

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2017: *The Gospel in Galatians*

Lesson 1 “Paul: Apostle to the Gentiles”

Read for this week’s study

Acts 6:9–15, 9:1–9; 1 Samuel 16:7; Matthew 7:1; Acts 11:19–21, 15:1–5.

Memory Text

“When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, ‘Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life’ “ (Acts 11:18, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Persecutor of Christians
- III. Saul’s Conversion
- IV. Saul in Damascus
- V. The Gospel Goes to the Gentiles
- VI. Conflict Within the Church
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Read Acts 11:1-18. What was the primary issue addressed in this passage? What did the apostles conclude in response to the Cornelius story as told by Peter? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Read Acts 6:1-14. What charges were brought against Stephen? What do these charges remind you of? (Hint: see Matthew 26:59-61) How do we learn to temper our zeal for truth with the realization that, at times, we just might be wrong? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read the three descriptions of Saul’s conversion in Acts 9:1-18, 22:6-21 and 26:12-19. What do the latter accounts add to the original description? What were the decisive events that became turning points in Paul’s perception of the Jewish faith? Why did Jesus come to him in such a dramatic and frightening way? Was your own conversion dramatic like Saul’s or more quiet? Be prepared to share your story. (Monday’s lesson)
4. Read Acts 9:10-14 and compare with Acts 9:26-30. What do you think was going on in the mind of Ananias as he hears about Saul’s conversion? Read 1 Samuel 16:7,

Matthew 7:1, and 1 Corinthians 4:5. Matthew 5:13. What do these texts have to say about how we view the spiritual experience of other people? What mistakes have you made in your judgments about others, and what have you learned from those mistakes? (Tuesday's lesson)

5. Read Acts 11:19-21. Where was the first Gentile church established? What events caused the believers to go to that place? Read Acts 11:20-26. What occurred in Antioch that led to Barnabas' visit to the city and how did Saul/Paul end up there as well? What role might the cosmopolitan nature of Antioch have had on the spread of the gospel there? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read Acts 15:1-5. How did certain believers from Judea try to counteract Paul's work with the Gentile Christians in Antioch? Put yourself in the position of these Jewish believers who were concerned about Paul's teaching. In what way does their concern and opposition actually make sense? How can our own preconceived ideas lead us astray? (Thursday's lesson)
7. What lesson can we learn from the fact that some of Paul's harshest opponents were fellow Jews who believed in Jesus? (Friday's lesson)
8. How can you stand firmly for matters of religious principle and at the same time make sure that you are not fighting against God? (Friday's lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Recommended Listening: The entire series by Graham Maxwell on the book of Galatians is available at <http://pkp.cc/MMGALATIANS66>

Paul went out to restore unity in Judaism. And how did he do it (Acts 26)? He arrested these Christians. He punished them. He put them in prison, and he consented to their death. When Stephen said words before the Sanhedrin that seemed to be a threat to unity, how did those Sabbath-keeping saints seek to keep unity? They stoned him to death. They saw nothing wrong with that use of force. It was to them *justice*.

In the name of God, Paul went out to keep unity in the church. That's been very popular through the years. Hundreds of thousands have been tortured to death at the stake to keep unity in the Christian church. Has it worked? You cannot force trust and love. It just can't be done. It's the very antithesis of freedom. Jesus cleared that all up. And what we learn from his life and teaching is the greatest protection against hostility and disunity and apostasy and defection in the hereafter. There is not one streak of arbitrariness in our God. He is not exacting, vengeful, and severe. {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)

Lou: Here is Saul or Paul on his way to Damascus. And Acts says that a great light flashed from Heaven and he falls to the ground. That's a very impressive use of force or power. Didn't it win Paul?

Graham: No, it just floored him. But it got his attention. And I would judge, with a man like Saul, nothing less would have gotten his attention. He was a firebrand!

Now, already he was quite tormented within because of the behavior of Stephen. And when Stephen said, "Lay this not to their charge," he must have remembered the report that when that Heretic died on the cross, he said, "Father, forgive them." And Saul knew his Old Testament well; he recognized that was a picture of the ideal. And so in order to stifle the prickings of his conscience, instead of settling the theological problem, he went out to conduct another evangelistic effort.

So God floored him on the Damascus Road, and He got his attention. But then notice what God did. He just said, "Saul, you're having trouble with your conscience, aren't you?" And he said, "Yes, I really am."

"Then why don't you give in?"

"I give in. What do you want me to do?"

And Christ didn't say, "The following, and be sure you do it." No, the Lord said, "Your way is to overwhelm people. Mine is: go and talk to Ananias, one of your peers. That's all I'm going to say." And from then on, Paul never pressed anybody. He said, "If you disagree with me, well—let everyone be fully persuaded in his own mind."

Before that he put them in prison or had them stoned. Now he realizes that persuasion can only really come when in the highest sense of freedom you are convinced yourself; and he adopted that method. Now he knew God. He didn't change his diet, his Sabbath, his dress, his Bible, even the name of his God. But he changed his picture of God.

