

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2014: *The Teachings of Jesus*

Lesson 4 "Salvation"

Read for this week's study

Luke 18:9–14; John 6:44; Luke 15:3–10; Matt. 20:28; John 8:34–36; John 6:35, 47–51.

Memory Text

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Salvation Is a Gift From God
- III. Salvation: God's Initiative
- IV. The Required Death
- V. Free From Sin
- VI. Christ Gives Us Eternal Life
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Moderator: Daniel Duda

1. “This week we will consider Jesus’ saving work. First, our attention will focus on the basis of our salvation and later on the results of it.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. “We have only two choices regarding our sins: either we pay for our sins in the lake of fire, or we accept Christ’s payment for them on the cross.” (Sabbath afternoon)
What are the advantages and disadvantages of seeing the process of salvation as payment for sins? In what sense do the wicked “pay” for their sins in the lake of fire? In what sense did Jesus “pay” for our sins on the cross? The purpose of looking at salvation in this manner is clear: “As we review the generous gift of God’s grace through Christ, let us once again humbly renew our faith in Jesus as our personal Savior.” (Sabbath afternoon) While renewing our faith in Jesus is certainly desirable, does this approach deal with the larger issues that have been raised in God’s universe-wide family?
3. “What does the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Luke 18:9-14) teach us about what our attitude toward God and His grace should be? (...) However, those who heard Jesus when he pronounced the verdict must have been astonished. Wasn’t this an unjust outcome? Yes, it was completely undeserved. That is the way

salvation is. It is a gift from God. Gifts are not earned; they are simply accepted. We cannot buy salvation; we can only receive it. (Sunday's lesson)

4. How does this story function in Luke's Gospel? In Luke 18:1-14, there are two parables: stories about the persistent widow and the tax collector. Both are about vindication: If even a rotten judge can be persuaded to do the right thing by someone who pesters him day and night, then of course God, who is Justice personified and who cares passionately about people will vindicate them, will see that justice is done. In the second parable, the Pharisee in the temple turned religion into a contest. In his "prayer" he tells God all about his own good points, thus exalting himself by denouncing the tax collector. Jesus reveals that the divine judge sees things differently. God knows who His true people are and that recognition does not depend on what their enemies think (17:20-37) or on particular observance of the minutia of the Jewish law (18:9-14). God sees genuine repentance, change of heart and casting oneself on the mercies of God and will ultimately vindicate all His people.
5. Monday's lesson points out, "Not only is the Father involved [*by drawing people to Himself; John 6:44*], but the Son also has a very active role in our salvation. He came with a definite mission. 'The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.' (*Luke 19:10, NKJV*) How far is the Lord willing to go in His efforts to save us? See *Luke 15:3-10*."
6. Once again, the two parables are not only about the fact "that God is not waiting passively for us to come to Him, but actively seeks us out. We have a seeking God. It does not matter if we are astray, far away in a dangerous place or even lost at home; the Lord will seek us untiringly until He finds us." (Monday's lesson). For Luke the important part is that in Jewish understanding the two halves of God's creation, heaven and earth, were meant to fit together and be in harmony with each other. If we discover that there is a party going on in heaven with all the angels joining in, we discover how things were meant to be on earth. And if there is grumpiness and murmuring among the Pharisees and law experts, instead of rejoicing that sinners are repenting, they are out of tune with God's reality.
7. "John the Baptist described Jesus as 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' (*John 1:29, NKJV*). This image was easy for any Israelite familiar with the sacrifices offered in the temple and the sacred history recorded in the Old Testament to understand." (Tuesday's lesson) If this image was easy for any Israelite to understand, why was the connection not made until well into the Christian era? There is no clear evidence in the Old Testament that the people saw the sacrificial lamb as referring to a coming deliverer. Only after the Resurrection did the combination of Isaiah 53 and the Passover imagery come together to portray Jesus as the suffering one who died for our sins.
8. Jesus is referred to as the Passover lamb in only one New Testament passage, 1 Corinthians 5:7-8: "Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch – as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

⁸ Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.” Even here Paul is not discussing the Passover interpretation, but simply assuming such an application with reference to a very difficult situation in Corinth. The words of John Baptist (John 1:29) point out that events concerning Jesus need to be understood as a new and better Exodus story. Just as God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, so God was now bringing a new people out of an even older and darker slavery. In John’s Gospel Jesus is the true Passover lamb and the death of Jesus takes place on the afternoon when the Passover lambs were killed in the Temple.

