

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

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

Lesson 6 “The Marks of a Steward”

Read for this week’s study

Hebrews 11:8–12; Romans 4:13, 18–21; Matthew 6:24; Hebrews 9:14; 1 John 5:2, 3; Luke 16:10–12.

Memory Text

“Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:1, 2, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Faithfulness
- III. Loyalty
- IV. A Clear Conscience
- V. Obedience
- VI. Trustworthy
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. What is a “brand” as in the phrase “brand name”? How does that concept relate to Christian life? What is the Christian “brand” (1 Corinthians 6:17; John 13:34-35)? More narrowly, what is the Loma Linda brand? What is the Seventh-day Adventist brand? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-2. What does it mean to be a “faithful steward”? Read Hebrews 11:8-12, 17-19, and Romans 4:13, 18-21. What do these verses teach us about being faithful? Read Revelation 2:10. What should the words about being “faithful unto death” mean to us in our everyday walk with the Lord? What relevance does this concept have in a secular world with religious liberty? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read Matthew 6:24 and 1 Chronicles 28:9. What does these texts teach us about the supreme importance of loyalty to God? What about those who don’t experience a whole heart and a willing mind? What are some ways that you reveal loyalty to God in daily life? (Monday’s lesson)
4. What does it mean to have a clear conscience? What is the opposite of that? Read Hebrews 10:19-22 and 1 Timothy 4:1-2. What does it mean to have an “evil conscience”? How does one get that? What does it mean to have a “conscience

seared with a hot iron”? How does that happen? What does Paul say is the only solution to a bad conscience? How does that happen in everyday terms? If you have ever struggled with a guilty conscience, how did you become free from that condition? (Tuesday’s lesson)

5. Read Genesis 4:1-16. Notice the progression from thought to reaction to action in the story of Cain. Notice how God responds to Cain at each stage. What does this story tell us about God? Read 1 John 5:2-3 and Romans 1:5 and 10:16-17. What do these texts tell us about the relationship between obedience and faith/trust? Read 1 Samuel 15:22. What are the similarities and differences between Saul and Cain? (Wednesday’s lesson)
6. Read Luke 16:10-12. What does this passage teach us about being trustworthy? Why is this trait so important for a faithful steward? What characteristic of a steward is highlighted in 1 Chronicles 9:26-27? Describe someone you consider trustworthy? What is the characteristic of that person that you would most like to emulate? (Thursday’s lesson)
7. The lesson for this week lists the qualities of a steward as faith, loyalty, obedience, a clear conscience, trustworthiness and individual accountability. Do you agree with this list? What would you add or subtract from it? (Friday’s lesson)
8. In what ways would it be possible to be loyal to someone or something that is not Good? (Friday’s lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

But going back to the beginning, sin entered our universe when angels ceased to trust. And as a consequence they themselves became untrustworthy. Hence all the other passages in the first half of our Bible Reference Sheet. See James 4:17. That’s a familiar definition: “Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” (RSV)

It is rebellious to act that way. It’s lawless to act that way. A man who behaves like that is a cheat. He’s certainly not trustworthy to have around in a free universe. Look at the next verse in Romans 14:23, these different versions:

Any action that is not based on faith is a sin. (Moffat)

Whatever does not proceed from faith is sin. (RSV)

When we act apart from our faith we sin. (Phillips)

And in the text from Ezra, the Jews are confessing (when they came back from Babylonian captivity) that they have done several things that they should not have done. But they describe their misbehaviors in these words:

We have broken faith with our God. (RSV)

We have been unfaithful to our God. (NIV)

See, that again suggests that the essence of sin is a breach of faith; it's a breakdown of trust and trustworthiness. One of the most impressive illustrations of sin as a violation of trust involves so great a saint as Moses. I don't know of a greater illustration in the whole Bible. You remember when the people were complaining about the lack of water, and they came to Moses and they grumbled. They even said they wished they had died in the wilderness. "Why did you bring us here from Egypt? We have no water!"

And they behaved so badly that Moses ran to God and prayed, "God, what shall I do?"

And God said, "Give them water. Take your rod and go to the rock and speak this time; don't hit it, don't make a scene, don't be angry with the people. Don't even condemn them. Just speak to the rock, and they'll have all the water they want."

And Moses went back to the rock and stood there, and striking it smartly he said, "You ungrateful rebels! Must we bring forth water from this rock?"

And God said what you see in Numbers 20:12:

But the Lord said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you will not bring this community into the land I give them." (NIV)

Now, isn't that being a bit arbitrary and severe? All the old man had done was to get irritated and impatient. And he disobeyed God, and he hit the rock with his rod. Is that enough to keep him out of the Promised Land? For forty years he had led the people. And think what he had put up with all those years. But God says, "Because of what you did at the rock you may not take this people in." Does that seem severe to you, for God to treat his old friend like this? How could what Moses did be serious enough to call for such (in his eyes) a terrible consequence and penalty?

