

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2018: *The Book of Acts*

Lesson 3 Life *in the Early Church*

Read for this week's study

Acts 2:42–46; Acts 4:34, 35; Acts 3:1–26; Acts 4:1–18; Acts 5:1–11; Acts 5:34–39.

Memory Text

“Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people” (Acts 2:46, 47, NIV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Teaching and Fellowship
- III. The Healing of a Lame Man
- IV. The Rise of Opposition
- V. Ananias and Sapphira
- VI. The Second Arrest
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “That the believers devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching shows that the gift of the Spirit did not lead them to a contemplative religion but to an intense learning process under the apostles (Acts 2:43).” (Sunday’s lesson) What is the place, what is the role of Spirit anointed teaching in the life of a community and that of contemplative spirituality?
2. “Spiritual fellowship was another distinctive mark of early Christian piety. The believers were constantly together, not only in the temple but also in their homes, where they shared meals, celebrated the Lord’s Supper, and prayed (Acts 2:42, 46). [...] The believers still attended the temple’s daily ceremonies (Acts 3:1), and on Sabbaths they presumably were in the synagogues with their fellow Jews (James 2:2), but the distinctive elements of Christian devotion were performed in homes.” (Sunday’s lesson)
3. “Believing that the end was near, they decided that their material possessions, ‘private property’ (to use a more up to date term), was not that important anymore. A common use of their material resources, therefore, seemed appropriate. There

was no reason to worry about tomorrow, as the Messiah Himself would provide for their needs in the Messianic kingdom (Luke 22:29, 30). This sharing allowed them to experience a deeper sense of unity, besides becoming an extraordinary example of Christian generosity.” (Sunday’s lesson). What can we learn from this experience now, 2000 years later? Which aspects would be wise to emulate, and what has proven to not work well?

4. “Five main points characterized early Christian preaching: Jesus was the suffering Messiah (Acts 3:18); God resurrected Him (Acts 3:15); Jesus was exalted in heaven (Acts 3:13); He will come again (Acts 3:20); and repentance is necessary for the forgiveness of sins (Acts 3:19). In many ways, this is the same message we are taking to the world.” (Monday’s lesson)
5. Peter does more than simply give a few proof-texts about Jesus. He understands the Old Testament as a single great story which consistently points forward to something that God was going to do through Abraham, his family, and something that Moses, Samuel, and Isaiah pointed to as well. This was the restoration of all things, when at last everything would be put right. And now, in Jesus, it has happened! And we can be part of it.
6. “The challenge about authority posed by the Jewish leaders suggests a concern for power. Peter, however, declared not only that the miracle had been performed in the name of Jesus but also that salvation comes from Him only. [...] They feared the message as much as the increasing popularity of the movement. Failing to evaluate the evidence properly, they allowed prejudice and desire for self-protection to dictate their actions.” (Tuesday’s lesson)
7. If God, in Jesus, is setting things right in the world, those in power have no guarantee that they will still be in power when all is made right. But what was most upsetting to them, was that the present Temple (and their role in it) was replaced with Jesus.
8. What are the lessons from the story of Ananias & Sapphira? If Ananias and Sapphira had been confronted with their cheating, most of us would have been relieved if they confessed and repented. Then they would have had the opportunity to start over and decide what they really wanted to do. Instead, swift judgment falls on them, judgment of a sort which (despite popular impressions to the contrary) is highly unusual in the Bible. Often, nations and individuals who do wrong seem to get away with it for a long time. And even when the judgment comes, it is not always in the form people expect. What is Luke trying to tell us through it all?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Though Luke has not given us all the details, there is no question that the fundamental problem of Ananias and Sapphira was not the attempt to keep the money but the practice of deceit within the community. As a picture of God, though, can you think of anything more direct, more directly relevant, than what he did to Ananias and Sapphira? You'd think you were back in the days of the Judges, in the Old Testament. The two of them cheated with their pledges. And they didn't have to give any more than they wanted to. But they cheated. And one by one they died on the church floor. Why is God still using that method? Why would he do that?

COMMENT: Deception could not be encountered there, without dealing with it.

