

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2025: *God's Love and Justice*
Lesson 1 "God Loves Freely"

Read for this week's study

Exodus 33:15–22; Hosea 14:1–4; Revelation 4:11; John 17:24; Matthew 22:1–14; John 10:17, 18.

Memory Text

“ I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely, for My anger has turned away from him’ ”
(Hosea 14:4, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Beyond Reasonable Expectations
- III. Unrequited Love
- IV. Love Freely Given
- V. Many are Called, but Few are Chosen
- VI. Crucified for Us
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. The author of this series of lessons states in the Introduction: “. . . how we understand God's love has massive implications for our faith and practice.” What is the biblical definition of love? Does God's love only give, but never receive? In other words, is divine love purely self-sacrificial, or might God also delight in and be pleased by humans? (Lesson Introduction)
2. The lesson author also says, “(God) identifies Himself with the oppressed and the suffering, willingly entering into the pain and grief that evil has wrought in creation—Himself suffering most of all, so much so that God Himself is the greatest victim of evil.” Do you agree?
3. Read Exodus 33:15-19. Does God portray Himself as arbitrary in verse 19 (ESV) when He says, “I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom

I will show mercy”? In what ways has God loved you beyond any reasonable expectations? (Sunday’s Lesson)

4. God’s relentless love for fallen Israel is illustrated in the book of Hosea. Read Hosea 1:2. What kind of woman does God ask Hosea to marry? What is the likely outcome of such a union? What is the New Testament equivalent of the Hosea story? Read Romans 3:23-24. Read Hosea 14:1-4. What do these verses reveal about God’s steadfast love for His people? (Monday’s Lesson)
5. What needs within God were fulfilled in the act of creation? Does our love for God meet a need inside of God (Acts 17:25)? What is the underlying reason that creation happened (Rev 4:11)? What does John 17:24 tell us about the mind of God prior to creation? How is God’s continuing relationship with creation described in Hebrews 1:3? (Tuesday’s Lesson)
6. Read Matthew 22:1-14. If God truly loves freely (without conditions), as the lesson suggests, why will anyone be lost in the end? (Wednesday’s Lesson)
7. The previous parable is echoed through the words of Jesus in Matthew 23:37: “How often I wanted . . . but you were not willing.” Why do you think Israel was so resistant to God’s call throughout its history? Are you and I any different today? Read John 10:17-18. What does that text add to the passages in Matthew? If Jesus truly went to the cross voluntarily, why did He so often say that “it is necessary” (Greek: *dei*) for Him to die (Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22, etc.)? When was this voluntary decision made (Rom 16:25)? (Thursday’s Lesson)
8. Friday’s lesson is grounded on a wonderful statement from Ellen White in *Christ’s Object Lessons*, 415-416: “It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known. Into the darkness of the world is to be shed the light of His glory, the light of His goodness, mercy, and truth. . . .
“Those who wait for the Bridegroom’s coming are to say to the people, ‘Behold your God.’ The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of His character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them.” Why does this statement say that the “last message of mercy to be given to the world is a revelation of God’s character of love”? Don’t most churches teach the love of God? Why would that be a unique end-time message? (Friday’s Lesson)
9. How different would the world be if instead of love, God hated the human race? (Friday’s Lesson)
10. Why do you think there is so much misunderstanding of God’s character in the world today? (Friday’s Lesson)

11. How would you explain the biblical picture of God so someone who is not already familiar with it?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

I will treat them as though they had always been my loyal children. That's all God has ever wanted. But he's had to add a lot of things, hasn't he? And that's Galatians 3. The law was added because of transgression, to be our guardian, our custodian, to bring us to Christ, to bring us back to the place where we say, "You be our God, and we'll be your people. We're willing to listen. We trust you." And God can save and heal all who trust him. If only we could understand that we wouldn't need so many other aids.

But God's a good teacher. If we don't trust him, he'll lay hands on us, he'll discipline us, he'll raise his voice, he'll give us a thousand rules to protect us in our ignorance and immaturity. But all he wants in the end is that we trust him. The whole plan of salvation, the cross, everything, if it does not lead us back to trust him, it will do us no good whatsoever. God can only save those who trust him. The only people who are safe to save are those whom he can trust, and who will behave as described earlier in Jeremiah and all the other prophets. There's nothing legalistic about that. It isn't even a legal problem. It's a problem of trust, of honesty, integrity, humility, willingness to listen.

And God, the Infinite One, has all the power needed to heal the damage done. He's not so concerned with forgiveness as with healing the damage done and restoring us to the condition we were in before sin ever came into the universe, when there was no need to mention law. It was written on the hearts of the angels. There's a magnificent description here of what God really wants. Are we emphasizing this at this present time? Are we known for this? Well, here's a way to test it. Look at Jeremiah 9:23 in the light of all this. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Jeremiah & Lamentations, recorded January 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/35MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/36MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Does predestination bother anybody? That was our Sabbath School lesson this week. Was it cleared up thoroughly, there? Shall we look, just in passing, very quickly? Romans 8:29:

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son [we're predestined then], . . . And those whom he predestined [verse 30] he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.

Well, if you're predestined, then why stay any longer tonight? How about chapter 9, about the potter and the clay? He can take out of one lump, he can take some clay and make vessels made for destruction; take out the same lump and make vessels for salvation. Does that cancel all out?

Could I suggest this very quickly? In Romans 8:29, "Those whom he foreknew [how many does he foreknow? Everybody.] he predestined." So how many are predestined? All. And all who are predestined, he calls. How many does he call? All. And those whom he calls, he justifies. How many? And those whom he justifies, he glorifies. How many does he glorify? Well, we have no need to worry! He's going to justify and glorify everybody! Everybody! Saints and sinners alike? Then no one will be lost? It doesn't work. So we start back through. How many does he glorify? Only those that he justifies. How many does he justify? Only those whom he calls. But he calls everybody. Then there's something wrong. Because if you start in from both ends, you don't meet in the middle. So there must be some word misunderstood in there; and I wouldn't have chosen this so late, except that it fits in with all the purpose of our study. Those whom he foreknew. What does it mean in the Bible to know?

"Thee only have I known." I thought he knew everybody. "Depart from me. I never knew you." I thought he knew everybody. In the Bible, to know means to know as a friend. It even means to know with love and intimacy. Hence, "Adam knew Eve his wife" and they had a baby. It isn't that babies come from being introduced. And you remember in Kings, when David had that extraordinary hot water bottle, and it says that he never knew her, (1 Kings 1:4) it doesn't mean that he never learned her name. So we're very familiar with this in the Bible. To know means to know in a special way. And to foreknow means to know in a special way. Those whom God foreknew would be his friends. Then all the rest follows. Does God know who will be his friends and who will not? Read Romans 9. Jacob and Esau, and the others. He knows this.

Do you mind that God foreknows the future? Would you trust anybody else with that kind of knowledge? Would God abuse such infinite power and knowledge? Not the kind of God we worship. So I don't mind how much he knows. So, it makes sense then. We're not predestined. "Choose you this day." We're free. "Whosoever will" is made plain all through scripture. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Romans,

recorded May 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/61MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/62MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

I wonder if tonight we could think back in imagination to the very dramatic events of that first week of this earth's history. The war had begun already up in heaven. Satan had already leveled his charges and his accusations. One-third of the angels had already agreed with him that God is not worthy of our love and our trust.

Right in the middle of that devastating crisis, God invites His family to watch Him as He creates yet another world—this time, ours. How easily He could have created our world with a snap of His fingers, in just an instant of time. But in the dramatic and significant setting of The Great Controversy He chose, this time, to do it in six twenty-four hour days. On the first day, all He said was, "Let there be light." That's all. And then day two, three, four, and five, God in unhurried majesty and drama unfolded His plans for our earth. By the sixth day, what a beautiful place this was. Where now were Satan's charges that God was selfish?

I mean, look at the freedom. He created us in His own image with power to think and to do. And we know from human history that He created us free to either love and trust Him, or hate Him and spit in His face, because it has been done. He created us able to do it. God even allowed Satan to approach our first parents at the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. And He didn't hide that tree in some dark corner of the garden; He put it right in the middle near the Tree of Life, so that Adam and Even would see it every time they came to that other tree. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #10, "The Reminder of the 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/10MMCAG>

Is there a verse in the Bible that says that when Jesus died, He was given up? Romans 4:25 says Christ was given up for our transgressions. And many versions, with their reformation influence translate this "Christ was put to death." There is nothing in there about being put to death. It says He was given up. To tie that in with the issue in the Great Controversy, God gave up His Son as if He were a sinner. Just as He will give us up, if we are real sinners at the end. Because you can't force people to trust you, in a free universe, what can you do but give people up? When Jesus was given up, yes, He died.

So I believe there were three questions answered by Gethsemane and the cross. One: who is right, God or the devil? Is God a liar when He says sin results in death? The devil says, "Yes, God has lied to you." "You will not die" is the teaching of the devil. God says, "You will die. But it is not torture and execution at My hands." The devil developed the whole doctrine of hell to turn the universe against God. And God says that is not true. And I say, "Well, how do I know how the wicked are going to die?" He says, "Only one person has ever died the death as a result of sin. It's only happened once in all eternity. I died that death. I wouldn't ask any of you to prove the truthfulness of My word. This is the meaning of substitutionary death." Yes, He died in our place, but not for legal reasons. He died because He wouldn't think of asking anybody else to go through that painful experience to demonstrate the truth. Besides, our death wouldn't have answered it anyway. Because if our dying would have answered the question, then He might as well have let Lucifer die in the beginning.

But you remember the explanation. Had He left Lucifer to die, the universe would have misunderstood and assumed God had put him to death. So only by God coming, He said, "No one takes My life from Me. Nobody can kill Me. I'm going through this Myself. I have arranged this with my Father." And the universe looking on said the Father isn't killing the Son. God isn't killing God. And it was clear enough to them that they could say, "Our questions are answered. One: sin does result in death. Two: it is not torture and execution at the hands of our gracious God.

Only one thing left. "God, why were you so concerned that we understand this?" God says, "Because if you serve Me from fear, it will turn you into rebels—holy rebels." He says. "Come to Calvary." On Calvary, Jesus was tortured to death. By whom? The most devout, blueprinting Adventists the world has ever known. Absolutely dedicated to God, the scriptures, creation, Sabbath, the Ten Commandments, you name it. Jesus said you even strain gnats out of your goat's milk. Real health reformers. You couldn't fault them for a thing. You couldn't have disfellowshipped one of the people who crucified Christ. Their lives were apparently without blemish.

But they hated Him. They hated His picture of God. They killed Him to silence His unbiblical heresy. And the angels looking on said, "We thought, by sending Your Son to Palestine, You did that to get a good running start with people who already agreed with You. We didn't realize You sent Him there to prove this costly point, that if we obey You for the wrong reason, because we don't really know You, we could turn into Your worst enemies in the middle of our Sabbath keeping and our tithe-paying and our health-reforming." And that's why I think the biggest mistake the Adventist church could make in these last days is to have one tremendous revival in reformation, get out the blueprint, straighten out our lives, without spending much more time on the picture of God. Because if we do the right things for the wrong reason, we'll do what some of the Jews did and become His enemies.

So I believe the cross was the only way to answer the questions. Without answers to the questions, there would be no peace, no freedom, no security throughout the universe. So it was for these specific reasons. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, Questions People are Asking About the Plan of Salvation, recorded April 1983, Redlands, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/1MMQUESTP> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/2MMQUESTP> (Part 2)

Recommended Listening:

Conversations About God #8 “The Most Costly and Convincing Evidence” is available at:

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

Further Study with Ellen White

It is our privilege to reach higher and still higher for clearer revealings of the character of God. When Moses prayed, “I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory,” the Lord did not rebuke him, but He granted his prayer. God declared to His servant, “I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee.” Exodus 33:18, 19. {MH 464.1}

God has bound our hearts to Him by unnumbered tokens in heaven and in earth. Through the things of nature, and the deepest and tenderest earthly ties that human hearts can know, He has sought to reveal Himself to us. Yet these but imperfectly represent His love. Though all these evidences have been given, the enemy of good blinded the minds of men, so that they looked upon God with fear; they thought of Him as severe and unforgiving. Satan led men to conceive of God as a being whose chief attribute is stern justice,—one who is a severe judge, a harsh, exacting creditor. He pictured the Creator as a being who is watching with jealous eye to discern the errors and mistakes of men, that He may visit judgments upon them. It was to remove this dark shadow, by revealing to the world the infinite love of God, that Jesus came to live among men. {SC 10.3}

Through Christ’s redeeming work the government of God stands justified. The Omnipotent One is made known as the God of love. Satan’s charges are refuted, and his character unveiled. Rebellion can never again arise. Sin can never again enter the universe. Through eternal ages all are secure from apostasy. By love’s self-sacrifice, the inhabitants of earth and heaven are bound to their Creator in bonds of indissoluble union. {DA 26.2}

In the person of Christ we behold the eternal God engaged in an enterprise of boundless mercy toward fallen man. {FLB 98.3}

The heart of Infinite Love yearns after those who feel powerless to free themselves from the snares of Satan; and He graciously offers to strengthen them to live for Him. “Fear thou not,” He bids them; “for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee: yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness.” . . . {CC 235.4}

Infinite love—how great it is! God made the world to enlarge heaven. He desires a larger family of created intelligences (MS 78, 1901). {1BC 1081.2}

All heaven took a deep and joyful interest in the creation of the world and of man. Human beings were a new and distinct order. They were made “in the image of God,” and it was the Creator’s design that they should populate the earth (RH Feb. 11, 1902). {1BC 1081.3}

In the creation of man was manifest the agency of a personal God. When God had made man in His image, the human form was perfect in all its arrangements, but it was without life. Then a personal, self-existing God breathed into that form the breath of life, and man became a living, intelligent being. All parts of the human organism were set in action. The heart, the arteries, the veins, the tongue, the hands, the feet, the senses, the faculties of the mind, all began their work, and all were placed under law. Man became a living soul. Through Christ the Word, a personal God created man and endowed him with intelligence and power. {MH 415.1}

Jesus took the nature of humanity, in order to reveal to man a pure, unselfish love, to teach us how to love one another. {5BC 1126.1}

In consenting to become man, Christ manifested a humility that is the marvel of the heavenly intelligences. The act of consenting to be a man would be no humiliation were it not for the fact of Christ’s exalted pre-existence. We must open our understanding to realize that Christ laid aside His royal robe, His kingly crown, His high command, and clothed His divinity with humanity, that He might meet man where he was, and bring to the human family moral power to become the sons and daughters of God. To redeem man, Christ became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. {SD 81.4}

Had God the Father come to our world and dwelt among us, humbling Himself, veiling His glory, that humanity might look upon Him, the history that we have of the life of Christ would not have been changed. . . . In every act of Jesus, in every lesson of His instruction, we are to see and hear and recognize God. In sight, in hearing, in effect, it is the voice and movements of the Father. {TMK 338.4}

The Holy Spirit will not compel men to take a certain course of action. We are free moral agents; and when sufficient evidence has been given us as to our duty it is left with us to decide our course. {RH, July 17, 1888 par. 4} {FE 124.1}

Jesus employed no miraculous agency to compel men to believe in him. They were left to choose or reject him, of their own free will. No direct power was to force them into obedience, and destroy the free moral agency that God has given to man. {4Red 86.3}

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all intelligent beings depends upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love—service that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced obedience; and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service. {PP 34.3}

Through the ministry of the angels the Holy Spirit is enabled to work upon the mind and heart of the human agent and draw him to Christ. . . . But the Spirit of God does not interfere with the freedom of the human agent. The Holy Spirit is given to be a helper, so that man may cooperate with the Divine, and it is given to Him to draw the soul but never to force obedience. {TMK 57.2}

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}

Christ undertook to redeem man and to rescue the world from the grasp of Satan. The great controversy begun in heaven was to be decided in the very world, on the very same field, that Satan claimed as his. {PP 69.2}

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}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2025: *God's Love and Justice*

Lesson 3 "To Be Pleasing to God"

Read for this week's study

Luke 15:11–32; Zephaniah 3:17; Ephesians 5:25–28; Isaiah 43:4; Romans 8:1; Romans 5:8; Mark 9:17–29.

Memory Text

"The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One, will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness, He will quiet you with His love, He will rejoice over you with singing" (Zephaniah 3:17, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. More Valuable Than You Can Imagine
- III. Rejoicing With Gladness
- IV. Pleasing God?
- V. Living Stones
- VI. A Worthy Goal
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. A five-year-old child brings a parent a "work of art" that he or she cobbled together from leftover ice cream sticks, Q-Tips, broken crayons, and assorted other castoffs. Why would a parent be pleased by such a "worthless" gift from a child? After all, a child's gift was either bought with a parent's money or made from materials the parent originally paid for. What value could that gift possibly have to the parent? The answer to that question is probably the answer to the next question: Can we actually do **anything** that pleases God? (Sabbath Afternoon's Lesson)
2. Is God a Being with real emotions like human beings have? Does a term like "pleased" or "delighted" even make sense when speaking about God?

3. Read Luke 15:11-32. What does this parable reveal about God? And what warning does it provide for those who, like the elder brother, stay close to the father throughout the story? Does the older brother have a point? Is his father being unfair in treating the prodigal the way he does? Is love at times unfair? (Sunday's Lesson)
4. Read Zephaniah 3:17. How does this verse shed light on the parable of the prodigal son? What does Ephesians 5:25-32 say about God's love as well as the love we are called to display? (Monday's Lesson)
5. Read Isaiah 43:4, Psalm 149:4, and Proverbs 15:8-9. What do these verses tell us about God's delight in His people? On the other hand, if God loves us as much as the Bible suggests, why is God so displeased when we sin? (Tuesday's Lesson)
6. Read Romans 8:1 and 5:8. What do these texts teach about our standing before God? (Wednesday's Lesson)
7. Read 1 Peter 2:4-6, Hebrews 11:6 and 13:21. What do these texts tell us about how to please God? (Wednesday's Lesson)
8. A question that often arises after texts like these is: "What if I am not good enough, trusting enough to please God?" If someone were to ask you that question, how would you respond? Read Mark 9:17-29. How does Jesus respond to the man in the story? How much faith is enough? (Thursday's Lesson)
9. When Jesus says, "Love one another the way I have loved you", how does one do that in practical terms? See Paul's answer to that question in Romans 12:9-21. How would you understand each detail of Paul's advice in this passage? (Thursday's Lesson)
10. In what way is the Golden Rule an "emergency measure"? (Friday's Lesson)
11. Even though you know with your mind that God is on your side, how often are you tempted to feel that you are somehow an exception to God's loving regard for the human race? A statement to ponder: "The Lord is disappointed when His people place a low estimate upon themselves. He desires His chosen heritage to value themselves according to the price He has placed upon them. God wanted them, else He would not have sent His Son on such an expensive errand to redeem them." Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages*, 668. (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

And that's why Jesus told the prodigal son story. When did the father forgive the prodigal son? Even as he helped him pack his bags to leave. And the greatest discovery the prodigal son made was—half way through his speech of repentance—that his father had long since forgiven him. The message of forgiveness is simply part of the revelation of the truth about God. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Ephesians & Colossians, recorded May 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/67MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/68MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

That ring meant that he had full and equal authority in the family, which was very offensive to the older brother. For the older brother was quite a legalist, who thought that the longer you served, the more you should be rewarded. And the father said, "Haven't you enjoyed being with me all this time?" Suggesting that the greatest reward we ever have is to be with our heavenly father, if we really like him.

Did the father discuss the legal standing of his son at all? What's the only thing the prodigal son had to do to be saved? Just come home. That's absolutely all. Of course, if he hadn't come, what could the father do? Even though he didn't know his father that well, he knew enough to start home. And that's why I think many of us might start home from the foot of Sinai, or lots of places in between. All that counts is, be sure we start home. And the boy came home and found the truth about his father. {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: Now, there are questions that arise in regard to the second part of your presentation on intercession. You've talked about intercession, a mediator, as part of an emergency measure. Does that mean that we don't need an advocate? First John, second chapter talks about, "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Are you saying that we don't need an advocate?

Graham: As I mentioned, if one is still afraid of God, the Bible says we have an advocate with the Father. However, knowing that we really don't need someone to intercede with the Father, do we still need an advocate? Well, if we only determined who it is that's really against us, then we would see why we need an advocate standing beside the Father, the paraclete, called to His

side to help. Satan is against us, the accuser of the brethren who accuses us day and night before God. Look in Zechariah 3, who is accusing Joshua the High Priest? Who is defending? In Job, who is accusing? Who is defending? So since we have an enemy, God's enemy is our enemy too.

We need an advocate. We need someone to represent us. To God? No. He's our friend as much as the Son and the Holy Spirit. But our future neighbors and friends, the inhabitants of the universe, might not be too sure about us. And God doesn't ask them to accept His list of candidates. He doesn't run His universe that way. So He allows Satan to accuse, and has Jesus explain. If He can defend, He does. If He can't, He won't. And so it's very real to me that Jesus is in this role of advocate and intercessor defending His loyal children who may even be just babes in the truth. If they trust Him like the thief on the cross, Jesus can say, "Yes, he has a terrible record as the Devil has pointed out, but he has a new heart and a right spirit. I commend him as safe to save, even to live next door to." And his guardian angel heaves a big sigh of relief.

Lou: Not from God's wrath or anything like that, that He's protecting us.

Graham: No. So often, we've got the wrong enemy.

Lou: He made God the enemy.

Graham: Yes.

Lou: Exactly what the devil would like to have us think.

