

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2015: *Proverbs*
Lesson 12 “The Humility of the Wise”

Read for this week’s study

Proverbs 30; Luke 18:9–14; Job 38–40:2; 1 John 1:9; Rev. 3:14–18; Psalm 104:24.

Memory Text

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Who Do You Think You Are?
- III. A Knowledge of God?
- IV. Neither Too Much nor Too Little
- V. The Actions of the Arrogant
- VI. Lesson From Nature
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Jon Paulien

1. Read Proverbs, chapter 30. This is one of the more narrative sections of Proverbs (others include chapter 31 and the “strange woman” material in Proverbs 5-7). What does chapter 30 have to say about humility? (Sabbath afternoon’s lesson)
2. Read Proverbs 30:1-4. What is the basis for humility in this passage? The author connects this passage with the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican in Luke 18:9-14. In what ways is it easy for all of us to act like the Pharisee? What does boasting reveal about a person? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read Proverbs 30:3-6. What do these verses tell us about God? How can we at the same time be humble before God and yet confident in His approval? (Monday’s lesson)
4. Read Proverbs 30:7-9. What is the point of the balancing contrasts in this passage? How is this passage similar to aspects of the Lord’s Prayer in Matthew 6:11-13? How can we maintain a sense of dependence on God when so much of life depends on our planning and effort? How do we find balance in the many challenges that we face in today’s world? (Tuesday’s lesson)

5. Read Proverbs 30:10-20. What are some of the consequences of human pride listed in these verses? Is there a way we can develop humility in the face of the many unexpected obstacles that pride places in our way? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read Proverbs 30:18-28. What does this passage tell us about the limits of human understanding? Why does the author compare human folly, arrogance and vice with the animal world? What is there about nature that can keep us humble? What does an understanding of science and nature teach us about God? (Thursday's lesson)
7. Friday's lesson contains a significant quote from the book *Desire of Ages* (299-300) by Ellen G. White: "The Lord can do nothing toward the recovery of man until, convinced of his own weakness, and stripped of all self-sufficiency, he yields himself to the control of God." How can we go about doing this?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

In the servant's understanding of sin and its divinely imposed penalty, salvation is seen as God's merciful provision by which the guilty servant's legal standing may be adjusted and he will not have to be executed after all.

How the death of an innocent substitute makes this adjustment possible is of no serious concern to the servant. All he wants to know is whether his Master is satisfied and his righteous anger about the sinner's misbehavior has somehow been assuaged—or "propitiated."

{Maxwell, Graham. *Servants or Friends*, 111. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.}

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

But to think of the meaning, why Jesus had to die, the most costly and convincing evidence, without which there would be no security in the future. Ah, I'm not going to make light of the blood. But it's a symbol, just a symbol of something. And we have to ask what the meaning is behind that, as with "paying the price." That can be interpreted in various ways. That maybe God paid a price to the devil to buy us back and so on. No, I think it's just a way of saying, "This is what it cost to do away with sin. This is what it cost to handle the breakdown of trust and trustworthiness."

Just as when Roger Bannister broke the four-minute mile. I'll never forget when that medical student did it—over there in England, wasn't it? He paid some price. It cost. He used to fall unconscious as he crossed the line. He calculated it closely. He didn't pay that price to anybody. It cost all that effort to break the four-minute mile. So Jesus did die to pay the price of sin, but let's be careful what we read into that also. As always, it's the meaning that we read into it, and

we need all the rest of Scripture to guide us in what meaning we read into those words and those terms.

Lou: So some of the illustrations that we may have used—of a payment of a kind of thing—give the wrong impression.

Graham: Ah, they're hazardous. All illustrations are hazardous, so we need several, which is the Bible way. There are many, many. They sort of cover each other's little vulnerable parts.

Lou: But what about some of these others, though? The "satisfying of justice," and "the demands of the law"?

Graham: Ah, those are the strongest ones. He died to satisfy the demands of the law. Now, what does the law demand? Well, the law seems to demand our love, which can't be demanded anyway. There's no way you can command love. And yet as Paul says, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." Jesus said the same. Moses said the same. So does the law say, "You either love God, and love each other, or you will be executed in the most painful way known to our Heavenly Father"? Some of our good Christian friends live under the awful weight of believing that God has said, "You either love and obey me, or you will be tortured in sulfurous flames for eternity." That such good folk can still love God is a real tribute to them, not to God. I mean this is an awesome burden to live under. And yet because they love Jesus, they still love and are still faithful. And they will be in the Kingdom. And I think Jesus will love to introduce such people to the Father. He'll say, "Would you like to meet the Father?" And they'll say, "Well, if you will go with us." He says, "There's no need, but I'll go with you."

And what a marvelous surprise to millions of these people, to meet the Father in the Kingdom, and discover that He is just as loving and gracious as the Son.

This is what we want to deal with next week, "There Is No Need To Be Afraid of God."

