)

Imagine living in a community where everyone lives as described in the Ten Commandments! That means everybody loves God and everybody loves everybody else; which means that no one is ever rude or arrogant, or impatient. No one insists on having his own way. Can you imagine living in such a community? Would you be free?

Then you go down to the details of the Decalogue. No one ever steals. No one ever kills. No one ever hates. No one ever lies. Everyone can be trusted. And even more than that, look at number ten. People not only never do anything wrong—no one ever *wants* to. That's the meaning of number ten, the one that bothered Paul so much at first. He thought God was interfering too much when He got in that deep. And finally, Paul said that *that* is what really guarantees our freedom. We will live in a place where people not only never do anything wrong, they will never even want to. That means they have really been healed. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, session 12, "God's Law is No Threat to Our Freedom" recorded April, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/12MMCAG>

Do you know the word "obedience" in the Greek (and one can't press the etymological meaning of the word too far), means literally "listening under, humble willingness to listen." A doorkeeper is called by this word. Now if you had a doorkeeper who said, "I'm listening, but I don't intend to carry through with what I hear." This isn't just an idle, rude willingness to listen; it's a *humble* willingness to listen. So when the doorkeeper listens, he hears his master knock, and he proceeds to open the door. Hence the word came to mean "obedience", but the essence of the word is "a willingness to listen."

Now does God expect of us perfect performance? He knows better. Can He expect of us perfect willingness to listen? What if we have a twenty-five percent reservation here? Then we're not safe to save. I mean we've got a lot of listening to do in the hereafter! So God can demand obedience in this sense, a willingness to listen. And without it He can't help us. And He says, "All the good things that have come to you have come by hearing; by a willingness to listen, in a mood of trust." That's all that is asked. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, Galatians, part 3, recorded February, 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/3MMGALATIANS66>

Rote, mechanical, legalistic, unthinking obedience implies a rote, mechanical, unthinking, legalistic, arbitrary God. And those who God chose to be His spokesmen to the world turned out to be the most serious perverters of the truth. To the extent that, when Christ came to set them right and give them a correct picture of God, it was His family, His Sabbath-keeping saints in the Promised Land, who killed Him rather than accept the truth. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, Galatians, part 3, recorded February, 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*
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Further Study with Ellen White

He went about doing good. His work was to help those who needed help, to save the lost and perishing, to lift up the bowed down, to break the yoke of oppression from those who were in bondage, to heal the afflicted, and to speak words of sympathy and consolation to the distressed and sorrowing. . . . The more we partake of the spirit of Christ, the more we shall see to do for our fellow men. We shall be filled with a love for perishing souls, and shall find our delight in following the footsteps of the Majesty of heaven. {OHC 180.4}

Though He was a Jew, Christ mingled with the Samaritans, setting at naught the Pharisaic customs of His nation. In face of their prejudices, He accepted the hospitality of this despised people. He slept under their roofs, ate with them at their tables, partaking of the food prepared and served by their hands—and taught in their streets, and treated them with the utmost kindness and courtesy. {3SM 238.2}

Jesus sat as an honored guest at the table of the publicans, by His sympathy and social kindness showing that He recognized the dignity of humanity; and men longed to become worthy of His confidence. Upon their thirsty souls His words fell with blessed, life-giving power. New impulses were awakened, and the possibility of a new life opened to these outcasts of society. {3SM 238.3}

His Spirit is a renewing power, transforming to the divine image all who will receive it. {5T 219.4}

This love is the evidence of their discipleship. “By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples,” said Jesus, “if ye have love one to another.” When men are bound together, not by force or self-interest, but by love, they show the working of an influence that is above every human influence. Where this oneness exists, it is evidence that the image of God is being restored in humanity, that a new principle of life has been implanted. It shows that there is power in the divine nature to withstand the supernatural agencies of evil, and that the grace of God subdues the selfishness inherent in the natural heart. {DA 678.1}

This is not an act of arbitrary power on the part of God. The rejecters of His mercy reap that which they have sown. God is the fountain of life; and when one chooses the service of sin, he separates from God, and thus cuts himself off from life. He is “alienated from the life of God.” Christ says, “All they that hate Me love death.” Ephesians 4:18; Proverbs 8:36. God gives them existence for a time that they may develop their character and reveal their principles. This accomplished, they receive the results of their own choice. By a life of rebellion, Satan and all who unite with him place themselves so out of harmony with God that His very presence is to them a consuming fire. The glory of Him who is love will destroy them. {DA 764.1}

At the beginning of the great controversy, the angels did not understand this. Had Satan and his host then been left to reap the full result of their sin, they would have perished; but it would not have been apparent to heavenly beings that this was the inevitable result of sin. A doubt of God’s goodness would have remained in their minds as evil seed, to produce its deadly fruit of sin and woe. {DA 764.2}

But not so when the great controversy shall be ended. Then, the plan of redemption having been completed, the character of God is revealed to all created intelligences. The precepts of His law are seen to be perfect and immutable. Then sin has made manifest its nature, Satan his character. Then the extermination of sin will vindicate God’s love and establish His honor before a universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law. {DA 764.3}

Well, then, might the angels rejoice as they looked upon the Saviour’s cross; for though they did not then understand all, they knew that the destruction of sin and Satan was forever made certain, that the redemption of man was assured, and that the universe was made eternally secure. Christ Himself fully comprehended the results of the sacrifice made upon Calvary. To all these He looked forward when upon the cross He cried out, “It is finished.” {DA 764.4}

Love is the basis of godliness. Whatever the profession, no man has pure love to God unless he has unselfish love for his brother. But we can never come into possession of this spirit by trying to love others. What is needed is the love of Christ in the heart. When self is merged in Christ, love springs forth spontaneously. The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within—when the sunshine of heaven fills the heart and is revealed in the countenance. {COL 384.2}

Wherever there is an impulse of love and sympathy, wherever the heart reaches out to bless and uplift others, there is revealed the working of God’s Holy Spirit. In the depths of heathenism, men who have had no knowledge of the written law of God, who have never even heard the name of Christ, have been kind to His servants, protecting them at the risk of their own lives. Their acts show the working of a divine power. The Holy Spirit has implanted the grace of Christ in the heart of the savage, quickening his sympathies contrary to his nature, contrary to his education. The “Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world”

(John 1:9), is shining in his soul; and this light, if heeded, will guide his feet to the kingdom of God. {COL 385.1}

The glory of heaven is in lifting up the fallen, comforting the distressed. And wherever Christ abides in human hearts, He will be revealed in the same way. Wherever it acts, the religion of Christ will bless. Wherever it works, there is brightness. {COL 386.1}

Men will surely set up their laws to counterwork the laws of God. They will seek to compel the consciences of others, and in their zeal to enforce these laws they will oppress their fellow men. {DA 763.2}