Graham: Exactly. The Father's not our foe. No. "If God can be for us, who can be against us?" Romans 8. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #11 with Lou Venden, "God's Emergency Measures" 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/11MMCAG>

Someone came between because of the emergency. It's not ideal. God would like to deal directly with us, face to face, as a man speaks with his friend. But because we don't know God, and we've been afraid, God has given us these pictures. He's given us a picture even of Jesus being our judge. Doesn't Jesus deal with this? He says, "You're all comforted that I'm going to be your judge. Because you were scared my Father was going to judge you, isn't that right?" They said, "Oh, we're so relieved you're going to be our judge." Is that because the Father is not as gracious and forgiving as the Son, that we say we're glad the Son's going to be our judge? So before he went back to heaven, he said, "I've got to clear that up, too. Actually, if you've seen me, you've seen the Father. You'd receive just as gracious judgment from my Father as from me. But I'd like to take you a step further. I'm not going to judge you anyway." "Oh, there'll be

something that will judge you. The truth will judge you. The truth about my Father in the Great Controversy. The truth about the kind of person he is and what he wants of his children, and the way he governs the universe. That's the truth. If you have loved that truth and it has led you to repentance and faith and trust, you will have stood humbly in our presence and said, 'What must I do to be saved and healed?' and we will have been able to save and heal you, and all will be well. But if you have turned down this truth about my Father and about me, you will not know us; you will not be our friends; you will not trust us enough to listen; we will not be able to heal you; and you will perish and we will cry." And that's the judgment. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Leviticus, recorded October 1981, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/5MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/6MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

It certainly helps to understand "salvation by faith" and "righteousness by faith," to understand faith as trust in this way. We're not saved by faith; that is, faith does not save us. God saves us. But God can only save those who trust Him.

Like a physician, God stands ready to heal all the damage done. But He cannot force us to be well. If we don't trust Him enough to listen, and to cooperate, and let Him heal the damage done, there's no way He can heal us. Physicians cannot heal rebellious patients who stay away because they think the doctor is a quack. Only if there is trust there—mutual trust—can healing really take place.

But now, doesn't it seem too little that God would only ask for trust? Isn't it also necessary to know Him? And to love Him? And to obey Him? Not to mention the need to repent. And to be reborn. And to be converted. And to be justified. And to be sanctified. And even to be perfect. And the list gets so long that it's no wonder that it discourages many people from really wanting to have a right relationship with our God. But don't be scared by that list. Taken in the larger view of what went wrong and what needs to be set right, every one of those items I have mentioned is an integral part of a single, wonderful, reassuring, transforming experience that is made available to us all. And it was never supposed to be so complicated, or to be divided into so many different parts. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #3, "All God Asks Is Trust" recorded January 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/3MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

All are not led to the Lord in precisely the same way. Human beings are not to define, arbitrarily and narrowly, the characteristics of God's working on minds. It may be given to one to gain spiritual strength and discernment easily, while another has to contend with "a thorn in the flesh" (2 Corinthians 12:7), and at times is ready, apparently, to step off the heights over the precipice. Yet who dare say that God does not still love and regard as His child the one so sorely beset, and that His hand is not still stretched out to save? {TDG 67.3}

All heaven is interested in our salvation. The angels of God, thousands upon thousands, and ten thousand times ten thousand, are commissioned to minister to those who shall be heirs of salvation. They guard us against evil and press back the powers of darkness that are seeking our destruction. {6T 63.3}

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}

Had Christ come in His divine form, humanity could not have endured the sight. The contrast would have been too painful, the glory too overwhelming. Humanity could not have endured the presence of one of the pure, bright angels from glory; therefore Christ took not on Him the nature of angels; He came in the likeness of men. {5BC 1131.1}

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

The precious Saviour will send help just when we need it. The way to heaven is consecrated by His footprints. Every thorn that wounds our feet has wounded His. Every cross that we are called to bear He has borne before us. The Lord permits conflicts, to prepare the soul for peace. The time of trouble is a fearful ordeal for God's people; but it is the time for every true believer to look up, and by faith he may see the bow of promise encircling him. {GC 633.1}

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. . . . 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}

In the darkest days, when appearances seem most forbidding, have faith in God. He is working out His will, doing all things well in behalf of His people. The strength of those who love and serve Him will be renewed day by day. {MH 482.1}

He is able and willing to bestow upon His servants all the help they need. He will give them the wisdom which their varied necessities demand. {MH 482.2}

Heaven has a never-failing supply of help for all who are needy. {OHC 117.4}

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}

God bids us fill the mind with great thoughts, pure thoughts. He desires us to meditate upon His love and mercy, to study His wonderful work in the great plan of redemption. Then clearer and still clearer will be our perception of truth, higher, holier, our desire for purity of heart and clearness of thought. The soul dwelling in the pure atmosphere of holy thought will be transformed by communion with God through the study of Scriptures. {COL 60.1}

The work of grace upon the heart is not an instantaneous work. It is effected by continuous, daily watching and believing the promises of God. The repentant, believing one, who cherishes faith and earnestly desires the renewing grace of Christ, God will not turn away empty. He will give him grace. And ministering angels will aid him as he perseveres in his efforts to advance.— Manuscript 55, 1910. {Ev 287.3}

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. {FLB 129.2}

If you take even one step toward Him in repentance, He will hasten to enfold you in His arms of infinite love. His ear is open to the cry of the contrite soul. The very first reaching out of the heart after God is known to Him. Never a prayer is offered, however faltering, never a tear is shed, however secret, never a sincere desire after God is cherished, however feeble, but the Spirit of God goes forth to meet it. Even before the prayer is uttered or the yearning of the heart made known, grace from Christ goes forth to meet the grace that is working upon the human soul. {FLB 129.3}

Jesus loves to have us come to Him just as we are, sinful, helpless, dependent. We may come with all our weakness, our folly, our sinfulness, and fall at His feet in penitence. It is His glory to encircle us in the arms of His love and to bind up our wounds, to cleanse us from all impurity. {SC 52.2}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2025: *God's Love and Justice*
Lesson 4 "God Is Passionate *and* Compassionate"

Read for this week's study

Psalm 103:13; Isaiah 49:15; Hosea 11:1–9; Matthew 23:37; 2 Corinthians 11:2, 1 Corinthians 13:4–8.

Memory Text

“Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely they may forget, yet I will not forget you’ ” (Isa. 49:15, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. More Than a Mother's Love
- III. Gut-Wrenching Love
- IV. The Compassion of Jesus
- V. A Jealous God?
- VI. Compassionate and Passionate
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. The title of the lesson this week is “God is Passionate and Compassionate.” What do these two adjectives mean and what is the difference between them as descriptions of God's character? Why did God make us emotional creatures? What is the role of emotion in God's plans for the human race? (Sabbath Afternoon's Lesson)
2. Read Psalm 103:13, Isaiah 49:15, and Jeremiah 31:20. What do each of these passages convey about the nature and depth of God's compassion? Some people might struggle with these comparisons because one or both of their parents were not loving. How would you illustrate God's compassion to people like them? (Sunday's Lesson)
3. Read Hosea 11:1-9. How does the imagery in these verses bring to life the way God loved and cared for Israel? How does the imagery in Hosea 1:2 relate to this

passage? Compare also the story in 1 Kings 3:25. How does the mother in this passage illustrate the point of Hosea 11? The lesson author states: “God is compassionate, but never to the exclusion of justice.” Do you agree or disagree? Why? (Monday’s Lesson)

4. Read Matthew 9:36, 14:14, and 23:37; Mark 1:41, and Luke 7:13. How do these verses shed light on the way Christ was moved by the plight of people? What impact should awareness of God’s compassion have on us? (Tuesday’s Lesson)
5. Read Deuteronomy 4:24. The God of the Bible is the compassionate God. But He is also called a “jealous” God. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4. Paul says there that “love is not jealous”. How do you reconcile the idea that God is love with the idea that God is jealous (2 Cor 11:2)? The lesson asks the question: “How can we learn to reflect that same kind of ‘good jealousy’ toward others that God displays toward us?” Do you think that is even possible in sinful human beings? (Wednesday’s Lesson)
6. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. How would you apply this passage to God? How can we become that kind of person? How helpful do you find Paul’s comments on this in 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13? What role might “death to self and selfishness” play in the process of living out what Paul counsels here? (Thursday’s Lesson)
7. Commenting on the “poor in spirit” beatitude in Matthew 5:3 and echoing the parable of the prodigal son, Ellen White says the following, “Whatever may have been your past experience, however discouraging your present circumstances, if you will come to Jesus just as you are, weak, helpless, and despairing, our compassionate Saviour will meet you a great way off, and will throw about you His arms of love and His robe of righteousness.” Does this lengthy sentence describe any particular incident in your personal history? Be prepared to share that experience. (Friday’s Lesson)
8. Throughout the Gospels Jesus was moved by the needs of people. He not only felt their pain (passion), but acted in a way that addressed their needs (compassion). What can we do to be more effective in meeting the needs that come to our attention? (Friday’s Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Graham: Yes. I enjoy when people say the fourth is arbitrary. How about number one? “Thou shalt have no other gods before Me, and I am a jealous God. I don’t like it when you have other gods.”

Lou: It’s sort of peevish, wanting to be the only one.

Graham: Well again, if you take the whole Bible and you are convinced of the kind of person God is, I am glad He says what He does. If He were not in support of freedom and the quality of life that He has revealed, then it would be arbitrary of Him. But God says, “Being the kind of

God I am, wishing nothing but the best for you, and valuing nothing more than your freedom, I don't want you to go after Dagon the fish god and Molech. Molech would require your babies burned alive in his hollow hands. And there are crocodiles and frogs in Egypt. And Ashtoreth and Baal—don't go after them. In fact, if you go after something abominable, you will become abominable yourself." God says, "Actually, if you make **Me** your God, then you will become ever more free, ever more intelligent. Don't hurt yourself."

Lou: It's a request. It's a plea. It is said out of love.

Graham. Right. But only if He is not arbitrary, only if God is the kind of person we believe Him to be. He says, "Don't lose your freedom and every other good thing you have by going after these degraded deities. Stay with Me. I am jealous; that is, I am jealous for you. I don't want you to be hurt." I like that.

Lou: Just as we would not want our children to have anything that would hurt them.

Graham: Isn't that kind of jealousy all right? I always felt my parents were jealous for my reputation. I derived great comfort from that. My mother wouldn't tell on me for anything. And so we have a God who is jealous for us, His children, and it's marvelous. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #7 with Lou Venden, "The Question of Authority" 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/7MMCAG>*

Lou: That does lead to another question: "Is it possible, since you put such importance on the basis of Scripture, on growing up, is it possible for a person to tell that he or she is in fact growing up?"

Graham: Since we've used 1 Corinthians 13 on the list, it would be appropriate to note that in the chapter where he says, "I once thought like a child, but now I've given up childish ways," that all the rest of the chapter is on how a grown-up behaves. That is, he loves. That is, love is never rude, never impatient, never arrogant, never boasts—look how little children boast, never insists on having its own way. Am I beginning to behave like a grownup? 1 Corinthians 13, the love chapter, describes how a grown-up behaves.

I think there's an additional thing, too. Why am I behaving like this? Am I doing it because somebody in authority has told me to and He has power to reward and destroy? Or am I sold on the message of 1 Corinthians 13? I love how Jesus behaved that way. I would like to be like Him. I just agree with Him. He doesn't have to tell me anymore not to murder my mother-in-law. I don't like the idea myself, you see. So eventually we do what is right because it is right. That's all part of growing up.

Lou: You are saying, then, that there is a certain legitimacy in evaluating the way we act, the way we feel about other people, for example.

Graham: I think if we see no progress over the past year, we should be concerned.

Lou: Well, I was thinking about how my dad used to put marks on the wall. Did your dad do that?

Graham: Oh yes, had them all over the laundry wall.

Lou: And I was interested in whether I was growing more than Morrie. Morrie finally surpassed me.

Graham: I lost to my younger brother.

Lou: But there's a certain danger in focusing on our growth, isn't there, to where my whole concern is how am I doing? And I get my eyes off of . . .

Graham: That's why we need to go back to our earlier conversation, "God can completely heal the damage done." I mean, how does one grow up?

Lou: You don't grow by trying to grow.

Graham: We grow up into His likeness. But if I'm not thinking about Him . . .

Lou: How can you grow if you're looking at yourself and hoping to grow? And how can you avoid the self-confidence that comes in, for instance, with the Laodiceans who feel very content? I suppose if you'd ask a Laodicean, he'd say, "Well, I've really done quite well. I'm growing very nicely, thank you."

Graham: One of the evidences that one is growing up is that one is not becoming arrogant. There's nothing more stubborn than a little child. "My Daddy says it, and he's bigger than your Daddy, and therefore it's true." I would say it would be a mark of immaturity for a person of advanced years to be so self-satisfied and so arrogantly stubborn about his opinions. That suggests one is still a child. One grows up. One even enhances this quality of a child, the humility, the willingness to listen, to accept correction, to accept instruction. That should become even greater as one gets older. So an arrogant, "I think I've almost made it now," suggests one may not have even started. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #18 with Lou Venden, "God Waits for His Children to Grow Up" recorded June 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/18MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

He pointed His hearers to the Ruler of the universe, under the new name, “Our Father.” He would have them understand how tenderly the heart of God yearned over them. He teaches that God cares for every lost soul; that “like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.” Psalm 103:13. Such a conception of God was never given to the world by any religion but that of the Bible. Heathenism teaches men to look upon the Supreme Being as an object of fear rather than of love—a malign deity to be appeased by sacrifices, rather than a Father pouring upon His children the gift of His love. Even the people of Israel had become so blinded to the precious teaching of the prophets concerning God that this revelation of His paternal love was as an original subject, a new gift to the world. {MB 74.1}

Jesus came into the world to illustrate the character of God in His own life, and He swept back the misrepresentations that Satan had originated, and revealed the glory of God. It was only by living among men that He could reveal the mercy, compassion, and love of His heavenly Father; for it was only by actions of benevolence that He could set forth the grace of God. The unbelief of men was deep seated, and yet they could not resist the testimony of His God-like example, and His deeds of love and truth. {SD 139.3}

God would not have His children, for whom so great a salvation has been provided, act as though He were a hard, exacting taskmaster. He is their best friend, and when they worship Him, He expects to be with them to bless and comfort them and fill their hearts with joy and love. The Lord desires His children to take comfort in His service, and to find more pleasure than hardship in His work. The Lord desires that those who come to worship Him shall carry away with them precious thoughts of His care and love that they may be cheered in all the employments of daily life, that they may have grace to deal honestly and faithfully in all things. . . {TMK 263.3}

We dishonor God when we think of Him only as a judge ready to pass sentence upon us, and forget that He is a loving Father. The whole spiritual life is molded by our conceptions of God, and if we cherish erroneous views of His character, our souls will sustain injury. . . . {TMK 263.4}

Never are we absent from the mind of God. God is our joy and our salvation. {3SM 338.1}

The heart of God yearns over His earthly children with a love stronger than death. In giving up His Son, He has poured out to us all heaven in one gift. The Saviour’s life and death and intercession, the ministry of angels, the pleading of the Spirit, the Father working above and through all, the unceasing interest of heavenly beings,—all are enlisted in behalf of man’s redemption. {SC 21.2}

He has redeemed us out of the careless world and has chosen us to become members of the royal family, sons and daughters of the heavenly King. He invites us to trust in Him with a trust deeper and stronger than that of a child in his earthly father. {ML 289.5}

God is to us a tender, compassionate, heavenly Father. {ML 289.6}

Human love may change, but Christ's love knows no change. {MH 72.3}

The love of God to man is incomprehensible, broad as the world, high as heaven, and as enduring as eternity. {HP 115.5}

In word and in deed the Messiah, during His earthly ministry, was to reveal to mankind the glory of God the Father. Every act of His life, every word spoken, every miracle wrought, was to make known to fallen humanity the infinite love of God. {PK 696.3}

Jesus did not seek to attract the people to Him by gratifying the desire for luxury. To that great throng, weary and hungry after the long, exciting day, the simple fare was an assurance not only of His power, but of His tender care for them in the common needs of life. {DA 367.2}

That prayer of Christ embraces all His followers to the close of time. Our Saviour foresaw the trials and dangers of His people; He is not unmindful of the dissensions and divisions that distract and weaken His church. He is looking upon us with deeper interest and more tender compassion than moves an earthly parent's heart toward a wayward, afflicted child. He bids us learn of Him. He invites our confidence. He bids us open our hearts to receive His love. He has pledged Himself to be our helper. {5T 237.2}

Not a sigh is breathed, not a pain felt, not a grief pierces the soul, but the throb vibrates to the Father's heart. {AG 189.5}

God is ever seeking to instruct finite men that they may exercise faith in Him and trust themselves wholly in His hands. Every drop of rain or flake of snow, every spire of grass, every leaf and flower and shrub, testifies of God. These little things so common around us, teach the lesson that nothing is beneath the notice of the infinite God, nothing too small for His attention (GCB Feb. 18, 1897). {3BC 1141.3}

God's everlasting arm encircles the soul that turns to Him for aid, however feeble that soul may be. {4T 328.1}

We all have many difficulties to meet, many perplexing problems to solve. But we have an all-powerful Helper, who will listen to our requests as willingly and gladly as He listened to the requests of those who, when He was on this earth in person, came to Him for help. . . . {HP 124.2}

In Christ the character of the Father was revealed. As children looked upon His countenance, they saw purity and goodness shining forth from His eyes. In His countenance gentleness, meekness, love, and conscious power were combined. But though every word, every gesture, every expression of His face, betokened His divine supremacy, humility marked His deportment and bearing. He came but for one purpose, and that was the salvation of the lost. {ML 300.4}

Never is one repulsed who comes to Him with a contrite heart. Not one sincere prayer is lost. Amid the anthems of the celestial choir, God hears the cries of the weakest human being. We pour out our heart's desire in our closets, we breathe a prayer as we walk by the way, and our words reach the throne of the Monarch of the universe. They may be inaudible to any human ear, but they cannot die away into silence, nor can they be lost through the activities of business that are going on. Nothing can drown the soul's desire. It rises above the din of the street, above the confusion of the multitude, to the heavenly courts. It is God to whom we are speaking, and our prayer is heard. {COL 174.1}

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

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}

Love was the element in which Christ moved and walked and worked. He came to embrace the world in the arms of His love. . . . {SD 147.2}

The glory of heaven is in lifting up the fallen, comforting the distressed. And wherever Christ abides in human hearts, He will be revealed in the same way. Wherever it acts, the religion of Christ will bless. Wherever it works, there is brightness. {COL 386.1}

Holiness is wholeness to God. The soul is surrendered to God. The will, and even the thoughts, are brought into subjection to the will of Christ. The love of Jesus fills the soul, and is constantly going out in a clear, refreshing stream, to make glad the hearts of others (MS 33, 1911). {6BC 1076.2}

The most powerful evidence a man can give that he has been born again and is a new man in Christ Jesus, is the manifestation of love for his brethren, the doing of Christlike deeds. This is the most wonderful witness that can be borne in favor of Christianity, and will win souls to the truth. . . . {SD 293.4}

True sanctification unites believers to Christ and to one another in the bonds of tender sympathy. This union causes to flow continually into the heart rich currents of Christlike love, which flows forth again in love for one another. {5BC 1141.2}

The love of God alone can open and expand the heart, and give to love and sympathy a breadth and height that is without measure. Those who love Jesus will love all the children of God. The sense of personal infirmities and imperfections will lead the human agent to look away from self to Christ; and the Saviour's love will break down every cold, Pharisaical barrier, it will banish all harshness and selfishness, and there will be a blending of soul with soul, even with those who are opposite in temperament. {OHC 183.3}

Love imparts to its possessor grace, propriety, and comeliness of deportment. Love illuminates the countenance and subdues the voice; it refines and elevates the entire man. It brings him into harmony with God, for it is a heavenly attribute. {4T 559.3}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2025: *God's Love and Justice*
Lesson 5 "The Wrath of Divine Love"

Read for this week's study

Psalm 78; Jonah 4:1–4; Matthew 10:8; Matthew 21:12, 13; Jeremiah 51:24, 25; Romans 12:17–21.