Why doesn't he use that method now? We haven't had anyone die on the church floor in Loma Linda for awhile. But you think of how the Adventist church is very strapped for funds. If you are in one of our institutions now, you know the subsidies are way down, and you remember the verse in Ecclesiastes, that "money answers everything". There is a need for funds, and you know there's one way to get them. If God would put selected people to death around the Adventist circle, who were known to be careless with their offerings, more money would pour in than the General Conference could use! Could you imagine sitting in church next week, and someone near you dies because he was not faithful in paying his offering! Wouldn't you immediately review in your mind, "Let me see. Let me see. Am I up to date? Am I up to date? Maybe I trimmed a little too close. Next week I'm going to really go the other direction."

Well, wouldn't it make for generosity? Paul says God loves a cheerful giver but if you're not cheerful about it there's another method, behind the scenes. Does this make for giving that springs from fear? And isn't God very much opposed to that kind of thing? Then why does he do it? Sinai; Achan; Nadab and Abihu; Korah, Dathan, and Abiram? You know all the stories, all the way through; and he's still doing it in the New Testament.

COMMENT: Practice what you believe in.

And if you don't, God will kill you.

COMMENT: If you don't, you'll die.

That inspires one to honesty.

COMMENT: Honesty is what saves you.

Yes, but if you're not honest?

COMMENT: Well, if you're not honest, then you are open to suggestions that maybe you'll become honest.

Such as, "I'll kill you if you're not honest."

COMMENT: It will result in death because you're not honest.

It is the exception though, as someone said. He doesn't often do this, does he? Isn't it apparent that God very rarely does this, when he could do it all the time?

If he wanted to use this method, he could use it all the time. If he wanted the reverence that springs from the thunders of Sinai, we could have thunder all the time, couldn't we? But he doesn't do that. It's obvious that God does not like to use this method.

But when the emergency is serious enough, he will, if need be. But who loses ground, really, every time he does it? In the great controversy, he pays a price for this. It must, then, have been very seriously necessary for the early saints to take him seriously in this regard, as it was with Israel on the way into Canaan. For them not to trust God, weak people as they were, why, they'd never get into Canaan past all those Canaanites, unless they trusted him and were really honest with him. So he made an example of Achan. He made an example of Ananias and Sapphira. But these are emergency measures. They're not the ideal method. These are the rare exceptions, aren't they.

COMMENT: The only times God has used such methods was when there was disrespect being shown him in such a degree that he was in danger of losing all contact. There's something more going on here than we're told about, that required such drastic measures on God's part to get their attention.

That is, knowing what God is like, here after Jesus has been here to show what he's like, you would know it would have to be a very serious occasion to call for such action on God's part {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Acts*, recorded April, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/59MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/60MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

The golden chain of love, binding the hearts of the believers in unity, in bonds of fellowship and love, and in oneness with Christ and the Father, makes the connection perfect, and bears to the world a testimony of the power of Christianity that cannot be controverted. . . . {TMK 173.2}

The soul that turns to God for its help, its support, its power, by daily, earnest prayer, will have noble aspirations, clear perceptions of truth and duty, lofty purposes of action, and a continual hungering and thirsting after righteousness. By maintaining a connection with God, we shall be enabled to diffuse to others, through our association with them, the light, the peace, the serenity, that rule in our hearts. The strength acquired in prayer to God, united with

persevering effort in training the mind in thoughtfulness and care-taking, prepares one for daily duties and keeps the spirit in peace under all circumstances. {MB 85.2}

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}

Wherever there is union with Christ there is love. Whatever other fruits we may bear, if love be missing, they profit nothing. Love to God and our neighbor is the very essence of our religion. No one can love Christ and not love His children. When we are united to Christ, we have the mind of Christ. Purity and love shine forth in the character, meekness and truth control the life. The very expression of the countenance is changed. {RC 104.2}

Christ abiding in the soul exerts a transforming power, and the outward aspect bears witness to the peace and joy that reign within. We drink in the love of Christ, as the branch draws nourishment from the vine. If we are grafted in Christ, if fiber by fiber we have been united with the Living Vine, we shall give evidence of the fact by bearing rich clusters of living fruit. If we are connected with the Light, we shall be channels of light, and in our words and works we shall reflect light to the world. {RC 104.3}

