

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Fourth Quarter 2018: *Oneness in Christ*

Lesson 7 When Conflicts Arise

Read for this week's study

Acts 6:1–6; Acts 10:1–23; Matthew 5:17–20; Acts 11:3–24; Acts 15:1–22; Amos 9:11, 12.

Memory Text

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:27, 28, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Ethnic Prejudices
- III. The Conversion of Gentiles
- IV. The Spirit Is Leading
- V. The Jerusalem Council
- VI. A Difficult Solution
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Read Galatians 3:27-28. What are some different aspects of the “many” that become “one” in Jesus Christ? (Sabbath Afternoon)
2. Read Acts 6:1. What issue in the early church caused people to complain about the fair and equitable distribution of food to widows? Was the complaint of the widows legitimate or was the unfairness only perceived? Read Acts 6:2-6. What steps did the early church take to resolve this issue? What was the role of the deacons in relation to the apostles? Do you see significance in the fact that the apostles called many believers together to work out a solution to the problem? (Sunday's lesson)
3. Read Acts 10:1-23. What elements in this passage indicate that the Holy Spirit was at work in a number of places to prepare the way so that the Gentiles could receive the gospel and be included in the church? Read Acts 10:28-35. How did Peter understand the meaning of the vision he received in Joppa? What led him to this interpretation? (Monday's lesson)

4. Read Acts 11:4-18. What did Peter say to explain the work of the Holy Spirit in the Cornelius event? What was the main point he was trying to make? Read Acts 11:19-24. What happened next in the life of the early church? How might we ourselves be holding on to narrow views of the church and its message that could hamper our witness to the world? (Tuesday's lesson)
5. Read Acts 15:1-2 and Galatians 2:11-14. What were the two issues that caused serious conflict in the early church? Read Acts 15:3-22. What were some issues presented during the Jerusalem Council? How did the apostles come to change their minds about the meaning of Scripture? Was there ever a time when you changed your mind about how you understood a deeply held belief? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read Amos 9:11-12 and Jeremiah 12:14-16. What predictions did these Old Testament prophets make regarding Israel's neighboring nations? On what basis did James draw the conclusion he did from these texts? What implications does James' reading have for the way we look at familiar texts today? (Thursday's lesson)
7. What steps for the resolution of church conflicts today can we draw from the texts we explored in this lesson? How can we distinguish whether the real issue dividing a church is theological, cultural, political or ethnic? (Friday's lesson)
8. Regarding the decision at the Jerusalem Council, Ellen White wrote: "Not all, however, were pleased with the decision; there was a faction of ambitious and self-confident brethren who disagreed with it." Ellen G. White, *Acts of the Apostles*, pages 196-197. What lesson for today should we take away from this historical reality? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

When he was on the roof and he had the dream, and the sheet came down, and the voice from heaven said, "Rise Peter. Kill and eat." What should a man of faith do, when heaven tells him to do something? Should he not check his bumper sticker, "God has said it. I believe it. That's all there is to it!" And should Peter have said, "I don't understand it, but I don't have to understand. Who am I to question God's inscrutable ways? Hand me a knife and fork!" But he didn't.

Now, on what authority could he say, "God, I can't do it." Didn't he cite scripture, and say, "What you've once said; I don't make sense out of this." Does God say, "I don't have to make sense; I'm the Potter; I can do whatever I like"—coming up in Romans next time. And so the sheet came down again, and again Peter says no. And the third time. Can you imagine the quiver in Peter's voice when he said, "No, I won't do it"? "And I'm puzzled. I don't know what's going on here."

A knock came on the door. And he went downstairs, and here were some contaminating people. Just a moment before he was about to be contaminated by the creeping things in the

sheet, and now he's about to be contaminated by these Gentiles. You see, they treated them about the same. And I think he got the message. "Peter, you're right about the things in the sheet, but you're wrong to treat people created in my image like the things in the sheets." And he got the message, and he went with them. He was right in saying no. As he thought that through, he was prepared to meet those folk at the door.

"Oh! When I think what I've been doing! I've been treating you as if you could contaminate me, just like those things in the sheets." {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)

In fact, from whom did the strongest opposition come? Hasn't that always been the history? Yes, God's professed people opposed this picture. In fact, in [Acts] chapter 13:50, did you notice that even the devout women opposed. Not all of them, but some. "But the Jews incited the devout women of high standing and the leading men [they were together], of the city, and stirred up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district." So even the devout women were opposed. But look who incited them. The Jews! God's own family had rejected his Son, and now they were making sure that nobody would accept the truth that Jesus had come to reveal. Why do you think again, at this stage, the Jews did not like what they had heard?