Memory Text

"But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them; Yes, many a time He turned His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath" (Psalm 78:38, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Grieved by Evil
- III. God Is Slow to Anger
- IV. Righteous Indignation
- V. God Does Not Afflict Willingly
- VI. Show Compassion
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Though God's compassion is often celebrated, many find the idea of His wrath disturbing. If God is love, they argue, He should never exhibit or express wrath. What do you think? Should God express wrath or not? Be prepared to defend your answer. (Sabbath Afternoon's Lesson)
2. The author of the lesson states: "God's wrath is simply the appropriate response of love to evil and injustice. Accordingly, evil provokes God to passion in favor of the victims of evil and against its perpetrators. Divine wrath, then, is another expression of divine love." Do you agree or disagree? Why or why not? (Sabbath Afternoon's Lesson)
3. Today's lesson states: "The God of the Bible loves justice and hates evil." Do you consider it appropriate to say that God hates anything? If so, why does God hate evil

- so much? Read Nehemiah 9:7-33. How does this relate to the cycle of rebellion mentioned above? (Sunday's Lesson)
4. Read Exodus 34:6-7, the clearest summary of God's character in the Old Testament. How do you understand this passage? Read Jonah 4:1-4. What does this passage tell us about God? What does it tell us about Jonah? How can one show mercy and grace without giving license to sin or enabling abuse and oppression? (Monday's Lesson)
 5. While there are many inappropriate forms of anger, the Bible teaches that there is such a thing as "righteous indignation", the proper response of love to abuse or oppression. It has a protective function in a sinful world. Read Matthew 21:12-16. What was the evil that Jesus was responding to in the temple? Why does Jesus use a whip to enforce these changes? (Tuesday's Lesson)
 6. How can you tell the difference between righteous indignation and selfish anger? Why is it easier to see the selfishness in another's anger rather than our own? (Tuesday's Lesson)
 7. The author of the lesson states: "Throughout the Bible, God repeatedly displays His passion in favor of the downtrodden and the oppressed and His corresponding righteous indignation against the victimizers and oppressors. If there were no evil, God would not be angry." Do you agree? Read Lamentations 3:32-33. What does this text tell us about God? What do Ezra 5:12 and 2 Chronicles 36:16 tell us about God's role in the Babylonian Exile? According to Jeremiah 51:24-25, how did God feel about that? How do you show God's compassion for the bully while still protecting the victims of wrongdoing? (Wednesday's Lesson)
 8. The lesson comments: "Love is essential to God; wrath is not. Where there is no evil or injustice, there is no wrath. . . . Eradicating evil from the universe also will effectively eliminate anger and wrath." Do you find this statement helpful? Why or why not? (Thursday's Lesson)
 9. It is generally understood that punishing children to correct defiance or rebellion is appropriate, but punishing them for blunders or immaturity is not. If a parent instructs the child, "Clean your room!" and returns fifteen minutes later to see that nothing was done, is that an example of defiance or childishness? (Thursday's Lesson)
 10. Some worry that the existence of divine anger might unintentionally be taken to give license to human vengeance. How do texts like Deuteronomy 32:35, Proverbs 20:22 and 24:29, Romans 12:17-21, and Hebrews 10:30 apply to this issue? Do you think people will still get offended with each other in eternity and need intervention to maintain relationships? (Thursday's Lesson)
 11. What problems always arise when people seek vengeance that never arise when God seeks it? (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Lou: Graham, I want you to comment on this question of God's wrath. I can hear somebody saying this evening, and perhaps this question has come up before: "But doesn't the Bible talk about God's wrath, many, many times? God's anger?" Can you give me about a forty-five second response on that?

Graham: On God's wrath. Yes. When we talk about why Jesus had to die, we can do more with this. But I wouldn't want to live one night without having the question pretty well resolved. If you take all sixty-six books, and look at the references to God's wrath all the way through, you'll find so many places that will say (and later I'll put the text down on the sheet for the evening) God's wrath is simply His turning away in loving disappointment from those who do not want Him anyway, thus leaving them to the inevitable and awful consequences of their own rebellious choice. It is not like our anger. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #2 with Lou Venden, "What Went Wrong in God's Universe" recorded January 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/2MMCAG>*

So in imagination let's go to the cross and watch Jesus die. Did He really die? The soldiers were surprised to find he was already dead. Crucifixion was a slow way of dying. Evidently something else had happened. Is it true that Jesus was dying the death of a sinner, to show us how the sinner really dies? Look at the next verse on our sheet, 2 Corinthians 5:21: "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin." (RSV) He did die the death of a sinner. And what caused Jesus to die? As you watch Him dying on the cross, is God killing His Son? Is He torturing His Son to death? Is God pouring out His wrath on His Son; something the Bible so often pictures God doing toward sinners for whom there is no further hope?

Well, it all depends on the meaning of wrath. What is God's wrath? One of the clearest explanations in the whole Bible is in Romans 1, the next passage. And I wish we could read at least the whole first chapter. But look at these few verses; Romans 1:18, 24, 26, 28:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth [and it is the truth about God in that whole section]. . . . Therefore, God gave them up. . . . For this reason God gave them up. . . . And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up. . . . (RSV)

Three times it states in Romans 1 that God's wrath is simply His turning away, in loving disappointment, from those who do not want Him anyway, thus leaving them to the inevitable and awful consequence of their own rebellious choice. Was Jesus given up? Look at Romans 4:25: ". . . Jesus our Lord, who was **put to death** [given up—emphasis supplied] for our trespasses." (RSV)

There is nothing in the Greek that says He was put to death. It says what is in the brackets there. "Jesus our Lord, who was given up for our trespasses."

And it is exactly the same word as in Romans 1:24, 26, and 28. And versions ought to leave them the same to show the point that Jesus died under the wrath of His Father. But look at the real meaning of God's wrath. And this was not new with Paul. It's all through the Old Testament, most dramatically in Hosea 11. Again, I wish we could read the whole chapter. Hosea 11 just verses 7 and 8: "My people are bent on turning away from me. . . . How, oh how can I give you up, Ephraim! How, oh how, can I hand you over Israel!" (*Phillips*)

Did Jesus understand that this is the experience He was passing through? Did Jesus know He was being given up as Hosea describes it? And Paul later in Romans 1 and 4? What did Jesus cry just before He died? "My God, my God, why are You beating Me up? Why are you torturing Me? Why are you killing Me?" No! "Why have you given Me up?" He knew.

We should have come earlier though to Gethsemane. For He began this awesome experience of demonstrating the truth about God's gracious but awful warning, that the wages of sin is death. We should have come to Gethsemane. And there Jesus fell to the ground dying. The angels were watching. Was God killing His Son in the Garden of Gethsemane, or did Jesus feel His unity with His Father breaking up? He began to feel the awesome loneliness of being given up. Had Jesus been left in the Garden of Gethsemane, and had He died there, could you say that the Father had killed the Son? Now had He been a mere creature you wouldn't know; but the angels knew who Jesus was. They knew that He was God. And they knew the meaning of His words. I should have included the verse in John 10:18. Jesus said, "No one takes My life from Me. No one can. I lay it down of Myself. I have the power to lay it down and I have the power to take it up." The angels knew that was the truth. And if Jesus died it was not because His Father had killed Him. The Father was giving Him up and both of them suffered and the Father was crying, "How can I give you up?" The Son who had assumed humanity was the One who died. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #8, "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>*

Lou: This individual last week wanted to ask this question: "Could the word 'wrath' have been translated differently, as in the three angels' messages? Could there have been a better word than 'wrath' used?"

Graham: Hmm. That's an interesting question. That's a limitation of human language. The word is *orge* which just **did** mean wrath, even fury. God is limited to our human language with all the hazards thereunto appertaining. And so we have to take the whole context to understand. The question there that appeals to me most is: "Why would God use the word at all, if He does not

wish to be understood as angry?” It would seem to me that He has left the impression that He is angry with us, and I would have to compare that with a father’s conversation with his little girl, say.

You’ve tried everything else under the sun to persuade her not to help herself to cookies at three in the afternoon, and it hasn’t worked. But finally you put this little youngster in front of you, and you know how it is with the little daughters; we both have them, and how cute and innocent they can look, even in the midst of iniquity. That’s true! And you say, “Look, if you do that one more time, Daddy’s going to be **very, very** cross with you.” Now, don’t smile when you say that, because she doesn’t know what “cross” means. She can’t look it up in *Webster’s*. She knows what “cross” means by the look on your face and the tone of your voice. So you feel like a bully. Here’s this little, tiny child with pigtails, and you’re saying, “Daddy will be very, very cross with you.”

And a little later, you thought you had impressed her adequately; you find her tiptoeing around the corner and reaching up and taking another cookie. And it’s so cute, you wish you had your camera. And then you suddenly realize, no, this is the time for some stern discipline. And you put this helpless little girl in front of you. She puts her hands behind her and assumes that little posture that little girls can, and you as a big brute say, “Daddy told you that if you did that one more time, he’d be very, very cross.” You have to look cross, sound cross. Don’t glance over to your wife, you know, or you’ll melt. You’ve got to go through with this thing.

I think it’s a matter of communication. And God has dealt with children. We’ve been the immature children. He even has to say, “Do that one more time and I will be furious with you! And I wish I didn’t have to say that one more time.” So I think our human experience helps us to understand the Scripture. Parents and teachers and little ones are in the best position to read the Bible sympathetically, it seems to me. {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>*

Now, immediately Paul begins to discuss God’s wrath, which may seem a surprise right here. He’s been talking about the good news, without interruption up to this point. Why do you think he switches to talk about God’s wrath? “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, against all ungodliness and wickedness of men, who by their wickedness suppress the truth.” Has he changed the subject, do you think? Has he changed from discussing the good news, the truth about God’s righteousness, that he is infinitely trustworthy, and this good news can lead us back to trust, and salvation, and healing. Has he changed the subject, when he begins to talk about God’s wrath?

Now this is much discussed, and Ellen White warns that a misunderstanding of God's wrath has turned many people against God. Many people hate God because they misunderstand his wrath. My personal conviction is that he hasn't changed the subject at all. One of the things that has raised the most serious questions about God's righteousness, is his attitude toward rebels, and toward sinners. The Bible describes this sometimes, as wrath. And the Devil has seized on this and tried to picture God as a fierce, arbitrary, unforgiving and severe God, who delights in punishing and tormenting and finally destroying his creatures. Why would I ever want him to come back the second time? How could I ever be comfortable with that kind of God for eternity? This is hardly good news. To me that is the Devil's picture of God.

But how would God like us to understand his wrath? I believe that it was essential right now for Paul, who's saying, "The good news is that God is infinitely righteous. He's not as he's been misrepresented by his enemies. For Paul to deal with the greatest problem of all, what has been God's attitude toward and treatment of those who have rebelled against him and distrusted him, and rejected the good news and the truth?"

Well, he goes on to explain. What do you think of his explanation? Is it good news or bad news? "For the wrath of God is revealed [in some way] from heaven against [notice] ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth." Now he doesn't mention any specific indulgence here, as so serious an offence that God reveals his wrath on such people. He speaks of their suppressing the truth.

Would you agree, that the most destructive thing a person could do in this universe, is to twist, and pervert, and suppress the good news, the truth about God? What was Satan's ultimately destructive sin, up in heaven? Was he caught attending some show he shouldn't have gone to? Was he drinking and smoking? Was he swearing? What was he doing? Was he committing adultery? What was this awful thing he did up in heaven that split the universe? Wasn't he just twisting the truth, and twisting it so little and so carefully, it appeared that even the loyal angels did not understand what he was doing. They stayed with God out of sheer loyalty, not because they understood his misrepresentations. Not until Calvary, were Satan's purposes finally unmasked. That's how carefully and subtly, he had twisted and perverted the truth. What truth? Was he leading the angels to worship on a different Sabbath? Was he leading them to eat things they shouldn't, to give up tithing? What was he leading them to do? The only change, as I understand it through the sixty-six books, Satan was seeking to change their understanding of the kind of person God was, and therefore what he wanted of his people. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 1, recorded September 1977, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

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

Further Study with Ellen White

God calls upon His creatures to turn their attention from the confusion and perplexity around them and admire His handiwork. As we study His works, angels from heaven will be by our side to enlighten our minds and guard them from Satan's deceptions. {CT 457.1}

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}

None need abandon themselves to discouragement and despair. Satan may come to you with the cruel suggestion, "Yours is a hopeless case. You are irredeemable." But there is hope for you in Christ. God does not bid us overcome in our own strength. He asks us to come close to His side. Whatever difficulties we labor under, which weigh down soul and body, He waits to make us free. {MH 249.2}

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. Looking upon them with hope, He inspired hope. Meeting them with confidence, He inspired trust. Revealing in Himself man's true ideal, He awakened, for its attainment, both desire and faith. In His presence souls despised and fallen realized that they still were men, and they longed to prove themselves worthy of His regard. In many a heart that seemed dead to all things holy, were awakened new impulses. To many a despairing one there opened the possibility of a new life. {Ed 80.1}

Christ bound them to His heart by the ties of love and devotion; and by the same ties He bound them to their fellow men. With Him love was life, and life was service. "Freely ye have received," He said, "freely give." Matthew 10:8. {Ed 80.2}

After a season the priests and rulers ventured back to the temple. When the panic had abated, they were seized with anxiety to know what would be the next movement of Jesus. They expected Him to take the throne of David. Quietly returning to the temple, they heard the voices of men, women, and children praising God. Upon entering, they stood transfixed before the wonderful scene. They saw the sick healed, the blind restored to sight, and deaf receive their hearing, and the crippled leap for joy. The children were foremost in the rejoicing. Jesus had healed their maladies; He had clasped them in His arms, received their kisses of grateful affection, and some of them had fallen asleep upon His breast as He was teaching the people. Now with glad voices the children sounded His praise. They repeated the hosannas of the day before, and waved palm branches triumphantly before the Saviour. The temple echoed and re-

echoed with their acclamations, “Blessed be He that cometh in the name of the Lord!” “Behold, thy King cometh unto thee; He is just, and having salvation!” Psalm 118:26; Zechariah 9:9. “Hosanna to the Son of David!” {DA 592.2}

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}

Even when he was cast out of heaven, Infinite Wisdom did not destroy Satan. Since only the service of love can be acceptable to God, the allegiance of His creatures must rest upon a conviction of His justice and benevolence. The inhabitants of heaven and of the worlds, being unprepared to comprehend the nature or consequences of sin, could not then have seen the justice of God in the destruction of Satan. Had he been immediately blotted out of existence, some would have served God from fear rather than from love. The influence of the deceiver would not have been fully destroyed, nor would the spirit of rebellion have been utterly eradicated. For the good of the entire universe through ceaseless ages, he must more fully develop his principles, that his charges against the divine government might be seen in their true light by all created beings, and that the justice and mercy of God and the immutability of His law might be forever placed beyond all question. {PP 42.3}

Satan’s rebellion was to be a lesson to the universe through all coming ages—a perpetual testimony to the nature of sin and its terrible results. The working out of Satan’s rule, its effects upon both men and angels, would show what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority. It would testify that with the existence of God’s government is bound up the well-being of all the creatures He has made. Thus the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard to all holy beings, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression, to save them from committing sin, and suffering its penalty. {PP 42.4}

Kind words simply spoken, little attentions simply bestowed, will sweep away the clouds of temptation which gather over the soul. The true expression of heaven-born sympathy has power to open the door of hearts that need the fragrance of Christlike words, and the simple, delicate touch of the spirit of Christ’s love. {MH 354.4}

Tender, compassionate, sympathetic, ever considerate of others, He represented the character of God, and was constantly engaged in service for God and man. {8T 286.4}

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}

God saw that a clearer revelation than nature was needed to portray both His personality and His character. He sent His Son into the world to manifest, so far as could be endured by human sight, the nature and the attributes of the invisible God. {MH 419.4}

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}

Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, a God of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. By the world's Redeemer the thick darkness with which Satan had enshrouded the throne of the Deity was swept away, and the Father was again manifest to men as the Light of life. {RH, February 15, 1912 par. 4}

Up to the time of Christ's first advent, men worshiped cruel, despotic gods. Even the Jewish mind was reached through fear, and not love. Christ's mission on the earth was to reveal to men that God was not a despot, but a heavenly Father, full of love and mercy for His children. {18MR 112.4}

Recommended Reading: "God's Justice and Love" – *The Signs of the Times*, August 27, 1902
<https://egwwritings.org>

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2025: *God's Love and Justice*
Lesson 6 "God's Love of Justice"

Read for this week's study

Psalm 78; Jonah 4:1–4; Matthew 10:8; Matthew 21:12, 13; Jeremiah 51:24, 25; Romans 12:17–21.

Memory Text

"But He, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and did not destroy them; Yes, many a time He turned His anger away, and did not stir up all His wrath" (Psalm 78:38, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Love and Justice
- III. God Is Entirely Good and Righteous
- IV. God's Changeless Character
- V. A Repenting God?
- VI. Hold Fast to Love and Justice
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. In the Ancient Near East, the "gods" of the nations were not only fickle, immoral, and unpredictable, but they also commended atrocities, like child sacrifice. And even then, the pagan masses could not count on their favor. In stark contrast to the gods of the ancient world, Yahweh is deeply concerned about evil, suffering, injustice, and oppression. He is a God who loves justice. (Sabbath Afternoon's Lesson)
2. According to the lesson, "Throughout Scripture, love and justice go together. True love requires justice, and true justice can be governed by and meted out only in love." Do you think this statement strikes the appropriate balance? Read Psalm 33:5, 85:10, 89:14, Isaiah 61:8 and Jeremiah 9:24. What do these texts have to say about God's concern for justice? Read Micah 6:8. What does God expect from those who

follow Him? Can the concept of justice be misused? Can you think of examples in today's world of perverted human justice? (Sunday's Lesson)

3. According to the lesson, God does not simply claim to love justice, but unwaveringly exemplifies that trait. God knows what is best for everyone, wants what is best for everyone, and continually works to bring about the best outcome for all involved. God only and always does what is loving, righteous and just. He never does any wrong. Does this summary statement express your own view of God? Read Deuteronomy 32:4, Psalm 9:7-8, 92:15, and 145:9-17. What do all these passages tell us about God? (Monday's Lesson)
4. Does God ever change? And if so, what in God changes and what does not? Read Malachi 3:6 and James 1:17. What do these texts imply about God's character? If a text says that God does not change, what kind of changelessness is the text talking about? Read 2 Timothy 2:13, Titus 1:2, and Hebrews 6:17-18. What do these texts teach about God? (Tuesday's Lesson)
5. Can God repent? If so, what would that mean? Read Exodus 32:7-14 and Jeremiah 18:1-10. What do you make of these descriptions of God's "relenting"? How do we reconcile these two texts with Numbers 23:19? (Wednesday's Lesson)
6. Read Deuteronomy 7:9 and Matthew 5:43-48. What do these verses tell us about God? Why does Jesus ask us to love our enemies? In what sense are we expected to be perfect? If God's justice is as perfect as His love, what would that be like? Revelation 15:3-4. Why do people marvel at God at the End? What does love and justice mean in our daily interaction with others? (Thursday's Lesson)
7. In your understanding, what is God's glory? (Friday's Lesson)
8. How important is it to recognize that God's glory is bound up with His goodness? (Friday's Lesson)
9. Have you ever questioned God's goodness? How did you work through that question for yourself? (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Is Jeremiah pleased that finally God's justice and wrath are being demonstrated? Do you remember Jonah? When God did not destroy Nineveh on time, was Jonah pleased? No, he wished they would be, because that would have proved that he was a good prophet. Was Jeremiah pleased that now they were getting what they so richly deserved? No, he was a much better friend of God than Jonah was. Jeremiah weeps because finally all that he had been predicting had come. How do you think Adventists should feel if finally in the end all the terrible things we have predicted will come? Will we say, "Well, that's good; God is keeping his promise, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,'" and I, in a sense of justice, will be deeply satisfied? Or would you weep? When the wicked die at the end of the millennium, how do you think God

will behave? Hosea 11, he'll cry? God is not willing that any should perish. Think of all the verses like that in the Bible. I think Jeremiah knew God very well. Think how they had treated him. Think how he had been abused, and no one would listen. And yet when the trouble came, he wept over them. I think it speaks very well of him. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Jeremiah & Lamentations*, recorded January 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/35MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/36MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

I have heard servants sometimes charge that friends lack a keen sense of justice. They do not leave room in their understanding of God for just and essential punishment. Their God is simply too weak and kind. "You have a marshmallow God," I heard one servant say.

The truth is precisely the opposite. Friend-believers have great concern about righteousness, which is the literal meaning of the Greek word often translated "justice." The English word "justice" comes from the Latin translation of the Greek. (Latin, "justitia")

Friends admire God's righteousness and would love to be like him. And to do what is right is, of course, to do what is just. But servants tend to think of justice in terms of retribution and punishment.

"I find comfort in the thought that some day God will bring retribution on those who have hurt me so much," I heard a believer say. "Now, I'm not asking for vengeance, you understand. I'm just asking for justice." {Maxwell, Graham. *Servants or Friends? Another Look at God*, 109-110. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.}

<https://speakingwell.wpengine.com/written-materials/servants-or-friends/servants-or-friends-chapter-8>

You remember in John 3 and John 12 Jesus says, "I don't condemn anybody. I didn't come to judge you. Oh there is something that will judge you in the last day. I won't be the one. The truth that I brought to you; it will judge you. If you like the truth, if you like the message about healing and salvation, and you trust me enough to accept it and follow it, all will be well. If you reject the light you reject the truth and the plan of healing. I won't condemn you then, but you will die, and I'll grieve as I give you up for the last time." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the

audio series Romans, chapter 14, recorded January 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/27MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/28MMROMANS66> Part 2)

But “under the demands of law.” That belongs to a very legal conception of what has gone wrong in the universe, which we discussed in our second conversation. That what has gone wrong is that we have “broken the rules,” and the law demands that God execute us for breaking the rules. And Jesus died so that somehow God could justly forgive us even though we have broken the rules.

