

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2025: *God's Love and Justice*
Lesson 2 "Covenantal Love"

Read for this week's study

2 Peter 3:9; Deuteronomy 7:6–9; Romans 11:22; 1 John 4:7–20; John 15:12; 1 John 3:16.

Memory Text

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him' " (John 14:23, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Everlasting Love of God
- III. Covenantal Love
- IV. Conditional Relationship
- V. Mercy Forfeited
- VI. You Have Freely Received; Freely Give
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. There is one word for "love" in English (that can be used in many ways, both serious and casual—"I love pizza"). But there are two different words for love in Biblical Greek (both Septuagint OT and NT Greek): *agapē* and *phileō*. While *agape* leans toward a radical self-sacrificing love and *phileō* leans toward brotherly affection, both terms are often used interchangeably within the New Testament. Deuteronomy 7:8-9 (LXX) and John 13:34-35 speak of God's love as *agape*, John 16:27 speaks of God's love in terms of *phileō*. So the author of this lesson does not encourage readers to make a strong distinction between the two terms. (Sabbath Afternoon's Lesson)
2. How far does God's lovingkindness, compassion, and mercy extend? Are there any limits to God's love relationally, geographically, or temporally (with regard to time)? Read Psalm 33:5. What does it mean that the earth is full of God's *chesed* (relentless

- love)? Read Psalm 145:9. Does the psalmist know of any limits to God's mercy? Read Jeremiah 31:3. Was there ever a time when God did not love us? (Sunday's Lesson)
3. Read 2 Peter 3:9, 1 Timothy 2:4, Ezekiel 33:11, and John 3:17. What do these texts tell us about God? What are some implications of God loving everyone? What influence should that have on our relationships with others? (Sunday's Lesson)
 4. Read Deuteronomy 7:6-9. According to the lesson author, God's love is not conditional, but His covenant relationship with His people is conditional. Do you agree? What is the relationship between God's making of covenants and His *chesed*? (Monday's Lesson)
 5. Can God's love be rejected or forfeited? How do the following texts respond to that question (Hos 9:15; Jer 16:5; Rom 11:22; Jude 21)? How do you square texts like these with God's *chesed*? In what ways can people experience God's love even though they do not return it? (Tuesday's Lesson)
 6. Read 1 John 4:7 and 19. What do these verses tell us about God's love? The lesson author explains that God is the ground and source of all love, but we have the choice whether we will accept it or not. He feels that this truth is exemplified in the parable of the unforgiving servant. Do you agree? Read Matthew 18:23-35. What are the implications of this story for our topic in this week's lesson? (Wednesday's Lesson)
 7. Read Matthew 5:43-48, John 15:12-13, 1 John 3:16, and 1 John 4:7-12. What do these passages teach about the relationship between God's love for us, our love for God, and love for others? Luke 7:47 teaches that the one who is forgiven much, loves much. But the one to whom little is forgiven, loves little. Does that mean that God forgives some more than others? How does one show God's love in a secular context like the workplace? (Thursday's Lesson)
 8. Ellen G. White wrote (*Steps to Christ*, 100): "The relations between God and each soul are as distinct and full as though there were not another soul upon the earth to share His watchcare, not another soul for whom He gave His beloved Son." What does that statement mean to you? (Friday's Lesson)
 9. In light of this week's lesson, how do you understand Psalm 103:17-18? (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

But whatever you are able to read into the details, the picture remains the same. Jesus did not expose them before the crowd. That's clear. He didn't expose them, until they were all gone. And he could have readily done so. Now, why didn't he? Well, why didn't he expose Simon in that other story? Why didn't he expose Judas? If we're his children, what father enjoys humiliating his children? You see, unfortunately, we so often make just the good people his children. The others are not, you see. So he could expose them; they're not his children. Is not

God the Father of bad children as well as good children? And I think it's so crucial to realize that.

