

## Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

### Second Quarter 2017: *“Feed My Sheep”*: 1 and 2 Peter

#### Lesson 6 *“Suffering for Christ”*

#### Read for this week’s study

1 Peter 1:6, 3:13–22; 2 Timothy 3:12; 1 Peter 4:12–14; Revelation 12:17; 1 Peter 4:17–19.

#### Memory Text

“For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow in His steps” (1 Peter 2:21, NKJV).

#### Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Persecution of Early Christians
- III. Suffering and the Example of Christ
- IV. The Fiery Trial
- V. Judgment and the People of God
- VI. Faith Amid Trials
- VII. Further Study

#### Questions and Notes for Consideration

##### Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. The first letter of Peter can be divided into three parts: God’s Grace and Salvation (1:1-2:10); God’s Grace and Submission (2:11-3:12); and God’s Grace and Suffering (3:13-5:11). (For more details see the study materials for Lessons 4 and 5.)
2. The third section can be further divided into: Make Jesus Christ Lord (3:13-22); Have Christ’s Attitude (4:1-11) [dealt with in Lesson 5]; Glorify Christ’s Name (4:12-19); Look for Christ’s Return (5:1-6); and Depend on Christ’s Grace (5:7-14). In this lesson we will look at the first and third (the last two are dealt with in Lesson 7).
3. Peter writes his letter to the “scattered strangers” who were going through a time of suffering and persecution. In this letter, Peter refers to suffering at least 15 times, using eight different Greek words. Some of these Christians were suffering because they were living godly lives and doing what was good and right (2:18-25; 3:13-21; 4:1-4, 12-19). Others were suffering reproach for the name of Christ (4:14) and being harassed. (3:9-10). Peter wrote to encourage them to be good witnesses to their persecutors, and to remember that their suffering would lead to glory (1:6-7; 4:13-14; 5:10).

4. In 1:6 Peter states a concept that he will continue to develop further: this suffering, though difficult, is one means by which the quality of the Christians' faith can shine all the more, and when Jesus is finally revealed, this will result in an explosion of praise.
5. Suffering and opposition were widespread for Christians in the Roman Empire, even while the details and intensity varied from place to place (5:9).
6. How should Christians respond to those who would cause them to suffer because of their faith (3:13-22)? Peter writes to encourage people who were likely to suffer unjust treatment from the human authorities – not just from random acts of mob violence or casual brutality, but the vicious sting of official, legal persecution, even in the face of innocence. Peter points out that this innocent suffering puts the Messiah's people in the place where the Messiah himself had been, the victim of the worst injustice of all.
7. But Peter's point is also that after his suffering Jesus announced God's victory over all 'authorities' particularly those in heavenly places. The human authorities persecuting them represent the evil 'spiritual' authorities, those standing behind in the shadowy, unseen realm, who are responsible for wickedness and corruption in this world.
8. Sometimes the opponents' actions actually serve to advance the cause (4:12-19), and that proved to be true in history. The problem Peter is facing here is not simply that nobody likes to be persecuted and ill-treated. That's obvious. The underlying issue Peter is addressing is the early Christians' surprise that even after the Messiah had been raised from the dead and had defeated all the powers of sin and death, that his people should still be subjected to such intense suffering. Why is this still happening to them?
9. Peter answers by quoting Zechariah 13:9. After the shepherd is struck and killed (which Jesus applied to himself [see Mark 14:27]), those who remain of his followers are to be put into the fire to be refined like silver or gold. They still can expect a "fiery ordeal" (Zechariah 13:9; 1 Peter 4:12). No goldsmith would deliberately waste the precious ore. After he allows the impurities to be removed, he creates from the metal a beautiful article of art and value.
10. Peter is treading a fine line here. He is not glorifying the suffering for its own sake. He is not saying you should go looking for it. Just as the crucifixion of Jesus demonstrated both the wickedness of humans and the love of God, the wickedness of those who persecute God's people allows the power of His transforming love to be seen more clearly.
11. Many Christians around the world who experience similar persecution today need this same message. We can pray for them realizing that one day we also might need this message ourselves.
12. Finally, Peter reminds his readers that they must view everything that is happening in the light of the final judgement which is yet to occur. The outcome is not in doubt:

Jesus will vindicate his faithful people (Daniel 7:21). The judgement does not begin with the obviously wicked, but with God's own household (1 Peter 4:17). And in v. 18 Peter puts it even more strongly: the righteous person is scarcely saved!

13. This alarming reflection is not meant to produce panic, but rather gratitude. Those who at present persecute God's people will in due course meet their own judgement. But God's people are called to faith and patience. In particular, they should "entrust their whole lives to God and continue to do good" (4:19)! That is more than just rule-keeping, staying out of trouble and keeping your nose and ears clean (and stomach healthy). 'Doing good' is much more positive than that. It means bringing fresh goodness, fresh kindness, fresh love, fresh wisdom into the community, into the family, to the people on the street.
14. We do this not to call attention to ourselves, but rather to say to God, "I trust you. This is what you have called me to do; this is what I am going to do with the life you have given me. Even when I face suffering I will continue to be this kind of person for your glory. I'm going to do what's right because it *is* right."