I don’t think we have been able to make too much sense out of that. But it goes along with the other one, “satisfying justice.” Whose justice? I have friends who say, “If God does not give Idi Amin several days in the fire, I will not regard Him as a just God.” They have that feeling about the satisfaction of justice. And I think they really mean it, and I would respect them for that. I would love to relieve them of that burden. If I want to know why Jesus died, I should go right to the cross, and watch Him die, and hear His cry and see how the Father is involved, and then fit that back into Scripture. I don’t see Him fulfilling the requirements of a legal model. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #8, “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>

Further Study with Ellen White

With sorrow and indignation the angels heard the choice made by the people and the sentence passed upon Christ. But they could not interfere; for in the great controversy between good and evil, Satan must be given every opportunity to develop his true character, that the heavenly universe and the race for whom Christ was giving His life might see the righteousness of God’s purposes. Those under the control of the enemy must be allowed to reveal the principles of his government (MS 136, 1899). {5BC 1107.5}

The law of ten commandments is not to be looked upon as much from the prohibitory side, as from the mercy side. Its prohibitions are the sure guarantee of happiness in obedience. As received in Christ, it works in us the purity of character that will bring joy to us through eternal ages. To the obedient it is a wall of protection. We behold in it the goodness of God, who by revealing to men the immutable principles of righteousness, seeks to shield them from the evils that result from transgression. {1SM 235.1}

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character,

and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death. {1SM 235.2}

Every manifestation of creative power is an expression of infinite love. The sovereignty of God involves fullness of blessing to all created beings. {PP 33.2}

The history of the great conflict between good and evil, from the time it first began in heaven to the final overthrow of rebellion and the total eradication of sin, is also a demonstration of God's unchanging love. {PP 33.3}

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all created beings depended upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love—homage that springs from an intelligent appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced allegiance, and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service. {GC 493.2}

God's law is the law of love. He has surrounded you with beauty to teach you that you are not placed on earth merely to delve for self, to dig and build, to toil and spin, but to make life bright and joyous and beautiful with the love of Christ—like the flowers, to gladden other lives by the ministry of love. {MB 97.3}

Above the distractions of the earth He sits enthroned; all things are open to His divine survey; and from His great and calm eternity He orders that which His providence sees best. {MH 417.3}

Our God has heaven and earth at His command, and He knows just what we need. We can see only a little way before us; "but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Hebrews 4:13. Above the distractions of the earth He sits enthroned; all things are open to His divine survey; and from His great and calm eternity He orders that which His providence sees best. {8T 272.1}

Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father's notice. Satan's hatred against God leads him to delight in destroying even the dumb creatures. It is only through God's protecting care that the birds are preserved to gladden us with their songs of joy. But He does not forget even the sparrows. "Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows." Matthew 10:31. {8T 273.1}

All earthly powers are under the control of the Infinite One. To the mightiest ruler, to the most cruel oppressor, He says, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further." Job 38:11. God's power is constantly exercised to counteract the agencies of evil; He is ever at work among men, not for their destruction, but for their correction and preservation. {PP 694.1}

The God of heaven is constantly at work. It is by His power that vegetation is caused to flourish, that every leaf appears and every flower blooms. Every drop of rain or flake of snow, every

spire of grass, every leaf and flower and shrub, testifies of God. These little things so common around us teach the lesson that nothing is beneath the notice of the infinite God, nothing is too small for His attention. {8T 260.1}

God's dealings with rebellion will result in fully unmasking the work that has so long been carried on under cover. The results of Satan's rule, the fruits of setting aside the divine statutes, will be laid open to the view of all created intelligences. The law of God will stand fully vindicated. It will be seen that all the dealings of God have been conducted with reference to the eternal good of His people, and the good of all the worlds that He has created. Satan himself, in the presence of the witnessing universe, will confess the justice of God's government and the righteousness of His law. {PP 338.4}

While there are different degrees of development and different manifestations of His power to meet the wants of men in the different ages, God's work in all time is the same. The Teacher is the same. God's character and His plan are the same. With Him "is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." James 1:17. {Ed 50.3}

In the darkest days, when appearances seem most forbidding, fear not. Have faith in God. He knows your need. He has all power. His infinite love and compassion never weary. Fear not that He will fail of fulfilling His promise. He is eternal truth. Never will He change the covenant He has made with those who love Him. And He will bestow upon His faithful servants the measure of efficiency that their need demands. {PK 164.3}

By His life and His death, Christ has achieved even more than recovery from the ruin wrought through sin. It was Satan's purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. In taking our nature, the Saviour has bound Himself to humanity by a tie that is never to be broken. {DA 25.3}

We are not to think of God only as a judge and to forget Him as our loving Father. Nothing can do our souls greater harm than this, for our whole spiritual life will be molded by our conceptions of God's character. . . . {TMK 262.2}

The kingdom of God comes not with outward show. It comes through the gentleness of the inspiration of His word, through the inward working of His Spirit, the fellowship of the soul with Him who is its life. The greatest manifestation of its power is seen in human nature brought to the perfection of the character of Christ. {7T 143.2}

Recommended Reading: *Testimonies for the Church Volume Five*, Chapter 90 "The Character of God Revealed in Christ" page 737-742. <https://egwwritings.org>

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2025: *God's Love and Justice*
Lesson 7 "The Problem of Evil"

Read for this week's study

Job 30:26; Matthew 27:46; Job 38:1–12; Psalm 73; Genesis 2:16, 17; Revelation 21:3, 4.

Memory Text

" 'And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away' " (Revelation 21:4, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. "How Long, O Lord?"
- III. "There Are Many Things We Do Not Know"
- IV. The Skeptical Theist
- V. The Free Will Defense
- VI. Love and Evil?
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. This week's lesson summarizes the challenging topic in these words: "If God is all-good and all-powerful, why is there so much evil in the world?" Ellen White comments: "To many minds the origin of sin and the reason for its existence are a source of great perplexity." GC 492. The author of the lesson asserts in response, "The God of the Bible is entirely good, and we can trust Him—even despite the evil that so infects our fallen world." Do you agree with this claim? What would you add to make it more convincing to atheists and agnostics? (Sabbath Afternoon's Lesson)
2. While the above challenge is very current, the Bible is very familiar with the problem of evil. Read Job 30:26, Psalm 10:1, Isaiah 12:1, Jeremiah 13:22, and Malachi 2:17. How would you answer some of the questions raised in these texts, such as "*Why do the wicked prosper? Why do the righteous suffer so much? Where is God when evil*

- happens? Why does God seem to keep His distance when trouble comes?"* (Sunday's Lesson)
3. Read Matthew 27:46. How do you understand Jesus' words here? How do you think God is and was impacted by becoming flesh? How did Jesus deal with this spiritual crisis (Luke 23:46)? (Sunday's Lesson)
 4. Read Job 38:1-12? How does this answer Job's questions? What is the point of God's bombardment of questions? Why doesn't God tell Job about His encounter with Satan in the heavenly council? What is the message for us? Read Job 42:3. What does Job's response tell us about our own understanding of God's ways? Why is it so difficult for many people to live with unanswered questions? (Monday's Lesson)
 5. Read Isaiah 55:8-9. We cannot even imagine the complexities of God's plan for history. Given this, why should we expect to be in a position to know just what God's reasons are for what He does in specific circumstances? The lesson author advocates something he calls "skeptical theism". What do you think he means by that? (Tuesday's Lesson)
 6. A strong parallel to the book of Job is Psalm 73. How does the Psalmist talk about the evil and injustice around him? What does he find out that changes his mind? How does the Adventist view of the sanctuary help? (Tuesday's Lesson)
 7. One explanation for the problem of evil is the "free will defense". God is not to blame for evil because evil is caused by the free will of God's creatures. But if free will is the cause of all the evil in the world, why did God create it? Read Genesis 2:16-17. How do these verses describe the freedom God granted to Adam and Eve? Why do you think so many people teach that human beings have no real freedom, that all our actions are programmed by genetics and past behaviors? (Wednesday's Lesson)
 8. Read Deuteronomy 7:12-13, Joshua 24:14-15, and Psalm 81:11-14. What do these verses tell us about human free will? Would you trade in your dog for a robot dog that doesn't need to be fed or watered, doesn't make messes, and is completely obedient? Why or why not? What does that tell us about God's decisions in creation? (Wednesday's Lesson)
 9. So, let's summarize: Why did God grant His creatures free will when there was so much risk involved? If love cannot be commanded, how come the Bible has so many commandments? Read Romans 8:18 and Revelation 21:3-4. How do these texts deal with the problem of evil? (Thursday's Lesson)
 10. Why was Satan's rebellion not dealt with at the time that he rebelled. Wouldn't that have saved a lot of heartache for many centuries? (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Lou: One of our congregation went out of her way to type up the question that she has had for a number of years. She says this: "Can you give a reason why a loving God would allow a good Christian woman to be murdered? She was a good help in her small church. She was the treasurer of her church. The last Sabbath of her life they had a consecration service at the church. She dedicated herself anew to God, and she was murdered that afternoon at her house. She was the treasurer, and she had money at her house, and apparently that was the reason that someone broke in and she was killed." And this individual says, "The reason I know about this is that she was my sister."

Graham: Again, happy the person who knows God very well at a time like this. It doesn't mean that we would know the answer. I don't think Job ever found out why those things happened to him that did. But all he knew was that those theologians were wrong. And those theologians came to Job and said, "You cannot be asking God about this." I mean, Job was crying to God with intense feeling and saying, "God, how can You do this to me? I've been Your good friend all this time, and now You won't even speak to me. You won't explain this." And the theologians were going on with their very legalistic explanation. Finally he said, "I wish you brethren would be quiet. I appreciate your coming, but you're not helping me at all." None of their explanations were good. He said, "If only I could talk to God, I'm sure I could clear this up." And eventually the boldness of his inquires of God reached such a level that those three men were worried for their friend that God would surely zap him on the spot for daring to inquire. And God broke in and said, "Job, you have said of Me what is right."

So if a person is wrestling with this, we may not find out. I'm sure we won't find out the answer to every such absolutely unfair thing that happens on this planet during this emergency. But some things we know for sure; the kind of person God is, and that He welcomes us to lodge our inquires with feeling, and hopefully we will trust Him enough to wait for the answer.

Lou: Acquainted well enough to trust when we don't know how to answer all these things.

Graham: That's the thing. And I'd like to think that that sister was such a saint; don't worry about her. She will arise in the resurrection and say, "What am I doing here?" She will have no complaints. She'll be looking for her sister. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #6 with Lou Venden, "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>*

Lou: I gather that Job is a favorite character of yours.

Graham: Yes.

Lou: You refer to him so frequently. And yet the question comes up; why would you use Job as a model, since at the end of the book he talks about repenting?

Graham: That's right.

Lou: And repenting sounds like somebody who has been wrong and is saying, "I'm sorry. I'm a sinner." How could Job be a good model when he is repenting?

Graham: A lot of folk, I think, misunderstand Job by closing with that statement. Job says, "I repent." And they say, "The friends were right; they said he should repent." See, many people read Job and side with the friends. Those who take, if I may say, the narrow, legal view are more comfortable with the friends. But they fail to read on. After Job says, "I repent," God says, "Don't. You have done a beautiful job. You have said of Me what is right and those theologians have not."

So then I go back and ask, "Why did Job say 'I repent'?"

"God," he says, "I have spoken of many things beyond my understanding. I wouldn't say it the same way next time."

God says, "Look, We're sympathetic up here. You've lost your family, lost your estate, lost your reputation and you are sitting on a dung heap with your clothes torn and your body covered with boils. We didn't expect eloquent speeches from you. We think under the circumstances you did magnificently, Job! We couldn't be more proud of you. You have said of Me what is right."

But Job says—wouldn't you say at the end of the best sermon you ever preached, "I'm sorry I didn't do a better job"? I would.

Lou: Yes.

Graham: Well, I think that's all Job said. "I wish I had done a better job." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #18 with Lou Venden, "God Waits for His Children to Grow Up" recorded June 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/18MMCAG>*

Lou: Well, in this connection someone has already asked: “How can you really have a conversation about God? After all, how can we really know God? Take Paul’s statement in Romans 3:11: ‘How unsearchable are His judgments. How inscrutable are His ways,’ the *Revised Standard Version* translates it. If that’s the case, who are we to question? God is sovereign, so why should we be sitting here having conversations about God?”

Graham: Ah, who are we to question the inscrutable ways of God? And that’s in Romans. But I notice in Romans 1, Paul says “You’re without excuse if you don’t know God.” So on the principle of taking the Bible as a whole, and not “here a little and there a little,” I would have to put Romans 1 alongside Romans 9 and the other places.

I think when he’s saying God’s thoughts are so far above ours, that is a reverent recognition that God is infinite. Think of all He knows! We’ll never fully understand God; we’re mere creatures. And at times we need to be reminded of His infinite superiority. But then it’s marvelous that the Infinite One would want to be known.

All through the Bible He says, “Israel is destroyed because they don’t know Me.” And “I’ve come to this earth that you may know Me.” So it’s pretty clear God wants to be known. But we shouldn’t pretend we’re gods who could know everything that He knows.

Lou: So we ought not to use that idea of God’s sovereignty, and so on, as an excuse to not think about Him.

Graham: Yes, and I think where that really comes from is Romans 9, where you have the verse: “Who are you to question God? Who are you to answer back to God?” And Romans 9, I believe, has been misunderstood by some very saintly people including a notable theologian in Reformation days. One needs to really put Romans 9 in the whole context of Romans — certainly in the context of chapters 1 through 9.

In Romans 1-8, Paul has been saying to his audience (which is made up of both Jews and Gentiles), “I have great good news for you. God will save all who trust Him—whether you are Jew or Gentile, bond or free, male or female. He’ll save everybody who trusts Him.” And as Paul was developing chapters 1-8, he could sense that certain members of His audience (descended from Abraham) were not taking this too kindly, because they thought that they had a **special relationship** with God. You know, God almost had made a deal with their ancestor. And that’s why they were so concerned with their genealogy and other matters.

And when Paul got to the end of chapter 8, he sensed that some in his audience were quite offended. So he turned to them and said, “I sense that some of you don’t like what I’ve said, that God is the kind of God that would save all who trust Him. I want to know (you people who object to this), are you suggesting you would run the universe better than God? Are you saying God cannot save all who trust Him? Let me tell you something: God is going to run this universe precisely as He wishes. Just as the potter takes a lump of clay and makes of the same clay a

vessel for honor, and a vessel for dishonor, so God has the right—if He will exercise it—to run His universe any way He likes!” {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God, #1 with Lou Venden, “The Conflict in God’s Family”* January 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/1MMCAG>

Lou: A question has come up that takes us back to the perspective that we are studying—and that we’re looking at this whole thing from—the great controversy perspective: war in heaven. “Why doesn’t God take more firm control of the universe—even if that would mean a bit of a loss of freedom? It would seem that the price of freedom is almost too much? With all the pain and the tragedy that happens in our world, couldn’t God have done a better job of protecting us from the consequences of freedom?”

Graham: I remember years ago a lady came up after a meeting, and she said, “I’d be willing to give up some of my freedom to have peace and security once again; to be safe. I wish God had not given me quite so much freedom.” Like today, to be safe on the plane from terrorists we’re willing to stand in line and go through those electronic devices.

Lou: And feel rather good about it. I want them to check rather carefully.

Graham: See, so we would rather give up our freedom in order to be safe. But on a universe-wide scale, to say to God, “I know you’ve paid a great price for freedom, but I’d rather not be that free”?

And God says, “Well, I’m sorry. That’s one thing that is not negotiable. I will keep my universe free, or your trust and love will mean nothing. To do what you’re saying; yes, I could save everybody—for example, if I turn my universe into a penitentiary.” See, if He would lock us up in solitary confinement so we couldn’t hurt each other, He could save everybody. But God says, “I refuse to be a prison warden for the rest of eternity. Forgive me, I would rather die than give up freedom.” And He has already died to show what freedom means to Him. I cannot ever say “God, take some freedom back.” {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God, #4 with Lou Venden, “God’s Way of Restoring Trust”* 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>

The most important of all Seventh-day Adventist beliefs is the one that brings joy and assurance to Christians everywhere, the truth about our heavenly Father that was confirmed at such cost by the life and the death of His Son.

We believe that God is not the kind of person His enemies have made Him out to be—arbitrary, unforgiving and severe. We accept the testimony of Jesus when He said, “If you have seen Me you have seen the Father.” God is just as loving and trustworthy as His Son, just as willing to forgive and heal. Though infinite in majesty and power, our Creator is an equally gracious Person who values nothing higher than the freedom, the dignity, and the individuality of His intelligent creatures—that their love, their faith, their willingness to listen and obey may be freely given.

This is the truth revealed through all the books of Scripture. This is the everlasting good news that wins the trust and admiration of God’s loyal children throughout the universe.

And like Abraham and Moses, the ones God spoke of as His trusted friends, we want to speak well and truly of our Heavenly Father. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from written material, “What We Believe”.} <https://pineknoll.org/>

Further Study with Ellen White

Opposition to the law of God had its beginning in the courts of heaven, with Lucifer, the covering cherub. Satan determined to be first in the councils of heaven, and equal with God. He began his work of rebellion with the angels under his command, seeking to diffuse among them the spirit of discontent. And he worked in so deceptive a way that many of the angels were won to his allegiance before his purposes were fully known. Even the loyal angels could not fully discern his character, nor see to what his work was leading. When Satan had succeeded in winning many angels to his side, he took his cause to God, representing that it was the desire of the angels that he occupy the position that Christ held. {7BC 972.6}

The evil continued to work until the spirit of disaffection ripened into active revolt. Then there was war in heaven, and Satan, with all who sympathized with him, was cast out. Satan had warred for the mastery in heaven, and had lost the battle. God could no longer trust him with honor and supremacy, and these, with the part he had taken in the government of heaven, were taken from him. {7BC 973.1}

So long as all created beings acknowledged the allegiance of love, there was perfect harmony throughout the universe of God. It was the joy of the heavenly host to fulfill the purpose of their Creator. They delighted in reflecting His glory and showing forth His praise. And while love to God was supreme, love for one another was confiding and unselfish. There was no note of discord to mar the celestial harmonies. But a change came over this happy state. There was one who perverted the freedom that God had granted to His creatures. Sin originated with him who, next to Christ, had been most honored of God and was highest in power and glory among the inhabitants of heaven. Lucifer, “son of the morning,” was first of the covering cherubs, holy

and undefiled. He stood in the presence of the great Creator, and the ceaseless beams of glory enshrouding the eternal God rested upon him. . . . {CTr 9.2}

Little by little Lucifer came to indulge the desire for self-exaltation. . . . Though all his glory was from God, this mighty angel came to regard it as pertaining to himself. Not content with his position, though honored above the heavenly host, he ventured to covet homage due alone to the Creator. Instead of seeking to make God supreme in the affections and allegiance of all created beings, it was his endeavor to secure their service and loyalty to himself. And coveting the glory with which the infinite Father had invested His Son, this prince of angels aspired to power that was the prerogative of Christ alone. . . . {CTr 9.3}

To dispute the supremacy of the Son of God, thus impeaching the wisdom and love of the Creator, had become the purpose of this prince of angels. To this object he was about to bend the energies of that master mind, which, next to Christ's, was first among the hosts of God. But He who would have the will of all His creatures free left none unguarded to the bewildering sophistry by which rebellion would seek to justify itself. Before the great contest should open, all were to have a clear presentation of His will, whose wisdom and goodness were the spring of all their joy.—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 35-37. {CTr 9.4}

Nothing is more plainly taught in Scripture than that God was in no wise responsible for the entrance of sin; that there was no arbitrary withdrawal of divine grace, no deficiency in the divine government, that gave occasion for the uprising of rebellion. Sin is an intruder, for whose presence no reason can be given. It is mysterious, unaccountable; to excuse it, is to defend it. Could excuse for it be found, or cause shown for its existence, it would cease to be sin. {FLB 66.3}

The underworking [of Satan] was so subtle that it could not be made to appear before the heavenly host as the thing that it really was This condition of things had existed a long period of time before Satan was unmasked.—4BC 1143. {TA 40.1}

God in His great mercy bore long with Lucifer. He was not immediately degraded from his exalted station when he first indulged the spirit of discontent, not even when he began to present his false claims before the loyal angels. Long was he retained in heaven. Again and again he was offered pardon on condition of repentance and submission.—GC 495, 496. {TA 40.2}

In the scenes that transpired in the judgment hall and at Calvary, we see what the human heart is capable of when under the influence of Satan. Christ submitted to crucifixion, although the heavenly host could have delivered Him. The angels suffered with Christ. God Himself was crucified with Christ; for Christ was one with the Father. Those who reject Christ, those who will not have this man to rule over them, choose to place themselves under the rule of Satan, to do

his work as his bondslaves. Yet for them Christ yielded up His life on Calvary (BE Aug. 6, 1894). {5BC 1108.5}

The spotless Son of God took upon Himself the burden of sin. He who had been one with God, felt in His soul the awful separation that sin makes between God and man. This wrung from His lips the anguished cry, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” Matthew 27:46. It was the burden of sin, the sense of its terrible enormity, of its separation of the soul from God—it was this that broke the heart of the Son of God. {SC 13.1}

Christ yielded not in the least degree to the torturing foe, even in His bitterest anguish. Legions of evil angels were all about the Son of God, yet the holy angels were bidden not to break their ranks and engage in conflict with the taunting, reviling foe. Heavenly angels were not permitted to minister unto the anguished spirit of the Son of God. It was in this terrible hour of darkness, the face of His Father hidden, legions of evil angels enshrouding Him, the sins of the world upon Him, that the words were wrenched from His lips: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” . . . {LHU 43.5}

So keenly did He feel the sinfulness of sin that for a moment the cup trembled in His hand, and all heaven heard the agonizing cry, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me” (Matthew 26:39). “Nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). The omnipotent God suffered with His Son. {UL 223.3}

Press close to Jesus, and place your hand in His, and He will firmly hold your hand, and never let go of the soul who maintains his faith in Him. . . . {UL 42.3}

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}

The character of God as revealed by Christ invites our faith and love, for we have a Father whose mercy and compassion fail not. At every step of our journey heavenward He will be with us to guide in every perplexity, to give us help in every temptation. {HP 16.4}

From the opening of the great controversy it has been Satan’s purpose to misrepresent God’s character and to excite rebellion against His law, and this work appears to be crowned with success. The multitudes give ear to Satan’s deceptions and set themselves against God. But amid the working of evil, God’s purposes move steadily forward to their accomplishment; to all created intelligences He is making manifest His justice and benevolence. {PP 338.2}

So long as the people of God preserve their fidelity to Him, so long as they cling by living faith to Jesus, they are under the protection of heavenly angels, and Satan will not be permitted to exercise his hellish arts upon them to their destruction. {OHC 92.5}

It is the greatest joy of the angels of heaven to spread the shield of their tender love over souls who turn to God. {OHC 92.6}

