

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2015: *Proverbs*

Lesson 5 “The Blessings of the Righteous”

Read for this week’s study

Proverbs 10:1–14; Matthew 19:19; Proverbs 11-12; John 3:16; Proverbs 13.

Memory Text

“Blessings are on the head of the righteous, but violence covers the mouth of the wicked”
(Proverbs 10:6, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Righteousness Is Holistic
- III. The Mouth of the Righteous
- IV. The Hope of the Righteous
- V. The Truth of the Righteous
- VI. The Reward of the Righteous
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Zdravko Stefanović

A. Introduction

Some parts of the human body are more frequently mentioned in the Bible than others. Ear (or ears), for example, figures prominently in many key passages in the Torah (Deuteronomy 31:11) and in the prophets (Isaiah 30:21). In Proverbs, it seems that the first step in becoming wise is: Learn to listen! Proverbs 18:13 (NIV) says: “To answer before listening is folly and shame.” Also Proverbs 12:15 has this warning: “The way of the fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice.” **Does this mean that wisdom has more to do with our ears than with our mouth?**

B. Power of Words

In Proverbs as well as in the rest of the Bible, words are linked with the mouth, lips and tongue.

1. Think before you speak! A father would often tell his son, “Better to be thought a fool than to open your mouth and remove all trace of doubt.” Various forms of this saying were widespread in the ancient world (Rome). Proverbs 17:28 says:

“Even fools are thought wise if they keep silent,
And discerning if they hold their tongues.”

Silence can be as powerful as words. **How much is silence appreciated in our culture?**

Is it true that very few people have repented of silence?

How can we know when it is best to speak up and when to keep quiet?

2. Words have power to create or destroy
“The soothing tongue is a tree of life,
But a perverse tongue crushes the spirit” (15:4)

“The tongue has the power of life and death,
and those who love it will eat its fruit” (18:21).

How can words be so powerful?

3. Words should be truthful and credible
“Truthful lips endure forever but a lying tongue lasts only a moment” (12:19).

“Let someone else praise you, and not your own mouth;
an outsider, and not your own lips” (27:2).

4. Words can bring healing and build up others:
“The words of the reckless pierce like swords,
but the tongue of the wise brings healing” (12:18)

“Anxiety weighs down the heart, but a kind word cheers it up” (12:18, 25).

“The teaching of the wise is a fountain of life, turning a man from the snares of death” (13:14).

“Gracious words are a honeycomb,
sweet to the soul and healing to the bones” (16:24).

5. Speak softly and in a timely manner!
“A gentle answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger” (15:1).

“A person finds joy in giving an apt reply—
and how good is a timely word!” (15:23)

“Like apples of gold in settings of silver
is a ruling rightly given” (25:11).

C. Words and Deeds

The example from the life of the Arab Cesar. **What did Jesus say about how we should use words?**

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

I have heard servants sometimes charge that friends lack a keen sense of justice. They do not leave room in their understanding of God for just and essential punishment. Their God is simply too weak and kind. “You have a marshmallow God,” I heard one servant say.

The truth is precisely the opposite. Friend-believers have great concern about righteousness, which is the literal meaning of the Greek word often translated “justice.” The English word “justice” comes from the Latin translation of the Greek. (Latin, “justitia.”)

Friends admire God’s righteousness and would love to be like him. And to do what is right is, of course, to do what is just. But servants tend to think of justice in terms of retribution and punishment.

“I find comfort in the thought that some day God will bring retribution on those who have hurt me so much,” I heard a believer say. “Now, I’m not asking for vengeance, you understand. I’m just asking for justice.” {Maxwell, Graham. *Servants or Friends*, 109-110. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.}

<http://www.pineknoll.org/graham/sof/chapter8.html>

You see, the truth about God, the good news about God, is what tells us that He is a gracious God, and that He’s not a legalistic God. And obviously then, my own legalistic efforts to please Him, and to win His favor, and maybe persuade Him to forgive me, like the prodigal son saying I’ll do this and that and I’ll be just a hired servant and make restitution, and so on. If I do that, could you forgive me? Could you take me back? What’s that saying about God? And the father of the prodigal son said, “You don’t have to do anything. Just stay here. I want you here. Just don’t leave again.” When we try legalistically to satisfy God, we’re suggesting that we have a legalistic God, rather than a gracious God. So the same truth that wins us back to trust is the truth that ought to terminate any legalistic attempts to earn God’s favor. It’s an insult to God to say, “I suppose I ought to do the following in order to win your favor.” We don’t have to do

anything. He has regarded us graciously all the time we've been gone. And the father of the prodigal son was looking down that long road for years and years, while his son wasn't even thinking about him. The father wanted him to come home. So if we have accepted the good news, that ought to be the end of legalism, because the remedy for legalism is the elimination of a legalistic God. *The essence of legalism is the worship of a legalistic God*, and the remedy is the truth about God, the gospel. Obviously we're not set right, and we can leave that as broad as possible. To be forgiven, how reassuring. But to be healed and made right, how absolutely necessary. So let's include all of that in this term "righteousness", being set right, being justified. Obviously we are not set right by trying to make amends. *We begin to be set right from the moment we respond to the good news with trust and a willingness to listen.*

