

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Second Quarter 2024: *The Great Controversy*

Lesson 5 “Faith Against All Odds”

Read for this week’s study

Psalm 119:162; John 16:13–15; 2 Peter 1:20, 21; Ephesians 2:8, 9; Romans 3:23, 24; Romans 6:15–18.

Memory Text

“Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You” (Psalm 119:11, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. God’s Word Alone
- III. Passing on God’s Word
- IV. Enlightened by the Spirit
- V. Christ Alone . . . Grace Alone
- VI. Obedience: The Fruit of Faith
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. The historical focus of this lesson is on the great Reformers Luther and Zwingli up to the famous protest of the princes (AD 1517-1530). (*The Great Controversy*, chapters 7-11). The lesson notes that since the Reformers had a message they felt was worth dying for, it would also be a message worth living for. The lesson explores biblical passages related to the Scriptures, which were at the heart of the developments described in these chapters of GC. (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)
2. Read Psalm 119:103-104, 147, 162. What was David’s attitude toward God’s Word? How did this impact the Reformers and what impact might it have on us today? What is the difference between devotional reading of the Bible and exegesis? What are some of the benefits and limitations of both approaches? (Sunday’s Lesson)
3. Read 2 Corinthians 4:1-6. What does this passage tell us about Paul’s confidence in the Word of God? Why were early reformers like Luther and Tyndale so anxious to translate the Bible into the common languages of their communities? Does the work

we do for God matter if we never see any results (Daniel 12:3; Revelation 14:13)? (Monday's Lesson)

4. Early in his university education, Martin Luther discovered a Latin copy of the Bible. Up to that point he didn't even know the Bible existed. It transformed his life almost immediately. What do the following texts teach us about the impact of the Bible (John 14:25-26; 16:13-15; 2 Peter 1:20-21)? How do you balance the need for the Holy Spirit's illumination of the biblical text with the need for careful and detailed study? The Reformers believed in the "clarity" of Scripture. Do you believe that the Bible is clear? (Tuesday's Lesson)
5. The very heart of the Reformation was centered in the biblical concept of righteousness by faith. Read Romans 3:23-28. What do these verses teach about salvation? Why do you think a book like *Steps to Christ* makes no mention at all of righteousness by faith? (Wednesday's Lesson)
6. If salvation is the work of God, what role do human works play in the Christian life? How can we affirm the importance of good works in our experience but without making them the foundation of our hope? (Wednesday's Lesson)
7. Read Romans 6:15-18. What does this passage teach about salvation through Christ's righteousness alone? (Thursday's Lesson)
8. Many or most historical accounts of the Medieval Church are extremely negative, criticizing unbiblical doctrines, persecution of those who disagreed, and withholding access to the Bible for most believers. But if God is at work in every religion, where was God working in the Middle Ages? If the history of the papacy is so negative, why did God let the papacy win the battle for control of the church? (Friday's Lesson)
9. Why is it so easy to slip into legalism? What do some people mean when they talk about "cheap grace"? Is grace ever cheap? (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Lou: The "substitutionary," that comes in, say more about that. The "vicarious."

Graham: Ah. He died in our stead. He died as the substitution. In a way, it's very true. I mean, either He dies or we die. However, that's where the comparison ends, because if God has let you and me and all other sinners die, all it would have done is prove the truthfulness of His warning, "If you sin, you will die." And God could say to the universe, "Was I right? I said sinners would die, and look, they're dead." But the universe would not have had answers to questions two and three that I just mentioned. When Jesus died, there was no doubt in the minds of the universe that God was not killing His Son. They were clear about that. And the death of Christ answers all those three questions. So it's not either us or Him. His death was infinitely more

significant than ours. But had He not died, then what else could God do but leave us to reap the consequences and we all would have died. So in a sense, yes. He died in our stead, but beyond that there's no comparison.

Lou: But not as a payoff. It's not one or the other.

Graham: It's not His death is equal to all of ours. His death is infinitely more significant than the death of every sinful man or angel who has ever lived. The death of angels and men would not have answered the questions.

Lou: What you're saying then, is that just a simple "satisfaction" idea doesn't encompass what's involved at all, does it?

