

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2018: *Stewardship: Motives of the Heart*

Lesson 2 “I See, I Want, I Take”

Read for this week’s study

2 Corinthians 8:1–7; Matthew 13:3–7, 22; Genesis 3:1–6; Isaiah 56:11; Matthew 26:14–16; 2 Peter 1:5–9.

Memory Text

“ ‘Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful’ ” (Matthew 13:22, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Prosperity Gospel
- III. Blurred Spiritual Eyesight
- IV. The Steps of Covetousness
- V. Greed—Having Things Your Way
- VI. Self-Control
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Read Matthew 13:3-7, 22. How does Jesus’ explanation of the seed that landed among thorns relate to our lives in today’s world? Does this truth apply only to the developed world or is it true also in places that don’t have all the amenities that people in the West are used to? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. In Proverbs it suggests that following God’s ways (the wise) leads to prosperity, but wickedness leads to ruin (Proverbs 3:33; 10:3; 13:25; 14:11; 15:6). Is that always true in this life? Does God truly prosper all who are faithful to Him? Is poverty ever a sign of unfaithfulness? Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-7. How does this passage help us answer the questions above? How should we read texts like the ones in Proverbs? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. In what ways have you seen the “deceitfulness of riches” in your own life? What practical choices can help people protect themselves from this deception? (Monday’s lesson)

4. Read Genesis 3:1-6. What did Satan do to lure Eve into sin? How has he used the same principles through the ages to deceive many others as well? (Tuesday's lesson)
5. Read Isaiah 56:11. What sin is this text warning about? How can we learn to recognize tendencies toward covetousness in ourselves? Read Matthew 26:14-16. What does the Judas story tell us about the power of greed? Who among us doesn't manifest some greed in our characters? What can we do to keep this natural tendency under control? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read Acts 24:24-26 and Galatians 5:22-25. How do these texts help us understand how people, rich or poor, can protect themselves from the dangers that greed, covetousness, and the love of material things can present to the Christians? Read 2 Peter 1:5-9. What path is Peter pointing to and how does pursuing this path help us against greed and covetousness? Why do you think love is listed first in Galatians 5 and last in 1 Peter 1? (Thursday's lesson)
7. Can you think of any biblical examples that refute the idea of a "prosperity gospel?" (Friday's lesson)
8. Does your experience with small children suggest to you that they are born greedy or generous? How does one raise children that exhibit the fruits of the Spirit? (Friday's lesson)
9. How does greed damage the greedy person? How does it damage others? Can you give examples from your own experience? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Well, what was the theology prevailing at that time? When a man was poor, was he blessed? No, the reason he was poor was that he was not blessed. And why was he not blessed? Because he was not good. Do you remember in Job? So long as Job was prosperous, they knew he was a good man, but when he lost everything, the three theologians came and said, "You must have done something very bad, because if you are good, you are blessed. If you are bad, you are punished. And the greatest evidence of blessing is prosperity. "This is why Jesus stunned them when he said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." And they said, "Well, if a rich man can't be saved, who can be?" Because if you are rich, you are blessed; and if you are blessed, you are good. So what Jesus said to them was, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a good man to be saved." That's the way they read it.

You see, that's why they were so puzzled by it. But of course their theology was wrong, and the Book of Job is to show it. Job was good, but he lost everything, and he remained good. But his friends had this system all neatly worked out, you see. The more virtuous you are, the more you are blessed. The more you're blessed, the more you'll prosper. So the richer you are, the "gooder" you are. Well, hasn't that prevailed through the years? "The rich are blessed." And

they have tyrannized the poor sometimes because of this. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Matthew, recorded March, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

[http://pkp.cc/51MMPOGIA66 \(Part 1\)](http://pkp.cc/51MMPOGIA66) [http://pkp.cc/52MMPOGIA66 \(Part 2\)](http://pkp.cc/52MMPOGIA66)

Well, supposing Jesus came to a group of our church, and said, “By the way, you have not been keeping the Sabbath correctly. You have been too strict.” How would we react? You know, we’d say, “Well, we’ve been warned that false prophets would come. ‘To the Law and to the Testimony’ and you’re not speaking in harmony.” We shouldn’t underestimate the devotion, the dedication of these Pharisees. And they were highly respected by the people. Jesus said, “I read the Old Testament differently.” You remember, in the Sermon on the Mount, “Blessed are the poor,” and they said, “That’s ridiculous! The poor aren’t blessed. They’re poor because they’re not blessed. If they were blessed they would be rich.” And then he says, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” If you’re rich, you’re blessed. Otherwise you wouldn’t be rich. And you wouldn’t be blessed if you weren’t good, so if you were rich, you were good. So Jesus was saying to those Bible students, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a good person to be saved.” That’s ridiculous! It’s just their basic understanding was wrong.

