

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2015: *Proverbs*
Lesson 3 “A Matter of Life and Death”

Read for this week’s study

Matt. 5:21–30; Prov. 6:21; 7:3; Prov. 6:23; 7:2; 6:24; 6:30, 31; Prov. 7:26, 27.

Memory Text

“For the commandment is a lamp, and the law a light; reproofs of instruction are the way of life” (Proverbs 6:23, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Law in Our Life
- III. Light and Life
- IV. Fighting Temptation
- V. “You Shall Not Steal”
- VI. The Threat of Death
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Zdravko Stefanović

MATTERS OF LIFE AND DEATH (PROVERBS 5-7)

A. Stick to your own spouse (5)

1. God sees everything, sin is deadly; enjoy intimacy with your spouse ... Are these reasons sufficient to help people overcome temptations?
2. The son born of adultery would be considered as the son of the cheated husband. How would this situation complicate the inheritance of an adulterer in Bible times?
3. The ceremony of public shaming is described in 5:12-13. What do you think of the adulterer’s confession?
4. The passage 5:15-19 is famous because it celebrates the pleasure of sexual intimacy. Your wife alone is yours and she is more attractive to you than anyone else. Why is the wife compared to a well?

B. Diligence, prudence and purity (6)

1. The beginning of Proverbs 6 warns one not to provide surety for another’s loan. How does this advice fit with the calls to help the poor and needy?

2. The ant is a model of hard work. Can working too hard carry risks, and how do we find a balance?
3. Duplicity of the heart leads to quarrels and intrigues. How often does the one who digs a pit for others fall into it himself?
4. Seven things “which the Lord hates” are listed in this chapter, which one do you think qualifies for the ultimate offense? Why?
5. The payment of a ransom could appease the wronged party in a case of stolen goods (Exodus 21:30). But unlike a thief, an adulterer could never buy his way out of trouble. Why?

C. Two ladies in contest (7)

1. Does the strange woman in 7:5 symbolize only temptations to commit immorality or also temptations to other sins?
2. Sin blinds a person so that he behaves like an animal going to slaughter. What helped Joseph resist the sin of adultery in Potiphar’s home?
3. The language in 7:15-18 has much in common with the Song of Songs. How do the two ladies differ from each other?
4. The “apple of your eye” is an old English expression for the eye’s center, or pupil. The author of Proverbs urges us to take as much care of its teaching as we do of our eye. Is God’s will the basis of our plans or an afterthought?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

All the law requires is that we love Him and we love each other, and behave accordingly. If God changes His law, the quality of life in the hereafter would deteriorate. We do not wish Him to change it! So eventually it will be written on our hearts, where a man does his thinking. It becomes thinking obedience, intelligent obedience. We don’t love because we’re *told* to; we love because we’re absolutely sold on this. We agree with God; we actually do love Him, and we love each other. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Larger View, part 2, recorded October, 1982, Monterey, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/2MMLVIEW>*

Lou: Now here’s another one. “If a person is sincere about religious things but sincerely wrong, whose fault is that?” And I suppose implicit behind the question is, “What will happen as a result? Will the person be punished or suffer consequences from that?”

Graham: Yes, I like that question and what it implies. It needs to be understood, or that would seem rather forbidding. I do believe that if one sincerely takes the wrong path, one will sincerely arrive at the wrong destination. That’s true.

Lou: So whose fault is it then?

Graham: It's just that if we really are sincere; if we're really willing to listen, God has not left us in the dark. As John says, Christ is the light that enlightens everyone who comes into this world. And Paul says in Romans that there are Gentiles who know nothing about the Bible, who know nothing about God's law and instructions. But they do by nature the things that the law requires, and they show that the law has been written on their hearts. And I love the paragraph that is familiar to us both, that says even among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly; those to whom the message was never brought by human instrumentality, but they've heard the voice of God speaking to them in nature. And they've done the things that the law requires, which is love. And they're recognized as God's children. Anybody on this planet who is sincerely and humbly willing to listen; God is not going to abandon that person, and leave him in the dark. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, session 2 with Lou Venden, "What Went Wrong in God's Universe" recorded January, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/2MMCAG>*

This separation between the Old and the New Testaments is very regrettable. And personally I don't see any break whatsoever between the two. Christ came to say, "I haven't come to do away with the Old Testament; I've come to fulfill it, to explain it, to tell you what it's all about." And His explanations, almost all of them are quotations from the Old Testament. What it means to fulfill the law, that what God wants is love and faith and trust and trustworthiness, runs all through the Old Testament. We have never been under law in our relationship with God. We are under grace. The law has never been a way of being saved.