9. Understandably, the lesson emphasizes the substitutionary nature of Christ’s death: “What illustrations did Jesus use to indicate that He was going to die as a Substitute for us (see *Matt. 20:28, John 10:11*)? (...) On the cross, Jesus shed His blood ‘for many for the remission of sins’ (*Matt. 26:28, NKJV*). (...) Even Caiaphas, who openly rejected Jesus and led the plot to kill Him, involuntarily recognized Jesus’ substitutionary death (John 11:49–51).” (Tuesday’s lesson) What do we mean when we say that Jesus died a substitutionary death? What are the strong and weak points of this emphasis?
10. Wednesday’s lesson is titled “Free From Sin”. Who wouldn’t want to be free from sin? And why not sooner rather than later? However, a misunderstanding of the nature of sin and the nature of Christ’s kingdom (the dynamics of “already – not yet”) brought a lot of suffering and controversy in the history of Christianity and the SDA Church. How do you understand the promise from John 8:34-36? What is Jesus talking about?
11. “When four men brought a paralyzed man to Him, He knew that this man was sick as a result of his dissolute living, but He also knew that the man had repented. In the pleading eyes of this man, the Lord saw the longing of his heart for forgiveness and his faith in Jesus as his only Helper.” (Wednesday’s lesson) There is nothing in the text to indicate this! Why is it important to have repentance before forgiveness? What model of theology is behind such thinking? What about Luke 15:11-24, Romans 2:4? Is there another (and better?) model presented there?
12. The lesson rightfully emphasizes the present reality of eternal life: “However, the promise of salvation is expressed in the present tense: ‘He who believes in the Son has everlasting life’ (*John 3:36, NKJV*). Whoever believes in Christ ‘has everlasting life’ now, ‘and shall not come into judgment’ in the final day, ‘but has passed from death into life’ (*John 5:24, NKJV*). Thus, even if we die and sleep in the grave, this temporary rest doesn’t take away from the reality of eternal life.” How do you understand this reality?
13. If it is true that “When Jesus becomes our Savior, our life acquires a whole new meaning, and we can enjoy a richer and a fuller existence”(Thursday’s lesson), why did Mahatma Gandhi say that he would have believed, if he had seen more redeemed Christians? What does eternal life and salvation as a present reality, really mean?

14. Remember, salvation is first and foremost not a doctrine to be discussed, pondered and analyzed, but an experience to be savored. It is easy to forget that and end up in a divisive fight about the intricacies of a doctrine and/or end up feeling smug that we are not like those who still employ some crude metaphors to express their beliefs.

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

But now, is there really uncertainty in our church on the plan of salvation? Is there serious disagreement? Are the disagreements important? Some say, “No, why don’t we just carry on and finish the work, while we allow the theologians the luxury of having theological disputation in their spare time. And we ought to employ them more profitably so they don’t have quite so much spare time to engage in the theological disputation.” You know, administrators will make this comment every once in a while. Well, some really do feel there isn’t any important difference. Personally, I’ll run the risk of saying I think that some of the issues at the present time are as fundamental as any that have been raised in the history of the great controversy, and what we’re witnessing is history repeating itself; maybe for the last time. If this thing should grow, it could grow into a clarification, once again, of the fundamental issues in the great controversy over the character and government of God. But history also repeats itself in that many people are saying there’s really nothing important here, it’s all semantic, it’s just the use of words. As you may know, after the Minneapolis General Conference in 1888, some people went home from that meeting saying, “We had a very blessed time together with the Lord; just a wonderful spiritual feast.” And others went home and said, “We had a terrible fight there over the three horns that were uprooted”, you remember? And somebody went to Ellen White and said, “What’s your view on the three horns that were uprooted?” She said, “I think we have altogether too many horns around here.” She didn’t want to waste time, and I wondered what her comment would be at certain large conferences we’ve had of late. But when you ask Ellen White if anything happened at that meeting, and you hear her say things like this, you wonder how anybody could go home and say, “I don’t think there was any dispute at all.”