Now, it is true that our being set right is taking place in the setting of the great controversy with an enemy misinterpreting God's every move. And His willingness to be so gracious, and to be so forgiving, and to preserve us from the death that is the natural consequence of sin, it's true—that has provoked questions throughout the universe, and the devil has seized on this as an opportunity to continue his accusations against God. But God says, "There's no way you people can handle that; leave that up to me. I've taken care of all the issues in the great controversy. Doubts that Satan has circulated, his saying I lied when I said you would die. And I still don't want you to die, I want to heal you. He seized on that as evidence of the fact that I don't tell the truth. Well, I've taken care of that. In fact I took care of that 1900 years before you were born. So just trust me. All we need to worry about is how you're going to stay home and be a trusting, trustworthy son from now on. For we can do great things together. It may take a little time to do some of this, but the all-important thing is that you stay close by." {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>*

Lou: "What is the difference between killing and murdering? Is it because it damages yourself by just hating your brother?" And another person says, "I am confused. 'Thou shalt not kill' is a commandment and yet God told His people to kill." Can you touch on that very quickly?

Graham: The Hebrew and Greek words both mean murder. "Thou shalt not murder." Many modern versions are so translated, and what's so bad about murdering is what happens inside. And Jesus said, "He who hates his brother has done the damage. He is a murderer." God has never said, "Go and murder people." Now He did instruct them to go and kill in battle. But He didn't want them to. It's very clear. He said, "Let My angel do it. Let Me put My children to sleep." He never wanted them to kill at all. That, too, was an emergency measure. But at the end of the millennium God doesn't violate that law. Do you think He hates His children as they die? He doesn't even kill them. He watches them die and He cries. God has never violated His

Ten Commandments. Never. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, session 12 with Lou Venden, “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>*

What are the elementary teachings about Christ? What are the rudiments of our beliefs, as some versions have it? Well, let us ask ourselves. Do we still need the law in order to love God and love each other, and not hate and desire to murder our enemies? Would we murder them if there was no law to say we must not do it? If it’s the law that keeps you from murdering your mother-in-law, then you are still very much a child and not ready for the awful time of trouble.

Let me ask it another way. Which moves you more, the thunders of Sinai or the still small voice of truth? Satan is going to bring great thunder and fire from heaven in the sight of men, miracles and wonders. If that is what moves us, then we are very vulnerable. We’re still babes in the truth. God has used those methods with babes, but He waits for us to grow up. The one thing that the devil cannot come with is the still small voice of truth, for it is not with him. We must be ready to recognize that as the supreme authority. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, session 18, “God Waits for His Children to Grow Up” recorded June, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/18MMCAG>*

Then look at the extraordinary story told in 1 Kings 13. It’s a whole chapter. I wish there was time to retell it; it’s so dramatic. About this younger prophet called the “man of God,” who was told by God to deliver a message to the king, not to accept hospitality, but to come home by another route. But on the way an older prophet heard of what had happened. And he asked his sons to saddle his donkey and he got on it and chased after the man of God. When he caught up with him, as it says on the Bible Reference Sheet:

The old prophet said to him, “Come home with me and eat bread.” And he [the man of God] said, “I may not return with you, or go in with you; neither will I eat bread nor drink water with you in this place; for it was said to me by the word of the Lord, ‘You shall neither eat bread nor drink water there, nor return by the way that you came.’ And he said to him, “I also am a prophet as you are, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the Lord, saying, ‘Bring him back with you into your house that he may eat bread and drink water.’ But he lied to him. (RSV)

And you remember that the younger prophet believed the older prophet, and he went home and ate with him. And as he proceeded on his way he was met by a lion that slew him. If you don’t know the story you ought to read it. But that warns us that people who make claims that

God has spoken through them may be lying to us. And it's God Himself who warns us of that. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, session 4 "God's Way of Restoring Trust" recorded February, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/4MMCAG>

And Christ explained to Satan that it's not that God was unwilling to forgive, but that Satan had so long indulged in sin, that is, lawlessness, in dishonesty, in cheating, in lack of trust, and being untrustworthy, and all these things; for so long he had known what was right to do, and he had done it not. For so long he had known he was lying about God, that he had even come to the place where he believed the lie. He'd even come to the place where his so long indulgence and persistence in the practice of irresponsible, illogical, and rebellious thinking, that he had completely destroyed the image of God within him, the power to think straight and act accordingly. That's the god-like thing we have, that my Great Danes don't have. That's what distinguishes us, this marvelous ability, which God ran such a great risk to share with us, and that we have so abused. It is possible to destroy the image of God within us. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – 1, 2 & 3 John & Jude, recorded August, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/77MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/78MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