But that leads Paul to ask the question, "Why then the law at all?" If all God has ever wanted is that we be won back to trust Him, if the struggle for righteousness and salvation by works of law has always been fruitless for us sinners –why then the law? And in Galatians, you remember he says, "It was added because of transgressions, to be our custodian, our schoolmaster" the *King James* says, "our guardian to bring us to Christ." And once we've come to Christ if we stay with Him, we are no longer under this custodian. And as you remember, Jones and Waggoner said that our traditional view that it is the ceremonial law which terminates once we have come to Christ is wrong. That leads to the assumption that you can be righteous by works of obedience to the Ten Commandments but not to the ceremonial law. They said that the struggle for righteousness by works of obedience to any law is fruitless. And the law that was added to bring us to Christ includes every law that God ever gave. Everything was designed for our best good, to win us back to trust and faith and to restore the damage done.

And so you remember the struggle at the Minneapolis General Conference on this subject. It is spelled out in detail in *Selected Messages Book One*, and since we will do more when we get to Galatians, just a little of this now. Ellen White says:

I'm asked concerning this law in Galatians that was added because of transgressions to be our guardian to bring us to Christ. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: Both the ceremonial and the moral code of Ten Commandments.

Later she says after quoting the same verse: "In this Scripture, [Galatians 3:24] the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law."

Just the opposite of the view in those days, because "The law reveals sin to us, and causes us to feel our need of Christ and to flee unto Him for pardon and peace by exercising repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

He is not doing away with the law. We sinners need it, it was added to help us and we are still sinners and we still need it. And someday when we don't need it, it will be because our lives are in perfect harmony with it; it isn't that we have done away with it. And then she goes on to say that:

An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and to accept this truth, [that is, the purpose of God's laws, the Ten Commandments, the ceremonial law, the purpose of everything God has ever asked us to do] An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and accept this, lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord's message through Brethren Waggoner and Jones. [And how the devil was delighted that we were unwilling to accept this explanation] By exciting that opposition Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart to them. [Think of that, the Latter Rain held off because we wouldn't accept this truth] The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, [we can't even finish the work until we are straight on this point] The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted. . . .

That would suggest, then, that a correct understanding of God's use of law lies at the foundation of our understanding the light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory. Because a misunderstanding of God's use of law can lead one to support Satan's charges that God is arbitrary, unforgiving and severe. No wonder Ellen White said so much about understanding the place of the law in the good news. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 10, recorded December, 1977, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/19MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/20MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

In the Bible, the heart is often referred to as representing the inner man, the place where a person does his or her thinking, as well as the seat of emotions and attitudes. For example, the Gospel of Mark mentions that some scribes were “reasoning in their hearts.” (Mark 2:6, KJV)

The prophet Jeremiah looked forward to the day when God would fulfill his promise: “I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.” (Jeremiah 31:33, NRSV) When the law of Ten Commandments was given to Moses to be passed on to the people, God wrote the ten precepts on tablets of stone. If God wanted only blind, unthinking obedience from his people, he would hardly be promising to write his law on his people’s hearts, their centers of reasoning and intelligence. He would simply leave it engraved there on the stone, to go on spelling out his requirements.

The apostle Paul was a man of considerable intelligence. He was eager to understand and explain the meaning and purpose of all God’s laws. As the friend of a friendly God, he knew he was free to raise the question, “Why then the law?”

The more Paul studied the Ten Commandments, the more he came to admire them and agree that they made good sense. He told the believers in Rome, “I delight in the law of God in my inmost self.” (Romans 7:22, NRSV) The law engraved on the stone was being written on his heart.