When Jesus watches the wicked die, he is watching members of his family die. When we say, "Have you joined the family of God?" we mean, "Have you joined the saints?" Well, that's not really true. We are all members of the family. He's going to lose part of his family. When you count your own children, from day to day, say you have six, how many do you have tonight? Three perhaps? The good ones. You don't have the others. Hopefully tomorrow you'll have four, maybe five. Have you ever had a day when you'd own up to all six of your children? I'm glad my folks didn't do this. And some day my father might say, "I don't have any children tonight. They all were bad." That would make no sense. You know Lucifer is a child of God? The worst one he's got. And some day he'll watch him die. And isn't it safe to say that that brilliant child of his will leave an eternal void in the infinite memory of God? He'll always remember his most brilliant son, and he lost him. And he'll miss us if we're lost. That pain will last forever. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – John, recorded April 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/57MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/58MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Lou: Something you said reminds me of another question. If God is all-powerful, why isn't He able—why isn't He willing to save everyone? You've spoken of this approach with the prison house sort of thing. But why can't God lovingly save everybody?

Graham: Well, if salvation just meant admitting us to the Kingdom, (rather than what He wants) He could. He has the power to do that. He even has the power to put us all in terrorized subjection, and then have us grumbling within for the rest of eternity. What **human** father would want that of his family? No matter how powerful a father is, he cannot enforce love and trust in his family. You cannot terrorize your children into a happy home. It just doesn't work. They may behave as long as you're around because you scare them so, but once they've grown up and gone their own ways, they will do what they wish. So I think people who have families, or teachers of children, ought to be in a position to understand what God is trying to do. He is omnipotent, to be sure. But you cannot produce love and trust by force. It simply can't be done; hence the length of the experiment and the history, and the length of the Scriptures.

Lou: So with the idea that God would let everyone in, we would create our own kind of hell by the way we would act, even though He would let us in.

Graham: And He refuses to preside over hell, if you put it that way, it's true. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #4 with Lou Venden, "God's Way of

Restoring Trust” recorded February 1984, Loma Linda, California} To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/4MMCAG>

It is emphasized all through the Old Testament as well as the New. Look at Ezekiel 33:11:

As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel? (RSV)

Like a physician, God stands ready to heal us. But He cannot force us to be well. If we prefer to leave Him, He will respect our decision and sadly let us go. But as we leave Him for the last time to reap the awful consequences, we will hear His sad cry in Hosea, “How can I give you up? How can I let you go?” We discussed it when we talked about why Jesus died. Do you remember that dramatic story in the book of Hosea? Then as God interpreted what Hosea had done, He said, “I have pled so long, so many years, centuries, with My people Israel to please come home. Bring words of repentance with you, and I’ll heal you and I’ll forgive you.”

You remember when the prodigal son did this. Jesus told the story to show how glad God is when anyone does come home. How eager He is to heal! How magnificent is that story, told so many times. Just a little of it now, look at Luke 15 on the reference sheet. Look what this says about the attitude of our Father toward His sinful children:

While he was still a long way off his father saw him, and his heart went out to him. He ran to meet him, flung his arms round him, and kissed him. The son said, “Father, I have sinned against God and against you; I’m no longer fit to be called your son.” But the father said to his servants, “Quick! fetch a robe, my best one [don’t you like that! Quick! fetch a robe, my best one], and put it on him. . . . And let us have a feast to celebrate the day. For this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found.” (NEB)

Jesus added that there is joy among the angels in heaven whenever anybody comes back. Even the angels are pleased when we come home. But Israel did not come back in the days of Hosea. So those sad words follow in Hosea 14: “But come home, Israel, come home to the Lord your God. . . . Take words of repentance with you as you return to the Lord. . . . I will heal their unfaithfulness, I will love them with all My heart.” (Phillips) But they didn’t come. Look at Hosea 11:7, 8: “My people are bent on turning away from Me [not turning home, turning away]. . . . How, oh how, can I give you up Ephraim! How, oh how, can I hand you over Israel!” (Phillips)