Throw a pebble into the lake and a wave is formed, and another and another; and as they increase, the circle widens until they reach the very shore. Thus our influence, though apparently insignificant, may continue to extend far beyond our knowledge or control.—*Review and Herald*, Jan. 24, 1882. {CH 413.2}

Salt must be mingled with the substance to which it is added; it must penetrate and infuse in order to preserve. So it is through personal contact and association that men are reached by the saving power of the gospel. They are not saved in masses, but as individuals. Personal influence is a power. We must come close to those whom we desire to benefit. {MB 36.1}

The savor of the salt represents the vital power of the Christian—the love of Jesus in the heart, the righteousness of Christ pervading the life. The love of Christ is diffusive and aggressive. If it is dwelling in us, it will flow out to others. We shall come close to them till their hearts are warmed by our unselfish interest and love. The sincere believers diffuse vital energy, which is penetrating and imparts new moral power to the souls for whom they labor. It is not the power of the man himself, but the power of the Holy Spirit that does the transforming work. {MB 36.2}

Thus it is with the truly righteous man. He is unconscious of his goodness and piety. Religious principle has become the spring of his life and conduct, and it is just as natural for him to bear the fruits of the Spirit as for the fig tree to bear figs or for the rosebush to yield roses. His nature is so thoroughly imbued with love for God and his fellow men that he works the works of Christ with a willing heart. {SL 13.1}

All who come within the sphere of his influence perceive the beauty and fragrance of his Christian life, while he himself is unconscious of it, for it is in harmony with his habits and inclinations. He prays for divine light, and loves to walk in that light. It is his meat and drink to do the will of his heavenly Father. His life is hid with Christ in God; yet he does not boast of this, nor seem conscious of it. God smiles upon the humble and lowly ones who follow closely in the footsteps of the Master. Angels are attracted to them, and love to linger about their path. They may be passed by as unworthy of notice by those who claim exalted attainments and who delight in making prominent their good works, but heavenly angels bend lovingly over them and are as a wall of fire round about them. {SL 13.2}

Gospel religion is Christ in the life--a living, active principle. It is the grace of Christ revealed in character and wrought out in good works. The principles of the gospel cannot be disconnected from any department of practical life. Every line of Christian experience and labor is to be a representation of the life of Christ. {COL 384.1}

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}

Like the first is the second commandment, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” The law of love calls for the devotion of body, mind, and soul to the service of God and our fellow men. And this service, while making us a blessing to others, brings the greatest blessing to ourselves. Unselfishness underlies all true development. . . . {RC 51.3}

Righteous words and deeds have a more powerful influence for good than all the sermons that can be preached.--ML 114. {VSS 52.1}

It is a wonderful thought that human beings can speak the Word of God, in simple words of comfort and encouragement. The humblest instruments will be used of God to sow the seeds of truth, which may spring up and bear fruit, because the one in whose heart they were sown needed help--a kind thought, a kind word, made effective by the One who has said, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.”—Letter 329a, Nov. 16, 1905, to her 19-year-old granddaughter Mabel. {TDG 329.6}

Never should we forget that we are children of the heavenly King, sons and daughters of the Lord of hosts. It is our privilege to maintain a calm repose in God. {MH 253.1}

The road may be rough and the ascent steep; there may be pitfalls upon the right hand and upon the left; we may have to endure toil in our journey; when weary, when longing for rest, we may have to toil on; when faint, we may have to fight; when discouraged, we must still hope; but with Christ as our guide we shall not fail of reaching the desired haven at last. Christ Himself has trodden the rough way before us and has smoothed the path for our feet. {MB 140.2}

And all the way up the steep road leading to eternal life are well-springs of joy to refresh the weary. Those who walk in wisdom's ways are, even in tribulation, exceeding joyful; for He whom their soul loveth, walks, invisible, beside them. At each upward step they discern more distinctly the touch of His hand; at every step brighter gleamings of glory from the Unseen fall upon their path; and their songs of praise, reaching ever a higher note, ascend to join the songs of angels before the throne. "The path of the righteous is as the light of dawn, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Proverbs 4:18, R.V., margin. {MB 140.3}

"God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved." John 3:17. Looking upon men in their suffering and degradation, Christ perceived ground for hope where appeared only despair and ruin. Wherever there existed a sense of need, there He saw opportunity for uplifting. Souls tempted, defeated, feeling themselves lost, ready to perish, He met, not with denunciation, but with blessing. {Ed 79.2}

In every human being He discerned infinite possibilities. He saw men as they might be, transfigured by His grace—in "the beauty of the Lord our God." Psalm 90:17. Looking upon them with hope, He inspired hope. Meeting them with confidence, He inspired trust. Revealing in Himself man's true ideal, He awakened, for its attainment, both desire and faith. In His presence souls despised and fallen realized that they still were men, and they longed to prove themselves worthy of His regard. In many a heart that seemed dead to all things holy, were awakened new impulses. To many a despairing one there opened the possibility of a new life. {Ed 80.1}