He begged God, "Please. Please may I take the people in?"

And finally God said, "Speak to Me no more on this matter." Now how could it be that serious? Or is the answer in the text that we read? It doesn't say in Numbers 20:12, "because you disobeyed me, you cannot take the people in." The Lord said, "Because you did not trust in me, and you did not trust in me enough to honor me as holy in the sight of the Israelites, you may not bring the people in."

You see, Moses had been maybe the best friend God ever had. God even talked to him face to face—even differently than the way God talks to a prophet with visions and dreams. He says, "I talk to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friends." And the people knew Moses had a special relationship with God, and they revered him—at least when they were behaving. They had seen him go up on Mt. Sinai and come down carrying the Ten Commandments. If your pastor came down some mountain nearby, carrying the Ten Commandments and his face

shining so brightly that you couldn't look at him, wouldn't he have increased influence among the congregation? Moses had enormous influence. And that's what made his behavior at the rock so serious. Moses had pictured God as angry when he was not. God wished by his kindness to lead some of those Israelites to repentance. Romans 2:4. And Moses deprived God of that opportunity. Standing as they were on the verge of going into Canaan to meet those well-armed tribes there, they needed to trust God very closely. And God purposed to win them, with all their complaining and grumbling. He was not going to condemn them or criticize them; just give them abundant water. "Moses," he said, "don't even strike the rock."

But Moses pictured God as angry.

What a contrast to the way Moses had behaved once earlier when God said, "I'm tired of these people. Step aside. Let me destroy them and I'll make a great nation out of you."

And Moses said, "God, you couldn't do that. Think what it would do to your reputation. What would the Egyptians think? They would assume that you couldn't take your people to the Promised Land!"

And God said, "I love that, Moses. Who knows me as well as you do? You really are my friend."

But now under pressure, Moses let God down. He misrepresented God as vengeful, unforgiving, and severe. And that was precisely Satan's sin in the beginning, the sin that is the most devastating of all.

God has honored his friend Moses ever since. He even personally buried him and resurrected him, and later sent him down to comfort his Son on the Mount of Transfiguration. But God had to go on record before the eyes of the onlooking universe as to the terrible seriousness of Moses' sin. It wasn't just that he disobeyed, or by smiting the rock he had "spoiled a symbol." He had, to be sure. But Moses had broken faith with God. He hadn't shown himself to be God's trusted, trusting friend. And that's the essence of sin.

How many of us have committed the same sin? How many of us have hurt our own children, and others who trust us to tell the truth about our God? Have you apologized lately to God for ever putting him in a bad light and suggesting that he's not the kind of person we know him to be?

Moses repented (as we know) and became a better friend of God than ever before. But so many people have continued to mistrust. What happens—what are the results?

Not "what are the penalties?"

What are the results of centuries of rebellion and mistrust? Well, look at Romans 3 in the collection. Romans 3:10-18. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #1, "The Conflict In God's Family" 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/1MMCAG>

Look at Psalm 51. Here is what God wants, to have peace once again in the family:

Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward being: therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart. . . . Create in me a clean heart, O God, and put a new and right spirit within me. . . . For thou hast no delight in sacrifice; were I to give a burnt offering, thou wouldst not be pleased. The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise. (RSV)

Because that means we're willing to stand humbly in the presence of our God and ask, "What must I do to be well, to be saved?" And he says, "You need a new heart and a right spirit." And then we say, "Well then I'd be very happy to have one. Please give me one soon." Hosea understood what God wanted: to have peace in the universe once again. And his whole book is so magnificent. I think we'll find we've quoted it many times these many Friday evenings. Look at Hosea 6:6, 7:

It is true love that I have wanted, not sacrifice; the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings [and as you know about Hebrew parallelism, the second line simply reaffirms or enlarges the point in the first line. That shows that true knowledge of God, and love for God mean the same thing. That's what he wants]. But they, like Adam have broken their agreement; again and again they have played me false. (Phillips)

They cheated. How much security can you have in the family when some of the children are playing false? Then you remember what Jesus said had to happen to Nicodemus before he would be safe to save. John 3:3: "Jesus answered him, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'" (RSV)

"Born again" means a new heart and a right spirit. It's exactly what David said in the fifty-first Psalm. Do you notice that Jesus didn't say, "Unless you be forgiven"? "Except you be justified"? "Unless you have your legal standing adjusted, you cannot enter the kingdom"? He said, "Unless you be changed and become a trustworthy person, a teachable member of my family, you will not be safe to admit to the hereafter." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #3, "All God Asks is Trust" 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/3MMCAG>

In the introduction to his letter to the believers in Rome, Paul states his conviction that he had been specially commissioned to bring about a new kind of obedience. It was to be different

from the kind of obedience he himself had offered before he met Jesus on the Damascus road. It was to be what he calls literally “obedience of faith,” “obedience of trust.”

