

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2026: *1 and 2 Corinthians*

Lesson 2 “The Message of the Cross”

Read for this week’s study

1 Corinthians 1:17–31; Colossians 1:20; 1 Peter 2:24; Acts 13:16–47; 1 Corinthians 2:1–5.

Memory Text

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” (1 Corinthians 1:18, NIV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Gospel of the Cross
- III. Foolishness to Those Who Are Perishing
- IV. Power to Those Who Are Being Saved
- V. A Messiah Crucified
- VI. Christ, the Power and Wisdom of God
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. The pagan Roman writer Cicero wrote that the cross is such an awful and contemptible thing that upstanding Romans should not even think about it (“let it be far from your minds”). In contrast, Paul says that the cross “is the power of God” (1 Cor 1:18) and the place God and the creation are reconciled (Eph 2:16; Col 1:20). In this lesson, we will explore the meaning of the cross as expressed in Paul’s letters to the Corinthians (Sabbath Afternoon).
2. According to 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, what is the context for Paul’s writing his first letter to the church at Corinth? Read 1 Corinthians 1:17-31. What is the main point Paul is making in this passage? Do Paul’s comments on the wisdom of the world diminish the value of education in the life of a Christian? Why did the simple proclamation of the cross bear more fruit in Corinth than the logic, philosophy, and science did in Athens? (Sunday)
3. According to 1 Corinthians 1:20-21, 23, 25, and 27, what is the meaning of the word “foolishness” that Paul uses repeatedly in the opening chapter of the letter? (Monday)

4. Read 1 Peter 2:24. What is this verse saying about the cross? How does that fit with what Paul says in Colossians 1:20? Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-19. When Paul talks about those who are “perishing”, who or what is causing the perishing? Read Romans 6:23. How does that verse restate what Paul is saying in 1 Corinthians 1:18-19? (Tuesday)
5. Read Acts 13:16-47 (especially note verses 26, 38, and 47). What does this passage tell us about the meaning of the cross? A crucified Messiah was something completely unexpected for both the Jews and the Greeks. What does this tell us about God? (Wednesday)
6. Compare 1 Corinthians 1:18 and 24 with Romans 1:16-17. What is the relationship between the cross of Christ and “the power of God”? Read 1 Corinthians 1:24-29. What is the relationship between foolish and wise, on the one hand, and “power” and “weak” on the other? In 1 Corinthians 1:26 Paul says, “not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called”. What message is there for us in these words? (Thursday)
7. “But to Paul the cross was the one object of supreme interest. Ever since he had been arrested in his career of persecution against the followers of the crucified Nazarene he had never ceased to glory in the cross. At that time there had been given him a revelation of the infinite love of God, as revealed in the death of Christ; and a marvelous transformation had been wrought in his life, bringing all his plans and purposes into harmony with heaven. . . . He knew by personal experience that when a sinner once beholds the love of the Father, as seen in the sacrifice of His Son, and yields to the divine influence, a change of heart takes place, and henceforth Christ is all and in all.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 245, 246. (Friday)
8. In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus said, “O My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.” What does this sentence tell us about the cost of salvation to God? (Friday)
9. The message of a crucified Christ was a stumbling block for the Jews and foolishness for the Greeks. What biblical themes that we talk about today have a similar effect on modern audiences? (Friday)
10. Paul says that “the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God” (1 Cor 2:14). So how can we talk about spiritual things in such a way that it actually reaches their minds and hearts? (Friday)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Now, is there a danger that we might leave too many of these very precious phrases and provisions just as phrases and say, “My Bible says without the shedding of blood there’s no remission of sin and I don’t know why. I know God knows why. I just want to know if He’s satisfied because I want to be saved.” Or is it right to reverently ask what does that really mean? Or is it possible that if we settle for the symbols without inquiring for the meaning, we would do exactly what many of the Jews did with the sacrificial system of the Old Testament? Did not that system become a great curse to them because they never asked for the meaning? And they never came to know God. They never thought that when they sacrificed a lamb it represented what we know it did.