Graham: Oh, it makes it much too small. I think it puts God in a very bad light, and it doesn't answer the questions of the Great Controversy. Many folk who prefer those understandings of the plan of salvation do not understand there has been a universe-wide great controversy over the character and government of God. And do you remember at our first meeting, I brought along the evidence that even Luther, hero of the Christian world that he is, could not conceive of these larger issues because he couldn't include the book of Revelation—let alone Hebrews, James and Jude. And this has been the pattern through the years. Not many have seen the sixty-sixth book picture of a universe-wide controversy over the character and government of God. And so they have seen the death of Christ as primarily a plan just to save you and me, for which we are very grateful. It's just that the larger view makes the cross much more significant. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #8 with Lou Venden, "The Most Costly and Convincing Evidence" recorded March 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/8MMCAG>

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, NSRV) 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? Another Look at God*, 103-104. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.}

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

My conviction is that Paul could read James and say, “Well said!” and vice versa. I see no conflict at all between the two. So what do you suppose led to this feeling? Is it possible that there had been so much legalism, in Luther’s day, that he just went too far in the other direction for a while? Ellen White has an interesting comment. “We’ve heard a great deal about faith, it’s time now we heard a little more about works.” A matter of balance. Isn’t it true that faith without works is a dead faith? Is anyone saved by a dead faith? So you don’t really trust. I don’t see any disagreement between the two at all.

Now, if a man tries to be saved by works without any faith; I mean, can God save those who do not trust Him? No matter how hard they work? No. There must be trust. But the man who says, “I trust You, but I don’t have time to listen, and I don’t intend to follow Your instructions, because if I were to follow Your instructions, that would be works.” That makes nonsense out of faith. “I trust You, but I’m not going to do what You say.” Try that on your doctor.

You say, “I’m very sick, and I trust you.”

And the doctor says, “Do the following.”

“Oh no! It would only be faith if I can go to bed tonight and wake up well in the morning.”

Well, it doesn’t come that easily, does it? It’s a faith that works. Faith is a willingness to listen and to carry through with the instructions as best one can. Now it’s true, our efforts may not be at all perfect—quite fumbling. But the trust must be complete. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Acts*, recorded July 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/75MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/76MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Lou: In your presentation this evening it seems clear that you are convinced that we need to be attentive to all ten of the commandments. But isn't a person, you've mentioned the word "legalist" here, isn't a person who is concerned about the law, who is even thinking about the Ten Commandments, isn't such a person a legalist? Isn't that the meaning of legalism? A person who thinks about the law? Shouldn't we be thinking about Jesus rather than about the law?

Graham: It's interesting when you think of the fact that to obey the law is to love. This suggests that the loving person is the legalist. And that doesn't seem to make sense. But I think on a broader basis one needs to consider the real meaning of legalism. Currently, my best understanding of the meaning of legalism is this: I believe that the essence of legalism is preoccupation with our legal standing with a legal, legalistic God. And so many Christians are preoccupied with their legal standing, because they don't really know God. They don't realize that He is a gracious God who is not preoccupied with our legal standing. Like the father of the prodigal son, He's very preoccupied with our welfare and whether or not we will come home. That's what God is preoccupied with. So unfortunately, the word "legalism" is often misused, so I will repeat it. ***The essence of legalism is preoccupation with one's legal standing with God.***

Lou: Well now, Graham, if you are saying that a person might not be just concerned about the Ten Commandments, let me ask you this: Could a person believe and accept, for instance, Christ's sacrifice in his or her place in such a way—could he or she think of that in such a way that they would in effect be a legalist?

Graham: Yes, this something to say very carefully. But I really believe that's true. If you believe Jesus died primarily to adjust our legal standing with a God who is preoccupied with our legal standing, you are a legalist. And this means that you no longer take the blood of bulls and goats to God to adjust your legal standing—and I'd want to say this very reverently—you now take Him the blood of His Son and say, "Will this adjust my legal standing?" He would say, "That's good; now, you've brought Me the right blood." This is legalism.

Lou: So you're saying that if the purpose of our idea or our experience of salvation is meeting a legal requirement or it satisfies a legal requirement, it becomes a matter of legalism.

