

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Fourth Quarter 2025: *Lessons of Faith From Joshua*

Lesson 12 “God Is Faithful!”

Read for this week’s study

Joshua 21:43–45; 2 Timothy 2:11–13; Joshua 23; Revelation 14:10, 19; Deuteronomy 6:5.

Memory Text

“Not one word of all the good promises that the LORD had made to the house of Israel had failed; all came to pass” (Joshua 21:45, ESV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. All Came to Pass
- III. A Sign of Concern
- IV. Clear Boundaries
- V. The Anger of the Lord
- VI. Cling to God
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “As Joshua, the aging leader of the Israelites, sensed that he was nearing the end of his life, he decided to address the leaders of the nation and the Israelites (Joshua 23 and 24). [...] This week, we will study together the first speech of Joshua, in which he glances back at the victories of Israel, but at the same time traces the path of future success for Israel.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. How do you measure or evaluate God’s faithfulness? How does the answer depend on where you are on the stages of faith continuum? How would people in various stages of faith evaluate God’s faithfulness differently? What is the greatest proof of God’s faithfulness to you right now?
3. After the land was apportioned, Israel is given rest from war (21:44), the Levites are scattered throughout Israel (cf. Genesis 49:7) in 48 towns including the cities of refuge (reflect on the significance of this!), Joshua looked back and made one summary statement: God keeps his promises (21:45). (Sunday’s lesson)
4. How do you understand these words in light of God’s ancient promise to Abraham that his descendants would inherit the land (Genesis 12:6-7; 13:14-17; 17:8)? How do you understand the words: “the Lord gave all their enemies into their hands. Not one

of all the Lord's good promises to Israel failed; every one was fulfilled" (21:44-45 cf. Exodus 23:28-30)? What does it tell us about the meaning of quantifiers in the Bible (cf. Exodus 9:6 & 20, 26; Matthew 1:17)?

5. In just 21 chapters, the Promised Land is conquered, the land is distributed to the 12 tribes, the place of the priestly class is affirmed, and the laws are set in place. Yet we read in the same book that some land remained to be taken (13:1-7; 15:63; 16:10; 17:12). How does Judges 2:1-3, 20-23 function as a corrective of Joshua 21:44-45? What is the interplay between divine sovereignty and human responsibility?
6. In Deuteronomy 7, in God's original command, Israel is first told to "drive out" the Canaanites as well as to "totally destroy" them. This is immediately followed by commands not to intermarry or enter business deals with them. How can you marry or do business with people that you have literally destroyed? Obviously, Moses is using hyperbole, an exaggerated expression, to make his point.
7. The same idea applies to the stories told in Joshua. For example, we are told in Joshua 10:36-39 that Israel left "no survivors" in either Hebron or Debir, but later in 15:13-15, these towns are still populated by Canaanites. In this way, the stories of Joshua fit in with other ancient battle accounts in their use of nonliteral hyperbole as part of the narrative style.
8. What major concerns can you trace in Joshua's introduction of his speech to the leaders of the nation (23:1-5)? (Monday's lesson) Which clear boundaries does he delineate further (in verses 6-13)? (Tuesday's lesson) What does this tell you about his audience's stage of faith? On what level do they operate if Joshua needs to tell them: you will enjoy prosperity and joy if you're faithful, but unfathomable misery if you're not faithful (cf. Leviticus 26:1-46; Deuteronomy 28:1-68)?
9. How should we interpret the descriptions of God's wrath and retributive justice in Joshua (23:15, 16) and elsewhere in Scripture (cf. Numbers 11:33; 2 Chronicles 36:16; Revelation 14:10, 19; 15:1)? (Wednesday's lesson)
10. Thursday's lesson focuses on Joshua's call to the nation to cling to God and to love him. Can love be commanded? Why or why not? How does that relate to the "new commandment" that Jesus gave his followers (John 13:34; 15:17)?
11. Sometimes we look at the harsh treatment the Canaanites received from the conquering Israelites. But both Moses and Joshua warned that if they are unfaithful, Israel would bring the same divine judgment upon themselves that the Canaanites experienced and be forced from the Promised Land back into exile (which also happened later in history).
12. How would God's faithfulness be expressed for someone in the Adolescent / Questioning stage of faith? What about someone in the Mature / Tested stage of faith? What about someone at the end of their life peering beyond this world? How is God's faithfulness manifested in his presence and sustaining grace not by *escaping* pain but by His unwavering companionship *through* pain? How can we move from "What has God done for me lately?" to "Who has God always been?"

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

I brought with me the worst illustration I have ever seen of reading the Bible the wrong way. It is called *The Bible Unmasked*. A man who's avowed purpose was to destroy confidence in the Bible and in God, collected every unpleasant story of immorality and cruelty in the Bible and laid them end to end with the preface, "Would you mothers let your children read this sort of thing?" I brought my more modest printing. I have a later edition that has line drawings in it. I mentioned this in class up at Pacific Union College more than thirty years ago and a student, his name was Winn Paulie, came back with the best answer I have ever heard in all these years. "If you took the medical counselor book and cut out all the pictures of disease; cancer of the lip and tongue, etc., and all the symptoms of disease and printed them all by themselves, it would be a useless, repulsive publication. The only justification for printing those things is that they are always presented in the setting of the remedy."