She says, for example, at that Minneapolis General Conference:

An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions lay at the foundation of a large share of the opposition manifested at Minneapolis against the Lord’s message through Brethren Waggoner and Jones. [Something had happened at the conference and] By exciting that opposition, Satan succeeded [yet folk went away and said we had a wonderful spiritual feast; she said Satan was victorious at the meeting. And they thought they were having a spiritual feast.] By exciting that opposition, Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people in a great measure, the special power of

the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart to them. [We're not going to have the latter rain until we get this settled.] The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency that might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. The light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted, [at that meeting where some said they had no controversy; they had a spiritual feast] and by the action of our own brethren has been to a large degree kept away from the world.

Now, two or three other places to show how she regarded that as a very serious disagreement and misunderstanding. She says:

I shall never, I think, be called to stand under the influence of the Holy Spirit as I stood at Minneapolis. All assembled at that meeting had an opportunity to place themselves on the side of truth by receiving the Holy Spirit which was sent by God in such a rich current of love and mercy. But in the rooms occupied by some of our people, we heard ridicule, criticism, jeering, and laughter. Who searched the Holy Scriptures as did the noble Bereans to see if the things they heard were so? The scenes which took place at that meeting [where some said they had such wonderful spiritual blessing]. The scenes which took place at that meeting made the God of Heaven ashamed to call those who took part in them His brethren. All this the Heavenly watcher noticed. [God] will blot out the transgression of those who since that time have repented with a sincere repentance; but every time that same spirit wakens in the soul, the deeds done on that occasion [in Minneapolis] are endorsed, and the doers of them are made responsible to God, [and so on.] The same spirit that actuated the rejecters of Christ rankles in their hearts, and had they lived in the days of Christ, they would have acted toward Him in a manner similar to that of the godless and unbelieving Jews.

So she says it was that bad, that if Christ had appeared at the Minneapolis General Conference, some would have rejected Him, just as the Jews rejected Christ. Now when the Jews rejected Christ, did they disagree over which day was the Sabbath? Tithing? Health-reforming? Authority of scripture? Ten Commandments? The blueprint? They were in full agreement. So some looking on said, "Well I don't see what the trouble is. We all keep the same day; all eat the same food, more or less. I mean, what's the difference?" She said the difference was as night from day. Remember that the men who crucified Christ rushed home to keep the seventh-day Sabbath.

So the difference then would not be perceived by some, who would settle for a more or less superficial conformity to the requirements of the organization. She says: "All the universe of heaven witnessed the disgraceful treatment of Jesus Christ, [at the Minneapolis General Conference]. Had Christ been before them, they would have treated Him in a manner similar to that in which the Jews treated Christ." Can you imagine such words? Lastly, "In Minneapolis,

God gave precious gems of truth to His people in new settings.” And then she goes on to describe once again the atmosphere of those who were present. I guess I don’t need to repeat that. You see, she didn’t go home from the meeting and say, “We had a perfectly wonderful time. All the disagreements were inconsequential.” The one over the three horns; yes, it was inconsequential. There are other things which sometimes exercise us, which I think should be put in the same category as the three horns.

But there was something else at Minneapolis that caused a very fundamental disagreement. And because of the behavior there, the Holy Spirit was not able to give the Seventh-day Adventist Church influence to persuade the world as to the truthfulness of their message, because it wasn’t true. In what respect? Anything in the list from Dallas? I doubt it. It was something else that is not on the list. Because the issue in the great controversy has never appeared on the list of beliefs, I think, that our church has ever put together. What is the issue in the great controversy? {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)

One view sees the plan of salvation and God’s gracious provisions, such as the death of Christ on the cross, as being primarily offered to adjust our legal standing in the sight of God—because as sinners, we are guilty. And guilty as we are, justice and law demand that we be executed. And the only way to avoid being executed—and there are many, various explanations of execution; these are the various views of hell. We all have views of hell, the longer view, the medium view and the shorter view; there are many views of hell. But if God is the executioner, then we do well to be preoccupied with our legal standing. And unless we be forgiven, He will go ahead and do this to us; He must. Law and justice require it. And if He doesn’t go through with this, the universe will conclude He is unjust. And if He’s unjust, you wouldn’t trust Him, and now you’re getting over into the other view, which always amuses me, that if you pursue even the legal view logically to its conclusions you wind up with the other one.

