

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2014: *The Book of James*
Lesson 8 “The Humility of Heavenly Wisdom”

Read for this week’s study

James 3:13–4:10; Deut. 4:6; Gal. 5:17; Jer. 3:6–10, 20; Acts 19:13–16; Ps. 24:3–6.

Memory Text

“Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you” (James 4:10, NASB 1995).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Meekness of Wisdom
- III. Two Kinds of Wisdom
- IV. Cause of Conflict and Quarrels
- V. Friendship With the World
- VI. Submission to God
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Daniel Duda

1. “In many midsize and larger companies, a ‘middle-manager mentality’ exists. Workers feel entitled to something they do not yet have: more respect, a higher salary, a more advanced position, etc. This unhealthy attitude develops over time as the person strives to get ahead. Symptoms may include flattering remarks served up to decision makers and uncomplimentary revelations made about coworkers, all seasoned with a spirit of selfish rivalry.

“It would be nice to think that selfish rivalry is confined to secular organizations and that the church operates quite differently. Unfortunately, Scripture indicates that all too often worldly ‘wisdom’ also operates among believers. This week let’s see what the Word of God has to say about this unfortunate reality.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. What is the “meekness of wisdom” that James is talking about in 3:13? The spring of bitter water (3:11) produces “envy and selfish ambition” which puts everything and everybody down, and cannot let a nice word go by without adding a nasty one. When such a person claims to be a Christian, James points out that they are actually boasting; telling lies against the truth (v. 14) and that such a mindset comes from the world of demons. Cynicism often gives an appearance of wisdom.

3. We are faced with two kinds of wisdom. In our world people are fed up with corruption, abuse of power, with the way the global economy functions and the way countries are run. And much of it is justified. But the challenge for Christians is how to tell the truth about the world and about people without it becoming a perpetual grumble and without becoming critical of everyone and everything. How can we stay balanced, and still choose to see the vast amount of beauty, love, generosity and sheer goodness in the world? And how can we not only celebrate that goodness, but contribute to it?
4. James says it requires “wisdom that comes from above”. Jesus declared a blessing on peacemakers (Matthew 5), and James picks up the theme here (v. 18). Jealousy, fault-finding and bickering will not contribute to making peace; it is accomplished only through heavenly wisdom which is “holy, peaceful, gentle, compliant, filled with mercy and good fruits, unbiased, sincere.” It is easy to scorn these characteristics and dismiss such people as wimpy and naïve, and assume they are not aware of how nasty the world really is.
5. These characteristics of heavenly wisdom are not easy to acquire or maintain. “The proud have placed themselves in a position where they can’t easily receive that grace. Only a person humble, meek, and aware of his or her utter need and dependency is open to grace.” (Wednesday’s lesson) How can we become such people, such neighbors, to those around us? How can the local church be a community which brings hope to the world?
6. James does not accuse his readers of actual adultery (4:4), but to warn them that “being friends with the world means being enemies with God”. ‘Friendship’ with the world is related to war, fighting and asking for things in the wrong way. ‘The world’ therefore is a pattern of life, the way the world behaves, the underlying implicit story, the things people want, expect, long for and dream of that ultimately drive them to think and behave the way they do. You become a ‘friend’ with the ‘world’ by going with the flow, not reflecting on what you are doing, and picking up habits and values from all around you. You become ‘normal’. It takes guts, thought, decision and determination to stand out and be different.
7. Why is ‘friendship with the world’ at the root of war and fighting? Because in ‘the world’ the ultimate argument is a fist, or a boot, or a gun, or a bomb. Violence, force, power – that is what counts. Violence and the threat of more of it is the way the world ultimately works, whether it is with small criminals or large-scale dictatorships.
8. James highlights a major lack in the world: humility. Its opposite is arrogance: that **my** desires come first, **my** cause is more important. The cure is to submit to God and resist the devil (v. 7) – in that order! How do we submit to God? “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you” (v. 8). God longs to establish a friendship with us that is not based on the use of power, His position, the way of ‘the world’. This will be more satisfying than anything else the world has to offer. But it will take time to develop, as all worthy endeavors do.

