

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2014: *The Book of James*
Lesson 6 “Faith That Works”

Read for this week’s study

James 2:14–26; Rom. 3:27, 28; Titus 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:2; Rom. 4:1–5; Josh. 2:1–21.

Memory Text

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:26, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Dead Faith
- III. Saving Faith
- IV. The “Faith” of Demons
- V. Abraham’s Faith
- VI. The Faith of Rahab
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Jon Paulien

1. Read James 2:14-17 in light of Romans 3:27-28 and Ephesians 2:8-9. How do we understand James in light of Paul’s emphasis on salvation by faith alone? In light of this text how should we handle our encounters with beggars and homeless people? (Sunday’s lesson)
2. Read James 2:18. What is the main point James is making? Does Paul agree with this point in texts like Ephesians 2:10; 1 Thessalonians 1:3; 1 Timothy 5:25 and Titus 2:14? Why is Paul sometimes against “works” (Galatians 2:16)? (Monday’s lesson)
3. How important is it to know truth (2 Corinthians 4:2; 1 Timothy 2:4; James 5:19-20; 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:18-19)? Why does knowing the truth have so little value for demons (James 2:19)? (Tuesday’s lesson)
4. Read James 2:21-24 and compare with Romans 4:1-5, 22-24. How is the faith of Abraham described in these texts and on what is justification based? Both quote Genesis 15 but seem to draw opposite conclusions from the reference. How would you explain this seeming contradiction? (Wednesday’s lesson)

5. From your own experience, how do works or the lack thereof impact your faith? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read James 2:25 in light of Joshua 2:1-21. How can we reconcile this example to Paul's view of salvation by faith alone? (Thursday's lesson)
7. How does James 2:26 summarize the relationship between faith and works? What hope should we take from the fact that a prostitute was saved by faith? (Thursday's lesson)
8. It is often said that faith and works should be kept in balance. In light of this study, do you agree with that statement? If not, how would you express the relationship between the two in your own words? (Friday's lesson)
9. Why do you think that James makes no mention of the lies told by both Abraham and Rahab? What does this fact teach us about being covered by the righteousness of Christ? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Since the great controversy began, it has been Satan's studied purpose to persuade angels and men that God is not worthy of their faith and love. He has pictured the Creator as a harsh, demanding tyrant who lays arbitrary requirements upon his people just to show his authority and test their willingness to obey. From Genesis to Revelation the Bible tells of Satan's unceasing efforts to pervert the truth and blacken the character of God.

But if God were as Satan has pictured him, how easily he could have blotted out his rebellious creatures and started over again! If all God wanted was unthinking obedience, how easily he could have manipulated the minds of men and angels and forced them to obey!

But love and trust, the qualities God desires the most, are not produced by force—not even by God himself.

That is why, instead of destroying or resorting to force, God simply took his case into court. In order to prove the rightness of his cause, to demonstrate that his way of governing the universe was the best for all concerned, God humbly submitted his own character to the investigation and judgment of his creatures.

Paul understood this when he exclaimed, "God must prove true, though every man be false; as the Scripture says, 'That you may be shown to be upright in what you say, and win your case when you go into court'" (Romans 3:4, Goodspeed).

The Good News is that God has won his case. Though all of us should let him down, God cannot lose his case. He has already won! The universe has conceded that the evidence is on his side, that the devil has lied in his charges against God.

“It is finished,” Jesus cried (John 19:30). By the life that he lived and the unique and awful way he died, Jesus has demonstrated the righteousness of his Father and answered any question about God’s character and government (see Romans 3:25, 26).

Paul was proud to be a bearer of this Good News, and he knew what it was all about—“in it the righteousness of God is revealed” (Romans 1:16, 17). {Maxwell, Graham. *Can God Be Trusted?*, 30-31. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 2002}

<http://speakingwellofgod.org/written-materials/can-god-be-trusted-chapters/chapter-04>

When God took his case into court, he was inviting the universe to test even his claims and to believe only what proved to be true. Since the truth was on his side, he had nothing to fear from the most searching investigation. Nor was there any need for him to tamper with the evidence or to intimidate his inquirers.

All that was needed for God to win his case was the clearest possible exposure and demonstration of the truth. The more openness and light the better! Only cheats and liars are afraid of being questioned.

“Here lies the test,” Jesus explained to Nicodemus. “Bad men all hate the light and avoid it, for fear their practices should be shown up. The honest man comes to the light so that it may be clearly seen that God is in all he does” (John 3:18–21, NEB).

God himself has come to the light. And the universe has clearly seen that the truth is with him. No lie has been found in the mouth of God. “How right and true are your ways!” all heaven agrees (Revelation 15:3, GNT; compare 16:7; 19:2). We can safely place our trust in him.

Surely such faith is no leap in the dark—unless one should believe that God has left us without light. And if God has really left us in the dark, without sufficient evidence of his trustworthiness, then Satan’s charges have not been met, and trust in God would indeed be an unenlightened risk.

The first angel of Revelation 14 calls on all men everywhere to make up their minds about God. But he does not ask us to trust a God we do not know. The angel comes first with the everlasting truth, the eternal Good News. In the light of this evidence, do we find God worthy of our faith?

This is the faith of which the Bible speaks, the trust in God that makes it possible for him to save and heal. This is the faith described in Hebrews 11:1 as having “full confidence in the things we hope for, it means being certain of things we cannot see” (Phillips).