Those who are truly Christians are bound with the chain of love which links earth to heaven, which binds finite man to the infinite God. The light that shines in the face of Jesus Christ shines in the hearts of His followers, to the glory of God. {RC 104.4}

The most powerful evidence a man can give that he has been born again and is a new man in Christ Jesus, is the manifestation of love for his brethren, the doing of Christlike deeds. This is the most wonderful witness that can be borne in favor of Christianity, and will win souls to the truth. . . . {SD 293.4}

Christ brings all true believers into complete oneness with Himself, even the oneness which exists between Him and His Father. The true children of God are bound up with one another and with their Saviour. They are one with Christ in God. {SD 293.5}

Jesus says, "Love one another, as I have loved you." Love is not simply an impulse, a transitory emotion, dependent upon circumstances; it is a living principle, a permanent power. The soul is fed by the streams of pure love that flow from the heart of Christ, as a well-spring that never fails. (Letter 63, 1896). {5BC 1140.3}

To love as Christ loved means to manifest unselfishness at all times and in all places, by kind words and pleasant looks. These cost those who give them nothing, but they leave behind a fragrance that surrounds the soul. Their effect can never be estimated. Not only are they a blessing to the receiver, but to the giver; for they react upon him. Genuine love is a precious

attribute of heavenly origin, which increases in fragrance in proportion as it is dispensed to others. . . . {5BC 1140.4}

Christ's love is deep and earnest, flowing like an irrepressible stream to all who will accept it. There is no selfishness in His love. If this heaven-born love is an abiding principle in the heart, it will make itself known, not only to those we hold most dear in sacred relationship, but to all with whom we come in contact. It will lead us to bestow little acts of attention, to make concessions, to perform deeds of kindness, to speak tender, true, encouraging words. It will lead us to sympathize with those whose hearts hunger for sympathy (MS 17, 1899). {5BC 1140.5}

True sanctification unites believers to Christ and to one another in the bonds of tender sympathy. This union causes to flow continually into the heart rich currents of Christlike love, which flows forth again in love for one another. {5BC 1141.2}

The love of God alone can open and expand the heart, and give to love and sympathy a breadth and height that is without measure. Those who love Jesus will love all the children of God. The sense of personal infirmities and imperfections will lead the human agent to look away from self to Christ; and the Saviour's love will break down every cold, Pharisaical barrier, it will banish all harshness and selfishness, and there will be a blending of soul with soul, even with those who are opposite in temperament. {OHC 183.3}

When the heavenly principle of eternal love fills the heart, it will flow out to others, not merely because favors are received of them, but because love is the principle of action, and modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and elevates the affections. This love is not contracted, so as merely to include "me and mine," but is as broad as the world and as high as heaven. It is in harmony with that of the angel workers. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the entire life, and sheds a refining influence on all around. Possessing it, we cannot but be happy, let fortune smile or frown. And if we love God with all the heart, we must love His children also. This love is the spirit of God. It is the heavenly adorning that gives true nobility and dignity to the soul. {OHC 175.2}

When Christ abides in the heart, the whole nature is transformed. Christ's Spirit, His love, softens the heart, subdues the soul, and raises the thoughts and desires toward God and heaven. {SC 73.1}

When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the joy of heaven. No one sees the hand that lifts the burden or beholds the light descend from the courts above. The blessing comes when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then that power which no human eye can see, creates a new being in the image of God. {ML 46.3}

The command, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect,” would never have been given if every provision had not been made whereby we may become as perfect in our sphere as God is in His. We are to be ever advancing from light to a greater light, holding fast what we have already received, and praying for more. Thus we shall never be left in darkness (*Review and Herald*, Apr. 12, 1892). {LHU 123.5}

Our Lord Jesus Christ came to this world as the unwearied servant of man’s necessity. He “took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses,” that He might minister to every need of humanity. Matthew 8:17. The burden of disease and wretchedness and sin He came to remove. It was His mission to bring to men complete restoration; He came to give them health and peace and perfection of character. {MH 17.1}

Varied were the circumstances and needs of those who besought His aid, and none who came to Him went away unhelped. From Him flowed a stream of healing power, and in body and mind and soul men were made whole. {MH 17.2}