9. Only when we “draw near to God” into genuine friendship, can we “resist the devil and he will run away from you”. The devil is a coward. When he is resisted, he runs away, knowing that he is beaten. Thus his trick is to whisper to us that we cannot resist, we are powerless, he has trapped us before and he will get us again, so why not just give in now and save all the bother. But that is a lie.
10. However, only drawing nearer to God and having a genuine friendship with Him, will unmask the devil’s strategy and make a powerful difference in the world today! God is ready and waiting.

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Surely it’s clear in the epistle to Rome that all that God asks of us is that we trust Him, because if we trust Him, without reservation, with no cheating, with a complete willingness to listen, He can heal and save and restore us. But if I’m forever violating that trust, that relationship with Him, if sometimes I’ll listen and sometimes I don’t, sometimes I’m honest with Him and sometimes I’m not, will He condemn me? Do you doctors condemn your patients who are foolish enough not to take their medicine and so become more and more seriously ill? Now you might correct them; that’s for sure. You might show great concern. You might, if need be, sound very stern and severe. You might read them the medical equivalent of the Third Angel’s message, “If you persist in this you’re going to die”. You might well do that. But you wouldn’t condemn them, would you? What good would it do to send them home condemned and humiliated? Corrected, to be sure. Whenever we violate our relationship of trust in God He can’t trust us. Sometimes we’re with Him, sometimes we’re not, it’s a very irregular relationship. Sometimes we’re so honest and sometimes we cheat, we’re looking for alibis, we’re always rationalizing. He cannot heal us and we lose. This is a rebellious, untrusting, untrustworthy relationship. And that’s why sin is so dangerous. That’s why sin results in death, not because our Heavenly Father and physician will kill us, but the man who doesn’t trust God, the man who is cheating will reap the consequences. He will die, for God cannot heal this person who doesn’t trust Him. And I think this is such a correction to the definition so often used, “sin is just breaking this or that rule and you know what God does to sinners”. This suggests that breaking our trusting relationship with God is the most dangerous thing we can do. The consequences are very disastrous both in this life and in the end, but not at the hands of our gracious God. If we persist in cheating He will let us go and reap the consequences. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 14, 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/27MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/28MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

Might there be some things we don't know, too, and the Lord will have to work on all of us? So to understand that all that God asks of anybody is trust in Him—and Ellen White speaks of those among the heathen who trust God and worship Him, though ignorantly. Then we have to realize that there may be many surprises in the Kingdom and it would behoove us to begin speaking respectfully of our fellow human beings in all other communions, even outside any communion. They might be our next door neighbors in the hereafter. And it seems to me we do learn to value other people in a different way when we have this “measure of faith”. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 12, 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/23MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/24MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

Well, if we sense this unity in the family, who cares who's getting the credit? We're all getting the credit and we'll all rejoice when it's done. It's a pity in some ways; to avoid unseemly feelings of competition we haven't become much involved in sports in our church. There is one thing that playing on a team does to develop this team spirit where somebody in a very apparently inconspicuous position is absolutely essential to the success of the team. And you know how that is. If any one person lets the team down, the brilliant quarter back will fail. Those poor muscular men on the line who bang into each other over and over again, they're very rarely mentioned, but could OJ Simpson break through and make those runs if those monsters on the line didn't break the way open for him? And he gets all the credit, gets all the honors. And it's that way in our church. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 12, recorded January, 1978, Loma Linda, 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

Wherever there is union with Christ there is love. Whatever other fruits we may bear, if love be missing, they profit nothing. Love to God and our neighbor is the very essence of our religion. No one can love Christ and not love His children. When we are united to Christ, we have the mind of Christ. Purity and love shine forth in the character, meekness and truth control the life. The very expression of the countenance is changed. {RC 104.2}

Christ abiding in the soul exerts a transforming power, and the outward aspect bears witness to the peace and joy that reign within. We drink in the love of Christ, as the branch draws

nourishment from the vine. If we are grafted in Christ, if fiber by fiber we have been united with the Living Vine, we shall give evidence of the fact by bearing rich clusters of living fruit. If we are connected with the Light, we shall be channels of light, and in our words and works we shall reflect light to the world. {RC 104.3}

It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil and to impress His own character on His church. . . . {ML 46.2}

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}

Wherever a soul reaches out after God, there the Spirit's working is manifest, and God will reveal Himself to that soul. For such worshipers He is seeking. He waits to receive them and to make them His sons and daughters. {ML 46.5}