But "under the demands of law." That belongs to a very legal conception of what has gone wrong in the universe, which we discussed in our second conversation. That what has gone wrong is that we have "broken the rules," and the law demands that God execute us for breaking the rules. And Jesus died so that somehow God could justly forgive us even though we have broken the rules.

I don't think we have been able to make too much sense out of that. But it goes along with the other one, "satisfying justice." Whose justice? I have friends who say, "If God does not give Idi Amin several days in the fire, I will not regard Him as a just God." They have that feeling about the satisfaction of justice. And I think they really mean it, and I would respect them for that. I would love to relieve them of that burden. If I want to know why Jesus died, I should go right to the cross and watch Him die and hear His cry and see how the Father is involved, and then fit that back into Scripture. I don't see Him fulfilling the requirements of a legal model.

Lou: It's part of our problem, then, that we are taking models from our legal system here and trying to apply them to God.

Graham: That's a very good point, very much so.

Lou: The "substitutionary," that comes in, say more about that. The "vicarious."

Graham: Ah. He died in our stead. He died as the substitution. In a way, it's very true. I mean, either He dies or we die. However that's where the comparison ends, because if God had let you and me and all other sinners die, all it would have done is prove the truthfulness of His warning, "If you sin, you will die." And God could say to the universe, "Was I right? I said sinners would die, and look, they're dead."

But the universe would not have had answers to questions two and three that I just mentioned. When Jesus died, there was no doubt in the minds of the universe that God was not killing His Son. They were clear about that. And the death of Christ answers all those three questions. So it's not either us or Him. His death was infinitely more significant than ours. But had He not died, then what else could God do but leave us to reap the consequences and we all would have died. So in a sense, yes, He died in our stead, but beyond that there's no comparison.

Lou: But not as a payoff. It's not one or the other.

Graham: It's not His death is equal to all of ours. His death is infinitely more significant than the death of every sinful man or angel who has ever lived. The death of angels and men would not have answered the questions.

Lou: What you're saying then, is that just a simple satisfaction idea doesn't encompass what's involved at all, does it?

Graham: Oh, it makes it much too small. I think it puts God in a very bad light, and it doesn't answer the questions of the great controversy.

Many folk who prefer those understandings of the plan of salvation do not understand there has been a universe-wide great controversy over the character and government of God. And do you remember at our first meeting, I brought along the evidence that even Luther, hero of the Christian world that he is, could not conceive of these larger issues because he couldn't include the book of Revelation. Let alone Hebrews, James and Jude. And this has been the pattern through the years. Not many have seen the sixty-sixth book picture of a universe-wide controversy over the character and government of God. And so they have seen the death of Christ as primarily a plan just to save you and me, for which we are very grateful. It's just that the larger view makes the cross much more significant. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, session 8 with Lou Venden, "The Most Costly and Convincing Evidence" recorded March, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/8MMCAG>*

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? {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>

One of the evidences that one is growing up is that one is not becoming arrogant. There’s nothing more stubborn than a little child. “My Daddy says it, and he’s bigger than your Daddy, and therefore it’s true.” I would say it would be a mark of immaturity for a person of advanced years to be so self-satisfied and so arrogantly stubborn about his opinions. That suggests one is still a child.

One grows up. One even enhances this quality of a child, the humility, the willingness to listen, to accept correction, to accept instruction. That should become even greater as one gets older.

So an arrogant, “I think I’ve almost made it now,” suggests one may not have even started. {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>

Now this time he is relating the knowledge of God to the good news and to the cross. They are all about the same subject. Paul is sympathetic with them, for what could be expected of new converts, when some of the leading Christians in Jerusalem were themselves contradicting and compromising the gospel of Christ, as described in Acts 21. Even Peter, after his broadening

experience with Cornelius, reverted to some of his narrow views that he used to hold. Paul was moved to correct Peter to his face and in public, recorded in Galatians two. How could Paul feel right about doing that? This is Paul who wrote in 1 Corinthians 13 that love is never rude. Love never insists on having its own way. This is the Paul who wrote in Romans 14 that he was so respectful of other people's freedom that when there was disagreement over this and that religious matter, he would say, "Let everyone be fully convinced in his own mind," and "who are you to criticize one another?"

