

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2019: *“The Least of These”*: Ministering to Those in Need

Lesson 10 “Living the Gospel”

Read for this week’s study

Romans 8:20–23; John 3:16, 17; Matthew 9:36; Ephesians 2:8–10; 1 John 3:16, 17; Revelation 14:6, 7.

Memory Text

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8–10, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. “For God So Loved . . .”
- III. Compassion and Repentance
- IV. Grace and Good Works
- V. Our Common Humanity
- VI. The Everlasting Gospel
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “Our works of mercy and compassion toward those in need should not be seen as legalistic. On the contrary, as we grow in our understanding and appreciation of salvation, the link between God’s love and His concern for the poor and oppressed will be passed on to us, recipients of His love. We have received, so we will give. When we see how God so loved us, we also see how much He loves others and calls us to love them, as well.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. In the Christian church we have debated endlessly what the Gospel is, but the more pragmatic question is: How do we live out the Gospel? The way we define the Gospel certainly affects the way we live it. The ultimate purpose of life, however, is not to define the fine points of the Gospel (as an idea or philosophy), but to make a difference in the lives of individual people and communities around us (and the world). (See the memory text and Tuesday’s lesson.)

3. So how do we make a difference in the lives of others? When we consider the problem of evil in the world and our fallen human nature, two basic approaches have been devised: 1) it is an act of our will that will overcome the evil propensities and tendencies so that we do good to others. 2) Impose some kind of moral restraint upon the fundamental drives of the human heart (in the form of a divine law and/or human “policeman” watching you). The first creates a system of merits and a sense of achievement and superiority, while the second a motivation of fear (of punishment). What is so attractive about these approaches that they still exist?
4. What is the biblical solution to this dilemma of living out the Gospel? How does God accomplish the transformation of our character? How does a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit rewire one’s mind by the overwhelming love of God portrayed in the Gospel?
5. The Bible begins with the premise of creation and God’s love for all humankind. How does this influence the way we treat other people? (Sunday’s lesson)
6. “The sin in our lives is of the same nature as the evil that causes so much pain, oppression, and exploitation all over the world. [...] Selfishness, greed, meanness, prejudice, ignorance, and carelessness are at the root of all the world’s evil, injustice, poverty, and oppression.” (Monday’s lesson) How is our repentance and confessing our sinfulness the first step in addressing the pervasive evil in us and the society around us? What role does the compassion play in this?
7. How does Ephesians 2:8-10 show that God uses us to partner with Him to heal and restore the damage and hurt in the lives of others? (Tuesday’s lesson) How would 1 John 3:16-17 be applied by the original audience in first century Palestine? What would be a meaningful application in the 21st century context where you are? What about the complexity of globalization of the world in which we live?
8. What are the consequences of the radical inclusiveness of the Gospel on a local and global level? (Malachi 2:10; Acts 17:26; Romans 3:23; Galatians 3:28; see Wednesday’s lesson)
9. How is the first angel’s message connected with how we live out the Gospel in the last days? (Thursday’s lesson) How can we make sure people see the significance of it? How do the warnings and the Gospel fit together?
10. What can we do individually and with our community of faith to make a difference both locally and globally?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

The good news is that God is not the kind of person Satan has made him out to be: arbitrary, unforgiving and severe. On the contrary, he is the kind of person his own Son made him out to be. Living the life that he did, and treating sinners with such incredible respect and grace, he said, “If you have seen me, you have seen the Father.” And the issue in the great controversy is

over this, “What is God like?” {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, Galatians, #1, recorded February, 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/1MMGALATIANS66>

The controversy is about God. Likewise, the good news is not about us. The good news is about God; that he has won his case. And the universe has conceded that he has won his case. And only here on this little planet way out in space are there any people foolish enough, and ungrateful enough, or blind enough, Paul would even say stupid enough, to turn from this good news and believe Satan’s lies about God. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 3, recorded October, 1977, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/5MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/6MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

As he experienced this separation from his Father, so great was this agony, that his physical pain was hardly felt. With amazement angels witnessed the Saviour’s despairing agony. Note the words, agony, fear, consternation. He was really tempted to doubt all that he’d been teaching. He even wondered if he’d rise again.”

Maybe he was tempted to believe this legal explanation that the second death is, you die and stay dead forever. And if he was going to pay the price for sin, he would have to die, and stay dead forever. He would never rise again. But he didn’t come to pay that penalty. He came to answer the questions, and as soon as he had answered them (he did wait over Sabbath, to add more meanings to the Sabbath, so that every Sabbath we’d remember the questions he’d answered on Friday) he arose a great while before it was day, and he hastened to Heaven. And he said to Mary, “Don’t detain me! I have to hasten to Heaven.” And he appeared before his Father, and the angels, and he said, “Was it enough?” To pay the price of sin? “No,” they could have said, “You’re supposed to stay dead for eternity. You hurry back! We’ll not let anybody know you were out.” They never said such a thing! They said, “It is more than enough. You’ve cleared up all our questions. You’ve confirmed our trust without fear for eternity.” And he came back down to see if the twelve had got the message, and they were all in a deep depression. It took him a long time to revive them.