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

How successful would you say God has been in restoring peace to his universe? How about in Heaven? Does peace prevail? Read the whole book of Revelation. They never cease to celebrate God's victory in the great controversy and how trustworthy and righteous he is. How about peace in the hereafter? Read Isaiah and the last two chapters in Revelation and many of the other prophetic books, the marvelous descriptions of the peace to come. How successful has God been in restoring peace on this earth? Because so many have perversely chosen to twist or even reject the truth, instead of producing peace, it has produced argument, debate—even to the point of violence and persecution. Jesus warned of this. Look at his words in Matthew 10:34-36. He foresaw what his demonstration of the truth would cause: "I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. I came to set sons against their fathers, daughters against their mothers, daughters-in-law against their mothers-in-law; a man's worst enemies will be the members of his own family." (GNB)

Look at what the members of Jesus' own family did to him. Look at John 1:11: "He came to his home and his own family did not welcome him." (Goodspeed) In fact, they told him he had a devil to be so describing his Father. And they killed him to silence him. We need to remember as we have mentioned several times in these conversations, that the ones who rejected Christ and preferred Satan's picture of God, were the most pious group of seventh-day Sabbath-keeping, tithe-paying, health-reforming, Bible-studying, Adventists the world has ever known.

Peter warns that those who accept the true picture of God may expect similar treatment and even suffer somewhat as Christ did. Look at 1 Peter 4:12-14:

Do not be surprised at the painful test you are suffering. . . . Rather be glad that you are sharing Christ's suffering. . . . Happy are you if you are insulted because you are Christ's followers; this means that the glorious Spirit, the Spirit of God, is resting on you. (GNB)

Where will such trouble come from for those who hold the true picture of God? Could such trouble come again from the same sort of pious, Sabbath-keeping, tithe-paying, health-reforming, Bible-quoting, Adventists as before? Could one entertain such a thought? It happened once before. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #20, "At Peace With Our Heavenly Father" 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/20MMCAG>

Some day 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).

All of us are unavoidably caught up in this struggle and its results. Throughout history Satan has had vast success in corrupting man's ideas of God. Millions have worshiped deities who use fear and force to have their way. Even among those who call themselves the followers of Christ, the cruelest of persecutions have been conducted in God's name—men and women tortured at the stake to force acceptance of perverted Christian faith.

How often religion has sought to crush man's freedom and deny his sacred right of individuality! How often religion has insulted human dignity, demanding blind submission and belief!

All this bespeaks an arrogant and arbitrary God. Is this the truth that Jesus said would set men free? Or are these Satan's lies about our gracious God? Does God desire the obedience of fear or the obedience that springs from trust and admiration for the rightness of his ways?

No wonder that, for many, God is dead. The deity some have worshiped is perhaps far better dead. But in the vacuum that follows, will worse caricatures of God crowd in to take his place? Man was not designed to live alone, without friends and without God. {Maxwell, Graham. *Can God Be Trusted?*, 15-16. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 2002}

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

I suppose the most important question to end our week's discussion is what truth is this into which we must be so settled that we cannot be moved, or God in mercy would not allow the closing events to occur? When he said to Job that Job had told the truth, what was the truth about? He said, "You have said of me what is right" and the ultimate truth is the truth about God. You remember how God was defending Job; he has always defended his friends. And who is the accuser of the brethren who accuses us day and night before God? And Satan said, "God, if you'll let me work on this man I'll break down his friendship with you." And God said, "There's no way you could do it. He trusts me and I trust him." And God gave Satan a free hand and it didn't work the first time. Then he gave him a freer hand to do everything he wanted to Job short of taking his life. Satan took away Job's estate. He took away his family. He took away his health. He took away his reputation. And he overwhelmed his wife who said, "Job, I can't stand it another minute. Curse God and die." And Job did not allow his friendship with God to be broken up.

And that's only chapter two. What is the rest of the book about? Job had held together, he had not broken down. He had not collapsed. Satan could not undermine his faith in God by all the usual things we look for in the time of trouble—persecution, opposition, privation, hunger, sorrow, bad health—all those things had not turned him against God. The rest of the book is Satan's supreme effort to undermine Job's faith and turn him against his God.

How did he do it? He sent four caring theologians who were wrong. And the four theologians arrived and oh they had all their key texts. And they were so sympathetic which was very winsome. They cried when they saw their old friend. And they couldn't speak for seven days and seven nights. They *really* empathized with their old friend. And then they opened their mouths and began to describe a God that was no friend, a very legalistic God. But you'll have to admit they were against sin and they were for righteousness and they believed in God and in his sovereign authority, all those good things. But they were no friends of God as Job was.