Satanic agencies are ever warring for the mastery over human minds. But the angels of God are constantly at work, strengthening the weak hands and confirming the feeble knees of all who call upon God for help. The promise to every child of God is, “Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” (Matthew 7:7). The Lord is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children. {UL 68.3}

In the councils of heaven it was decided that principles must be acted upon that would not at once destroy Satan’s power, for it was His [God’s] purpose to place things upon an eternal basis of security. . . . God’s order must be contrasted with the new order after Satan’s devising. The corrupting principles of Satan’s rule must be revealed. The principles of righteousness expressed in God’s law must be demonstrated as unchangeable, eternal, perfect.—*Manuscript 57, 1896 (Manuscript Releases, vol. 18, pp. 360, 361).* {CTr 13.6}

Satan led men to conceive of God as a being whose chief attribute is stern justice—one who is a severe judge, a harsh, exacting creditor. He pictured the Creator as a being who is watching with jealous eye to discern the errors and mistakes of men that He may visit judgments upon them. It was to remove this dark shadow, by revealing to the world the infinite love of God, that Jesus came to live among men.—SC 11 (1892). {1MCP 250.1}

The knowledge which God did not want our first parents to have was a knowledge of guilt. And when they accepted the assertions of Satan, which were false, disobedience and transgression were introduced into our world. This disobedience to God’s express command, this belief of Satan’s lie, opened the floodgates of woe upon the world. Satan has continued the work begun in the Garden of Eden. He has worked vigilantly, that man might accept his assertions as proof against God. He has worked against Christ in His efforts to restore the image of God in man, and imprint in his soul the similitude of God. {1SM 214.2}

Satan was found in only one tree to endanger the safety of Adam and Eve. He planned to attract the holy pair to that one tree, that they might do the very thing God had said they should not do—eat of the tree of knowledge. . . . The subtlety of Satan will not decrease, but the wisdom given to men through a living connection with the Source of all light and divine knowledge will be proportionate to his arts and wiles. {5T 504.1}

God had power to hold Adam back from touching the forbidden fruit; but had He done this, Satan would have been sustained in his charge against God's arbitrary rule. Man would not have been a free moral agent, but a mere machine (RH June 4, 1901). {1BC 1084.2}

Christ does not drive but draws men unto Him. The only compulsion which He employs is the constraint of love. {MB 127.1}

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}

The work of redemption will be complete. In the place where sin abounded, God's grace much more abounds. The earth itself, the very field that Satan claims as his, is to be not only ransomed but exalted. Our little world, under the curse of sin the one dark blot in His glorious creation, will be honored above all other worlds in the universe of God. Here, where the Son of God tabernacled in humanity; where the King of glory lived and suffered and died,—here, when He shall make all things new, the tabernacle of God shall be with men, "and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God." And through endless ages as the redeemed walk in the light of the Lord, they will praise Him for His unspeakable Gift,— *Immanuel, "God with us."* {DA 26.3}

Our lifework here is a preparation for the life eternal. The education begun here will not be completed in this life; it will be going forward through all eternity—ever progressing, never completed. {Mar 363.3}

Every faculty will be developed, every capacity increased. The acquirement of knowledge will not weary the mind or exhaust the energies. There the grandest enterprises may be carried forward, the loftiest aspirations reached, the highest ambitions realized; and still there will arise new heights to surmount, new wonders to admire, new truths to comprehend, fresh objects to call forth the powers of mind and soul and body. {Mar 363.6}

The resurrection of Jesus was a sample of the final resurrection of all who sleep in Him. The risen body of the Saviour, His deportment, the accents of His speech, were all familiar to His followers. In like manner will those who sleep in Jesus rise again. We shall know our friends even as the disciples knew Jesus. Though they may have been deformed, diseased, or disfigured in this mortal life, yet in their resurrected and glorified body their individual identity will be perfectly preserved, and we shall recognize, in the face radiant with the light shining from the face of Jesus, the lineaments of those we love. {TMK 362.3}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2025: *God's Love and Justice*
Lesson 8 "Free Will, Love, and Divine Providence"

Read for this week's study

Luke 13:34; Jeremiah 32:17–20; Hebrews 1:3; Deuteronomy 6:4, 5; Ephesians 1:9–11; John 16:33.

Memory Text

“ ‘These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world’ ” (John 16:33, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Our Sovereign God
- III. *Pantokrator*
- IV. To Love God
- V. God's Ideal and Remedial Wills
- VI. Christ Has Overcome the World
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “God's love as depicted in Scripture is far superior to the ideas that pass for “love” in much of our world today. In the coming weeks, we will look more closely at some of the most prominent and beautiful aspects of God's love that are revealed in the Bible. [...] The entire story of Scripture is about what God has done and is doing to restore love to every corner and crevice of the universe. This and much more is the topic of this quarter's lessons.” (Introduction to the quarter)
2. “Providence is the term used to describe God's action in the world. How we think about God's providence makes a huge difference in how we relate to God, how we relate to others, and how we think about the problem of evil.” (Sabbath afternoon)
3. The word “providence” comes from the Latin *providentia* meaning foresight or prudence, and is based on *pro-* “ahead” and *videre* “to see”. What are the consequences if people believe that “nothing happens by chance; everything that happens is God's command or will”?

4. “People sometimes assume that everything that occurs happens just as God wants it to. Whatever happens in the world is precisely as God wanted to have happen. After all, God is almighty. How, then, could anything occur that God does not want to occur?” (Sunday’s lesson) What kind of deep problems, especially in the context of evil, such a theology create?
5. “While many people believe that God must always get what He wants, the Bible tells a quite different story. Over and over, Scripture depicts God as experiencing unfulfilled desires.” (Sunday’s lesson) See Psalm 81:11–14; Isaiah 30:15, 18; Isaiah 66:4; and Luke 13:34. What is the lesson for us that God is a supremely happy being although he has unfulfilled desires? What does a happy and fulfilled life look like for us?
6. What do we mean when we say God is “all-powerful”? (Monday’s lesson) Does it mean that God can do anything? How do you understand the words of Jesus, “With God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:26)? Was it possible for Jesus to come down from the cross (=save himself) and to save others?
7. We are to love God, but God cannot force anyone to love Him, because if love is forced, it is no longer love (Matthew 22:37; Deuteronomy 6:4, 5) (Tuesday’s lesson) Therefore, it is impossible to force someone freely do something. Why is this important?
8. A lot of misunderstanding of God’s character was caused by the word “predestine,” which in Greek simply means, “to decide beforehand”. The Scripture teaches that God “can decide something beforehand in a way that takes into account the free decisions of others” (Ephesians 1:9-11) (Wednesday lesson)
9. To do this, we need to make a distinction “between what we might call God’s ‘ideal will’ and God’s ‘remedial will.’ God’s ‘ideal will’ is what God actually prefers to occur and which would occur if everyone always did exactly what God desires. God’s ‘remedial will,’ on the other hand, is God’s will that has already taken into account every other factor, including the free decisions of creatures, which sometimes depart from what God prefers.” (Wednesday lesson) How does this help us deal with difficult situations in our lives?
10. If God does not unilaterally control everything that happens, this requires (at least) a two-dimensional view of God’s providence. Some things in this world may be caused by God, but other occurrences are the result of the free decisions of creatures (humans and demons). (Thursday’s lesson) How does this help us to deal with the randomness of the universe? How does it help in difficult situations, when people have to struggle not only with the circumstances, but also the consequences of their bad theology and/or lack of faith? In what sense do Jesus’ words from John 16:33 bring great comfort?
11. Are there ways we can help others understand this when they are going through difficult periods of life? What can we do to help others build a better model that empowers them to cope with reality even before evil strikes? How do we become agents of compassion and empathy within our circle of influence?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Lou: There are two here that we just must not pass up any longer, because they speak so poignantly of where many of us hurt and wonder. “The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life.’ I have a cousin, age thirty years, who has a malignant brain tumor; and he is awaiting death. There is nothing medically that can be done for him. Everyone tells him, ‘God’s will be done.’ Now the question is, does God will for one to die?” This person just can’t stand that, and they go on to say, “I don’t think so. I believe that sin has contaminated the world and as a result we have disease and death. So please elaborate on this concept, and what’s more, what do you say to such a person? How do you talk about God’s will?”

Graham: That’s too sad to give a snap answer to. I think at times like that we draw from everything we’ve learned and experienced through the years about God in our study of Scripture, and one needs to fall back on the things we are sure of. What God wants for us: He wants us to be well. He created us perfect. Disorder, disease—these are not of His doing. These are all part of being caught up in the consequences of this revolt. But then we do know that God could heal, that’s true. And if He doesn’t seem to be doing it at this time, we might wonder why. But if you should say, “God, I wonder why,” would He be offended? Not for a moment! On the authority of so many cases in Scripture.

But that God would be willing that this person should die? Is He a destructive God? An experience like this really tests the kind of person we believe our God to be. But even if one is not too clear on this, if one has learned that prayer is conversation with God as with a friend, then the one who is wondering would feel perfectly free to kneel down and really talk to God about this, and say, “God, this is not clear. It looks as if You are like this, and that’s the devil’s picture.” Or, “It looks as if You are like that. You couldn’t be, could You? Or are You?” He would not be offended. He honors our questions. And there is great peace that comes from realizing we have a God toward whom we can direct such questions, even in agony at the time. So I think the answer is a long one in a way. Learn the good news about God. But one thing sure, if the Lord were here, how sympathetic He would be! But He would want to clear up the thought, “I’m doing this to you.” {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #6 with Lou Venden, “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>

Lou: We must move on to some other very important questions in this same connection. This phrase, “Thy will be done.” If we really want and mean for God’s will to be done, why ask for anything? Wouldn’t it be more trusting really to just say, “God, do what You’re going to do”?

Graham: Ah, yes. So many things come to mind, but especially watching Jesus do it. He really was an example in almost every important area. He would say to His Father, "Thy will be done; nevertheless, . . ." I think that if prayer is conversation with God, we will be honest with Him. "I do not relish what's coming. I want to understand this, and I want You to do things Your way. I want to defer to Your wisdom. Nevertheless, may I talk to You about this? May I tell You honestly I want this, I want that, I shrink from this, I shrink from that?" That's real, honest conversation. But behind it all, we are going to defer to God's wisdom; of course. I think it underscores the idea that it's genuine, honest conversation.

Lou: But to turn that the other way, there are those who express real concern that when you are praying, for example, for someone who is very seriously ill, a loved one that you very much want to be healed, that it's somehow an expression of a lack of faith, to, after you've said, "Lord, please heal my mother or my child," then to say, "Nevertheless, Thy will be done." Wouldn't it be more trusting to just say, "Lord, heal. I believe You are going to"?

Graham: Because we want to tell Him what to do. It would seem to me, it shows much more trust to say, "God, You know best, and You do that for this person."

Lou: You're saying then that it's perfectly all right to express my will very forcibly, I mean, to tell God exactly what I want.

Graham: Or I'm not telling the truth. I want this person to be well. This is my mother. Please make her well.

Lou: But then is that a lack of trust?

Graham: "Thy will be done" is much more trust.

Lou: Not a lack of faith.

Graham: No, and I love it when the person you are praying for says, "Look, you don't have to dictate to God. He doesn't have to heal me for me to trust Him. I'm willing for Him to do whatever is best, and you may pray that way." And you know from experience, isn't it easy to pray around the bedside when the patient, someone you love especially, trusts God like that. I've had many, many experiences like that. It is very moving. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #15 with Lou Venden, "Talking to God as a Friend" 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/15MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

It is Satan's settled purpose to cut off all communications between God and His people, that he may practice his deceptive wiles with no voice to warn them of their danger. If he can lead men to distrust the messenger, or to attach no sacredness to the message, he knows that they will feel under no obligation to heed the word of God to them. And when light is set aside as darkness, Satan has things his own way. {LHU 361.2}

If you ask the help of God, you will not ask in vain. The Lord is at work in many ways to win your hearty confidence. In nothing does He take more delight than to have you unburden, come to Him for light and strength, and He has promised that you shall find rest to your soul. If you will find heart and voice to pray, He will be sure to hear, and an arm will be reached down to save you. There is a God that hears prayer, and when all other resources fail, He is your refuge, a very present help in time of trouble. . . . {TDG 184.4}

Christ, the Light of the world, veiled the dazzling splendor of His divinity and came to live as a man among men, that they might, without being consumed, become acquainted with their Creator. Since sin brought separation between man and his Maker, no man has seen God at any time, except as He is manifested through Christ. {MH 419.1}

Since God is infinite, and in Him are all the treasures of wisdom, we may to all eternity be ever searching, ever learning, yet never exhaust the riches of His wisdom, His goodness, or His power. {Ed 172.2}

In the annals of human history, the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as if dependent on the will and prowess of man; the shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, above, behind, and through all the play and counterplay of human interest and power and passions, the agencies of the All-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will. . . . {CC 250.3}

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}

There is by our side a witness, a heavenly messenger, who will lift up for us a standard against the enemy. He will shut us in with the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Beyond this Satan cannot penetrate. He cannot pass this shield of holy light. {COL 171.3}

But the power of God is still exercised in upholding the objects of His creation. It is not because the mechanism once set in motion continues to act by its own inherent energy that the pulse beats, and breath follows breath. Every breath, every pulsation of the heart, is an evidence of

the care of Him in whom we live and move and have our being. From the smallest insect to man, every living creature is daily dependent upon His providence. . . . {Ed 130.5}

The light shining from the throne of God upon the cross of Calvary forever puts an end to man-made separations between class and race. Men of every class become members of one family, children of the heavenly King, not through earthly power, but through the love of God who gave Jesus to a life of poverty, affliction, and humiliation, to a death of shame and agony, that He might bring many sons and daughters unto glory. {1SM 258.4}

All heaven has been looking on with interest, and ready to do whatever God might appoint, to help fallen men and women to become what God would have them. God will work for His children, but not without their cooperation. They must have indomitable energy, and a constant desire to become all that it is possible for them to be. {RC 296.3}

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}

God destroys no one. The sinner destroys himself by his own impenitence. When a person once neglects to heed the invitations, reproofs, and warnings of the Spirit of God, his conscience becomes seared, and the next time he is admonished, it will be more difficult to yield obedience than before. And thus with every repetition. Conscience is the voice of God, heard amid the conflict of human passions; when it is resisted, the Spirit of God is grieved. {5T 120.1}

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. {MB 93.1}

As the will of man co-operates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings. {COL 333.1}

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. {AG 130.2}

God's work is the same in all time, although there are different degrees of development and different manifestations of His power, to meet the wants of men in the different ages.

Beginning with the first gospel promise, and coming down through the patriarchal and Jewish ages, and even to the present time, there has been a gradual unfolding of the purposes of God in the plan of redemption. . . . He who proclaimed the law from Sinai, and delivered to Moses the precepts of the ritual law, is the same that spoke the sermon on the mount. . . . The Teacher is the same in both dispensations. God's claims are the same. The principles of His government are the same. {AG 130.4}

God never compels the obedience of man. He leaves all free to choose whom they will serve. {PK 510.4}

In matters of conscience the soul must be left untrammelled. No one is to control another's mind, to judge for another, or to prescribe his duty. God gives to every soul freedom to think, and to follow his own convictions. . . . In Christ's kingdom there is no lordly oppression, no compulsion of manner. The angels of heaven do not come to the earth to rule, and to exact homage, but as messengers of mercy, to co-operate with men in uplifting humanity. {DA 550.6}

God does not control our minds without our consent; but every man is free to choose what power he will have to rule over him. None have fallen so low, none are so vile, but that they may find deliverance in Christ. The demoniac, in place of prayer, could utter only the words of Satan; yet the heart's unspoken appeal was heard. No cry from a soul in need, though it fail of utterance in words, will be unheeded. Those who consent to enter into covenant with God are not left to the power of Satan or to the infirmity of their own nature. {MH 93.1}

God does not force anyone. He leaves all free to choose. But He says, "By their fruits ye shall know them." {CTr 14.6}

Our will is not to be forced into co-operation with divine agencies, but it must be voluntarily submitted. Were it possible to force upon you with a hundredfold greater intensity the influence of the Spirit of God, it would not make you a Christian, a fit subject for heaven. {MB 142.1}

It is not the plan of God to compel men to yield their wicked unbelief. Before them are light and darkness, truth and error. It is for them to decide which to accept. The human mind is endowed with power to discriminate between right and wrong. God designs that men shall not decide from impulse, but from weight of evidence, carefully comparing scripture with scripture (*Redemption: or the Miracles of Christ*, pp. 112, 113). {1BC 1120.5}

Christ is ready to set us free from sin, but He does not force the will, and if by persistent transgression the will itself is wholly bent on evil, and we do not *desire* to be set free, if we *will* not accept His grace, what more can He do? We have destroyed ourselves by our determined rejection of His love. "Behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation." "Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts" (2 Corinthians 6:2; Hebrews 3:7, 8) {HP 346.5}

All who consecrate soul, body, and spirit to God will be constantly receiving a new endowment of physical and mental power. The inexhaustible supplies of heaven are at their command. Christ gives them the breath of His own spirit, the life of His own life. The Holy Spirit puts forth its highest energies to work in heart and mind. The grace of God enlarges and multiplies their faculties, and every perfection of the divine nature comes to their assistance in the work of saving souls. Through co-operation with Christ they are complete in Him, and in their human weakness they are enabled to do the deeds of Omnipotence. {DA 827.3}

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 purpose and plan of grace existed from all eternity. Before the foundation of the world it was according to the determinate counsel of God that man should be created, endowed with power to do the divine will. But the defection of man, with all its consequences, was not hidden from the Omnipotent, and yet it did not deter Him from carrying out His eternal purpose; for the Lord would establish His throne in righteousness. God knows the end from the beginning. . . . Therefore redemption was not an afterthought . . . but an eternal purpose to be wrought out for the blessing not only of this atom of a world but for the good of all the worlds which God has created. {AG 129.2}

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}

Recommended Reading:

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

<https://egwwritings.org>

“Surpassing Love Revealed in His Plan” – *The Signs of the Times*, December 15, 1914

<https://egwwritings.org>

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2025: *God's Love and Justice*

Lesson 9 "The Cosmic Conflict"

Read for this week's study

Matthew 13:24–27; Genesis 1:31; Ezekiel 28:12–19; Isaiah 14:12–15; Matthew 4:1–11; John 8:44, 45.

Memory Text

“ ‘And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel’ ” (Genesis 3:15, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. An Enemy Has Done This
- III. The Origin of the Controversy on Earth
- IV. The Origin of the Controversy in Heaven
- V. If You Worship Me
- VI. The Nature of the Cosmic Conflict
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “This week, we will address how the two following questions might be answered according to some crucial biblical passages: (1) Where does Scripture teach that there is a cosmic conflict between God and Satan? (2) According to Scripture, what is the nature of the conflict? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. How does the answer of Jesus, “an enemy has done this,” help to answer the question often asked today concerning the problem of evil: “If God created the world entirely good, why is there evil in it?” (Sunday's lesson)
3. The servants asked, “Do you want us then to go and gather up the tares?” “No,” the master replies, “lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest” (Matt. 13:29, 30; cf. Mark 4:29). (Sunday's lesson) How does this attitude help with the zealous desire to have a ‘pure’ church? How can good intentions bring disastrous effects?
4. How do Genesis 1:31 and 3:1-7 help us to understand the dynamics of the cosmic conflict? (Monday's lesson) The serpent has managed to turn a statement of reality

- into a statement of threat. Your response depends on what you believe about the character of the one making the prohibition. Are prohibitions necessary in life?
5. How do the texts of Ezekiel 28:12-19 and Isaiah 14:12-15 help us understand the bigger picture beyond the historical personages of this world? (Tuesday's lesson) How do these two narratives help us understand that one does not need an outside temptation to fall? How does this influence the obsession of some to escape miles from any known sin into splendid isolation?
 6. Wednesday's lesson focuses on Christ's temptations (Matthew 4:1-11). What does this teach us about the reality of the cosmic controversy between Christ and Satan?
 7. What is the nature of the cosmic conflict? (Thursday's lesson) What 'rules of engagement' must God abide by (Revelation 12:7-9 cf. John 8:44-45)? How does this influence the tools and timing that God has available? If God wants to win, why would he limit himself? What does it teach us about the battles we are fighting?
 8. To explain this first sin means justifying it (saying Lucifer had a reason to rebel). How can we deal with the issue without excusing it? Why is it so important to understand that the conflict between God and Satan is not one of sheer power, but a conflict of character?
 9. If sin does not have a reason in the macrocosm, why do we expect it will always have a reason or purpose in our own microcosmos? How can we remain gracious and kind even when our character is misunderstood? How would the world change if we were imitators of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1)?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Who would dare to question the integrity of God? Who would dare suggest that God cannot be trusted? Yet with this incredible accusation, the Biblical account of human history begins.

The one who raised this charge had not always been God's enemy. He is pictured first as highly honored, standing in the very presence of our heavenly Father. As God's trusted spokesman he went out among his fellow angels bearing light and truth. He was called "the Light Bearer"—sometimes translated "Lucifer" or "Morning Star"—a name belonging also to the Son of God himself (see Ezekiel 28:14; Isaiah 14:12; 2 Peter 1:19; Revelation 22:16).

But Jesus later called him "a liar and the father of lies" (John 8:44). The last book in the Bible describes him as "that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world" (Revelation 12:9).

"Of course you will not die," the serpent said to Eve. "God knows that as soon as you eat it, your eyes will be opened and you will be like God knowing both good and evil" (Genesis 3:4, 5, NEB, margin). "God has no respect for your freedom and dignity as intelligent individuals,"

Satan argued. “In selfish tyranny he is depriving you of knowledge and experience that are rightfully yours. He has lied and is not worthy of your trust.”