Christ stood at the head of humanity in the garb of humanity. So full of sympathy and love was His attitude that the poorest was not afraid to come to Him. He was kind to all, easily approached by the most lowly. He went from house to house, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, comforting the mourners, soothing the afflicted, speaking peace to the distressed. . . . He was willing to humble Himself, to deny Himself. He did not seek to distinguish Himself. He was the servant of all. It was His meat and drink to be a comfort and a consolation to others, to gladden the sad and heavy-laden one with whom He daily came in contact. {WM 53.2}

Christ stands before us as a pattern Man, the great Medical Missionary—an example for all who should come after. His love, pure and holy, blessed all who came within the sphere of its influence. His character was absolutely perfect, free from the slightest stain of sin. He came as an expression of the perfect love of God, not to crush, not to judge and condemn, but to heal every weak, defective character, to save men and women from Satan’s power. He is the Creator, Redeemer, and Sustainer of the human race. He gives to all the invitation, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.” {WM 53.3}

The love which Christ diffuses through the whole being is a vitalizing power. Every vital part—the brain, the heart, the nerves—it touches with healing. By it the highest energies of the being are roused to activity. It frees the soul from the guilt and sorrow, the anxiety and care, that crush the life forces. With it come serenity and composure. It implants in the soul, joy that nothing earthly can destroy—joy in the Holy Spirit—health-giving, life-giving joy.—MH 115 (1905). {2MCP 452.1}

The Son of God came to the world as a restorer. He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Every word He uttered was spirit and life. He spoke with authority, conscious of His power to bless humanity, and deliver the captives bound by Satan; conscious also that by His presence He could bring to the world fullness of joy. He longed to help every oppressed and suffering member of the human family, and show that it was His prerogative to bless, not to condemn. {LHU 37.2}

The atonement of Christ is not a mere skillful way to have our sins pardoned; it is a divine remedy for the cure of transgression and the restoration of spiritual health. It is the Heaven-ordained means by which the righteousness of Christ may be not only upon us but in our hearts and characters (Letter 406, 1906). {6BC 1074.2}

It is the work of the Christian to mend, to restore, to heal. This healing process saves many a soul and hides a multitude of sins. God is love; God is, in Himself, in His essence, love. He makes the very best of what appears an injury, and gives Satan no occasion for triumph by making the worst appear and exposing our weakness to our enemies. {TM 265.1}

Christ, the Light of the world, veiled the dazzling splendor of His divinity and came to live as a man among men, that they might, without being consumed, become acquainted with their Creator. No man has seen God at any time except as He is revealed through Christ. . . . {8T 265.2}

God saw that a clearer revelation than nature was needed to portray both His personality and His character. He sent His Son into the world to reveal, so far as could be endured by human sight, the nature and the attributes of the invisible God. . . . {8T 265.5}

Christ revealed all of God that sinful human beings could bear without being destroyed. He is the divine Teacher, the Enlightener. Had God thought us in need of revelations other than those made through Christ and in His written word, He would have given them. {8T 266.1}

Through Christ's redeeming work the government of God stands justified. The Omnipotent One is made known as the God of love. Satan's charges are refuted, and his character unveiled. Rebellion can never again arise. Sin can never again enter the universe. Through eternal ages all are secure from apostasy. By love's self-sacrifice, the inhabitants of earth and heaven are bound to their Creator in bonds of indissoluble union. {DA 26.2}

Tender, compassionate, sympathetic, ever considerate of others, He represented the character of God, and was constantly engaged in service for God and man. {8T 286.4}

Looking upon man, God saw his desperate rebellion, and He devised a remedy. Christ was His gift to the world for man's reconciliation. The Son of God was appointed to come to this earth to take humanity and by His own example to be a great educating power among men. His experience in man's behalf was to enable men to resist Satan's power. He came to mold

character and to give mental power, to shed abroad the beams of true education, that the true aim of life might not be lost sight of. The sons of men had had a practical knowledge of evil; Christ came to the world to show them that He had planted for them the tree of life, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations. {CT 33.3}

Truthfulness and integrity are attributes of God, and he who possesses these qualities possesses a power that is invincible. {ML 331.2}