And to this present day, do we really accept what he came to reveal at such infinite cost, that he does not wish to be served from fear. The Father will no more kill us at the end of the millennium than he killed his Son—which leads some to believe that he did kill his Son as he will kill the wicked at the end. How have you worked this out yourself? How did Jesus resolve these questions on the cross? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in

all 66 – Luke, recorded April, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/55MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/56MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Of course, why did Jesus have to die? When you think of what we've been trying to do, from Genesis on, all God asks of us is trust. That's all he's asked of angels and men. But God has been accused of being unworthy of our trust, and the adversary has put him in a very bad light. God has been accused of not even telling the truth, right away in the Garden of Eden. And further accusations through the years. And God has sought to answer these, not with claims, but with demonstrations, in his treatment of people, all through the centuries.

Then finally he comes in person, to clear up any lingering doubts. And he even goes through the Old Testament in the Sermon on the Mount, and explains all these things. Why divorce?

"Doesn't mean I approve of it, but I gave it to you because of the stiffness of your necks and the hardness of your hearts." He explained one thing after another. But nothing in his explanation dealt with the accusation in the Garden of Eden. "God has lied to you, that if you sin, you will die." How could he answer that? Should he say, "Yes, you will die. Look at all the people who have died. Doesn't that prove it?" Well, it isn't enough just to get the answer, is it true that sinners will die, because does that mean that God said in the beginning, "If you sin, I'll kill you"? Would you like to live in a universe presided over by someone who, on the one hand, says he's our Father; on the other says, "If you don't obey me, I'll kill you." How long would you stay home, if your father told you; when you were children, at breakfast one morning, "You're old enough now for me to tell you the truth. We've had such a happy time together, but I have to tell you some serious things this morning. From now on, if any of you fail to obey me, I'll kill you. And you want to know how? You think I'll just put you to sleep? Some form of euthanasia? It would be too good for you. I will torture you to death, in the most painful way I know how, and I think sulfurous flames would be just the thing."

Believe it? Well, what is our explanation of why the wicked die? Does not God burn them in sulfurous flames? Not forever! We have good news! Not forever. For only as long as you deserve. Why doesn't he just put his sinful children to sleep? Well, then the rest of the family wouldn't take sin seriously, would they? But by torturing them, by the good members of the family hearing the agonizing screams of those who are being tortured to death, that will help eliminate sin from the universe, will it not? Wouldn't it in your home? If you still have little ones there, and they're not behaving too well, try it tomorrow! Take one of them out on the lawn and torture him to death, and then say to the others, "I hate to do this. I want freedom and love in my home. But any more disobedience, that's what I will do to you. Justice requires it. Other than that you're perfectly free, and I do not wish you to serve me from fear." It doesn't

make a scrap of sense. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Luke, recorded April, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/55MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/56MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Lou: This person also wanted to ask, “How does God forgive sins, and what is involved in receiving the remission of our sins?”

Graham: Now, remission meaning forgiveness and not just suppressing it for a little while like the medical term. What’s involved in God forgiving? I believe God is forgiveness personified. And in the prodigal son story, that’s so clear. What had to be done for the father to receive his son back—dirty, and diseased and malnourished as he was? All the boy had to do was come home and find his father had forgiven him long before. In fact, it’s when he found that his father had forgiven him that he repented. It isn’t, “If I repent, he’ll forgive me.” When I find how forgiving he is, that leads me to repentance. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #9 with Lou Venden, “There is No Need to be Afraid of God” 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/9MMCAG>*

Lou: Back to the prodigal son model and the question that comes out of that: Is it necessary to repent and to confess before one is forgiven?

Graham: Ah. The boy hardly started to speak when the father said, “I forgave you long ago.” But the most stunning illustration of that is Jesus forgiving on the cross. There was no indication that the soldiers who were nailing him to the cross were saying, “Please forgive us; please forgive us.”

Lou: They didn’t even ask.

Graham: They didn’t even ask, and he says, “I forgive you anyway.” (Luke 23:34) And that’s the idea that God is forgiveness personified. But that does us no good unless we hear, unless we accept, unless we are moved by his forgiveness to repent. We always have it the other way around, “If I repent, maybe he will forgive me.” No, when I learn of his forgiveness, that moves me to repentance—some of us, anyway. That’s the kindness of God leading us to repentance. Now this doesn’t leave out repentance. If I don’t respond to his gracious forgiveness—which would be in terms of changing my mind and confessing and saying, “I am sick, help me, what must I do to be well?” Then it doesn’t do me any good.

Lou: So the difference here is whether we set out by our repentance and confession to win God over to where . . .

Graham: If I make a good speech . . .