With such falsehoods Satan had already led one third of the angels to side with him against God. Though he is a created being, he had come to think of himself as divine. “I will ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne on high; . . . I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will make myself like the Most High” (Isaiah 14:13, 14). Insane pride led him later even to ask Jesus, his Creator, to bow down and worship him (Matthew 4:8–10).

To set himself up as God he first must undermine confidence in the One he wished to supplant, and he sought to do this by destroying God’s reputation. Since he could find no fault in God, he must resort to deceit.

So began that long struggle for the loyalty of God’s free, intelligent creatures. Who was right—God or the brilliant Light Bearer? Could it be true that God was arbitrary and severe, unworthy of the love and trust of the beings he had made? What kind of god would allow his character to be so challenged? Was it strength or weakness that led him to permit such long debate, to allow this controversy to spread throughout his universe?

Finally Satan and his followers even ventured into open revolt. Then God, in his farsighted plan for the best good of all concerned, expelled the rebels from his presence, and the great controversy was extended to the planet on which we live.

As described in the frequently symbolic language of the Book of Revelation, “Then war broke out in heaven. Michael and his angels waged war upon the dragon. The dragon and his angels fought, but they had not the strength to win, and no foothold was left them in heaven. So the great dragon was thrown down, that serpent of old that led the whole world astray, whose name is Satan, or the Devil—thrown down to the earth, and his angels with him. . . . But woe to you, earth and sea, for the Devil has come down to you in great fury, knowing that his time is short!” (Revelation 12:7–9, 12, NEB).

Someday soon, before Christ returns, Satan will make a last, desperate attempt to win us all to his side. He will appear as an angel of light—the Light Bearer again; Lucifer, the Morning Star (see 2 Corinthians 11:14). He will even proclaim himself to be God. Just as he tried to persuade Christ to worship him in the wilderness of temptation, so he will seek to win our worship now.

The Bible predicts that his efforts will seem to be completely successful. The whole world will worship him—except for a few, “the remnant” (KJV), who will not be deceived. On the contrary, they will take their stand with the loyal angels and maintain their trust in God (see Revelation 12:17; 13:1–8; 14:12). {Maxwell, Graham. *Can God Be Trusted?*, 13-15. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 2002}

<http://speakingwellofgod.org/written-materials/can-god-be-trusted-chapters/chapter-02>

Lou: There is a question that ties in with the matter of the war. You have this one who seems to start the war—Day Star, Lucifer. “If God knew that there would be all this trouble, and that Lucifer would be at the center of it, why did He create Lucifer?” It’s sort of similar to the first question but goes back behind it a bit.

Graham: I think very much related to it. And of course, it raises the question as to whether God **does** know everything in the future. And there are good saints who wonder about that. I would rather find an explanation that would allow me to say God can see the end from the beginning. The past, the present, and the future; they’re all alike to Him. And yet I’m still free. My understanding would be that when God created Lucifer, He knew what Lucifer would do. And yet He went ahead anyway. He knew what it would cost Him. He knew what it would cost His children. And yet He went ahead. And when you think of the history of the anguish that has been involved in solving this problem and settling this war, there must be something of infinite value at stake, or God would not have done this.

Because He had other options you know, some rather easy ones. When Lucifer began to entertain these rebellious thoughts, He could have eliminated him right there and then. What damage would that have done? Well, we might say the angels looking on would think, “I’d better not have bad thoughts or I might get eliminated, too.” But after eliminating Lucifer, God could then have blotted out all memory of the elimination and no one would know. And He could do that an infinite number of times; no one would know but our God.

Now why didn’t He do it? Is it He couldn’t live with the fact He was doing that? Or is it that He wants us to know what He **did** do? What He did do was not to take a shortcut. He allowed Lucifer to develop these thoughts, and to spread them among the angels, knowing what it would cost Him and cost His friends on this planet. We’ve all participated a little, it’s an honor to do so, in the larger view. But knowing the thousands of years it would take, and all the misunderstanding and the anguish, God said, “I will go ahead this way.” And the angels understand this and tell Him, “You did this magnificently. And we’re with you for the rest of eternity.” So what was at stake? That’s the big thing.

Lou: This perspective that you’re sharing with us this evening (and will develop through our twenty weeks here), this perspective includes a war, a crisis of distrust, and whether God can be trusted!

Graham: See, it’s not over power; that’s the big thing. If it were over God’s power, who has more power?

Lou: It would be easy.

Graham: He could do that in a second. And when you stop to think of it, why preach about God’s power, since even the Devil is already convinced? You remember James says that when the Devil thinks about the power of the One who hung the whole vast universe in space, it

scares him. He shudders with fear. So I don't think we should spend too much time arguing about God's power. ***Of course*** He's infinite in majesty and power.

Lou: But you've said that the issue has to do with trust, and who's telling the truth.

Graham: That's right. The conflict is not over ***who has the power***, but over ***who's telling the truth***. God has been accused of the abuse of power. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #1 with Lou Venden, "The Conflict in God's Family" recorded January 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/1MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

There is in the Saviour's words another lesson, a lesson of wonderful forbearance and tender love. As the tares have their roots closely intertwined with those of the good grain, so false brethren in the church may be closely linked with true disciples. The real character of these pretended believers is not fully manifested. Were they to be separated from the church, others might be caused to stumble, who but for this would have remained steadfast. {COL 72.1}

The teaching of this parable is illustrated in God's own dealing with men and angels. Satan is a deceiver. When he sinned in heaven, even the loyal angels did not fully discern his character. This was why God did not at once destroy him. Had He done so, the holy angels would not have perceived the justice and love of God. A doubt of God's goodness would have been as evil seed that would yield the bitter fruit of sin and woe. Therefore the author of evil was spared, fully to develop his character. {UL 77.5}

Through long ages God has borne the anguish of beholding the work of evil. He has given the infinite Gift of Calvary, rather than let any be deceived by the misrepresentations of the wicked one, for the tares could not be plucked up without danger of uprooting the precious grain. {UL 77.6}

Christ came to reveal to a fallen race the love of God. He, the Light of the world, veiled the dazzling splendor of the brightness of His divinity, and came to live on this earth as a man among men, that they might, without being consumed, become acquainted with their Creator. No man has seen God at any time, except as He is revealed through Christ. {UL 334.5}

Heaven, looking down and seeing the delusions into which men were led, knew that a divine Instructor must come to the earth. Through the misrepresentations of the enemy, many were so deceived that they worshiped a false god, clothed with the attributes of the satanic character. Those in ignorance and moral darkness must have light, spiritual light; for the world knew not God, and He must be revealed to their understanding. Truth looked down from

heaven and saw not the reflection of her image; for dense clouds of spiritual darkness and gloom enveloped the world. The Lord Jesus alone was able to roll back the clouds; for He is the light of the world. By His presence He could dissipate the gloomy shadow that Satan had cast between man and God.—First published Nov. 17, 1891. {CT 28.1}

Satan's rebellion was to be a lesson to the universe through all coming ages, a perpetual testimony to the nature and terrible results of sin. The working out of Satan's rule, its effects upon both men and angels, would show what must be the fruit of setting aside the divine authority. It would testify that with the existence of God's government and His law is bound up the well-being of all the creatures He has made. Thus the history of this terrible experiment of rebellion was to be a perpetual safeguard to all holy intelligences, to prevent them from being deceived as to the nature of transgression, to save them from committing sin and suffering its punishments. {GC 499.1}

God speaks to us in nature. It is His voice we hear as we gaze upon the beauty and richness of the natural world. We view His glory in the beautiful things His hand has made. We stand and behold His works without a veil between. God has given us these things that in beholding the works of His hands, we may learn of Him. {TDG 241.2}

Eve really believed the words of Satan, but her belief did not save her from the penalty of sin. She disbelieved the words of God, and this was what led to her fall. In the judgment men will not be condemned because they conscientiously believed a lie, but because they did not believe the truth, because they neglected the opportunity of learning what is truth. {PP 55.2}

From the beginning it has been Satan's studied plan to cause men to forget God, that he might secure them to himself. Hence he has sought to misrepresent the character of God, to lead men to cherish a false conception of Him. The Creator has been presented to their minds as clothed with the attributes of the prince of evil himself,—as arbitrary, severe, and unforgiving,—that He might be feared, shunned, and even hated by men. Satan hoped to so confuse the minds of those whom he had deceived that they would put God out of their knowledge. Then he would obliterate the divine image in man and impress his own likeness upon the soul; he would imbue men with his own spirit and make them captives according to his will. {5T 738.1}

Ever since the fall of man, Satan has been sowing the seeds of error. It was by a lie that he first gained control over men, and thus he still works to overthrow God's kingdom in the earth and to bring men under his power. A sower from a higher world, Christ came to sow the seeds of truth. He who had stood in the councils of God, who had dwelt in the innermost sanctuary of the Eternal, could bring to men the pure principles of truth. Ever since the fall of man, Christ had been the Revealer of truth to the world. By Him the incorruptible seed, "the word of God, which liveth and abideth forever," is communicated to men. 1 Peter 1:23. In that first promise spoken to our fallen race in Eden, Christ was sowing the gospel seed. But it is to His personal

ministry among men and to the work which He thus established that the parable of the sower especially applies. {COL 37.1}

Holy angels often visited the garden, and gave instruction to Adam and Eve concerning their employment and also taught them concerning the rebellion and fall of Satan. The angels warned them of Satan and cautioned them not to separate from each other in their employment, for they might be brought in contact with this fallen foe. The angels also enjoined upon them to follow closely the directions God had given them, for in perfect obedience only were they safe. Then this fallen foe could have no power over them. {EW 147.1}

Even the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart is to be tested by the Word of God. The Spirit which inspired the Scriptures, always leads to the Scriptures.—*General Conference Daily Bulletin*, April 13, 1891. {1SM 43.2}

He maintained his disguise till he had interpreted the Scriptures, and had led them to an intelligent faith in his life, his character, his mission to earth, and his death and resurrection. He wished the truth to take firm root in their minds, **not** because it was supported by his personal testimony, but because the typical law, and the prophets of the Old Testament, agreeing with the facts of his life and death, presented unquestionable evidence of that truth. (Emphasis supplied) {3SP 214.2}

God could have destroyed Satan and his sympathizers as easily as one can cast a pebble to the earth; but He did not do this. Rebellion was not to be overcome by force. Compelling power is found only under Satan's government. The Lord's principles are not of this order. His authority rests upon goodness, mercy, and love; and the presentation of these principles is the means to be used. God's government is moral, and truth and love are to be the prevailing power. {DA 759.1}

God desired that a change take place, and that the work of Satan be brought out in its genuine aspect. But the exalted angel standing next to Christ was opposed to the Son of God. The underworking was so subtle that it could not be made to appear before the heavenly host as the thing that it really was; and so there was war in heaven, and Satan was expelled with all who would not stand on the side of loyalty to God's government. The Lord God stood forth as Supreme Ruler. {4BC 1143.2}

This condition of things had existed a long period of time before Satan was unmasked and the evil ones expelled (Letter 162, 1906). {4BC 1143.3}

God in His wisdom permitted Satan to carry forward his work, until the spirit of disaffection ripened into active revolt. It was necessary for his plans to be fully developed, that their true nature and tendency might be seen by all. Lucifer, as the anointed cherub, had been highly exalted; he was greatly loved by the heavenly beings, and his influence over them was strong. God's government included not only the inhabitants of heaven, but of all the worlds that He

had created; and Satan thought that if he could carry the angels of heaven with him in rebellion, he could carry also the other worlds. He had artfully presented his side of the question, employing sophistry and fraud to secure his objects. His power to deceive was very great, and by disguising himself in a cloak of falsehood he had gained an advantage. Even the loyal angels could not fully discern his character or see to what his work was leading. {GC 497.1}

Satan has ascribed to God all the evils to which flesh is heir. He has represented Him as a God who delights in the sufferings of His creatures, who is revengeful and implacable. It was Satan who originated the doctrine of eternal torment as a punishment for sin, because in this way he could lead men into infidelity and rebellion, distract souls, and dethrone human reason. {CT 27.2}

To the angels and the unfallen worlds the cry, "It is finished," had a deep significance. It was for them as well as for us that the great work of redemption had been accomplished. They with us share the fruits of Christ's victory. {DA 758.2}

Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. The archapostate had so clothed himself with deception that even holy beings had not understood his principles. They had not clearly seen the nature of his rebellion. {DA 758.3}

It was God's purpose to place things on an eternal basis of security, and in the councils of heaven it was decided that time must be given for Satan to develop the principles which were the foundation of his system of government. He had claimed that these were superior to God's principles. Time was given for the working of Satan's principles, that they might be seen by the heavenly universe. {DA 759.2}

Satan led men into sin, and the plan of redemption was put in operation. For four thousand years, Christ was working for man's uplifting, and Satan for his ruin and degradation. And the heavenly universe beheld it all. {DA 759.3}

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}

At the Saviour's baptism, Satan was among the witnesses. He saw the Father's glory overshadowing His Son. He heard the voice of Jehovah testifying to the divinity of Jesus. Ever since Adam's sin, the human race had been cut off from direct communion with God; the

intercourse between heaven and earth had been through Christ; but now that Jesus had come “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Romans 8:3), the Father Himself spoke. He had before communicated with humanity through Christ; now He communicated with humanity in Christ. Satan had hoped that God’s abhorrence of evil would bring an eternal separation between heaven and earth. But now it was manifest that the connection between God and man had been restored. {DA 116.2}

It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature that by beholding we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward. {GC 555.1}

Satan assailed Christ with his fiercest and most subtle temptations, but he was repulsed in every conflict. Those battles were fought in our behalf; those victories make it possible for us to conquer. Christ will give strength to all who seek it. No man without his own consent can be overcome by Satan. The tempter has no power to control the will or to force the soul to sin. {GC 510.3}

The heavenly universe had witnessed the weapons that were chosen by the Prince of life—the words of Scripture, “It is written”; and the weapons used by the prince of the world—falsehood and deception. They had seen the Prince of life deal in straightforward lines of truth, honesty, and integrity, while the prince of the world exercised his power of cunning, artful secrecy, intrigue, enmity, and revenge. They had seen the One who bore the banner of truth sacrifice everything, even His life, to maintain truth, while the one who bore the banner of rebellion continued to strengthen his accusations against the God of truth. {RC 60.5}

Satan saw that his disguise was torn away. His administration was laid open before the unfallen angels and before the heavenly universe. He had revealed himself as a murderer. By shedding the blood of the Son of God, he had uprooted himself from the sympathies of the heavenly beings. Henceforth his work was restricted. Whatever attitude he might assume, he could no longer await the angels as they came from the heavenly courts, and before them accuse Christ’s brethren of being clothed with the garments of blackness and the defilement of sin. The last link of sympathy between Satan and the heavenly world was broken. {DA 761.2}

Yet Satan was not then destroyed. The angels did not even then understand all that was involved in the great controversy. The principles at stake were to be more fully revealed. And for the sake of man, Satan’s existence must be continued. Man as well as angels must see the

contrast between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness. He must choose whom he will serve. {DA 761.3}

Now the guilt of Satan stood forth without excuse. He had revealed his true character as a liar and a murderer. It was seen that the very same spirit with which he ruled the children of men, who were under his power, he would have manifested had he been permitted to control the inhabitants of heaven. He had claimed that the transgression of God's law would bring liberty and exaltation; but it was seen to result in bondage and degradation. {GC 502.1}

Satan's lying charges against the divine character and government appeared in their true light. He had accused God of seeking merely the exaltation of Himself in requiring submission and obedience from His creatures, and had declared that, while the Creator exacted self-denial from all others, He Himself practiced no self-denial and made no sacrifice. Now it was seen that for the salvation of a fallen and sinful race, the Ruler of the universe had made the greatest sacrifice which love could make; for "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." 2 Corinthians 5:19. It was seen, also, that while Lucifer had opened the door for the entrance of sin by his desire for honor and supremacy, Christ had, in order to destroy sin, humbled Himself and become obedient unto death. {GC 502.2}

Christ came to this earth in human form that He might stand as the Captain of our salvation, so that we should not be overcome by Satan's power. And when the enemy has seemed to be gaining a signal victory over righteousness, God has been working in mercy and power to counteract his designs. {TDG 308.4}

Determined to efface the image of God in man, Satan works with an intensity of effort to hide God from view. Not openly does he work, but secretly, mingling the human and the divine, the spurious and the genuine, so seeking to bring confusion and distress. But in proportionate power divine mercy is revealed to counteract this wicked working, and bring to light the enemy's hidden purposes. {TDG 308.5}

Satan's position in heaven had been next to the Son of God. He was first among the angels. His power had been debasing, but God could not reveal it in its true light and carry all heaven in harmony with Him in removing him with his evil influences. His power was increasing, but the evil was yet unrecognized. It was a deadly power to the universe, but for the security of the worlds and the government of heaven, it was necessary that it should develop and be revealed in its true light. {1SM 341.4}

Satan could not be presented to the universe at once in his real character. His crooked course must be allowed to continue until he should reveal himself as an accuser, a deceiver, a liar, and a murderer. In the latter act, Satan uprooted himself from the affection of the loyal universe. In the death of the Son of God the deceiver was unmasked.—*Letter 16a*, 1892. {CTr 11.7}

It was difficult to uproot Satan from the affection of the angels in heaven. He took the position that the law of God was against the heavenly intelligences, and the warfare and controversy between Christ and Satan was started in heaven and is going on in the earth to the present day. The controversy between Christ and Satan was witnessed not only by the heavenly intelligences but by all the worlds that God had created. {CTr 216.4}

God in His wisdom did not use measures of force to suppress Satan's rebellion. Such measures would have aroused sympathy for Satan, strengthening his rebellion rather than changing his principles. If God had summarily punished him, many would have looked upon him as one who had been dealt with unjustly, and he would have carried a much larger number with him in his apostasy. {CTr 289.4}

It was necessary to give Satan time to develop his principles. He has had every opportunity to present his side of the question. He has been artful. As often as his position has been seen in its true light, he has changed to some other position. By making false charges, and by misstating the purposes and declared will of God, he has secured sympathizers. {CTr 289.5}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2025: *God's Love and Justice*

Lesson 10 "*Rules of Engagement*"

Read for this week's study

Daniel 10:1–14; Revelation 13:1–8; Job 1:1–12; Job 2:1–7; John 12:31; John 14:30; Mark 6:5; Mark 9:29.

Memory Text

"He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. An Angel Delayed
- III. The Dragon of Revelation
- IV. The Case of Job
- V. The (Temporary) Ruler of This World
- VI. Limits and Rules
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. We have seen so far that the cosmic conflict is primarily a dispute over God's character, prompted by Satan's allegations against God's justice and rule. Insofar as God maintains his commitment to epistemic freedom (his creatures can love him or reject him), the use of force can do nothing to counter such allegations. Therefore, another strategy is required to meet the allegations. Doing so involves parameters, or "rules of engagement," in which the allegations can be settled and defeated once and for all.
2. "Behind the false 'gods' of the nations, were actually demons in disguise. This means, that all of the texts of Scripture dealing with idolatry and the foreign gods are 'cosmic conflict' texts. With this background, the cosmic conflict theme is better understood. And this truth has massive implications for understanding more about the nature of this conflict and how it sheds light on the problem of evil." (Sabbath Afternoon)
3. How would you reconcile and harmonize 1 Corinthians 8:4 ("no idol in the world really exists") and 10:20 (what the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God)? Why do we need to keep this in a healthy balance? What is Paul's argument in

chap. 10? Why is it important to keep that in mind in our contemporary world which is both materialistic and spiritual at the same time?

4. Since God's very character and government has been challenged, it makes sense that he would operate in a transparent way that involves celestial beings, allowing them and others to see that God is wholly fair, just, and loving. What do you make of the angel sent by God being "withstood" by the "prince of the kingdom of Persia" for three entire weeks (Daniel 10:12-13)? (Sunday's lesson)
5. "The enemy must be afforded some genuine freedom and power that is not removed capriciously, but is restricted by some parameters known to both parties (the details of which are not revealed to us). It seems there must be parameters in the cosmic conflict that even God's angels are operating within, which in the coming lessons will be referred to as the 'rules of engagement.'" (Sunday's lesson)
6. How does Revelation 13:1-8 show that Satan possesses jurisdiction over earthly kingdoms? (Monday's lesson) This inevitably means that God's jurisdiction is correspondingly limited. But there are also limitations on Satan and his minions including temporal limits (12:12). How does understanding that "the world is now under the dominion of the powers of darkness and can therefore resist and reject God's authoritative rule" help us better understand what is going on?
7. How does the case of Job show that God allows some allegations to have a hearing before the heavenly council and be put on display so that creatures can make their own decisions (Job 1:1-12; 2:1-7)? (Tuesday's lesson) If such cosmic allegations are to be answered, God must allow Satan parameters within which he might make his case. Finite beings must be granted some jurisdiction that the omnipotent being cannot override.
8. Satan is initially restricted, but later brings requests to the heavenly council to have more license to demonstrate his charges. How does this demonstrate not only that Satan works within limits that are known to him and to God, but also that these "rules of engagement" can be modified by agreement before the heavenly council? This helps us understand that given such "rules of engagement," God's action is morally restricted.
9. How does the fact that Jesus calls Satan the "ruler" of this world help us understand the evil that exists in the world now (John 12:31; 14:30; 16:11; Luke 4:6)? (Wednesday's lesson) How does it indicate that Satan has some rights under which he operates when he says to Jesus, "To you I will give all this authority and their glory, for it has been given over to me, and I give it to anyone I please"?
10. What do the texts in Mark 6:5, 9:29 and 11:22-24 convey about how divine action might be integrally related to factors such as faith and prayer? (Thursday's lesson) Although these and other texts do not explain precisely how faith and prayer relate to miracles, there is an explicit correlation. This indicates impediments on what God can morally do which are dynamic and seemingly tied to prayer and faith and perhaps other factors. Because of this, prayer may grant God jurisdiction to act in ways that otherwise would not be available to him within the rules of engagement (GC 525).