And Jesus said, “I say, blessed are you poor, because you’re more willing to accept what I have to offer than these rich people. Because the rich people know they’re in good standing.” You see, they had key texts for this. They would go back to Deuteronomy. “If you obey me, I’ll bless you and prosper you. If you disobey me, I’ll curse you and there will be punishments, and plagues, and all the rest. And your crops will not flourish.” The three friends of Job argued with him over that very point. And they were wrong. So Jesus was taking the same point of view against the Pharisees as Job was taking against the three theologians who came to him. Don’t oversimplify on this. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Mark, recorded April, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

[http://pkp.cc/53MMPOGIA66 \(Part 1\)](http://pkp.cc/53MMPOGIA66) [http://pkp.cc/54MMPOGIA66 \(Part 2\)](http://pkp.cc/54MMPOGIA66)

First of all, look in Jeremiah 9. Now, all the reading that we’ve done before is going to focus in on a book like Romans, and Galatians to come. Paul grew up reading Jeremiah. I wonder if he knew about Jeremiah 9:23. Of course he did!

Thus says the LORD: “Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this [are you proud of something? Be proud of this], that he understands and knows

me, that I am the LORD who practices steadfast love, justice, and righteousness in the earth; for in these things I delight, says the LORD.”

Isn't that Romans 1:16, 17? “I am not ashamed of the gospel. I am proud of it, for in it God's righteousness is revealed. I'm proud of the fact that God delights in love, justice, and righteousness, and that knowledge has great power.”

Do you remember all the books, how many of them said, “My people perish for lack of knowledge? They do not know me.”

Think of all the way through Isaiah, where people were worshipping God in the wrong way because they did not know him. You remember in Isaiah 29, “Their worship of me is a commandment of men learned by rote;”

Why would you obey God mechanically, without thinking, if you didn't think that's the kind of God he was, and would accept this? The way we worship God, the way we treat each other, is determined by the kind of person we believe him to be. And all the prophets wrestled with this.

Jeremiah saw the truth. He says, “I'm proud of the truth about God. He delights in love, justice, and righteousness.” Remember Micah, and Amos. They all said this, didn't they? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Romans, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/61MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/62MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

COMMENT: This is backing up just a little bit to your first question. What I see as the worst of the problem is what we refer to as original sin. They both chose to do something against God's advice. They began the habit or the inclination in mankind to open themselves to Satan's deceptions, and not to trust God supremely.

Yes, what do you think of that? And couldn't we be quite specific about that? Doesn't Satan make some specific points to Eve? First of all, he says, “Has God said you may not take this fruit?” She said, “Yes, we may not touch it or we die.” He said, “That's a lie.” Right? He said, “You will not die.” Would you have faith in a liar? It's not very wise. So immediately, he seeks to undermine confidence and trust in God, but then he also suggests that God has selfishly withheld something from them which would be very good. He says, “God knows if you take this you will become like him, and I don't know why he's holding that back from you,” he'd say in his deceitful manner. “You know, I don't know why God, being so good, would do this.” You know how you could say those things, seeming to be supportive, and yet actually undermining.

So the charges are right there. God is pictured as arbitrary, exacting, and the whole idea that God would say, “If you touch that tree I'll kill you,” sounds vengeful, unforgiving and severe. So

how are we to read those words? It would look, wouldn't it, if these are the charges in the great controversy, that God, though he did wonderfully during creation week, is not coming off so well in this conversation with Satan. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Genesis, recorded October, 1981, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1983:

[http://pkp.cc/1MMPOGIA66 \(Part 1\)](http://pkp.cc/1MMPOGIA66) [http://pkp.cc/2MMPOGIA66 \(Part 2\)](http://pkp.cc/2MMPOGIA66)