Frequently Old Testament prophets explained that if all the performance of prescribed religious services did not result in the people coming to know God and being kinder to each other, all those sacrifices and ceremonies had failed to meet their purpose. They were not indicating that these activities should stop. It was God who had prescribed them. They were simply emphasizing that nothing was more important than the knowledge of God.

Speaking for God, Hosea wrote this message to the people:

It is true love that I have wanted, not sacrifice;

The knowledge of God rather than burnt-offerings. (Hosea 6:6, Phillips)

“I would rather have my people know me than have them burn offerings to me,” is how the *Good News Bible* reads.

Jeremiah predicted that when God’s law has been written on the hearts of people, “no longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know me.” (Jeremiah 31:34, NRSV)

In the Bible, the Hebrew and Greek words translated “know” can mean more than being merely acquainted or informed. Depending on the context, to “know” someone can imply an attitude of appreciation and approval, a relationship with someone who is specially valued. Paul told the Corinthians that “anyone who loves God is known by him.” (1 Corinthians 8:3, NRSV)

God knew Abraham, and Abraham knew him. This is why they could be such good friends. When God says he wants to be known by us, he is inviting us also to be his friends. {Maxwell, Graham. *Servants or Friends*, 91-93. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.}

<http://www.pineknoll.org/graham/sof/chapter7.html>

Further Study with Ellen White

The law of ten commandments is not to be looked upon as much from the prohibitory side, as from the mercy side. Its prohibitions are the sure guarantee of happiness in obedience. As received in Christ, it works in us the purity of character that will bring joy to us through eternal ages. To the obedient it is a wall of protection. We behold in it the goodness of God, who by revealing to men the immutable principles of righteousness, seeks to shield them from the evils that result from transgression. {1SM 235.1}

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death. {1SM 235.2}

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. So in every soul wherein Christ, the hope of glory, dwells, His words are re-echoed, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." Psalm 40:8. {MB 109.2}

Satan represents God's law of love as a law of selfishness. He declares that it is impossible for us to obey its precepts. The fall of our first parents, with all the woe that has resulted, he charges upon the Creator, leading men to look upon God as the author of sin, and suffering, and death. Jesus was to unveil this deception. As one of us He was to give an example of obedience. For this He took upon Himself our nature, and passed through our experiences. "In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren." Hebrews 2:17. If we had to bear anything which Jesus did not endure, then upon this point Satan would represent the power of God as insufficient for us. Therefore Jesus was "in all points tempted like as we are." Hebrews 4:15. He endured every trial to which we are subject. And He exercised in His own behalf no power that is not freely offered to us. As man, He met temptation, and overcame in the strength given Him from God. He says, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within

My heart.” Psalm 40:8. As He went about doing good, and healing all who were afflicted by Satan, He made plain to men the character of God’s law and the nature of His service. His life testifies that it is possible for us also to obey the law of God. {DA 24.2}

What a God is our God! He rules over His kingdom with diligence and care, and He has built a hedge—the Ten Commandments—about His subjects to preserve them from the results of transgression. In requiring obedience to the laws of His kingdom, God gives His people health and happiness, peace and joy. {CT 454.1}

The love of Jesus in the soul will banish all hatred, selfishness, and envy; for the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul. There is health in obedience to God’s law. The affections of the obedient are drawn out after God. Looking unto the Lord Jesus, we may encourage and serve one another. The love of Christ is shed abroad in our souls, and there is no dissension and strife among us (MS 152, 1901). {1BC 1105.5}

The law of Jehovah dating back to creation, was comprised in the two great principles, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.” These two great principles embrace the first four commandments, showing the duty of man to God, and the last six, showing the duty of man to his fellowman. The principles were more explicitly stated to man after the fall, and worded to meet the case of fallen intelligences. This was necessary in consequence of the minds of men being blinded by transgression (ST April 15, 1875 [Reprinted in RH May 6, 1875]). {1BC 1104.4}

Our duty to obey this law is to be the burden of this last message of mercy to the world. God’s law is not a new thing. It is not holiness created, but holiness made known. It is a code of principles expressing mercy, goodness, and love. It presents to fallen humanity the character of God, and states plainly the whole duty of man (MS 88, 1897). {1BC 1104.9}