Since other factors are involved, it might be that in some situations those other factors are such that no matter how much people pray in good faith, the outcome regarding a specific event would not change (cf. Matthew 26:39; Luke 22:32).

11. Since the cosmic war is not one of sheer force but one of character—a challenge to God’s moral government and thus a battle for hearts and minds—there must be known limits or rules within which his enemies can operate. Thus, this covenantal arrangement is morally justified as the best and only available avenue to settle the cosmic dispute. It will bring the great good of ensuring that love flourishes throughout the universe for eternity. It also serves as the morally sufficient reason for God allowing the existence of evil, without affirming that any such evil itself is justifiable or necessary for God’s creatures to flourish.
12. Although we are not able to make confident or final judgments regarding God’s decisions, we can see a significant biblical principle here: God always does what is best, given the avenues available to him. And this assurance creates trust in God in even the most difficult life situations!

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

I’m not so worried about the beast as I am about the dragon who gives his power to the beast; the one who is behind all the heads. Sometimes we act as if one of the heads is our great enemy. On the contrary. The devil has worked through every false religious system. And it is significant to note that every false religious system has a substitute for the Son of God in one form or another. In the mystery religions that were popular in the days of these early Christians who were hearing this, there were dying, rising saviors who counterfeited the true Christ. So this substituting for the Son of God has gone on from the very beginning. It began up in heaven when Lucifer wished to take the place of the other ‘Lucifer’ in the respect and reverence of the angels.

So if you prefer his side, and you are distinguished in some way as preferring that side, your faith is in him and your loyalty is to him, and you prefer his way of doing things, this is what will happen to you. You will drink the wine of God’s wrath. But we’ve been prepared for wrath for sixty-five books. What is the meaning of God’s wrath? In Hosea 11, in Romans 1, specifically in Romans 1:24, 26, and 28, God’s wrath. He is the Father of the people He is about to give up. So how does He feel? He sadly turns away in loving disappointment from those who prefer the other side. Think of preferring the leadership of the one who led in the torture of the Son of God. But these people prefer his way of doing things. What would God do to those who would rather worship the deceiver than the infinitely trustworthy One? Does He beat them up, or give them up? Remember Hosea 11, where God cries, “How can I give you up, how can I let you go?” We know that is the meaning of God’s wrath. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Revelation*, recorded August 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/79MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/80MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Lou: In this use of James, I want to come back to that one again. James is saying that faith alone is not enough. Does that mean that we also have to have works? And isn't that getting back on dangerous ground?

Graham: That's this same matter of understanding what the "works" are. The word for obedience, as I mentioned, is a "willingness to listen." **God does not expect perfect performance.** I have just gone to my physician with an advanced case of arthritis, and he doesn't ask me to run the four-minute mile on the way home. He even helps me down the steps into my wheelchair, maybe. He says, "Do a little better this week, and be sure to come back, and take your medication." Now, what he asks of me is a "willingness to listen and cooperate."

And I might die the next day, but I'm going to die his trusting patient. And I will arise His trusting patient and all will be well. So the performance God desires of us is the **willingness to listen.** He knows we are too weak to do it perfectly. I think to picture God as our Physician is the best model we could have. God knows our weaknesses. He wants us someday to be perfect; not just spiritually, but physically, mentally, socially—all those things. But He knows it is going to take a little time. What He wants right now up front is a sincere willingness to listen and stop cheating. Then the healing is guaranteed. God has the ability to perfectly restore every one of His children. No question. He has never lost a patient, except the patients who are unwilling to listen. So to know that obedience means primarily a willingness to listen, is the thing.

Lou: And James gives us a picture of what happens in our lives when we are willing to listen.

Graham: Oh, when we are willing to listen, we begin to behave like God—more and more like Him.

Lou: Trust sounds like something we **have** to do. It might sound that way. But doesn't God do it all? Isn't faith, what we've talked about this evening, isn't that faith itself the gift of God?

Graham: It's so described in the Bible. "Faith is a gift of God." This is so important that it is much of the subject next week: "God's Way of Restoring Trust." Well, He gives everything except one thing, I believe. He gives us life. He gives us minds to weigh the evidence. He gives us the evidence. He gives us the freedom. He gives us everything except **He does not cast the vote.** If in this great controversy, in this war, God were also to manipulate us so we would vote the way He wanted, you know who would cry foul.

So God does not win this great controversy by "stuffing His own ballot box," by also putting the faith within us. Then you have the question, "Why does He put faith in some and not others?" And then there's no responsibility. You say, "I don't have faith. You know why? God didn't give me any." And you know what that has led to in theological history. God gives us everything, but **He doesn't cast the vote.** That's up to us. That is what freedom is. That's where responsibility is. And I like it this way. It's a little scary, but would you want it any other way? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #3 with Lou Venden, "All God Asks Is

Trust” recorded January 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/3MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

God is the author of truth. He enlightens the darkened understanding and gives to the human mind power to grasp and comprehend the truths which He has revealed. {SL 49.1}

Heavenly beings are appointed to answer the prayers of those who are working unselfishly for the interests of the cause of God. The very highest angels in the heavenly courts are appointed to work out the prayers which ascend to God for the advancement of the cause of God. Each angel has his particular post of duty, which he is not permitted to leave for any other place. If he should leave, the powers of darkness would gain an advantage. . . . {4BC 1173.5}

Christ seldom attempted to prove that truth is truth. He illustrated truth in all its bearings, and then left His hearers free to accept or reject it, as they might choose. He did not force anyone to believe. In the sermon on the mount He instructed the people in practical godliness, distinctly outlining their duty. He spoke in such a manner as to commend truth to the conscience. The power manifested by the disciples was revealed in the clearness and earnestness with which they expressed the truth. {Ev 171.1}

The Lord will not compel men to deal justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with their God; He sets before the human agent good and evil, and makes plain what will be the sure result of following one course or the other. Christ invites us, saying, “Follow Me.” But we are never forced to walk in His footsteps. {CS 138.1}

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. {DA 22.1}

The laws of God are designed to bring His people closer to Himself. He will save them from the evil and lead them to the good if they will be led, but force them He never will. {5T 444.2}

God never forces the will or the conscience; but Satan’s constant resort—to gain control of those whom he cannot otherwise seduce—is compulsion by cruelty. Through fear or force he endeavors to rule the conscience and to secure homage to himself. To accomplish this, he works

through both religious and secular authorities, moving them to the enforcement of human laws in defiance of the law of God. {GC 591.2}

To Daniel was given a vision of fierce beasts, representing the powers of the earth. But the ensign of the Messiah's kingdom is a lamb. While earthly kingdoms rule by the ascendancy of physical power, Christ is to banish every carnal weapon, every instrument of coercion. His kingdom was to be established to uplift and ennoble fallen humanity (Letter 32, 1899). {4BC 1171.5}

I saw that God would not compel any to be saved. Jesus has made the great sacrifice, and if man will freely, gladly accept it; if he will choose life, he can have it. But his life must be one of continual yielding. {2SG 278.2}

The enemy cannot overcome the humble learner of Christ, the one who walks prayerfully before the Lord. Christ interposes Himself as a shelter, a retreat, from the assaults of the wicked one. The promise is given, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." . . . {ML 316.2}

Those who follow Christ are ever safe under His watchcare. Angels that excel in strength are sent from heaven to protect them. The wicked one cannot break through the guard which God has stationed about His people. {FLB 328.6}

But the plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vindicate the character of God before the universe. To this result of His great sacrifice—its influence upon the intelligences of other worlds, as well as upon man—the Saviour looked forward when just before His crucifixion He said: "Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all unto Me." John 12:31, 32. The act of Christ in dying for the salvation of man would not only make heaven accessible to men, but before all the universe it would justify God and His Son in their dealing with the rebellion of Satan. {PP 68.2}

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}

By coming to dwell with us, Jesus was to reveal God both to men and to angels. He was the Word of God,—God's thought made audible. In His prayer for His disciples He says, "I have declared unto them Thy name,"—"merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth,"—"that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." But not alone for His earthborn children was this revelation given. Our little world is the lesson book of

the universe. God's wonderful purpose of grace, the mystery of redeeming love, is the theme into which "angels desire to look," and it will be their study throughout endless ages. Both the redeemed and the unfallen beings will find in the cross of Christ their science and their song. It will be seen that the glory shining in the face of Jesus is the glory of self-sacrificing love. In the light from Calvary it will be seen that the law of self-renouncing love is the law of life for earth and heaven; that the love which "seeketh not her own" has its source in the heart of God; and that in the meek and lowly One is manifested the character of Him who dwelleth in the light which no man can approach unto. {DA 19.2}

When Christ came to this world, He found that Satan had everything as he wanted it. The adversary of God and man thought that he was indeed the prince of the earth, but Jesus laid hold of the world to take it out of the power of Satan. {5BC 1137.9}

The transgression of God's law brought woe and death in its train. Through disobedience man's powers were perverted, and selfishness took the place of love. His nature became so weakened that it was impossible for him to resist the power of evil; and the tempter saw being fulfilled his purpose to thwart the divine plan of man's creation and fill the earth with misery and desolation. Men had chosen a ruler who chained them to his car as captives. {CT 33.2}

Looking upon man, God saw his desperate rebellion, and He devised a remedy. Christ was His gift to the world for man's reconciliation. The Son of God was appointed to come to this earth to take humanity and by His own example to be a great educating power among men. His experience in man's behalf was to enable men to resist Satan's power. He came to mold character and to give mental power, to shed abroad the beams of true education, that the true aim of life might not be lost sight of. The sons of men had had a practical knowledge of evil; Christ came to the world to show them that He had planted for them the tree of life, the leaves of which are for the healing of the nations. {CT 33.3}

God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith. {SC 105.2}

It is part of God's plan to grant us in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask. {GC 525.2}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2025: *God's Love and Justice*

Lesson 11 "What More Could I Have Done?"

Read for this week's study

John 18:37; Romans 3:23–26; Romans 5:8; Isaiah 5:1–4; Matthew 21:33–39; Isaiah 53:4; Romans 3:1–4.

Memory Text

"Pilate therefore said to Him, 'Are You a king then?' Jesus answered, 'You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice'" (John 18:37, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Christ the Victor
- III. The Just and the Justifier
- IV. The Song of My Beloved
- V. Christ's Parable of the Vineyard
- VI. The Vindication of God's Name
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. "Where is God when there is suffering? If God is good, why is there so much evil? The cosmic conflict sheds light on this crucial issue, but many questions remain. Yet, when all our attempts at answers fail to satisfy, we can look to Jesus on the cross and see in Him that God can be trusted, even with all the questions that remain unanswered for now." (Sabbath Afternoon)
2. What does John 18:37 tell us about Christ's work to counter the deceptions of the enemy? (Sunday's lesson) Note that Jesus does not say: 'my kingdom is not *of* this world' as some translations put it (KJV, NKJV, NIV, ESV), as if his 'kingdom' had nothing to do with the present world at all and was an altogether other-worldly, spiritual or heavenly reality. Jesus says that his 'kingdom is not *from* this world' (NRSV, NET Bible, Aramaic Bible in Plain English). Jesus is denying that his kingdom has a this-worldly *origin* or *quality*. He is not denying that it has a this-worldly *destination*. That's why he came into the world himself (v. 37) and why he has sent

his followers into the world (17:18; 20:21). His kingdom does not come from this world, but it is for this world. Why is this distinction so crucial?

3. Why is the demonstration of God's righteousness and love in the cosmic conflict so important (Rom 3:23-26; 5:8)? (Monday's lesson) When we reflect on the Cross and all of God's works in the plan of redemption, how do God's works give us confidence in the love of God, even amid trials and sufferings?
4. Isaiah chapter 5 contains a song (v. 1-7), a lament (v. 8-23) and a judgment (v. 24-30). Comparing Israel to a vineyard is very compelling to Isaiah's hearers because working in vineyards was their livelihood. The prophet describes in detail the three-year effort to produce the first crop of grapes (v. 1-2) (Tuesday's lesson) The rhetorical question asks what should be done with a worthless vineyard that produced bad grapes (v. 2) in spite of the 'choicest vines' being planted. Verses 5-6 announce what will be done and verse 7 clarifies that God is talking about Israel and Judah. The people took the blessings for granted and used them selfishly. Instead of serving the Lord, they served themselves. What lesson is there in all this for us today?
5. How does Christ's parable of the vineyard (Matthew 21:33-39) shed additional light on the character and actions of the vineyard owner? (Wednesday's lesson) Why is it significant that the culpability for the failure of the vineyard does not lie with the owner? How does the cross prove that although because of sin creatures suffer immensely, God suffers most of all and has done everything he morally could for this world?
6. How do texts like Isaiah 5:3-4; Romans 3:1-4, Revelation 15:3; 19:1-6 hint at the vindication of God's character? (Thursday's lesson)
7. The conflict over God's character that could not be settled by the exercise of divine power is met by the voluntarily suffering God of the cross, who still remains omnipotent and sovereign. God, who is love, subjects himself to suffering, making himself 'vulnerable to pain'. As Jürgen Moltmann said: "God incapable of suffering is a loveless being." (*The Crucified God*, 222). "From the cross springs light sufficient to illuminate even the darkest night." (Henri Blocher)
8. How does the cross provide grounds to trust that because God has done everything he could for our best good, that ultimately, he will eliminate all evil at the end of the ages? How can we live with the reality that even as many questions remain unanswered, we can confidently await the final eschatological solution to the problem of evil and its full eradication with the approval of the whole universe?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

So they were rich. They were religious. Remember the Laodiceans? “We are rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing.” And it says it made God sick. When it says, “I will spit you out of My mouth”, interestingly enough, the Greek word is *emeō* from which we get the word “emetic”. There are other places where it says God is sick as He looks at His children behaving the way they do. For He will lose them if they don’t behave better. So then we come to 5, to show God’s attitude toward them in their very privileged position, but their almost unhealable condition. And this very famous passage, 5:1:

Let me sing for my beloved a love song concerning his vineyard: My beloved had a vineyard on a very fertile hill. He dugged it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes. And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, between me and my vineyard. What more was there to do for my vineyard, that I have not done in it? [You can hear God saying, “What more could I have done for my people in the Promised Land?”] When I looked for it to yield grapes, why did it yield wild grapes? And now I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard. I will remove its hedge, . . . [And isn’t that precisely what He did? And the Babylonians were free to come; the Assyrians were free to come. And God ceased to protect that little people. I will remove its hedge], and it shall be devoured; I will break down its wall, and it shall be trampled down. I will make it a waste; it shall not be pruned or hoed, and briars and thorns shall grow up; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it. For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah are his pleasant planting; and he looked for justice, but behold, bloodshed; for righteousness, but behold, a cry!

Isn’t that eloquent translation, by the way? Is yours as good as that? I’m reading the *Revised Standard* of 1952. This is all in poetic form, of course.

Well, what has gone wrong? Does Isaiah explain how they could be so religious and apparently prosperous, which you know was usually interpreted as evidence of God’s blessing. Remember Job? When you’re prosperous, you’re blessed. They just misunderstood. Well, what is it they misunderstood? Look at 5:13 in this very same chapter. Why are the people going into exile?

“Therefore My people go into exile for want of knowledge.” Now, knowledge of what? Well, you remember 1:3? “My people do not know”, what? “They do not understand.” Well, what is it that they don’t understand, that’s leading them to be so religious and yet missing the point entirely? Let’s look at a number of places. And this runs through the whole Bible and is the reason for doing the sixty-six Books. Look at 11:9 for just one of many places, 11:6-9 is one of these famous descriptions of the new earth that artists have used as a basis for famous

paintings; the little child leading the lion, and so on. But at this moment just take verse 9. When all is restored:

They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for [when everything is right, look,] the earth shall be full of the knowledge [this time it's specified, the knowledge] of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

There never will be right behavior without a right picture of God. There's no other way to do it. When people attempt to be religious and even do what's right with a false picture of God, it turns out to be very destructive, as has been illustrated so painfully, especially by those who crucified Christ and rushed home to keep the seventh-day Sabbath holy. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Isaiah, recorded January 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/33MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/34MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

COMMENT: In 2 Thessalonians 2:9-11, we read about the sin that is not forgiven. It says, "Even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power, and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish. Because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved. And for this cause, God shall send them strong delusions, that they should believe a lie."

That's an excellent passage to quote with this. Remember that, in Thessalonians, where in the end the people refused to love the truth and so be saved? Therefore, a strong delusion came upon them. They actually believed what was false. They will all be condemned because they did not believe the truth. And that's Romans 1 very clearly. Well, when Jesus came as the Truth, they preferred Satan's lies to the Truth. They even killed Him to silence His explanation of the Truth. Then what more could God do for them? There was nothing more God could do, and so He turned from them to others who would be more willing to listen. That's a good example, isn't it, right there? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Jeremiah & Lamentations, recorded January 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/35MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/36MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

But how else can God win our respect to begin with, and then once He has it, tell us He never again wants to make us afraid by a show of His power? Now He wants to reason with us. “Come now, let us reason together. I just want to speak to you softly. Here’s the evidence. Here’s My Son. Look at Him treat His enemies so graciously.” Did that impress the people? They despised Jesus as weak. They misunderstood His gentleness as weakness on His part. Remember Romans 2:4? Don’t misunderstand the patience and long suffering of God as weakness on His part.

He just doesn’t like to lose His children. He is not willing that any should perish. And as they do perish, He cries, “Why will you die? How can I give you up? How can I let you go? But you are bent on leaving Me? What more can I do for you? I’ll have to let you go. What did I do wrong with your fathers?” Remember, we read this? “What did they find wrong in Me? I planted them like a vineyard.” Remember that whole picture in Isaiah? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Ezekiel, recorded February 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1984

<http://pkp.cc/37MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/38MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

Christ was the greatest teacher the world has ever known. He came to this earth to shed abroad the bright beams of truth, that men might gain a fitness for heaven. “For this cause came I into the world,” He declared, “that I should bear witness unto the truth.” John 18:37. He came to reveal the character of the Father, that men might be led to worship Him in spirit and in truth. {CT 259.1}

Man’s need for a divine teacher was known in heaven. The pity and sympathy of God were aroused in behalf of human beings, fallen and bound to Satan’s chariot car; and when the fullness of time was come, He sent forth His Son. The One appointed in the councils of heaven came to this earth as man’s instructor. The rich benevolence of God gave Him to our world, and to meet the necessities of human nature He took humanity upon Himself. To the astonishment of the heavenly host the eternal Word came to this world as a helpless babe. Fully prepared, He left the royal courts and mysteriously allied Himself with fallen human beings. “The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us.” John 1:14. {CT 259.2}

He who slumbers not, who is continually at work for the accomplishment of His designs, can carry forward His great work harmoniously. That which appears to finite minds entangled and complicated, the Lord’s hand can keep in perfect order. He can devise ways and means to thwart the purposes of wicked men, and He will bring to confusion the counsels of them that plot mischief against His people. {5T 754.2}

Claiming for himself the attributes of mercy, goodness, and truth, Satan attributed his own attributes to God. These misrepresentations must be met and demonstrated as false, by Christ in human nature. {CTr 246.4}

God saw that a clearer revelation than nature was needed to portray both His personality and His character. He sent His Son into the world to reveal, so far as could be endured by human sight, the nature and the attributes of the invisible God. {8T 265.5}

The law of ten commandments is not to be looked upon as much from the prohibitory side as from the mercy side. Its prohibitions are the sure guarantee of happiness in obedience. As received in Christ, it works in us the purity of character that will bring joy to us through eternal ages. To the obedient it is a wall of protection. We behold in it the goodness of God, who by revealing to men the immutable principles of righteousness seeks to shield them from the evils that result from transgression. {6BC 1110.4}

But the work of human redemption is not all that is accomplished by the cross. The love of God is manifested to the universe. The prince of this world is cast out. The accusations which Satan has brought against God are refuted. The reproach which he has cast upon heaven is forever removed. Angels as well as men are drawn to the Redeemer. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth," He said, "will draw all unto Me." {DA 626.1}

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}

Not until the death of Christ was the character of Satan clearly revealed to the angels or to the unfallen worlds. Then the prevarications and accusations of him who had once been an exalted angel were seen in their true light. It was seen that his professedly spotless character was deceptive. His deeply laid scheme to exalt himself to supremacy was fully discerned. His falsehoods were apparent to all. God's authority was forever established. Truth triumphed over falsehood. {RC 60.3}

The death of Christ upon the cross made sure the destruction of him who has the power of death, who was the originator of sin. When Satan is destroyed, there will be none to tempt to evil; the atonement will never need to be repeated; and there will be no danger of another rebellion in the universe of God. That which alone can effectually restrain from sin in this world of darkness, will prevent sin in heaven. {TA 205.2}

Through the Jewish nation it was God's purpose to impart rich blessings to all peoples. Through Israel the way was to be prepared for the diffusion of His light to the whole world. The nations of the world, through following corrupt practices, had lost the knowledge of God. Yet in His mercy God did not blot them out of existence. He purposed to give them opportunity for becoming acquainted with Him through His church. He designed that the principles revealed

through His people should be the means of restoring the moral image of God in man.
{COL 286.1}

God desired to bring all peoples under His merciful rule. He desired that the earth should be filled with joy and peace. He created man for happiness, and He longs to fill human hearts with the peace of heaven. He desires that the families below shall be a symbol of the great family above. {COL 290.2}

In the lives of God's people the truths of His word are to reveal their glory and excellence. Through His people Christ is to manifest His character and the principles of His kingdom.
{COL 296.3}

Satan seeks to counterwork the work of God, and he is constantly urging men to accept his principles. He represents the chosen people of God as a deluded people. He is an accuser of the brethren, and his accusing power is employed against those who work righteousness. The Lord desires through His people to answer Satan's charges by showing the results of obedience to right principles. {COL 296.4}

It was by falsifying the character of God and exciting distrust of Him that Satan tempted Eve to transgress. By sin the minds of our first parents were darkened, their natures were degraded, and their conceptions of God were molded by their own narrowness and selfishness. And as men became bolder in sin, the knowledge and the love of God faded from their minds and hearts. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God," they "became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." {5T 738.2}

At times Satan's contest for the control of the human family appeared to be crowned with success. During the ages preceding the first advent of Christ the world seemed almost wholly under the sway of the prince of darkness, and he ruled with a terrible power as though through the sin of our first parents the kingdoms of the world had become his by right. Even the covenant people, whom God had chosen to preserve in the world the knowledge of Himself, had so far departed from Him that they had lost all true conception of His character. {5T 738.3}

Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, full of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. The thick darkness with which Satan had endeavored to enshroud the throne of Deity was swept away by the world's Redeemer, and the Father was again manifest to men as the light of life. {5T 738.4}

It is beyond the power of the human mind to estimate the evil which has been wrought by the heresy of eternal torment. The religion of the Bible, full of love and goodness, and abounding in compassion, is darkened by superstition and clothed with terror. When we consider in what false colors Satan has painted the character of God, can we wonder that our merciful Creator is feared, dreaded, and even hated? The appalling views of God which have spread over the world

from the teachings of the pulpit have made thousands, yea, millions, of skeptics and infidels. {4SP 356.2}

The law of Jehovah was burdened with needless exactions and traditions, and God was represented as severe, exacting, revengeful, and arbitrary. He was pictured as one who could take pleasure in the sufferings of his creatures. The very attributes that belonged to the character of Satan, the evil one represented as belonging to the character of God. Jesus came to teach men of the Father, to correctly represent him before the fallen children of earth. Angels could not fully portray the character of God, but Christ, who was a living impersonation of God, could not fail to accomplish the work. The only way in which he could set and keep men right was to make himself visible and familiar to their eyes. {ST, January 20, 1890 par. 6}

Christ exalted the character of God, attributing to him the praise, and giving to him the credit, of the whole purpose of his own mission on earth,—to set men right through the revelation of God. In Christ was arrayed before men the paternal grace and the matchless perfections of the Father. In his prayer just before his crucifixion, he declared, “I have manifested thy name.” “I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do.” When the object of his mission was attained,—the revelation of God to the world,—the Son of God announced that his work was accomplished, and that the character of the Father was made manifest to men. {ST, January 20, 1890 par. 9}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2025: *God's Love and Justice*
Lesson 12 "*Love and Justice: The Two Greatest Commandments*"

Read for this week's study

Matthew 22:34–40; Zechariah 7:9–12; Psalm 82; Micah 6:8; Matthew 23:23–30; Luke 10:25–37.