What about the tenth Commandment, which prohibits any evil desire? Hasn't the tenth Commandment all along said that you haven't really got the Law written in your heart when you just don't break the rules? The Law is written in your heart when you don't even want to break the rules, you see. It prohibits evil desire. So the Ten Commandments have always taught this, that if you desire this, you're not really keeping the Commandment. So Jesus was only reiterating the Ten Commandments as originally given. These were not new ideas. And who said, "What God wants is truth in the inner being"? Didn't David understand this? How about the other writers, Jeremiah, and Isaiah, when they said, "Your obedience is just the commandments of men learned by rote. It's just external." Amos says, "You keep the Sabbath, but you can hardly wait for the sun to go down so you can cheat with biased scales, and so on." "Your hearts are not really in it." Remember, over and over we read this? Jesus is saying, "I am fully in harmony with the Old Testament. You, my friends, are not. I'm not teaching you anything new. This is as old as the Old Testament. There's no change here whatever." They were not living in harmony with the Scriptures. And of course this would be very hard to take. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Matthew, recorded March, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

[http://pkp.cc/51MMPOGIA66 \(Part 1\)](http://pkp.cc/51MMPOGIA66) [http://pkp.cc/52MMPOGIA66 \(Part 2\)](http://pkp.cc/52MMPOGIA66)

Has the law ever saved anybody? No, you see the law, by itself, just tells you what to do, and you remember in Romans 7 on the struggle, Paul says, "When I read the ten more and more carefully, and I came to that tenth one, and it said I not only should not sin, I should not even want to," he said, "that made me angry. I'd been good all these years, and a man of strong feeling. I had often wanted to do what was wrong, and I measured my virtue by the fact that though I wanted to do what was wrong so much, I didn't do it." Now there's a real saint! And Paul says, "I realize now that full salvation means that eventually I will even lose the desire to do what is wrong." That's real healing, you see. I'm not earning Brownie points by being good. I

want to be healed; that's all. What must I do to be saved? In Acts, "Trust God." And God says, "I will not just admit you to the kingdom, but I *will* heal and restore you, all the damage done."

And you remember the argument in that chapter where Paul finally realizes the law did him a service in revealing that inside himself, though he appeared to be good, that evil was still in there. He says, "I still want to do that thing. I've disciplined myself, and I haven't done it. I would really like to be delivered from this doomed body. Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord. The good news has power to save and to heal."

And in heaven, is it not right, we will live with neighbors who not only do not hurt; they don't even want to. You don't have to lock your house, because everybody will obey the law in those days. Is it because they wouldn't dare disobey in heaven? No, there won't even need to be a law any more. Nobody even wants to steal. The law is written in the heart. That's the whole meaning of the law being written in the heart, instead of on the wall. We've come to the place where the tenth Commandment has been obeyed. We do not even want to do what is wrong. And God offers that healing. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Romans*, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/61MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/62MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

One last thing, though, here in Galatians. It talks about being led by the Spirit. How fully would one want to be led and influenced and instructed and corrected by the Holy Spirit? Fully?

Now, what happens when we are fully under the influence of the Holy Spirit? We have phrases that sometimes describe this, such as "Let go and let God". It all depends on what that means. That can mean all kinds of things! But do we eventually completely surrender our self-control to God's control, and now he runs us day by day? Is that what we desire? Well, it's so interesting in this list of the fruits of the Spirit. If one is led by the Spirit he will have all those good things mentioned until you come to the last one, translated in the *King James*, "temperance". Do you have temperance in your version? You know temperance is something the *Women's Christian Temperance Union* promoted through the years, and gave temperance a certain understanding. It's abstinence from liquor, tobacco, narcotics, and moderation in all other things. But is that what Paul has in mind? What do you have in your version for the last of the fruits of the Spirit?

Self-control? Anything else? Do they all agree, self-control? It might be self-discipline, self-mastery, self-control. And that's exactly what the Greek word is. If I were to put it on the board, it's, well it's hard to put it quite into the English letters. Maybe I'll just pronounce it:

"*enkrateia*." The "en" is "in"-inside, and "*krateia*" is the root for democrat; the rule of the people. Aristocrat; the rule of the few. Autocrat, and so on. So "*enkrateia*" means exercising power, or rule, inside. And that's the word for self-control.

