

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Second Quarter 2017: “Feed My Sheep”: 1 and 2 Peter

Lesson 4 “Social Relationships”

Read for this week’s study

1 Peter 2:13–23; 1 Peter 3:1–7; 1 Corinthians 7:12–16; Galatians 3:27, 28; Acts 5:27–32; Leviticus 19:18.

Memory Text

“Above all things have fervent love for one another, for love will cover a multitude of sins” (1 Peter 4:8, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Church and State
- III. Masters and Slaves
- IV. Wives and Husbands
- V. Social Relationships
- VI. Christianity and the Social Order
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. To understand the Apostle Peter’s first letter, it’s helpful to follow his train of thought: Everything begins with salvation – what God has done through Jesus Christ. Our personal response to this shapes our relationship with God. If we know Jesus Christ as Savior, then we have hope. If we have hope, then we can walk in holiness and in harmony. When we walk in harmony, there will be no problem submitting to those around us in society, the home and the church family. Salvation and submission are preparation for suffering, but if we focus on Christ, we can overcome and God will ultimately transform our suffering into glory.
2. The first section of Peter’s letter (1:1-2:10) dealt with God’s grace and salvation showing its consequences – living in hope (1:1-12); living in holiness (1:13-21); living in harmony (1:22-2:10). The second part (2:11-3:12) will discuss God’s grace and submission. The Apostle Peter applied this theme of submission to the life of a believer as a citizen (2:11-17); a worker (2:18-25); a marriage partner (3:1-7) and a member of the Christian assembly (3:8-12) thus dealing with submitting to

authorities, to masters, submitting in the home and in the church. In this lesson, we will discuss the first three.

3. Submission is certainly not a popular topic in the present society of the first world. Why is that so? What is the relationship between submission and the quest for “personal fulfillment”? How are both important?
4. What is the meaning of submission? What is the relationship between submission and recognition of God’s authority? How does God wield his authority? God has established the home, human government, and the church. To what extent is Peter trying to tell us how these institutions should be run? What does “inspired” mean in this context? How do you take something written in the 1st century AD [Middle East] and apply it in 21st century [America, Australia, or Europe]?
5. Peter shared with his readers three excellent motives for submitting to authority and thus living dedicated, obedient Christian lives: For the sake of other people (lost; 2:11-12); for the Lord’s Sake (2:13-17) and for our own sake (2:18-25).
6. What is the significance of the fact that Peter did not criticize the Roman government or suggest that it be overthrown? Why must God’s church be able to live and grow in all kinds of political systems? How do you show respect for the office (position), even if you cannot respect the man or woman in the office?
7. Great evil resulted from a zealous application of Peter’s words in 3:1-7 throughout the centuries. Much of that application proved to be injudicious “proof texting” rather than built on an understanding of the principles. Let’s identify some of the principles contained in these verses:
8. The natural reaction to oppression is revolt. However, on the domestic scene, aggressive and confrontational behavior only invites more repression which would work against both slaves and women, since they cannot contend from a position of strength. For wives, harboring hostility and rancor or exhibiting antagonistic attitudes would be self-defeating. So Peter advises the attitude of kind submission that may so affect the unbelieving husbands that “they will be won over without words” (3:1).
9. To help define the nature of this submission, Peter cites the example of Christ and offers the potential of an eventual desirable conversion of the husbands. A submission that is mere obedience or required conformity to authority will convert no one. The goal is to elicit reflection in the other party. This can be achieved or encouraged by a voluntary submission in servanthood which conforms to Christ’s example and follows in his steps (2:21).
10. This is the servant who walks the extra mile and turns the other cheek. The motivation for such submission has nothing in common with submission defined as obedience to authority. Mere submission to authority has no power to demonstrate the gospel. But the submission of a “gentle and quiet spirit, is in God’s sight very precious” (3:4). Any pagan wife can submit in obedience, but when a Christian woman submits in servanthood, she demonstrates the power of the gospel and

makes her unbelieving husband think, thus she may even win him over without saying a word. Only when the element of sacrifice is present in submission does it point to Christ. Peter talks about a dynamic, redemptive action of self-disposition which is patterned after the servant ministry of Christ. This makes submission as compliance to patriarchal authority pale into insignificance.