And now as the disciples went out to explain it the best they could, and they did learn to do it better and better as time went on. You remember Peter had much to learn yet. And the brethren in Jerusalem had much to learn yet. They still thought they should hang on to the ceremonies, you remember. The commission was given to the early Christian church when it still had a lot of theological progress to make. You see, just because we are commissioned, it doesn't mean our theology is perfect! Because certainly the early Christian leaders did not have a perfect theology, but they had the essence of it, and they went out to give the good news. {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:*

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Further Study with Ellen White

In His wisdom the Lord brings those who are seeking for truth into touch with fellow beings who know the truth. It is the plan of Heaven that those who have received light shall impart it to those in darkness. Humanity, drawing its efficiency from the great Source of wisdom, is made

the instrumentality, the working agency, through which the gospel exercises its transforming power on mind and heart. {AA 134.3}

In every place, in regions afar as well as nearer home, there are God-fearing men and women searching for truth. They know that there is a God; they offer their prayers to Him; they trust Him; they act just as Christians act. From the story of Cornelius [Acts 10] we learn that God will lead every one who is willing to be led. He led Cornelius. He drew out His servant's heart in prayer. He prepared him to receive the light of His truth, and He chose to enlighten the mind of Cornelius through the agency of one who had already received light from above. . . . The Lord noticed every act of Cornelius. All heaven observed the giving of alms and the praying of this devout centurion. . . . {HP 322.2}

The sanctification of the soul by the working of the Holy Spirit is the implanting of Christ's nature in humanity. Gospel religion is Christ in the life—a living, active principle. It is the grace of Christ revealed in character and wrought out in good works. The principles of the gospel cannot be disconnected from any department of practical life. Every line of Christian experience and labor is to be a representation of the life of Christ. {COL 384.1}

The angels of heaven are sent forth to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. We know not now who they are; it is not yet made manifest who shall overcome, and share the inheritance of the saints in light; but angels of heaven are passing throughout the length and breadth of the earth, seeking to comfort the sorrowing, to protect the imperiled, to win the hearts of men to Christ. Not one is neglected or passed by. God is no respecter of persons, and He has an equal care for all the souls He has created. {DA 639.1}

No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple courts, that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. It lifts out of Satan's influence those who have been deluded by his deceptions, and places them within reach of the throne of God, the throne encircled by the rainbow of promise. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free. {PK 369.3}

Though He was a Jew, Christ mingled with the Samaritans, setting at naught the Pharisaic customs of His nation. In face of their prejudices, He accepted the hospitality of this despised people. He slept under their roofs, ate with them at their tables, partaking of the food prepared and served by their hands—and taught in their streets, and treated them with the utmost kindness and courtesy. {3SM 238.2}

Jesus sat as an honored guest at the table of the publicans, by His sympathy and social kindness showing that He recognized the dignity of humanity; and men longed to become worthy of His confidence. Upon their thirsty souls His words fell with blessed, life-giving power.

New impulses were awakened, and the possibility of a new life opened to these outcasts of society. {3SM 238.3}

The blessings of salvation are for every soul. Nothing but his own choice can prevent any man from becoming a partaker of the promise in Christ by the gospel. {DA 403.2}

The Saviour is still carrying forward the same work as when He proffered the water of life to the woman of Samaria. Those who call themselves His followers may despise and shun the outcast ones; but no circumstance of birth or nationality, no condition of life, can turn away His love from the children of men. To every soul, however sinful, Jesus says, If thou hadst asked of Me, I would have given thee living water. {DA 194.1}

The gospel invitation is not to be narrowed down, and presented only to a select few, who, we suppose, will do us honor if they accept it. The message is to be given to all. Wherever hearts are open to receive the truth, Christ is ready to instruct them. He reveals to them the Father, and the worship acceptable to Him who reads the heart. For such He uses no parables. To them, as to the woman at the well, He says, “I that speak unto thee am He.” {DA 194.2}

Christ did not tell His disciples that their work would be easy. He showed them the vast confederacy of evil arrayed against them. They would have to fight “against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Ephesians 6:12. But they would not be left to fight alone. He assured them that He would be with them; and that if they would go forth in faith, they should move under the shield of Omnipotence. He bade them be brave and strong; for One mightier than angels would be in their ranks—the General of the armies of heaven. He made full provision for the prosecution of their work and took upon Himself the responsibility of its success. So long as they obeyed His word, and worked in connection with Him, they could not fail. Go to all nations, He bade them. Go to the farthest part of the habitable globe and be assured that My presence will be with you even there. Labor in faith and confidence; for the time will never come when I will forsake you. I will be with you always, helping you to perform your duty, guiding, comforting, sanctifying, sustaining you, giving you success in speaking words that shall draw the attention of others to heaven. {AA 29.1}

Recommended Reading: *Desire of Ages* Chapter 19 – “At Jacob’s Well”

Desire of Ages chapter 43 – “Barriers Broken Down”

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