Now, think what that says about God—that when we have come completely under his saving and healing power, we have not given up self-control; we have recovered it. Now, is that tyranny? God’s desire is not to run us all, like robots. God’s desire is to lead us to the place where we will responsibly and reliably and consistently exercise self-discipline, self-mastery, self-control. And hasn’t it cost God a great deal to give us back our self-control? If he hadn’t given us this power in the beginning there wouldn’t have been the revolt in his universe. So I think the fruits of the Spirit are so significant that it ends with God’s ultimate goal for us, that when we come into full harmony with his ideal for us, we have recovered the dignity of self-mastery and self-control. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Galatians, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/65MMPOGIA66>*

Further Study with Ellen White

He who called the fisherman of Galilee is still calling men to His service. And He is just as willing to manifest His power through us as through the first disciples. However imperfect and sinful we may be, the Lord holds out to us the offer of partnership with Himself, of apprenticeship to Christ. He invites us to come under the divine instruction, that, uniting with Christ, we may work the works of God. {DA 297.1}

Every act of self-sacrifice for the good of others will strengthen the spirit of beneficence in the giver’s heart, allying him more closely to the Redeemer of the world, who “was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich.” And it is only as we fulfill the divine purpose in our creation that life can be a blessing to us. All the good gifts of God to man will prove only a curse, unless he employs them to bless his fellow men, and for the advancement of God’s cause in the earth.—R. & H., Dec. 7, 1886. {CS 20.2}

And the effort to bless others will react in blessings upon ourselves. This was the purpose of God in giving us a part to act in the plan of redemption. He has granted men the privilege of becoming partakers of the divine nature and, in their turn, of diffusing blessings to their fellow men. This is the highest honor, the greatest joy, that it is possible for God to bestow upon men. Those who thus become participants in labors of love are brought nearest to their Creator. {SC 79.1}

God might have committed the message of the gospel, and all the work of loving ministry, to the heavenly angels. He might have employed other means for accomplishing His purpose. But in His infinite love He chose to make us co-workers with Himself, with Christ and the angels,

that we might share the blessing, the joy, the spiritual uplifting, which results from this unselfish ministry. {SC 79.2}

Looking unto Jesus we obtain brighter and more distinct views of God, and by beholding we become changed. Goodness, love for our fellow men, becomes our natural instinct. We develop a character which is the counterpart of the divine character. Growing into His likeness, we enlarge our capacity for knowing God. More and more we enter into fellowship with the heavenly world, and we have continually increasing power to receive the riches of the knowledge and wisdom of eternity. {COL 355.1}

One of the divine plans for growth is impartation. The Christian is to gain strength by strengthening others. "He that watereth shall be watered also himself." This is not merely a promise; it is a divine law, a law by which God designs that the streams of benevolence, like the waters of the great deep, shall be kept in constant circulation, continually flowing back to their source. In the fulfilling of this law is the secret of spiritual growth (ST June 12, 1901).

{7BC 947.3}

Do not become overwhelmed with the great amount of work you must do in your lifetime, for you are not required to do it all at once. Let every power of your being go to each day's work, improve each precious opportunity, appreciate the helps that God gives you, and make advancement up the ladder of progress step by step. Remember that you are to live but one day at a time, that God has given you one day, and heavenly records will show how you have valued its privileges and opportunities. May you so improve every day given you of God, that at last you may hear the Master say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." {Mar 84.5}

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}

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 refreshing water, welling up in a parched and barren land, causing the desert place to blossom, and flowing out to give life to the perishing, is an emblem of the divine grace which Christ alone can bestow, and which is as the living water, purifying, refreshing, and invigorating the soul. He in whom Christ is abiding has within him a never-failing fountain of grace and strength. Jesus cheers the life and brightens the path of all who truly seek Him. His love, received into the heart, will spring up in good works unto eternal life. And not only does it bless the soul in which it springs, but the living stream will flow out in words and deeds of righteousness, to refresh the thirsting around him. {PP 412.2}

Christ came to this world for no other purpose than to manifest the glory of God, that man might be uplifted by its restoring power. All power and grace were given to Him. His heart was a wellspring of living water, a never-failing fountain, ever ready to flow forth in a rich, clear stream to those around Him. His whole life was spent in pure disinterested benevolence. His purposes were full of love and sympathy. He rejoiced that He could do more for His followers than they could ask or think. His constant prayer for them was that they might be sanctified through the truth, and He prayed with assurance, knowing that an almighty decree had been given before the world was made. {TMK 37.2}