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}

Many have an idea that they must do some part of the work alone. They have trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sin, but now they seek by their own efforts to live aright. But every such effort must fail. Jesus says, "Without Me ye can do nothing." Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness,—all depend upon our union with Christ. It is by communion with Him, daily, hourly,—by abiding in Him,—that we are to grow in grace. He is not only the Author, but the Finisher of our faith. It is Christ first and last and always. He is to be with us, not only at the beginning and the end of our course, but at every step of the way. David says, "I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." Psalm 16:8. {SC 69.1}

Each morning consecrate yourself to God for that day. Surrender all your plans to Him, to be carried out or given up as His providence shall indicate. Thus day by day you may be giving your

life into the hands of God, and thus your life will be molded more and more after the life of Christ. {SC 70.1}

A life in Christ is a life of restfulness. There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there should be an abiding, peaceful trust. Your hope is not in yourself; it is in Christ. Your weakness is united to His strength, your ignorance to His wisdom, your frailty to His enduring might. So you are not to look to yourself, not to let the mind dwell upon self, but look to Christ. Let the mind dwell upon His love, upon the beauty, the perfection, of His character. . . . It is by loving Him, copying Him, depending wholly upon Him, that you are to be transformed into His likeness. {SC 70.2}

Whenever one is encompassed with clouds, perplexed by circumstances, or afflicted by poverty or distress, Satan is at hand to tempt and annoy. He attacks our weak points of character. He seeks to shake our confidence in God, who suffers such a condition of things to exist. We are tempted to distrust God, to question His love. Often the tempter comes to us as he came to Christ, arraying before us our weakness and infirmities. He hopes to discourage the soul and to break our hold upon God. Then he is sure of his prey. If we would meet him as Jesus did, we should escape many a defeat. By parleying with the enemy we give him an advantage. . . . {HP 256.3}

Jesus gained the victory through submission and faith in God, and by the apostle He says to us, "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). We cannot save ourselves from the tempter's power; he has conquered humanity, and when we try to stand in our own strength, we shall become a prey to his devices; but "the name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe." Satan trembles and flees before the weakest soul who finds refuge in that mighty name. {HP 256.4}

The angels who do always behold the face of the Father in heaven would prefer to remain close by the side of God. But the Lord gives to every angel his work for this fallen world. Divine help is provided for men. They have the opportunity of cooperating with heavenly intelligences, of being laborers together with God. The possibilities of gaining a fitness for the presence of God, of being enabled to see His face, are placed before them. Heavenly angels are working to bring the human family into a close brotherhood, a oneness described by Christ as like to that existing between the Father and the Son. How can men so highly honored by God fail to appreciate their opportunities and privileges? How can they refuse to accept the divine help proffered? How much it is possible for human beings to gain if they will keep eternity in view. {UL 68.2}

Satanic agencies are ever warring for the mastery over human minds. But the angels of God are constantly at work, strengthening the weak hands and confirming the feeble knees of all who call upon God for help. The promise to every child of God is, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matthew 7:7). The Lord is more

willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children. Then ask; believe what God has said. He will surely fulfill His word. {UL 68.3}

Will human beings now act their part in resisting the devil? If they will do this, he will surely flee from them. Angels will do for you the things you cannot do for yourselves. They are waiting for your cooperation. . . . {UL 68.4}

How much better and safer it is to draw nigh to God, that the pure light shining from His Word may heal the wounds that sin has made in the soul. The closer we are to God, the safer we are, for Satan hates and fears the presence of God. {FLB 312.5}

The subtlety of Satan will not decrease, but the wisdom given to men through a living connection with the Source of all light and divine knowledge will be proportionate to his arts and wiles. {FLB 312.6}

Those who are sanctified through the truth are living recommendations of its power, and representatives of their risen Lord. The religion of Christ will refine the taste, sanctify the judgment, elevate, purify, and ennoble the soul, making the Christian more and more fit for the society of the heavenly angels. {TMK 250.6}

Draw nigh to Him by prayer, by contemplation, by reading His Word. When He draws nigh to you, He lifts up for you a standard against the enemy. Let us take courage; for the enemy cannot pass this standard. {OHC 96.5}

The soul that loves God, loves to draw strength from Him by constant communion with Him. When it becomes the habit of the soul to converse with God, the power of the evil one is broken; for Satan cannot abide near the soul that draws nigh unto God. {OHC 96.7}