Graham: That's the Devil's sad perversion. He has actually taken the death of Christ, which is a monument to freedom, and suggests that God is not preoccupied with our legal standing; he has turned that into just another ceremony to adjust legal standing. In other words, those who misunderstood the ceremonies in Old Testament times but then became Christians, applied the same misunderstanding to the cross and to the blood of Christ. It's just that now they have better blood and more persuasiveness with the Father to adjust their legal standing. It sounds terrible to say that.

Lou: It seems to me that you have opened the idea of the meaning and the problem of legalism to a much broader perspective, a very important perspective. You give us something to think about.

Graham: It supports the devil's charges that God is arbitrary, exacting, vengeful, unforgiving, and severe. See, all legalism is based on the conception that God has to execute those who disobey Him. Therefore, it follows that forgiveness will take care of it. That's what produces legalism. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #12 with Lou Venden, "God's Law Is No Threat to Our Freedom" 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/12MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

It is a law of the mind that it gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is trained to dwell. If occupied with commonplace matters only, it will become dwarfed and enfeebled. If never required to grapple with difficult problems, it will after a time almost lose the power of growth. As an educating power the Bible is without a rival. In the word of God the mind finds subject for the deepest thought, the loftiest aspiration. The Bible is the most instructive history that men possess. It came fresh from the fountain of eternal truth, and a divine hand has preserved its purity through all the ages. {PP 596.2}

The Bible unfolds truth with a simplicity and a perfect adaptation to the needs and longings of the human heart, that has astonished and charmed the most highly cultivated minds, while it enables the humblest and uncultured to discern the way of salvation. {SC 107.2}

When the grace of God reigns within, the soul will be surrounded with an atmosphere of faith and courage and Christlike love, an atmosphere invigorating to the spiritual life of all who inhale it. . . . Those who are humble in heart the Lord will use to reach souls whom the ordained ministers cannot approach. They will be moved to speak words which reveal the saving grace of Christ. {AG 238.5}

And in blessing others they will themselves be blessed. God gives us the opportunity to impart grace, that He may refill us with increased grace. Hope and faith will strengthen as the agent for God works with the talents and facilities that God has provided. He will have a divine agency to work with him. {AG 238.6}

God has given in His word sufficient evidence of its divine character. The great truths which concern our redemption are clearly presented. By the aid of the Holy Spirit, which is promised

to all who seek it in sincerity, every man may understand these truths for himself. God has granted to men a strong foundation upon which to rest their faith. {GC 526.2}

God does not ask us to do in our own strength the work before us. He has provided divine assistance for all the emergencies to which our human resources are unequal. He gives the Holy Spirit to help in every strait, to strengthen our hope and assurance, to illuminate our minds and purify our hearts. {8T 19.1}

Jesus will see us also in the secret places of prayer if we will seek Him for light that we may know what is truth. Angels from the world of light will be with those who in humility of heart seek for divine guidance. {SC 91.1}

Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit speaks to the mind, and impresses truth upon the heart. Thus He exposes error, and expels it from the soul. It is by the Spirit of truth, working through the word of God, that Christ subdues His chosen people to Himself. {DA 671.1}

I saw that the angels of God are never to control the will. God sets before man life and death. He can have his choice. {EW 221.1}

Christ has made every provision for us to be strong. He has given us His Holy Spirit, whose office is to bring to our remembrance all the promises that Christ has made, that we may have peace and a sweet sense of forgiveness. If we will but keep our eyes fixed on the Saviour and trust in His power, we shall be filled with a sense of security; for the righteousness of Christ will become our righteousness. {ML 45.5}

God has provided divine assistance for all the emergencies to which our human resources are unequal. He gives the Holy Spirit to help in every strait, to strengthen our hope and assurance, to illuminate our minds and purify our hearts. He provides opportunities and opens channels of working. If His people are watching the indications of His providence, and are ready to cooperate with Him, they will see mighty results. {PK 660.3}

Abundant grace has been provided that the believing soul may be kept free from sin; for all heaven, with its limitless resources, has been placed at our command. We are to draw from the well of salvation. {1SM 394.1}