In the familiar wording of the King James Version, faith is defined as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” {Maxwell, Graham. *Can God Be Trusted?*, 39-40. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 2002}

<http://speakingwellofgod.org/written-materials/can-god-be-trusted-chapters/chapter-05>

Faith is not a leap in the dark either, which is a common philosophical explanation. For has our gracious God left us in the dark? How would anyone dare suggest that God, who has revealed Himself at such infinite cost, has left us in the dark? More than this, would the God you know tempt you to trust a stranger you don't know? Look at the dangers involved in that. We warn our daughters when they are walking home from school; if a stranger offers you a ride in his car, don't get in. And there are sad stories in the newspaper from time to time about little girls who got in stranger's cars. Does God ask us as a stranger to get in His car? He doesn't ask us to run any such risk. He first reveals Himself, that's the good news. Then on the basis of this truth and this everlasting good news, God then has a right to ask us, “Do you find Me worthy of your trust, your confidence, your faith? Do you still think I'm an untrustworthy 'quack', who would hurt you? Or do you find Me a trustworthy physician? Could you trust Me enough to be willing to stay with Me long enough to let Me heal you?” This is why the only requirement for healing and salvation is faith and trust. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 13, recorded January, 1978, Loma Linda, California} To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:

<http://pkp.cc/25MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/26MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

What do you think of the story of Rahab as a revelation of the truth about God? Here's a woman who is a prostitute. We don't know how she became that. Maybe she was sold into this, or given into this. There were temple prostitutes in those days. The Bible makes no issue of that; she was one. And the two spies were looking for a place to hide, and they decided her place would be a natural place to hide, perhaps. And then the soldiers came. And she hid the spies on the roof, under the flax. And the two men know their lives may be rather brief, and so they are praying earnestly as Rahab goes to the door. Now, if you were under the flax, how would you pray? Would you say, “Lord, help Rahab tell the truth?”

COMMENT: Lord, help me not to sneeze!

Yes, “Lord, help me not to sneeze,” he suggests, under the flax! That's a good point, isn't it? Well, maybe just a general, “Keep me safe and help me not to sneeze.” And so Rahab goes to the door and says, “No, they're not here.” Now, how do you thank the Lord for that? Rahab winds up in Hebrews 11, does she not, among the heroines of faith? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66—Joshua, Judges, Ruth, recorded November,

1981, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/11MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/12MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Recommended Listening:

Conversations About God session 3 “All God Asks Is Trust” is available at:

<http://pkp.cc/3MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

“Let us not love in word,” the apostle writes, “but in deed and in truth.” The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within. It is the atmosphere of this love surrounding the soul of the believer that makes him a savor of life unto life and enables God to bless his work. {AA 551.1}

Supreme love for God and unselfish love for one another—this is the best gift that our heavenly Father can bestow. This love is not an impulse, but a divine principle, a permanent power. The unconsecrated heart cannot originate or produce it. Only in the heart where Jesus reigns is it found. “We love Him, because He first loved us.” In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the ruling principle of action. It modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, and ennobles the affections. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the life and sheds a refining influence on all around. {AA 551.2}

Faith works by love and purifies the soul. Faith buds and blossoms and bears a harvest of precious fruit. Where faith is, good works appear. The sick are visited, the poor are cared for, the fatherless and the widows are not neglected, the naked are clothed, the destitute are fed. Christ went about doing good, and when men are united with Him, they love the children of God, and meekness and truth guide their footsteps. The expression of the countenance reveals their experience, and men take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus and learned of Him. Christ and the believer become one, and His beauty of character is revealed in those who are vitally connected with the Source of power and love. {1SM 398.1}

Truth is an active, working principle, molding heart and life so that there is a constant upward movement. . . . In every step of climbing, the will is obtaining a new spring of action. The moral tone is becoming more like the mind and character of Christ. The progressive Christian has grace and love which passes knowledge, for divine insight into the character of Christ takes a deep hold upon his affections. The glory of God revealed above the ladder can only be

appreciated by the progressive climber, who is ever attracted higher, to nobler aims which Christ reveals. All the faculties of mind and body must be enlisted. {OHC 68.5}

We do not earn salvation by our obedience; for salvation is the free gift of God, to be received by faith. But obedience is the fruit of faith. {SC 61.1}

When we speak of faith, there is a distinction that should be borne in mind. There is a kind of belief that is wholly distinct from faith. The existence and power of God, the truth of His word, are facts that even Satan and his hosts cannot at heart deny. The Bible says that “the devils also believe, and tremble;” but this is not faith. James 2:19. Where there is not only a belief in God’s word, but a submission of the will to Him; where the heart is yielded to Him, the affections fixed upon Him, there is faith—faith that works by love and purifies the soul. Through this faith the heart is renewed in the image of God. Romans 8:1. {SC 63.2}

The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature. This is evidence that Satan’s delusions have lost their power; that the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God is arousing you. {SC 64.2}

A view of our sinfulness drives us to Him who can pardon; and when the soul, realizing its helplessness, reaches out after Christ, He will reveal Himself in power. The more our sense of need drives us to Him and to the word of God, the more exalted views we shall have of His character, and the more fully we shall reflect His image. {SC 65.2}

Unless we reveal the converting power of God in our lives, we can not work in safe paths. It is not in saying that we believe the truth, but by showing that we are changed in character, through a belief of the truth, that we make known to others the transforming power of the grace of God. {RH, February 25, 1909 par. 7}

The influence of the Holy Spirit is the life of Christ in the soul. We do not see Christ and speak to Him, but His Holy Spirit is just as near us in one place as in another. It works in and through every one who receives Christ. Those who know the indwelling of the Spirit reveal the fruits of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith (MS 41, 1897). {6BC 1112.1}

The faith that works by love and purifies the soul produces the fruit of humility, patience, forbearance, long-suffering, peace, joy, and willing obedience. {HP 109.6}