Now what if we settle just for the highly symbolic language about the death of Christ and paying the price of sin and without the shedding of blood there’s no remission of sin and covered with the righteousness of Christ. Those are interesting phrases, but the meaning is not that clear. Should we settle for the phrases, and be grateful that God is satisfied? Or do we miss, then, what God paid such a price to reveal? I think He wants us to ask. Hence Ellen White’s wonderful, simple words in *Christ’s Object Lessons*: “Merely to hear or to read the word is not enough. He who desires to be profited by the Scriptures must [learn the meaning of the words of truth].” Now what’s the meaning? And can we be reverent when we ask the meaning? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Hebrews, #4, recorded October 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/7MMHEBREWS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/8MMHEBREWS66> (Part 2)

When Jesus healed the paralytic at the pool, He was preaching by the very way in which He treated that man. It was a demonstration of the truth about God. Forbid the thought, but imagine that you had terminal lung cancer. It was the result of a lifetime of smoking. You’re sitting anxiously in the office of your physician. What would be the best possible news you could hear? Would it be for the physician to say, “I forgive you for smoking”? Would forgiveness heal the damage done? You would still die. The only difference is that you would die forgiven. Forgiveness would only help if your physician were accustomed to killing all his patients who contracted lung cancer because of a lifetime of smoking. If that is what he was accustomed to doing, it would be very relieving to have your physician say, “I forgive you.” Now he won’t have to kill you after all. But physicians do not kill their dying patients. The law would not permit it. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #14, “God Can Completely Heal the Damage Done” recorded May 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/14MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

The truths of the Word of God are not mere sentiment, but the utterances of the Most High. He who makes these truths a part of his life becomes in every sense a new creature. He is not given new mental powers, but the darkness that through ignorance and sin have clouded the understanding is removed.—RH, Nov 10, 1904. {1MCP 98.2}

You need not go to the ends of the earth for wisdom, for God is near. It is not the capabilities you now possess or ever will have that will give you success. It is that which the Lord can do for you. We need to have far less confidence in what man can do and far more confidence in what God can do for every believing soul. He longs to have you reach after Him by faith. He longs to have you expect great things from Him. He longs to give you understanding in temporal as well as in spiritual matters. He can sharpen the intellect. He can give tact and skill. Put your talents into the work, ask God for wisdom, and it will be given you. {COL 146.4}

God is our Father, and He will teach all who come to Him, realizing that their human wisdom is foolishness. As they take hold of His strength, and make peace with Him, living by His Word, He will unite His strength with their weakness, His knowledge with their ignorance, making them strong in Him. He will give them the care adapted to their necessities. Those who trust in Him as their Teacher will not stumble or fall.—Manuscript 88, June 18, 1902, “A Worldwide Work.” {UL 183.6}

It is the glory of the gospel that it is founded upon the principle of restoring in the fallen race the divine image by a constant manifestation of benevolence. This work began in the heavenly courts. There God gave to human beings an unmistakable evidence of the love with which He regarded them. He “so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” John 3:16. The gift of Christ reveals the Father’s heart. It testifies that, having undertaken our redemption, He will spare nothing, however dear, which is necessary to the completion of His work. {9T 254.1}

The spirit of liberality is the spirit of heaven. Christ’s self-sacrificing love is revealed upon the cross. That man might be saved, He gave all that He had and then gave Himself. {9T 254.2}

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}

God had a knowledge of the events of the future, even before the creation of the world. He did not make His purposes to fit circumstances, but He allowed matters to develop and work out. He did not work to bring about a certain condition of things, but He knew that such a condition would exist. The plan that should be carried out upon the defection of any of the high intelligences of heaven—this is the secret, the mystery which has been hid from ages. And an offering was prepared in the eternal purposes to do the very work which God has done for fallen humanity (ST March 25, 1897). {6BC 1082.3}

The meekness and humility that characterized the life of Christ will be made manifest in the life and character of those who “walk even as he walked.” {SD 81.5}

Through the gospel, souls that are degraded and enslaved by Satan are to be redeemed to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God. God’s purpose is not merely to deliver from the suffering that is the inevitable result of sin, but to save from sin itself. . . . Eternity alone can reveal the glorious destiny to which man, restored to God’s image, may attain. {MB 60.3}