But when it came to the good news and those who would suppress it or pervert it, gentle Paul spoke out with almost frightening conviction and power. He even went so far as to suggest that these legalistic agitators were confusing the new saints about the good news of truth and freedom. They were upsetting the new converts by urging them to adopt once again such ceremonial requirements as circumcision and other legalistic details like that. He said, "I wish they would go the whole way and make eunuchs of themselves." That is Galatians 5:12, if you want to look it up. You know that Paul would have to be deeply moved to say that about those legalistic agitators. In fact, if you have the *Jerusalem Bible*, you might like to look up Galatians 5:12, where Paul said, "Tell those who are disturbing you and confusing you about the good news of freedom, tell them, 'I would like to see the knife slip.'" Paul was pretty stirred to talk like that. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, session 16, "God's Last Pleading With His Children" recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/16MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

The enemy cannot overcome the humble learner of Christ, the one who walks prayerfully before the Lord. Christ interposes Himself as a shelter, a retreat, from the assaults of the wicked one. The promise is given, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." . . . {ML 316.2}

There is no power in the whole satanic force that can disable the soul that trusts, in simple confidence, in the wisdom that comes from God. {ML 316.3}

Christ is our tower of strength, and Satan can have no power over the soul that walks with God in humility of mind. The promise, "Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me." In Christ there is perfect and complete help for every tempted soul. Dangers beset every path, but the whole universe of heaven is standing on guard, that none may be tempted above that which he is able to bear. Some have strong traits of character, that will need to be constantly repressed. If kept under the control of the Spirit of God, these traits will be a blessing; but if not, they will prove a curse. . . . If we will give

ourselves unselfishly to the work, never swerving in the least from principle, the Lord will throw about us the everlasting arms, and will prove a mighty helper. If we will look to Jesus as the One in whom we may trust, He will never fail us in any emergency. {ML 316.4}

When we receive Christ as an abiding guest in the soul, the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. {MB 15.2}

We should cherish love and gratitude, we should look unto Jesus and become transformed into His image. The result of this will be increased confidence, hope, patience, and courage. We shall be drinking of the water of life of which Christ spoke to the woman of Samaria. He said: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water. . . . Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." This water represents the life of Christ, and every soul must have it by coming into living connection with God. Then blessed, humble, grateful confidence will be an abiding principle in the soul. Unbelieving fear will be swept away before living faith. We shall contemplate the character of Him who first loved us. {TM 226.1}

Had Lucifer really desired to be like the Most High, he would never have deserted his appointed place in heaven; for the spirit of the Most High is manifested in unselfish ministry. Lucifer desired God's power, but not His character. He sought for himself the highest place, and every being who is actuated by his spirit will do the same. Thus alienation, discord, and strife will be inevitable. Dominion becomes the prize of the strongest. The kingdom of Satan is a kingdom of force; every individual regards every other as an obstacle in the way of his own advancement, or a steppingstone on which he himself may climb to a higher place. {DA 435.2}

While Lucifer counted it a thing to be grasped to be equal with God, Christ, the Exalted One, "made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Philippians 2:7, 8. Now the cross was just before Him; and His own disciples were so filled with self-seeking—the very principle of Satan's kingdom—that they could not enter into sympathy with their Lord, or even understand Him as He spoke of His humiliation for them. {DA 436.1}

Before honor is humility. To fill a high place before men, Heaven chooses the worker who, like John the Baptist, takes a lowly place before God. The most childlike disciple is the most efficient in labor for God. The heavenly intelligences can co-operate with him who is seeking, not to exalt self, but to save souls. He who feels most deeply his need of divine aid will plead for it; and the Holy Spirit will give unto him glimpses of Jesus that will strengthen and uplift the soul. From communion with Christ he will go forth to work for those who are perishing in their sins.

He is anointed for his mission; and he succeeds where many of the learned and intellectually wise would fail. {DA 436.3}

In His life and lessons, Christ has given a perfect exemplification of the unselfish ministry which has its origin in God. God does not live for Himself. By creating the world, and by upholding all things, He is constantly ministering for others. “He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.” Matthew 5:45. This ideal of ministry God has committed to His Son. Jesus was given to stand at the head of humanity, that by His example He might teach what it means to minister. His whole life was under a law of service. He served all, ministered to all. Thus He lived the law of God, and by His example showed how we are to obey it. {DA 649.4}

Jesus, the brightness of the Father’s glory, thought “it not a thing to be grasped to be on an equality with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant.” Philippians 2:6, 7, R.V., margin. Through all the lowly experiences of life He consented to pass, walking among the children of men, not as a king, to demand homage, but as one whose mission it was to serve others. There was in His manner no taint of bigotry, no cold austerity. The world’s Redeemer had a greater than angelic nature, yet united with His divine majesty were meekness and humility that attracted all to Himself. {MB 14.2}

Christian humility is a wonderful grace—the very antidote to the apostasy of Satan, which has unholy ambition and every delusion that he can frame. The grace of humility through Christ Jesus will make an imperfect man discern his imperfections and make him meet for the inheritance of the saints, where God is all and in all. . . . {TDG 16.4}

The mind devoted unreservedly to God, under the guidance of the divine Spirit develops generally and harmoniously. The weak, vacillating character becomes changed through the power of God to one of strength and steadfastness. Continual devotion and piety establish so close a relation between Jesus and His disciple that the Christian becomes like Him in mind and character. After association with the Son of God the humble follower of Christ is found to be a person of sound principle, clear perception, and reliable judgment. He has a connection with God, the Source of light and understanding. {TMK 124.4}