“Law-obedience” is what Paul used to practice with such zeal, and he was not at all pleased with the results. It had made him intolerant toward other people, even cruel. “Law-obedience” had actually led him to violate the whole spirit of God’s law, the law of love.

By now urging “faith-obedience” or “trust-obedience,” is Paul doing away with the law? “By no means!” Paul exclaims. “On the contrary, we uphold the law.” (Romans 3:31, NRSV.) Phillips interprets, “We put the Law in its proper place.”

One proper place for the law has been to serve as “our attendant on the way to Christ.” But the ultimate place is the one Jeremiah described. Paul agrees with the prophet. What the law requires may be written on the heart—the place, Paul explains to the Romans, where the conscience is active and people do their thinking. (See Romans 2:15)

“Trust-obedience” is the kind that results from “knowing” God, in the full meaning of that word. It comes from learning the truth about him and his use of law. It is the result of being won back to trust him as a Friend, to admire him for his wise and gracious ways.

This means that the Spirit of Truth has succeeded in writing the law “on our hearts.” Now we freely do what the law requires, not because we’ve been ordered to, but because we’re convinced in our own minds that what the law requires is right. {Maxwell, Graham. *Servants or Friends*, 103-104. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.}

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

Further Study with Ellen White

He who knows the end from the beginning has provided for the attack of satanic agencies. And He will fulfill His word to the faithful in every age. That word is sure and steadfast; not one jot or tittle of it can fail. If men will keep under the protection of God, His banner will be over them as an impregnable fortress. He will give evidence that His word can never fail. He will prove a light which shineth in a dark place until the day dawn. He, the Sun of Righteousness, will arise with healing in His beams. . . . {RC 129.5}

He has assured you that the Holy Spirit was given to abide with you forever, to be your pleader and your guide. He asks you to trust in Him, and commit yourself into His keeping. The Holy Spirit is constantly at work, teaching, reminding, testifying, coming to the soul as a divine comforter, and convincing of sin as an appointed judge and guide. . . . {RC 129.6}

Every man is free to choose what power he will have to rule over him. None have fallen so low, none are so vile, but that they can find deliverance in Christ. The demoniac, in place of prayer, could utter only the words of Satan; yet the heart’s unspoken appeal was heard. No cry from a

soul in need, though it fail of utterance in words, will be unheeded. Those who will consent to enter into covenant relation with the God of heaven are not left to the power of Satan or to the infirmity of their own nature. They are invited by the Saviour, “Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me.” Isaiah 27:5. The spirits of darkness will battle for the soul once under their dominion, but angels of God will contend for that soul with prevailing power. The Lord says, “Shall the prey be taken from the mighty, or the lawful captive delivered? . . . Thus saith the Lord, Even the captives of the mighty shall be taken away, and the prey of the terrible shall be delivered: for I will contend with him that contendeth with thee, and I will save thy children.” Isaiah 49:24, 25. {DA 258.6}

As we partake of the divine nature, hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong are cut away from the character, and we are made a living power for good. Ever learning of the divine Teacher, daily partaking of His nature, we cooperate with God in overcoming Satan’s temptations. God works, and man works, that man may be one with Christ as Christ is one with God. Then we sit together with Christ in heavenly places. The mind rests with peace and assurance in Jesus. . . . In Him there is inexhaustible fullness. . . . {AG 235.5}

God has given us every facility, every grace. He has provided the riches of heaven’s treasure, and it is our privilege to draw continually from this capital. {AG 235.6}

When it is in the heart to obey God, when efforts are put forth to this end, Jesus accepts this disposition and effort as man’s best service and he makes up for the deficiency with his own divine merit; for he is the source of every right impulse. {OW, December 1, 1909 par. 10}

The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God. {COL 97.3}

In calling them to His service, God offers them freedom. Obedience to God is liberty from the thralldom of sin, deliverance from human passion and impulse. {TM 247.1}

“The law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” In this scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law. 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. . . . {6BC 1110.3}

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. {6BC 1110.4}

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. {6BC 1110.5}

God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This command is a promise. The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning. {DA 311.2}

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. {MB 109.2}

A sullen submission to the will of the Father will develop the character of a rebel. By such a one service is looked upon as drudgery. It is not rendered cheerfully, and in the love of God. It is a mere mechanical performance. If he dared, such a one would disobey. His rebellion is smothered, ready to break out at any time in bitter murmurings and complaints. Such service brings no peace or quietude to the soul. {ST, July 22, 1897 par. 11}

All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us. {DA 668.3}