The glory of Christ is revealed in the law, which is a transcript of His character, and His transforming efficacy is felt upon the soul until men become changed to His likeness. They are made partakers of the divine nature, and grow more and more like their Saviour, advancing step by step in conformity to the will of God, till they reach perfection. {1SM 240.3}

Through all our trials we have a never-failing Helper. He does not leave us alone to struggle with temptation, to battle with evil, and be finally crushed with burdens and sorrow. Though now He is hidden from mortal sight, the ear of faith can hear His voice saying, Fear not; I am with you. “I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive forevermore.” Revelation 1:18. I have endured your sorrows, experienced your struggles, encountered your temptations. I know your tears; I also have wept. The griefs that lie too deep to be breathed into any human ear, I know. Think not that you are desolate and forsaken. Though your pain touch no

responsive chord in any heart on earth, look unto Me, and live. “The mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee.” Isaiah 54:10.

{DA 483.1}

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}

Do you ask, “How am I to abide in Christ?” In the same way as you received Him at first. “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him.” “The just shall live by faith.” Colossians 2:6; Hebrews 10:38. You gave yourself to God, to be His wholly, to serve and obey Him, and you took Christ as your Saviour. You could not yourself atone for your sins or change your heart; but having given yourself to God, you believe that He for Christ’s sake did all this for you. By *faith* you became Christ’s, and by faith you are to grow up in Him—by giving and taking. You are to *give* all,—your heart, your will, your service,—give yourself to Him to obey all His requirements; and you must *take* all,—Christ, the fullness of all blessing, to abide in your heart, to be your strength, your righteousness, your everlasting helper,—to give you power to obey.

{SC 69.2}

Satan had questioned whether Jesus was the Son of God. In his summary dismissal he had proof that he could not gainsay. Divinity flashed through suffering humanity. Satan had no power to resist the command. Writhing with humiliation and rage, he was forced to withdraw from the presence of the world’s Redeemer. Christ’s victory was as complete as had been the failure of Adam. {DA 130.3}

So we may resist temptation, and force Satan to depart from us. 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. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.” James 4:7, 8. 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.” Proverbs 18:10. Satan trembles and flees before the weakest soul who finds refuge in that mighty name. {DA 130.4}

The work of gaining salvation is one of copartnership, a joint operation. There is to be co-operation between God and the repentant sinner. This is necessary for the formation of right principles in the character. Man is to make earnest efforts to overcome that which hinders him from attaining to perfection. But he is wholly dependent upon God for success. Human effort of itself is not sufficient. Without the aid of divine power it avails nothing. God works and man works. Resistance of temptation must come from man, who must draw his power from God. On the one side there is infinite wisdom, compassion, and power; on the other, weakness, sinfulness, absolute helplessness. {AA 482.2}

God wishes us to have the mastery over ourselves. But He cannot help us without our consent and co-operation. The divine Spirit works through the powers and faculties given to man. Of ourselves, we are not able to bring the purposes and desires and inclinations into harmony with the will of God; but if we are “willing to be made willing,” the Saviour will accomplish this for us, “Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:5. {AA 482.3}

Angels, who will do for you what you can not do for yourselves, are waiting for your co-operation. They are waiting for you to respond to the drawing of Christ. Draw nigh to God and to one another. By desire, by silent prayer, by resistance of satanic agencies, put your will on the side of God’s will. While you have one desire to resist the devil, and sincerely pray, Deliver me from temptation, you will have strength for your day. It is the work of the heavenly angels to come close to the tried, the tempted, the suffering ones. They labor long and untiringly to save the souls for whom Christ has died. And when souls appreciate their advantages, appreciate the heavenly assistance sent them, respond to the Holy Spirit’s working in their behalf; when they put their will on the side of Christ’s will, angels bear the tidings heavenward. . . . And there is rejoicing among the heavenly host. {SD 36.4}

The omnipotent power of the Holy Spirit is the defense of every contrite soul. Not one that in penitence and faith has claimed His protection will Christ permit to pass under the enemy’s power. The Saviour is by the side of His tempted and tried ones. With Him there can be no such thing as failure, loss, impossibility, or defeat; we can do all things through Him who strengthens us. When temptations and trials come, do not wait to adjust all the difficulties, but look to Jesus, your helper. {DA 490.5}