And Job said, "I wish you brethren would stop, miserable comforters are you" with their miserable picture of God. He said, "I just want to talk to God. I've been his friend for years, we've always talked together. And he won't talk to me now." And they said, "I wouldn't dare talk to God like that." He said, "I can. I'm not afraid." And God was complimented by the agony of his friend because God was moved that Job was so upset that they were not in communication, they had been such good friends. Job's cries were an honor to God his friend.

And Job said, "I wish I could speak to God." And Elihu said, "I wouldn't ask to speak to him. I wouldn't give him a chance to kill me." Elihu—a friend of God? He was like the Jews at the foot of Mount Sinai. "Don't let God speak to us lest we die." But Job was like Moses. He said, "God can speak to me. He's my friend and we can talk face to face." And when it was all over God said, "Thank you Job. You have said of me what is right. Thank you for being my friend."

{Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Friends of God, #8, "Thank You for Being my

Friends” recorded June, 1987, Orlando, Florida} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/8MMFOG>*

To think that we’re treated like the brothers of our Lord. God is only trying to tell us how he’s willing to accept us and regard us with such dignity and respect, even though we don’t deserve it. Provided, of course, that it means enough to us that we’re willing to suffer with him in order that we also may be glorified with him. Because the moment we declare ourselves on God’s side, the enemy of God is our enemy too, and he will work on us as he worked on the Lord. And it will be a struggle. And worse than that, we not only have the enemy outside to work on, to resist, we have the enemy inside. We have that old man of bad habits. We have to struggle with him.

Is the struggle really worth it? Paul even says that we can benefit from this struggle. Don’t be dismayed by it, he said (Romans 5), these struggles produce endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces a hope that will never let you down.

You remember Peter says in his letter, “Don’t be dismayed at the fiery struggle and persecution that you’ll have to pass through. It is inevitable. Anyone who’s really a saint, and who’s really committed himself to God’s side will have trouble. But then Peter goes on to say, “But be sure that you don’t deserve the trouble. Don’t bring it on yourself. If trouble comes, if opposition and persecution come, let it be because of the misbehavior and the unbelief of others, not because you’ve misbehaved yourself.”

See, often people suffer a great deal, and say, “That’s part of the lot of a saint.” No, they brought a lot of it on themselves. It’s their own behavior, they have invited trouble. Think how Jesus sought to avoid needless trouble, but yet, look what trouble came to him. There’ll be enough trouble from the enemy without brewing any for ourselves. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 8, recorded November, 1977, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/15MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/16MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

### **Further Study with Ellen White**

But Christ’s mission was not for judgment, but for salvation. “God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.” John 3:17. And before the Sanhedrin Jesus declared, “He that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life.” John 5:24, R. V. {DA 210.4}

“God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through Him might be saved.” John 3:17. Looking upon men in their suffering and degradation, Christ perceived ground for hope where appeared only despair and ruin. Wherever there existed a sense of need, there He saw opportunity for uplifting. Souls tempted, defeated, feeling themselves lost, ready to perish, He met, not with denunciation, but with blessing. {Ed 79.2}

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. {6BC 1110.5}

God 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. He provides opportunities and opens channels of working. If His people are watching the indications of His providence, and are ready to cooperate with Him, they will see mighty results. {PK 660.3}

Divine wisdom will order the steps of those who put their trust in the Lord. Divine love will encircle them, and they will realize the presence of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. {OHC 324.6}

God in His great love is seeking to develop in us the precious graces of His Spirit. He permits us to encounter obstacles, persecution, and hardships, not as a curse, but as the greatest blessing of our lives. Every temptation resisted, every trial bravely borne, gives us a new experience and advances us in the work of character building. The soul that through divine power resists temptation reveals to the world and to the heavenly universe the efficiency of the grace of Christ. {MB 117.1}

God leads His children by a way that they know not, but He does not forget or cast off those who put their trust in Him. He permitted affliction to come upon Job, but He did not forsake him. He allowed the beloved John to be exiled to lonely Patmos, but the Son of God met him there, and his vision was filled with scenes of immortal glory. God permits trials to assail His people, that by their constancy and obedience they themselves may be spiritually enriched, and that their example may be a source of strength to others. “I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil.” Jeremiah 29:11. The very trials that task our faith most severely and make it seem that God has forsaken us, are to lead us closer to Christ, that we may lay all our burdens at His feet and experience the peace which He will give us in exchange. {PP 129.2}

Ever since his fall, Satan has worked by means of deception. As he has misrepresented God, so, through his agents, he misrepresents the children of God. The Saviour says, “The reproaches of

them that reproached Thee are fallen upon Me.” Psalm 69:9. In like manner they fall upon His disciples. {MB 31.2}

There was never one who walked among men more cruelly slandered than the Son of man. He was derided and mocked because of His unswerving obedience to the principles of God’s holy law. They hated Him without a cause. Yet He stood calmly before His enemies, declaring that reproach is a part of the Christian’s legacy, counseling His followers how to meet the arrows of malice, bidding them not to faint under persecution. {MB 32.1}