11. Finally, Peter reminds us that lives of subservient people can be dominated by fear: It is a frightful thing to be at the mercy of the unmerciful powerful person. Thus Peter forbids Christian wives to submit out of fear. His word to them is “let nothing terrify you” (literally, “fearing no terror” [3:6]). The remedy is to place confidence in God as did the “holy women who hoped in God” (3:5) and “do right” (3:6).
12. Peter then gives Sarah as an example of wifely submission, who “obeyed Abraham, calling him lord” (v. 6). This example shows Peter’s sense of humor. As anyone can see, in the book of Genesis, Abraham obeyed Sarah just as Sarah obeyed Abraham. Once Abraham was clearly told by God, “Whatever Sarah says to you, do as she tells you.” (Genesis 21:11-12; see also 16:2.6) Moreover, Sarah referred to Abraham as “lord” in a monologue to herself, when he was out of earshot (Genesis 18:12).
13. The reason Peter refers to Sarah is that wives in the new covenant can learn from their spiritual ancestor (“you are now her children” [v. 6]), Sarah lived in the “dark side” of the old covenant when she had to “obey” her husband. If Sarah submitted in obedience, the least her spiritual daughters can do is to submit in servanthood. Sarah obeyed Abraham, but Christian wives (her spiritual daughters) are never told to “obey” their husbands, neither here nor anywhere else in the Bible. Instead, they are asked to “do good”.
14. Sarah called Abraham “lord”, but Christian wives are never told to call their husbands “lord” anywhere in the Bible. Instead they are told “let nothing terrify you” (v. 6). Although Sarah called Abraham “lord”, according to Peter it is husbands who must show consideration for their wives and “bestow honor” on them (v. 7), much like a servant to his master (2:18) or everyone to the emperor (2:17)! Peter subjects husbands to a traumatic role reversal. Under the Jewish patriarchal system, it was the duty of wives “to live considerately” with their husband, “bestowing honor” on their husband, regarding him as the supreme heirs to the blessings of life, listening to their husband’s thanking God daily in prayer that they had not been created a slave or a woman.
15. But the gospel of Jesus Christ turned this world upside down, shattering each of those patriarchal presuppositions and privileges. Women may be considered the “weaker sex”, but now in the new creation, they become “joint heirs” with their husbands (v. 7). Both husband and wife have become equal recipients of the grace that is the source of their new life. And should husbands default in any of those areas by reverting back to carnal, self-assertive ways, they might as well cease praying to God (3:7)! By acting under the new covenant like masters to their wives instead like servants, they create a spiritual obstruction that makes them and therefore their prayers unacceptable to God.

16. Peter's final word for all of his readers (including wives and husbands) is to live in harmony with one another; to be in tune with each other's feelings; to practice love, compassion, and humility toward one another (3:8). A shared life energized by such dynamics of reciprocity rejects upholding any differences of rank, hierarchy, authority, and rulership between a Christian husband and wife. That is the result of the new community that Christ created on the cross by removing the curses of the Fall. And it reflects the relationships within the Trinity. Imagine the power of influence, if God had a community like that! The world would pay attention.

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

You remember some of the leaders came and asked if Jesus was going to pay the temple tax or not. A prophet was exempt from paying the temple tax. He didn't have to pay it. But they had become accustomed to his being so agreeable and so submissive they assumed that this time, as always, he wouldn't fight, he wouldn't insist on his own rights, and he would pay. They were going to take advantage of his being such a peace maker, and present the money before the people and say, "Look, he's paid the temple tax; he admits he's not a prophet."

So what does Jesus do? He pays the tax. He always does the peace making thing, but look how he paid it. Discerning people looking on saw that even in the way he submitted, he provided even further evidence that he was who he claimed to be. {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)

There were more slaves than free. What should the early church do? Did Paul turn society upside-down? Or did he sow the seeds of real revolution here by saying to Philemon, "Take Onesimus back and treat him like a brother. And Onesimus, when you get back, be the best servant Philemon ever had." Because if they had started a revolution then, they never would have had time to talk about the gospel. Have you noticed, the Bible doesn't start great wars of social change. But it sows seeds of real change from inside. And so that comes through in here, also.

There's another lovely possibility in this. Do you know whether or not Philemon did what he was asked to do? Did he treat Onesimus well? Fifty years or so after Paul wrote the letter to Philemon, another great Christian letter writer, Ignatius, who was bishop of Antioch, sent a letter to the church in Ephesus, in which he speaks highly of the Bishop of the church at Ephesus. "A man of inexpressible love, Onesimus by name." Is it possible that the slave became the Bishop of Ephesus? Why not? It just works out beautifully, because it just fits the whole setting so well. And it would suggest that Philemon did the very brave thing. What do you think

his neighbors thought of him, not punishing Onesimus? Wouldn't this risk the stability of society at the time? No. Philemon decided on the contrary, to treat Onesimus like this would have an even greater effect for good. And in the end Onesimus became a leader of the church. I love to think it's the same one, because it would be a magnificent ending to the story. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – 1&2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/71MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/72MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

And I think that's the crucial point. Don't stop with "Wives, be subject to your husbands," but, "as to the Lord." Now, how are we supposed to be subject to the Lord? Is he arbitrary, exacting, unforgiving and severe? If you think of the Lord as a tyrant, then "be subject to your husbands as to a tyrant." But if you have a very different picture of the Lord, that would qualify the nature of this objection. In Galatians, you remember, when we are under the control of the Holy Spirit, we recover our self-control. So to be subject to Christ is to recover the dignity of individuality and self-control. So remember those qualifying words, "as to the Lord". The kind of person we believe the Lord to be, and the quality of "subjection" the Lord desires should determine the relationship we have between each other. Would the Lord tyrannize another? Think of all he's done to show that isn't so. He goes on:

"The husband is the head of the wife," and we tend, you see, to get the first half each time. "Wives, be subject to your husbands." "For the husband is the head of the wife." And without the qualifiers in there, this could be misunderstood. But just as one is subject to one's husband as to the Lord, and think how gracious he is, the husband is head of the wife as Christ is head of the church. How does Christ dominate the church? Does he even ask us to believe anything for which he does not provide adequate evidence? On the road to Emmaus, did he ask the disciples to believe him on the authority of his personal testimony, or did he first take them through the evidence? That's how Christ leads the church, you see. And then the church is described as his body, which he's going to develop later, and is himself its Savior and healer. "As the church is subject to Christ, so let wives also be subject in everything to their husbands."