The Bible is very candid in its depiction and description of sin. But it always presents sin in the setting of the remedy. Otherwise the Bible would not be fit to read. But that's why we must read it as a whole. Do you know that there are two books in the Bible that don't even mention God? Not once. But if you take the whole book and put it in the larger setting, those two books, Esther and Song of Solomon, say wonderful things about our God. You see, to be fair with the evidence we must read it as a whole. Or maybe could I read the statement I wrote at the bottom of the Bible Reference Sheet? After going through 108 times, this is my firmest conviction about the Bible:

The great purpose of the Bible is to reveal the truth about our heavenly Father, that we may be won back to Him in love and trust. This truth, this everlasting good news, is to be found in every one of the sixty-six books. But to discover this truth we must learn more than just what happened to Samson and Delilah, to David and Bathsheba, to Gideon and his fleece. The all-important question is, what do these stories tell us about God?

If one does not ask this question, much of the content of Scripture may seem unrelated to the plan of salvation, even perplexing, sometimes even contradictory. But when one learns to view the Bible as a whole, there emerges a consistent picture of an all-wise and gracious God who seems willing to go to any length to keep in touch with His people, to stoop down and reach them where they are, to speak a language they can understand. And the further one reads on book by book, the more one is moved with love and admiration for a God who would be willing to run such risk, to pay such a price, in order to keep open the lines of communication between Himself and His wayward children.

God will save all who trust Him. But He has not asked us to trust Him as a stranger. The Bible—all of it—is a record of God's revelation and demonstration of infinite trustworthiness.

{Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #6, “Evaluating the Evidence” 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/6MMCAG>*

How you define faith and trust enters into this. And we need to read other places. To me, faith is just a word we use to describe a relationship with God as with a person well known; and we get to know Him through the gospel. The good news is about God, that He is infinitely worthy of our trust. It implies an attitude toward God of love, and trust, and deepest admiration. It means having enough confidence in God, based upon the more than adequate evidence, all summed up in the good news, to be willing to believe what God says—as soon as we’re sure *He* said it! And to accept what God offers, as soon as we’re sure *He’s* offering it, and to do whatever God wishes, without reservation, as soon as we’re sure *He’s* asking us, and not somebody else. Anybody who has such a trusting relationship with God, of love, trust, and admiration, willing to listen, is perfectly safe to save.

He could die just beginning that relationship, like the thief on the cross. He would arise loving, trusting, and admiring that kind One in the middle. He will be willing to listen and accept all kinds of instruction and correction. He is therefore safe to save. But you can’t regard God in that attitude without a new heart and a right spirit. So you are a new creature, which he’s going to mention in a moment.

And that’s what David eventually wanted—truth and honesty in the inner man. Mention honesty, and you remember Micah, Amos, Hosea, they all talked about this. All God asks of us is that we stand humbly in His presence with an honest willingness to listen and let Him do for us whatever needs to be done.

I would add that even though with the passing of time I’m finding more and more that everything God has asked us to do makes such good sense and I agree with Him. I would have to say that being still somewhat ignorant and immature, I’m willing to obey this trustworthy God when He instructs me to do something beyond my present understanding. Wouldn’t that be safe? Because He’s proved always to make such good sense in every other respect. And I think that’s what Abraham said to Him. “God, you’ve always made such good sense. But your command to sacrifice the son of the promise makes no sense to me. But I know it will. So God, I’m on my way.” I believe faith says to God, “God, I hear you, and I’ve checked that carefully. It is you. And I am on my way. But as I go, in all reverence, may I ask why?” And that’s how we come to know God. And for three days and three nights Abraham thought that through; and in the end he said, “God, I’m even beginning to think of ways in which you could work this out. I’m not telling you how, but I know you will; because you’ll not contradict yourself in the promise you gave me about my son. Maybe you’ll resurrect my son. Just as you gave him miraculously, you could easily resurrect him. Or maybe you’ll provide a substitute.”

And that's what God chose to do. And Abraham is cited in Hebrews 11 as one who trusted God, but thought it through. Faith is not blind. You can jump off a cliff if you take leaps in the dark and call that faith. It is not safe. History is strewn with the wreckage of people who leap in the dark and call it faith. Light makes faith possible, and without it we ought to wait. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Galatians*, recorded May 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/65MMPOGIA66>*

According to the first chapter of Romans, this indicates the meaning of God's "wrath." Paul describes how God pours out His "wrath" on those who reject and suppress the truth. Three times he explains that God "gives up" such people and "turns them over" to the results of their rebelliousness. See Romans 1: 24, 26, 28.

How consistent this is with what we know about God! Since faith and love cannot be forced, what else can God do but sadly give up those who reject Him?

God's wrath, as Paul seems to describe it, is simply His turning away in loving disappointment from those who do not want Him anyway, thus leaving them to the inevitable consequences of their own rebellious choice.

Surely no more awful sentence could be pronounced upon a sinner than for God to say, "Leave him alone."