Memory Text

"If someone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?" (1 John 4:20, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Two Greatest Commandments
- III. The Two Greatest Sins
- IV. God Loves Justice
- V. Called to Establish Justice
- VI. Who Is My Neighbor?
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. "When others are afflicted by poverty, oppression, or any kind of injustice, we should be concerned. When others are oppressed, we should not turn a blind eye. Instead, we should ask ourselves what we can do, individually and corporately, to advance God's love and justice in a way that reflects to our broken world our Lord's perfect character of righteousness and love." (Sabbath Afternoon)
2. How is Jesus' answer in Matthew 22:34-40, that his opponents cannot question, connected with what happens in the last scenes of Jesus' life? (Sunday's lesson) Why does Jesus follow it up with a question his opponents cannot answer? It is only when we connect the two commandments with Jesus dying for the sins of the world and rising again, that we see them not as orders to be obeyed (in our own strength), but as invitations and promises to a new way of life in which step by step, hatred and pride are left behind and love becomes a reality.
3. How is the sin of idolatry an opposite from love for God (Psalm 135:13-19)? (Monday's lesson) How is that connected with the mistreatment of people, especially those less fortunate (Zechariah 7:9-12 cf. Exodus 22:22-27)? What was the purpose of this

post-Exodus legislation (Exodus 22:27)? How would you explain why the love for God cannot be separated from the love for others?

4. How does Psalm 82 express God's concern for justice in this world? How would that apply to where you live today? (Tuesday's lesson) Jesus is very clear, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35). Yet in Adventism the orthodoxy of our Fundamental Beliefs is often valued more than showing love to others! Why might that be?
5. Why are justice, mercy and faithfulness the more important matters of the law according to Jesus in Matthew 23:23-30? (Wednesday's lesson) People in Jesus' day liked the idea of being rigorous about the Torah because it suited their nationalist ambitions. But it would be a mistake to read these verses as a moral denunciation of *somebody else*. That's halfway to committing the very mistake that's being attacked.
6. Usually we take Jesus' injunction—"go and do likewise"—from the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:25-37) to apply in this way: go be a good person like the Samaritan (and negatively, do not be like the passers-by). Certainly every culture can use more people like the good Samaritan, but what is the deeper point of the parable? (Thursday's lesson)
7. For first-century Jews, doing what the law required meant being clear about how to fulfill its commandments in practice. If the law says to love your neighbor, you need to know who counts as a "neighbor".
8. Jesus' question requires the lawyer to draw the conclusion that the Samaritan is his neighbor. The lawyer, however, cannot quite bring himself to say "Samaritan," though he obviously knows the answer. He says instead, "the one who showed him mercy." This answer forces one to draw the circle of neighbor as wide as it can get. By the end of the parable the lawyer now has to include the repugnant Samaritan as his neighbor.
9. How did this new understanding, that even the Samaritans are included in the genealogy of the son of God by virtue of the image of God, transform the world in the first centuries? How did the early Christian understanding, that now Peter was as valuable as the Roman centurion Cornelius, transform the world? If the slave Onesimus was as valuable and important as his master Philemon, in this new community that Christ established, and the master Philemon as valuable and important as the Roman governor Sergius Paulus, the world was never to be the same again. How can we model this understanding in our time and world today? What is the contemporary application of these values?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

"Now, if anyone says, 'I love God,' but he hates his brother, he is a liar; . . ."

You see, people might go around and say, "Well, I love God and so I'm not afraid of the judgment." And just as James said, "So you claim to have faith. Show me." So John says, "You

claim to have love. Show me.” It’s interesting. The Bible often does that, doesn’t it? You make claims to be spiritual. Show me! It always shows in the way we behave:

If anyone says, “I love God” [so I have no need to be afraid], but he hates his brother, he is a liar [and in the book of Revelation, where do liars go, as you recall?]; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen. [If we don’t love people created in the image of God, how can we claim to love God whom we have not seen?] And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also.

And he said in 1 John 3:14 that love for our brethren is the first symptom of salvation, hasn’t he? Do I have the right verse? 1 John 3:14: “We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren.”

But if we don’t love each other, we’ve not passed from death unto life. And if we don’t love each other, and yet claim to love God, we’re liars. So he’s tied this all together. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God* in all 66 – 1, 2, and 3 John and Jude, recorded August 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/77MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/78MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

I have heard servants sometimes charge that friends lack a keen sense of justice. They do not leave room in their understanding of God for just and essential punishment. Their God is simply too weak and kind. “You have a marshmallow God,” I heard one servant say.

The truth is precisely the opposite. Friend-believers have great concern about righteousness, which is the literal meaning of the Greek word often translated “justice.” The English word “justice” comes from the Latin translation of the Greek. (Latin, “justitia”)

Friends admire God’s righteousness and would love to be like him. And to do what is right is, of course, to do what is just. But servants tend to think of justice in terms of retribution and punishment.

“I find comfort in the thought that some day God will bring retribution on those who have hurt me so much,” I heard a believer say. “Now, I’m not asking for vengeance, you understand. I’m just asking for justice.” {Maxwell, Graham. *Servants or Friends*, 109-110. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.}

<https://speakingwell.wpengine.com/written-materials/servants-or-friends/servants-or-friends-chapter-8>

Further Study with Ellen White

It is not possible for the heart in which Christ abides to be destitute of love. If we love God because He first loved us, we shall love all for whom Christ died. We cannot come in touch with divinity without coming in touch with humanity; for in Him who sits upon the throne of the universe, divinity and humanity are combined. Connected with Christ, we are connected with our fellow men by the golden links of the chain of love. Then the pity and compassion of Christ will be manifest in our life. We shall not wait to have the needy and unfortunate brought to us. We shall not need to be entreated to feel for the woes of others. It will be as natural for us to minister to the needy and suffering as it was for Christ to go about doing good. {COL 384.3}

Wherever there is an impulse of love and sympathy, wherever the heart reaches out to bless and uplift others, there is revealed the working of God's Holy Spirit. In the depths of heathenism, men who have had no knowledge of the written law of God, who have never even heard the name of Christ, have been kind to His servants, protecting them at the risk of their own lives. Their acts show the working of a divine power. The Holy Spirit has implanted the grace of Christ in the heart of the savage, quickening his sympathies contrary to his nature, contrary to his education. The "Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:9), is shining in his soul; and this light, if heeded, will guide his feet to the kingdom of God. {COL 385.1}

Christ brings all true believers into complete oneness with Himself, even the oneness which exists between Him and His Father. The true children of God are bound up with one another and with their Saviour. They are one with Christ in God. {SD 293.5}

When the heavenly principle of eternal love fills the heart, it will flow out to others, not merely because favors are received of them, but because love is the principle of action, and modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and elevates the affections. This love is not contracted, so as merely to include "me and mine," but is as broad as the world and as high as heaven. It is in harmony with that of the angel workers. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the entire life, and sheds a refining influence on all around. Possessing it, we cannot but be happy, let fortune smile or frown. And if we love God with all the heart, we must love His children also. This love is the spirit of God. It is the heavenly adorning that gives true nobility and dignity to the soul. {OHC 175.2}

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 mind, and with all thy strength." Mark 12:30. 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. {CT 32.1}

Like the first is the second commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Mark 12:31. The law of love calls for the devotion of body, mind, and soul to the service of God and our fellow

men. And this service, while making us a blessing to others, brings the greatest blessing to ourselves. Unselfishness underlies all true development. Through unselfish service we receive the highest culture of every faculty. {CT 32.2}

Kind words are never lost. Jesus records them as if spoken to Himself. Sow the seeds of kindness, of love, and of tenderness, and they will blossom and bear fruit (MS 33, 1911). {6BC 1118.2}

God is the source of life and light and joy to the universe. Like rays of light from the sun, like the streams of water bursting from a living spring, blessings flow out from Him to all His creatures. And wherever the life of God is in the hearts of men, it will flow out to others in love and blessing. {SC 77.1}

Christ presented to men that which was entirely contrary to the representations of the enemy in regard to the character of God, and sought to impress upon men the love of the Father, who “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. He urged upon men the necessity of prayer, repentance, confession, and the abandonment of sin. He taught them honesty, forbearance, mercy, and compassion, enjoining upon them to love not only those who loved them, but those who hated them and treated them despitefully. In all this He was revealing to them the character of the Father, who is long-suffering, merciful, and gracious, slow to anger, and full of goodness and truth. {CT 29.3}

Kind, tender, compassionate words will flow from sanctified hearts and lips. {SD 180.7}

Thus the question, “Who is my neighbor?” is forever answered. Christ has shown that our neighbor does not mean merely one of the church or faith to which we belong. It has no reference to race, color, or class distinction. Our neighbor is every person who needs our help. Our neighbor is every soul who is wounded and bruised by the adversary. Our neighbor is everyone who is the property of God. {DA 503.5}

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2025: *God's Love and Justice*

Lesson 13 "*Love Is the Fulfillment of the Law*"

Read for this week's study

Exodus 20:1–17; Romans 6:1–3; Romans 7:7–12; Jeremiah 31:31–34; Matthew 23:23, 24; James 2:1–9

Memory Text

"Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law" (Romans 13:8, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Law of Love
- III. The Law Is Holy and Righteous and Good
- IV. Law and Grace
- V. Love Is the Fulfillment of the Law
- VI. Above All, Love One Another
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. "If love is indeed the fulfillment of the law, then we should be careful not to think of law in a way that is separate from love or to think of love in a way that is disconnected from law. In Scripture, love and law go together. [...] God's law is not a set of abstract principles but commands and instructions intended for our flourishing. God's law is, in part, an expression of love as God Himself expresses it." (Sabbath afternoon)
2. If it is true that God desires that everyone loves him, and love is the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:38), why is it that some people do not love God? What does it tell us about God and universe that even God cannot causally determine that everybody loves him? God desires genuine love relationship with his creatures, which requires he consistently grants them free will. Love, by nature must be freely given, freely received, and freely maintained.
3. God's law does not consist of abstract principles; instead, God's law is an expression of relationship. How can the context of the covenant relationship be seen explicitly in the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1–17)? (Sunday's lesson)

4. If “the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good” (Romans 7:12, NKJV), how is the law further confirmed, rather than invalidated, by the process of redemption? (Monday’s lesson)
5. Jesus emphasized that “until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished” (Matthew 5:18, NIV). So what is going to happen when “heaven and earth pass away”?
6. Where does the sharp distinction of law and grace being diametrically opposed to one another come from? (Tuesday’s lesson)
7. “While the ‘gods’ of the surrounding nations were fickle and entirely unpredictable, leaving people without a way to know what the ‘gods’ desired and what would please them, the God of the Bible very clearly instructs His people about what pleases Him.” (Tuesday’s lesson) Why is it important to “please” God? Why is it significant that what pleases God is for the ultimate good of all His people, individually and collectively?
8. What does Jeremiah 31:31–34 teach about God’s promises to give us a new heart? How is that part of the biblical storyline (cf. John 3:1-21)?
9. In what sense is love the fulfillment of the law (Romans 13:8)? (Wednesday’s lesson) What are the “weightier matters of the law” in Matthew 23:23, 24 (cf. Deuteronomy 5:12–15 and Isaiah 58:13,14)? How can we model “justice and mercy and faith” in 21st century society?
10. Jesus commands His followers to “‘love one another;’” even as “‘I have loved you’.” Jesus also proclaims: “‘By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another’” (John 13:34,35, NKJV). How can we live this in a tangible way both individually and collectively in our time and culture? How can we model wanting good for the other person and immersing people into Trinitarian reality (Matthew 28:19)?
11. How can we put into practice what we have studied about God’s love and justice for the last 13 weeks?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

As you know, this idea that “love is the fulfilling of the law” was certainly not new with Paul. Jesus had said the same thing to the inquiring lawyer. But the first one to say it was Moses. Jesus and Paul quoted the man who was instrumental in giving the commandments in the first place. Look at Deuteronomy 6:5: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” (NIV) That is one half of it. Then look in Leviticus 19:17, 18: “Do not hate your brother in your heart. . . . But love your neighbor as yourself.” (NIV) Jesus quoted that from Moses, right from the beginning. But you cannot really command things like love, and “not hating your brother in your heart,” can you? But when people are misbehaving, you may say so as an emergency measure. But that is all it is. It doesn’t provide the lasting motivation that God desires.

Then, since even love is not clearly understood, and think how it has been grossly perverted through the years, Paul added 1 Corinthians 13:4-6. This love that we're talking about that is the fulfilling of the law, "is patient and kind . . . love is not jealous or boastful . . . it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right." (RSV) Imagine living in a community where everyone lives as described in the Ten Commandments! That means everybody loves God and everybody loves everybody else, which means that no one is ever rude or arrogant, or impatient. No one insists on having his own way. Can you imagine living in such a community? Would you be free?

Then you go down to the details of the Decalogue. No one ever steals. No one ever kills. No one ever hates. No one ever lies. Everyone can be trusted. And even more than that, look at number ten. People not only never do anything wrong—no one ever **wants** to. That's the meaning of number ten, the one that bothered Paul so much at first. He thought God was interfering too much when He got in that deep. And finally, Paul said that that is what **really** guarantees our freedom. We will live in a place where people not only never do anything wrong, they will never even want to. That means they have really been healed.

And more than that, according to the first commandment, everyone loves and reveres the same God. What kind of a God do they worship and admire? Every member of God's family will admire the God who values nothing higher than the freedom of His children and who has paid such a price to prove it. They will worship a God who asks for nothing more than mutual love and trust. That produces a unity that is inherent in our faith and the fact that we all love and worship the same God. When you have a group of people who live like that, you have real freedom, real peace, and real security. Seen in that light, the Decalogue is a guarantee of freedom. For God says, "I will always run my universe this way. I'd rather die than change it." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #12, "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/12MMCG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

God's work is the same in all time, although there are different degrees of development and different manifestations of His power, to meet the wants of men in the different ages. Beginning with the first gospel promise, and coming down through the patriarchal and Jewish ages, and even to the present time, there has been a gradual unfolding of the purposes of God in the plan of redemption. {PP 373.2}

Satan is ever at work endeavoring to pervert what God has spoken, to blind the mind and darken the understanding, and thus lead men into sin. This is why the Lord is so explicit, making His requirements so very plain that none need err. God is constantly seeking to draw men close under His protection, that Satan may not practice his cruel, deceptive power upon them. He has

condescended to speak to them with His own voice, to write with His own hand the living oracles. And these blessed words, all instinct with life and luminous with truth, are committed to men as a perfect guide. {PP 503.3}

The ten holy precepts spoken by Christ upon Sinai's mount were the revelation of the character of God, and made known to the world the fact that He had jurisdiction over the whole human heritage. That law of ten precepts of the greatest love that can be presented to man is the voice of God from heaven speaking to the soul in promise, "This do, and you will not come under the dominion and control of Satan." There is not a negative in that law, although it may appear thus. It is DO, and Live (Letter 89, 1898). {1BC 1105.2}

So far from making arbitrary requirements, God's law is given to men as a hedge, a shield. Whoever accepts its principles is preserved from evil. Fidelity to God involves fidelity to man. Thus the law guards the rights, the individuality, of every human being. It restrains the superior from oppression, and the subordinate from disobedience. It ensures man's well-being, both for this world and for the world to come. To the obedient it is the pledge of eternal life, for it expresses the principles that endure forever. {Ed 76.4}

It will take the whole of eternity for man to understand the plan of redemption. It will open to him line upon line; here a little and there a little (MS 21, 1895). {6BC 1115.15}

The religion of Jesus Christ is not merely to prepare us for the future immortal life; it is to enable us to live the Christ life here on earth. Jesus is not only our pattern, He is also our friend and our guide, and by taking hold of His strong arm and partaking of His Spirit, we may walk "even as he walked." {TMK 298.6}

The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God. {COL 97.3}

If the human agent consents, God can and will so identify His will with all our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His Word, that when obeying His will, we are only carrying out the impulses of our minds. {UL 187.5}

In calling them to His service, God offers them freedom. Obedience to God is liberty from the thralldom of sin, deliverance from human passion and impulse. {TM 247.1}

The new birth consists in having new motives, new tastes, new tendencies. Those who are begotten unto a new life by the Holy Spirit, have become partakers of the divine nature, and in all their habits and practices they will give evidence of their relationship to Christ. (RH April 12, 1892). {6BC 1101.1}

The truths of God's word are not mere sentiments, 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 has clouded the understanding is removed. {CT 452.2}

The Sabbath of the fourth commandment was instituted in Eden. After God had made the world, and created man upon the earth, He made the Sabbath for man. After Adam's sin and fall nothing was taken from the law of God. The principles of the ten commandments existed before the fall, and were of a character suited to the condition of a holy order of beings. After the fall, the principles of those precepts were not changed, but additional precepts were given to meet man in his fallen state (3SG 295). {1BC 1104.3}

The law was not spoken at this time exclusively for the benefit of the Hebrews. God honored them by making them the guardians and keepers of His law, but it was to be held as a sacred trust for the whole world. The precepts of the Decalogue are adapted to all mankind, and they were given for the instruction and government of all. Ten precepts, brief, comprehensive, and authoritative, cover the duty of man to God and to his fellow man; and all based upon the great fundamental principle of love. . . . In the Ten Commandments these principles are carried out in detail, and made applicable to the condition and circumstances of man. {PP 305.2}

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. So in every soul wherein Christ, the hope of glory, dwells, His words are re-echoed, "I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy law is within My heart." Psalm 40:8. {MB 109.2}

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}

There is no caste with God. He ignores everything of the kind. All souls are of value with Him. Laboring for the salvation of the soul is employment worthy of the highest honor. It matters not what may be the form of our labor, or among what class, whether high or low. In God's sight these distinctions will not affect its true worth. The sincere, earnest, contrite soul, however ignorant, is precious in the sight of the Lord. He places His own signet upon men, judging, not by their rank, not by their wealth, not by their intellectual greatness, but by their oneness with Christ. The unlearned, the outcast, the slave, if he has made the most of his opportunities and privileges, if he has cherished the light given him of God, has done all that is required. The world may call him ignorant, but God calls him wise and good, and thus his name stands registered in the books of heaven. God will fit him up to do Him honor, not only in heaven, but on the earth.—*Gospel Workers*, p. 332. (1915) {Ev 566.1}

To love as Christ loved means to manifest unselfishness at all times and in all places, by kind words and pleasant looks. These cost those who give them nothing, but they leave behind a fragrance that surrounds the soul. Their effect can never be estimated. Not only are they a blessing to the receiver, but to the giver; for they react upon him. Genuine love is a precious attribute of heavenly origin, which increases in fragrance in proportion as it is dispensed to others. . . . {OHC 231.4}