Lou: Maybe he would be willing to forgive us. And him saying, “Well, all right, since you feel that badly about it,” and the father saying to the prodigal son, “Well if you have made all these promises, then maybe I’ll welcome you home.”

Graham: You see, on the serious level—again I want to be very reverent in saying it—if it requires that I bring the blood of his Son to God before God can say, “Well, now I can forgive you,” that denies the prodigal son story.

Lou: That’s true.

Graham: Yes, that’s sad. You don’t have to bring him anything. But God sent his Son to die to answer all those questions and to draw us to him, to handle all the emergencies in the great controversy because he had forgiven us, but we didn’t know it. He sent the Son to make it clear. And the Son hanging on the cross said, “I forgive you. You don’t understand what you’re doing.” That’s incredible! That wins some to repentance. That won the thief. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #13 with Lou Venden, “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

Having undertaken the work of man’s redemption, the Father would spare nothing, however dear, which was essential for the completion of His work. He would make opportunities for men; He would pour upon them His blessings; He would heap favor upon favor, gift upon gift, until the whole treasury of heaven was open to those whom He came to save. Having collected all the riches of the universe, and laid open all the resources of His divine nature, God gave them all for the use of man. They were His free gift. What an ocean of love is circulating, like a divine atmosphere, around the world! What manner of love is this, that the eternal God should adopt human nature in the person of His Son, and carry the same into the highest heaven! {TMK 19.2}

Christ came to this world as the expression of the very heart and mind and nature and character of God. He was the brightness of the Father’s glory, the express image of His person. But He laid aside His royal robe and kingly crown, and stepped down from His high command to take the place of a servant. He was rich, but for our sake, that we might have eternal riches, He became poor. He made the world, but so completely did He empty Himself that during His ministry He declared, “Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head.” {MM 19.1}

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in his wings" (Malachi 4:2). {RC 23.3}

The plan for our redemption was not an afterthought, a plan formulated after the fall of Adam. It was a revelation of "the mystery which hath been kept in silence through times eternal" (Romans 16:25, R.V.). It was an unfolding of the principles that from eternal ages have been the foundation of God's throne. From the beginning, God and Christ knew of the apostasy of Satan, and of the fall of man through the deceptive power of the apostate. God did not ordain that sin should exist, but He foresaw its existence, and made provision to meet the terrible emergency. . . . {RC 23.4}

Through the plan of salvation, a larger purpose is to be wrought out even than the salvation of man and the redemption of the earth. Through the revelation of the character of God in Christ, the beneficence of the divine government would be manifested before the universe, the charge of Satan refuted, the nature and result of sin made plain, and the perpetuity of the law fully demonstrated. {ST, December 22, 1914 par. 4}

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 was taught by the Jews that before God's love is extended to the sinner, he must first repent. In their view, repentance is a work by which men earn the favor of Heaven. And it was this thought that led the Pharisees to exclaim in astonishment and anger. "This man receiveth sinners." According to their ideas He should permit none to approach Him but those who had repented. But in the parable of the lost sheep, Christ teaches that salvation does not come through our seeking after God but through God's seeking after us. "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way." Romans 3:11, 12. We do not repent in order that God may love us, but He reveals to us His love in order that we may repent. {COL 189.1}

Sin had become a science, and vice was consecrated as a part of religion. Rebellion had struck its roots deep into the heart, and the hostility of man was most violent against heaven. It was

demonstrated before the universe that, apart from God, humanity could not be uplifted. A new element of life and power must be imparted by Him who made the world. {DA 37.1}

With intense interest the unfallen worlds had watched to see Jehovah arise, and sweep away the inhabitants of the earth. And if God should do this, Satan was ready to carry out his plan for securing to himself the allegiance of heavenly beings. He had declared that the principles of God's government make forgiveness impossible. Had the world been destroyed, he would have claimed that his accusations were proved true. He was ready to cast blame upon God, and to spread his rebellion to the worlds above. But instead of destroying the world, God sent His Son to save it. Though corruption and defiance might be seen in every part of the alien province, a way for its recovery was provided. At the very crisis, when Satan seemed about to triumph, the Son of God came with the embassy of divine grace. Through every age, through every hour, the love of God had been exercised toward the fallen race. Notwithstanding the perversity of men, the signals of mercy had been continually exhibited. And when the fullness of the time had come, the Deity was glorified by pouring upon the world a flood of healing grace that was never to be obstructed or withdrawn till the plan of salvation should be fulfilled. {DA 37.2}

Every human being is the object of loving interest to Him who gave His life that He might bring men back to God. Souls guilty and helpless, liable to be destroyed by the arts and snares of Satan, are cared for as a shepherd cares for the sheep of his flock. {MH 162.1}

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}

Recommended Reading:

The Signs of the Times, April 25, 1892 “The Purpose and Plan of Grace”

The Signs of the Times, December 30, 1889 “What Was Secured by the Death of Christ”

<https://egwwritings.org>