The whole universe will have become witnesses to the nature and results of sin. And its utter extermination, which in the beginning would have brought fear to angels and dishonor to God, will now vindicate His love and establish His honor before the universe of beings who delight to do His will, and in whose heart is His law. Never will evil again be manifest. Says the word of God: "Affliction shall not rise up the second time." Nahum 1:9. The law of God, which Satan has reproached as the yoke of bondage, will be honored as the law of liberty. A tested and proved creation will never again be turned from allegiance to Him whose character has been fully manifested before them as fathomless love and infinite wisdom. {GC 504.1}

God does not force the will or judgment of any. He takes no pleasure in a slavish obedience. He desires that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy of love. He would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom, justice, and benevolence. And all who have a just conception of these qualities will love Him because they are drawn toward Him in admiration of His attributes. {GC 541.3}

The destiny of the wicked is fixed by their own choice. Their exclusion from heaven is voluntary with themselves, and just and merciful on the part of God. {GC 542.2}

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. {AG 313.5}

The fall of man, with all its consequences, was not hidden from the Omnipotent. Redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam, but an eternal purpose, suffered to be wrought out for the blessing not only of this atom of a world, but for the good of all the worlds that God had created. . . . {TMK 18.2}

It is no part of Christ's mission to compel men to receive Him. It is Satan, and men actuated by his spirit, who seek to compel the conscience. Under a pretense of zeal for righteousness, men who are confederated with evil angels sometimes bring suffering upon their fellow men in order to convert them to their ideas of religion; but Christ is ever showing mercy, ever seeking to win by the revealing of His love. {AA 541.1}

Jesus presented the Father as one to whom we could give our confidence and present our wants. When we are in terror of God, and overwhelmed with the thought of His glory and majesty, the Father points us to Christ as His representative. What you see revealed in Jesus, of tenderness, compassion, and love, is the reflection of the attributes of the Father. The cross of Calvary reveals to man the love of God. Christ represents the Sovereign of the universe as a God of love. By the mouth of the prophet He said, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with loving-kindness have I drawn thee" (Jeremiah 31:3). {HP 18.3}

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}

The only condition upon which the freedom of man is possible is that of becoming one with Christ. “The truth shall make you free;” and Christ is the truth. Sin can triumph only by enfeebling the mind, and destroying the liberty of the soul. Subjection to God is restoration to one’s self,—to the true glory and dignity of man. The divine law, to which we are brought into subjection, is “the law of liberty.” James 2:12. {DA 466.5}

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}

Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, or a day. It is a continual growth in grace. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. Satan lives, and is active, and every day we need to earnestly cry to God for help and strength to resist him. As long as Satan reigns we shall have self to subdue, besetments to overcome, and there is no stopping place. There is no point to which we can come and say we have fully attained (RH May 6, 1862). {7BC 947.5}

Sanctification is not a happy flight of feeling, not the work of an instant, but the work of a lifetime. {NL 55.1}

The mighty power of the Holy Spirit works an entire transformation in the character of the human agent, making him a new creature in Christ Jesus. {6BC 1117.17}

In every human being He discerned infinite possibilities. He saw men as they might be, transfigured by His grace—in “the beauty of the Lord our God” (Psalm 90:17). {AG 223.3}

In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe. All who choose to breathe this life-giving atmosphere will live and grow up to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. {SC 68.1}

When Christ took human nature upon Him, He bound humanity to Himself by a tie of love that can never be broken by any power save the choice of man himself. Satan will constantly present allurements to induce us to break this tie—to choose to separate ourselves from Christ. Here is where we need to watch, to strive, to pray, that nothing may entice us to *choose* another master; for we are always free to do this. But let us keep our eyes fixed upon Christ, and He will preserve us. Looking unto Jesus, we are safe. Nothing can pluck us out of His hand.

In constantly beholding Him, we “are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 3:18. {SC 72.1}

In the divine arrangement God does nothing without the cooperation of man. He compels no man’s will. That must be given to the Lord completely, else the Lord is not able to accomplish His divine work that He would do through the human agency. Jesus declared that in a certain place He could not do many mighty works among the people because of their unbelief. He wanted to do for them in that place just what He knew that they needed to have done, but He could not because unbelief barred the way. The potter cannot mold and fashion unto honor that which has never been placed in his hands. The Christian life is one of daily surrender, submission, and continual overcoming, gaining fresh victories every day. This is the growing up into Christ, fashioning the life into the divine Model. . . . {TMK 55.4}