As in Hosea, He will sadly hand us over if we insist on turning away. I understand that God will miss us if we are lost. He will miss us forever if we don’t come home. You think of the eternal

void that brilliant Lucifer will leave in the infinite memory of God! But for some of us, this magnificent picture of God leads us to repentance, and to trust. Remember the famous last verse on the list, Romans 2:4: “Do you not know that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” (RSV) {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #13, “How God Treats His Erring Children” recorded April 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*
<http://pkp.cc/13MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

The Lord speaks to human beings in imperfect speech, in order that the degenerate senses, the dull, earthly perception, of earthly beings may comprehend His words. Thus is shown God’s condescension. He meets fallen human beings where they are. {7BC 946.1}

The salvation of the human race has ever been the object of the councils of heaven. The covenant of mercy was made before the foundation of the world. It has existed from all eternity, and is called the everlasting covenant. So surely as there never was a time when God was not, so surely there never was a moment when it was not the delight of the eternal mind to manifest His grace to humanity. {FLB 76.4}

But notice here that obedience is not a mere outward compliance, but the service of love. The law of God is an expression of His very nature; it is an embodiment of the great principle of love, and hence is the foundation of His government in heaven and earth. If our hearts are renewed in the likeness of God, if the divine love is implanted in the soul, will not the law of God be carried out in the life? When the principle of love is implanted in the heart, when man is renewed after the image of Him that created him, the new-covenant promise is fulfilled, “I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.” Hebrews 10:16. And if the law is written in the heart, will it not shape the life? Obedience—the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of discipleship. Thus the Scripture says, “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” “He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” 1 John 5:3; 2:4. Instead of releasing man from obedience, it is faith, and faith only, that makes us partakers of the grace of Christ, which enables us to render obedience. {SC 60.2}

Let it be made plain that the way of God’s commandments is the way of life. God has established the laws of nature, but His laws are not arbitrary exactions. Every “Thou shalt not,” whether in physical or in moral law, implies a promise. If we obey it, blessing will attend our steps. God never forces us to do right, but He seeks to save us from the evil and lead us to the good. {MH 114.2}

In every command and in every promise of the word of God is the power, the very life of God, by which the command may be fulfilled and the promise realized. He who by faith receives the word is receiving the very life and character of God. {COL 38.1}

Those who surrender their lives to His guidance and to His service will never be placed in a position for which He has not made provision. Whatever our situation, if we are doers of His word, we have a Guide to direct our way; whatever our perplexity, we have a sure Counselor; whatever our sorrow, bereavement, or loneliness, we have a sympathizing Friend. {MH 248.2}

The Lord Jesus came to our world full of mercy, life, and light, ready to save those who should come unto Him. But He can save no one against his will. God does not force the conscience; He does not torture the body that He may compel men to compliance with His law. All this work is after the order of Satan. . . . {SD 182.2}

The government of God is not, as Satan would make it appear, founded upon a blind submission, an unreasoning control. It appeals to the intellect and the conscience. “Come now, and let us reason together” is the Creator’s invitation to the beings He has made. Isaiah 1:18. God does not force the will of His creatures. He cannot accept an homage that is not willingly and intelligently given. A mere forced submission would prevent all real development of mind or character; it would make man a mere automaton. Such is not the purpose of the Creator. He desires that man, the crowning work of His creative power, shall reach the highest possible development. He sets before us the height of blessing to which He desires to bring us through His grace. He invites us to give ourselves to Him, that He may work His will in us. It remains for us to choose whether we will be set free from the bondage of sin, to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God. {SC 43.4}

God is love. Like rays of light from the sun, love and light and joy flow out from Him to all His creatures. It is His nature to give. His very life is the outflow of unselfish love. {MB 77.2}

God is love, God is life. It is the prerogative of God to redeem, reconstruct, and restore. {HP 291.2}

The years of eternity, as they roll, will bring richer and still more glorious revelations of God and of Christ. As knowledge is progressive, so will love, reverence, and happiness increase. The more men learn of God, the greater will be their admiration of His character.—GC 678 (1911). {1MCP 252.1}