These were the terrible words pronounced over Israel in the days of the prophet Hosea. Long had God sought to persuade His rebellious people to return. But they mocked His love and spurned His every advance. What now is left for Him to do but give them up? Without His protection, the results would be terrible. {Maxwell, A. Graham. *I Want to be Free*, 11-12. Mountain View, California: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1970}

Further Study with Ellen White

Never are we absent from the mind of God. God is our joy and our salvation. {CTr 357.2}

The people of God will not be free from suffering; but while persecuted and distressed, while they endure privation and suffer for want of food they will not be left to perish. That God who cared for Elijah will not pass by one of His self-sacrificing children. He who numbers the hairs of their head will care for them, and in time of famine they shall be satisfied. While the wicked are dying from hunger and pestilence, angels will shield the righteous and supply their wants. To him that "walketh righteously" is the promise: "Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure." "When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them." Isaiah 33:15, 16; 41:17. {GC 629.2}

You must learn the simple art of taking God at His word; then you have solid ground beneath your feet. {ML 10.8}

Never feel that Christ is far away. He is always near. His loving presence surrounds you. {FLB 62.8}

When the Christian takes his baptismal vow, divine help is pledged to him. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit stand ready to work in his behalf. God places at his command the resources of heaven, that he may be an overcomer. His own power is small; but God is omnipotent, and God is his helper. Daily he is to make known his wants at the throne of grace. By faith and trust, by availing himself of the resources provided, he can be more than a conqueror. {OHC 157.5}

He who slumbers not, who is continually at work for the accomplishment of His designs, will carry forward His work. He will thwart the purposes of wicked men and will bring to confusion the counsels of those who plot mischief against His people. He who is the King, the Lord of hosts, sitteth between the cherubim, and amidst the strife and tumult of nations He guards His children still. When the strongholds of kings shall be overthrown, when the arrows of wrath shall strike through the hearts of His enemies, His people will be safe in His hands. {PK 176.1}

The Lord does not leave His wounded and bruised sheep to the power of Satan to be torn in pieces. He is ever strengthening His own when they are weak. He delivers the tried and tempted ones from the enemy's power. The Lord Jesus never forsakes any soul that puts his trust in Him. {UL 150.4}

If in our ignorance we make missteps, the Saviour does not forsake us. We need never feel that we are alone. Angels are our companions. The Comforter that Christ promised to send in His name abides with us. In the way that leads to the City of God there are no difficulties which those who trust in Him may not overcome. There are no dangers which they may not escape. There is not a sorrow, not a grievance, not a human weakness, for which He has not provided a remedy. {MH 249.1}

There is no power in the whole satanic force that can disable the soul that trusts, in simple confidence, in the wisdom that comes from God. {ML 316.3}

Prayer is heaven's ordained means of success in the conflict with sin and the development of Christian character. The divine influences that come in answer to the prayer of faith will accomplish in the soul of the suppliant all for which he pleads. For the pardon of sin, for the Holy Spirit, for a Christlike temper, for wisdom and strength to do His work, for any gift He has promised, we may ask; and the promise is, "Ye shall receive." {AA 564.1}

Christ came to the world with the accumulated love of eternity. Sweeping away the exactions which had encumbered the law of God, He showed that the law is a law of love, an expression of the Divine Goodness. He showed that in obedience to its principles is involved the happiness of mankind, and with it the stability, the very foundation and framework, of human society. {Ed 76.3}

But when we give ourselves wholly to God and in our work follow His directions, He makes Himself responsible for its accomplishment. He would not have us conjecture as to the success of our honest endeavors. Not once should we even think of failure. We are to co-operate with One who knows no failure. {COL 363.1}

Men have the power to quench the Spirit of God; the power of choosing is left with them. They are allowed freedom of action. They may be obedient through the name and grace of our Redeemer, or they may be disobedient, and realize the consequences. {FLB 58.3}

No one need look upon the sin against the Holy Ghost as something mysterious and indefinable. The sin against the Holy Ghost is the sin of persistent refusal to respond to the invitation to repent. {FLB 58.8}

It is no arbitrary decree on the part of God that excludes the wicked from heaven; they are shut out by their own unfitness for its companionship. The glory of God would be to them a consuming fire. They would welcome destruction, that they might be hidden from the face of Him who died to redeem them. {SC 17.2}

God destroys no man; but after a time the wicked are given up to the destruction they have wrought for themselves. {YI, November 30, 1893 par. 6}

No soul is ever finally deserted of God, given up to his own ways, so long as there is any hope of his salvation. "Man turns from God, not God from him." Our heavenly Father follows us with appeals and warnings and assurances of compassion, until further opportunities and privileges would be wholly in vain. The responsibility rests with the sinner. By resisting the Spirit of God today, he prepares the way for a second resistance of light when it comes with mightier power. Thus he passes on from one stage of resistance to another, until at last the light will fail to impress, and he will cease to respond in any measure to the Spirit of God. Then even "the light that is in thee" has become darkness. The very truth we do know has become so perverted as to increase the blindness of the soul. {MB 93.1}

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}

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}