But now in the larger view, which uses all 66 books and has no problems with Ellen White at all, it sees sin not as a legal problem. It sees sin as a very real problem that has had devastating consequences on us physically, mentally, spiritually, socially. Sin is a breach of trust, as Romans 14 says. Sin is treachery. Sin is what Lucifer did in the beginning, for which you could not have called him in before church counsel. I mean what had he done? Nothing! Except the most devastating thing that can ever be done. Nearly destroyed the universe, that’s what he did. That’s how bad it was. And because of this distrust, and the consequential unwillingness to listen and allow God to look after us and heal the damage done, enormous damage has been done to sinners. **We’re not in legal trouble, we’re in trouble. We’re not in danger of being**

executed, we're dying. That's the difference. And I believe it makes all the difference in the world. I would not go to a doctor who would kill his patients for not cooperating. But if I'm dying, I need a doctor. And if I go and don't cooperate, I still may die.

But my understanding is that in this larger view, this great controversy view, this 66 book view, we're all dying. And if God were to leave us alone, that's it. But He hasn't. He's pursued us through the years, trying to win us back to trust. And of course, you don't expect people to trust without evidence. You don't make claims; you offer demonstrations; that's the content of the 66 books, God's demonstration of the kind of person He is. And the way He has handled this emergency is the greatest demonstration of all. As to—not how He treats His friends, but how He treats His enemies. How He treats the sick and the dying; how does He seek to win them back to trust? And some of us find that very wonderful. So the purpose of the plan of salvation is not to adjust our legal standing, but the purpose of the plan of salvation is to win us back to trust so He can heal us, which He can readily do, and it is to confirm the trust of the onlooking universe. {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:*

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There is nothing more diabolic than to suppress and pervert the Good News about God. And this can be done even while apparently presenting Christian doctrine. As God is represented in some pulpits, the doctrine of the Second Coming is certainly not good news. The prospect of spending eternity with such a deity would be forbidding.

There are explanations of the death of Christ and of his intercession in our behalf that put God in a most unfavorable light, make Him seem less gracious and understanding than his Son. Such subjects as sin, the law, the destruction of the wicked, the requirements for salvation, are sometimes presented in such a way—including the voice and manner of the preacher—as to leave the people with precisely the picture of God that Satan has been urging.

As followers of Christ, it is our desire to be counted among God's loyal people, described in Revelation as obedient to his commandments and faithful to the truth revealed by Jesus.

But if in our eagerness to obey we may have left the impression that we worship a legalistic and arbitrary God, then we have not witnessed well to the Good News. And if by our teaching or our way of life we may have led some to think of God as the kind of person Satan has made him out to be, we have not shown ourselves to be trustworthy friends.

There could be no greater privilege and honor than to be entrusted with the Good News about God. Surely the time has come that God's friends everywhere who share something of Paul's

jealousy for God's reputation should speak up with more of Paul's pride and conviction as to what we believe the Good News really is. {Maxwell, Graham. *Can God Be Trusted?*, 34-35. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 2002}

<http://speakingwellofgod.org/written-materials/can-god-be-trusted-chapters/chapter-04>

1 Selected Messages, 233-235: "We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin." Ellen White is very strong on discipline. You know, "whom the Lord loves He disciplines," no question. She's talking here about final destruction:

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. [She wrote] 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 forgiveness doesn't take care of that change. That's why salvation is more than forgiveness, it means healing the damage done. Sin really changes us. The legalist thinks he can go and get it just covered or erased or forgiven or pardoned or forgotten. That's legalism. But to recognize that sin damages us—we are never the same. Adam and Eve were never the same. They were hurt by this thing. They could not pass on a perfect nature to their children. They were weakened by this thing. That's why it's suicide to sin. I mean the reasons for sin are not just "it upsets our righteous Heavenly Father". It also is utterly destructive, too, and He does not wish us to destroy ourselves. There's every reason for not sinning.

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. [And I'm sure we've all experienced that] 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.

{Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, *We've Camped Around This Mountain Long Enough*, number 1, recorded July, 1989, South Dakota Conference Ministers Meeting} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/1MMCAMPED>

Recommended further study: The complete article (interview) written for the Exchange in 1999 [Why Did Jesus Have to Die \(PDF\)](#)

Recommended further reading: *Servants or Friends?*, Chapter 8, "How Servants and Friends Look at Sin and Salvation" <http://www.pineknoll.org/graham/sof/chapter8.html>

Further Study with Ellen White

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 results of sin made plain, and the perpetuity of the law fully demonstrated. {ST, February 13, 1893 par. 12}

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. It would establish the perpetuity of the law of God and would reveal the nature and the results of sin. {PP 68.2}

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 in order that the heavenly universe might see the conditions of the covenant of redemption that Christ bore the penalty in behalf of the human race. **The throne of Justice must be eternally and forever made secure, even tho the race be wiped out, and another creation populate the earth.** By the sacrifice Christ was about to make, all doubts would be forever settled, and the human race would be saved if they would return to their allegiance. Christ alone could restore honor to God’s government. The cross of Calvary would be looked upon by the unfallen worlds, by the heavenly universe, by Satanic agencies, by the fallen race, and every mouth would be stopped. (Emphasis added) {ST, July 12, 1899 par. 2}

That which alone can effectually restrain from sin in this world of darkness, will prevent sin in heaven. The significance of the death of Christ will be seen by saints and angels. . . .The angels ascribe honor and glory to Christ, for even they are not secure except by looking to the sufferings of the Son of God. It is through the efficacy of the cross that the angels of heaven are guarded from apostasy. Without the cross they would be no more secure against evil than were the angels before the fall of Satan. Angelic perfection failed in heaven. . . . The plan of salvation, making manifest the justice and love of God, provides an eternal safeguard against defection in

unfallen worlds, as well as among those who shall be redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. {ST, December 30, 1889 par. 4}

A crisis had arrived in the government of God. . . All heaven was prepared at the word of God to move to the help of his elect. One word from him, and the bolts of heaven would have fallen upon the earth, filling it with fire and flame. God had but to speak, and there would have been thunderings and lightnings and earthquakes and destruction. {RH, July 17, 1900 par. 5}

The heavenly intelligences were prepared for a fearful manifestation of Almighty power. Every move was watched with intense anxiety. The exercise of justice was expected. The angels looked for God to punish the inhabitants of the earth. . . {RH, July 17, 1900 par. 6}

The heavenly universe was amazed at God's patience and love. To save fallen humanity the Son of God took humanity upon himself {RH, July 17, 1900 par. 7}

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 people whom God had called to be the pillar and ground of the truth had become representatives of Satan. They were doing the work that he desired them to do, taking a course to misrepresent the character of God, and cause the world to look upon Him as a tyrant. The very priests who ministered in the temple had lost sight of the significance of the service they performed. They had ceased to look beyond the symbol to the thing signified. In presenting the sacrificial offerings they were as actors in a play. The ordinances which God Himself had appointed were made the means of blinding the mind and hardening the heart. God could do no more for man through these channels. The whole system must be swept away. {DA 36.2}

The deception of sin had reached its height. All the agencies for depraving the souls of men had been put in operation. The Son of God, looking upon the world, beheld suffering and misery. With pity He saw how men had become victims of satanic cruelty. He looked with compassion upon those who were being corrupted, murdered, and lost. They had chosen a ruler who chained them to his car as captives. Bewildered and deceived, they were moving on in gloomy procession toward eternal ruin,—to death in which is no hope of life, toward night to which comes no morning. Satanic agencies were incorporated with men. The bodies of human beings, made for the dwelling place of God, had become the habitation of demons. {DA 36.3}

Sin had become a science, and vice was consecrated as a part of religion. Rebellion had struck its roots deep into the heart, and the hostility of man was most violent against heaven. It was demonstrated before the universe that, apart from God, humanity could not be uplifted. A new element of life and power must be imparted by Him who made the world. {DA 37.1}

Satan was exulting that he had succeeded in debasing the image of God in humanity. Then Jesus came to restore in man the image of his Maker. None but Christ can fashion anew the character that has been ruined by sin. He came to expel the demons that had controlled the will. He came to lift us up from the dust, to reshape the marred character after the pattern of His divine character, and to make it beautiful with His own glory. {DA 37.3}

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. {MH 253.3}