We are not to be driven to Christ. It is our part to come—to make our own choice, and come to the fountain of life. Why should we not come to Christ? for in Him our hope of eternal life is centered. {LHU 331.2}

To everyone is given freedom to act, and upon everyone rests the responsibility of their own actions. . . . {CTr 180.5}

When one surrenders to Christ, the mind is brought under the control of the law; but it is the royal law, which proclaims liberty to every captive. By becoming one with Christ, man is made free. Subjection to the will of Christ means restoration to perfect manhood. {MH 131.1}

In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan's control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God. {DA 466.4}

In the very fact that men are free moral agents, God teaches us not to be forced or compelled into any course of action, also that as responsible beings in copartnership with God we are to represent God in character. We are to have an interest in our brother, in our neighbor, in all around (Letter 65, 1895). {5BC 1098.1}

God has given us the power of choice; it is ours to exercise. We cannot change our hearts, we cannot control our thoughts, our impulses, our affections. We cannot make ourselves pure, fit for God's service. But we can choose to serve God, we can give Him our will; then He will work in us to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus our whole nature will be brought under the control of Christ. {MH 176.2}

In His plan of government there is no employment of brute force to compel the conscience. The Jews looked for the kingdom of God to be established in the same way as the kingdoms of the world. To promote righteousness they resorted to external measures. They devised methods and plans. But Christ implants a principle. By implanting truth and righteousness, He counterworks error and sin. {COL 77.1}

Love to man is the earthward manifestation of the love of God. It was to implant this love, to make us children of one family, that the King of glory became one with us. And when His parting words are fulfilled, "Love one another, as I have loved you" (John 15:12); when we love the world as He has loved it, then for us His mission is accomplished. We are fitted for heaven; for we have heaven in our hearts. {DA 641.3}

The religion of Christ means more than the forgiveness of sin; it means taking away our sins, and filling the vacuum with the graces of the Holy Spirit. It means divine illumination, rejoicing in God. It means a heart emptied of self, and blessed with the abiding presence of Christ. When Christ reigns in the soul, there is purity, freedom from sin. The glory, the fullness, the completeness of the gospel plan is fulfilled in the life. The acceptance of the Saviour brings a glow of perfect peace, perfect love, perfect assurance. The beauty and fragrance of the

character of Christ revealed in the life testifies that God has indeed sent His Son into the world to be its Saviour. . . . {LHU 292.6}

Jesus knows the circumstances of every soul. You may say, I am sinful, very sinful. You may be; but the worse you are, the more you need Jesus. He turns no weeping, contrite one away. He does not tell to any all that He might reveal, but He bids every trembling soul take courage. Freely will He pardon all who come to Him for forgiveness and restoration. {DA 568.3}

But forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose. When God gives the promise that He “will abundantly pardon,” He adds, as if the meaning of that promise exceeded all that we could comprehend: “My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.” Isaiah 55:7-9. God’s forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness *for* sin, but reclaiming *from* sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” Psalm 51:10. And again he says, “As far as the east is from the west, so far hath He removed our transgressions from us.” Psalm 103:12. {MB 114.1}

Love, the basis of creation and of redemption, is the basis of true education. This is made plain in the law that God has given as the guide of life. The first and great commandment is, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.” Luke 10:27. To love Him, the infinite, the omniscient One, with the whole strength, and mind, and heart, means the highest development of every power. It means that in the whole being—the body, the mind, as well as the soul—the image of God is to be restored. {Ed 16.1}

Love is the basis of godliness. Whatever the profession, no man has pure love to God unless he has unselfish love for his brother. But we can never come into possession of this spirit by *trying* to love others. What is needed is the love of Christ in the heart. When self is merged in Christ, love springs forth spontaneously. The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within—when the sunshine of heaven fills the heart and is revealed in the countenance. {COL 384.2}