And now he turns it around:

Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish [and, you see, you should hardly even pause to draw a breath]. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies [and want to present them in the same condition that Christ wishes to present the church. So, in effect] He who loves his wife loves himself [I always like to read that at

weddings]. For no man ever hates his own flesh [unless he's emotionally very ill. Any normal person doesn't hate his own flesh], but he nourishes [over-nourishes], and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. For this reason a man [that is, for all the reasons given above], a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one.

Did he make that up? Why, those are the very words of Jesus in the gospels. It goes right back to Eden. "This is a great mystery," he says; and it is, when you come to think of it. And it may be one of the emergency measures in the great controversy, because the family was invented, not before sin, but after. If we take the smaller view, it was before sin on this planet; but if we take the larger view, the great controversy and the war up in heaven had already started, and there was need for illustration. There was need for the seventh-day Sabbath more than there was before. But he says, "I take this great mystery to mean Christ and the church;" suggesting the family is a demonstration and an illustration of the relationship between God and his people, which is Christ and the church. And that's true. When you think of it, the relationship between parents and their children is the closest possible illustration and representation of all the problems, the most delicate ones, that God has with his children; and with his creatures throughout the whole universe. So it's meant to represent that. "However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband." And then he goes on to discussing children. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God* in all 66 – Philippians, 1&2 Thessalonians, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/69MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/70MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Recommended Listening: The audio series of the book of Romans, chapter 13 is available at:

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

Further Study with Ellen White

Every word you speak, every action you perform, has an influence for good or evil upon those who associate with you; and, oh! how necessary it is that you have Christ dwelling in your heart by faith, that your words may be words of life, and your works, the works of love.—RH, June 12, 1888. {2MCP 433.3}

Christ possessed the same nature that man possesses. He was tempted in all points like as man is tempted. The same power by which He obeyed is at man's command. {TMK 292.6}

When, as erring, sinful beings, we come to Christ and become partakers of His pardoning grace, love springs up in the heart. Every burden is light, for the yoke that Christ imposes is easy. Duty

becomes a delight, and sacrifice a pleasure. The path that before seemed shrouded in darkness, becomes bright with beams from the Sun of Righteousness. {SC 59.2}

The loveliness of the character of Christ will be seen in His followers. It was His delight to do the will of God. Love to God, zeal for His glory, was the controlling power in our Saviour's life. Love beautified and ennobled all His actions. Love is of God. The unconsecrated heart cannot originate or produce it. It is found only in the heart where Jesus reigns. "We love, because He first loved us." 1 John 4:19, R.V. In the heart renewed by divine grace, love is the principle of action. It modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and ennobles the affections. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the life and sheds a refining influence on all around. {SC 59.3}

The government under which Jesus lived was corrupt and oppressive; on every hand were crying abuses,—extortion, intolerance, and grinding cruelty. Yet the Saviour attempted no civil reforms. He attacked no national abuses, nor condemned the national enemies. He did not interfere with the authority or administration of those in power. He who was our example kept aloof from earthly governments. Not because He was indifferent to the woes of men, but because the remedy did not lie in merely human and external measures. To be efficient, the cure must reach men individually, and must regenerate the heart. {DA 509.3}

Not by the decisions of courts or councils or legislative assemblies, not by the patronage of worldly great men, is the kingdom of Christ established, but by the implanting of Christ's nature in humanity through the work of the Holy Spirit. "As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:12, 13. Here is the only power that can work the uplifting of mankind. And the human agency for the accomplishment of this work is the teaching and practicing of the word of God. {DA 509.4}

All whose hearts are in sympathy with the heart of Infinite Love will seek to reclaim, and not to condemn. Christ dwelling in the soul is a spring that never runs dry. Where He abides, there will be an overflowing of beneficence.—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 39. (1896)
{Ev 174.3}

We are to be one with Christ as He is one with the Father, and the Father will love us as He loves His Son. We may have the same help that Christ had, we may have strength for every emergency; for God will be our front guard and our rearward. He will shut us in on every side, and when we are brought before rulers, before the authorities of the earth, we need not meditate beforehand of what we shall say. God will teach us in the day of our need. Now may God help us to come to the feet of Jesus and learn of Him, before we seek to become teachers of others.—*Review and Herald*, Feb. 18, 1890. {TM 386.2}