But he wouldn't have done it if God had not hit him with a two-by-four on the Damascus Road. {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>

Unfortunately, gospel has come to be the name for a certain body of theological belief and doctrine. It's good news. If we could stay with that, then we could substitute, maybe, the word "truth" for it. Or the word "light" for it. You see, we have many synonyms for this. It's something we need to know; something of great consequence to us. Paul, when he says that the gospel brings freedom, could be echoing Jesus' words, "When you know the truth, the truth

will set you free.” Doesn’t he talk a lot about freedom in Galatians? The gospel sets you free. The truth sets you free. Truth about what sets you free? Good news about what? Light about what? And I don’t think we should go off in different directions in every book. I think they’re all pointing in exactly the same direction. The essence of the good news that is the basis of our trust, and God will save all who trust him; it’s the truth that establishes an entirely different relationship with God—one that brings peace, and brings freedom. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Galatians*, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/65MMPOGIA66>

Why was Jesus thought to be weak? The infinitely powerful Creator of the universe came and dealt with people so generously, with sinners so graciously, that he was thought to be weak. Well, Paul, who was not thought to be weak before Damascus, was he? They shrank in fear when he came to town. But afterwards, they despised him, and told him so. They said, “Your letters may be weighty and strong, but when we come face to face with you, your physical appearance is weak and your speech is contemptible.” That’s how they felt about him. So Paul has to, every once in a while, remind them that he does speak with proper authority; not with tyranny or force, but with real authority. And so he says in 1:11; and you remember all he says in Corinthians about his authority? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – Galatians*, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:* <http://pkp.cc/65MMPOGIA66>

Further Study with Ellen White

When the mind of man is brought into communion with the mind of God, the finite with the Infinite, the effect on body and mind and soul is beyond estimate. In such communion is found the highest education. It is God’s own method of development. “Acquaint now thyself with Him” (Job 22:21), is His message to mankind. {AA 126.1}

The gifts of Jesus are ever fresh and new. . . . Each new gift increases the capacity of the receiver to appreciate and enjoy the blessings of the Lord. He gives grace for grace. There can be no failure of supply. If you abide in Him, the fact that you receive a rich gift today insures the reception of a richer gift tomorrow. . . . {AG 104.2}

In the matchless gift of His Son, God has encircled the whole world with an atmosphere of grace as real as the air which circulates around the globe. All who choose to breathe this life-giving atmosphere will live and grow up to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. {SC 68.1}

As the flower turns to the sun, that the bright beams may aid in perfecting its beauty and symmetry, so should we turn to the Sun of Righteousness, that heaven's light may shine upon us, that our character may be developed into the likeness of Christ. {SC 68.2}

Jesus teaches the same thing when He says, "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. . . . Without Me ye can do nothing." John 15:4, 5. You are just as dependent upon Christ, in order to live a holy life, as is the branch upon the parent stock for growth and fruitfulness. Apart from Him you have no life. You have no power to resist temptation or to grow in grace and holiness. Abiding in Him, you may flourish. Drawing your life from Him, you will not wither nor be fruitless. You will be like a tree planted by the rivers of water. {SC 68.3}

Many have an idea that they must do some part of the work alone. They have trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sin, but now they seek by their own efforts to live aright. But every such effort must fail. Jesus says, "Without Me ye can do nothing." Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness,—all depend upon our union with Christ. It is by communion with Him, daily, hourly,—by abiding in Him,—that we are to grow in grace. He is not only the Author, but the Finisher of our faith. It is Christ first and last and always. He is to be with us, not only at the beginning and the end of our course, but at every step of the way. David says, "I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved." Psalm 16:8. {SC 69.1}

The Lord God through Jesus Christ holds out His hand all the day long in invitation to the sinful and fallen. He will receive all. He welcomes all. It is His glory to pardon the chief of sinners. He will take the prey from the mighty, He will deliver the captive, He will pluck the brand from the burning. He will lower the golden chain of His mercy to the lowest depths of human wretchedness, and lift up the debased soul contaminated with sin. {MH 161.3}

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

The work of transformation from unholiness to holiness is a continuous one. Day by day God labors for man's sanctification, and man is to co-operate with Him, putting forth persevering efforts in the cultivation of right habits. He is to add grace to grace; and as he thus works on the plan of addition, God works for him on the plan of multiplication. Our Saviour is always ready to hear and answer the prayer of the contrite heart, and grace and peace are multiplied to His faithful ones. Gladly He grants them the blessings they need in their struggle against the evils that beset them. {AA 532.2}

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}

A person may not be able to tell the exact time or place, or trace all the chain of circumstances in the process of conversion; but this does not prove him to be unconverted. Christ said to Nicodemus, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit." John 3:8. Like the wind, which is invisible, yet the effects of which are plainly seen and felt, is the Spirit of God in its work upon the human heart. That regenerating power, which no human eye can see, begets a new life in the soul; it creates a new being in the image of God. While the work of the Spirit is silent and imperceptible, its effects are manifest. If the heart has been renewed by the Spirit of God, the life will bear witness to the fact. While we cannot do anything to change our hearts or to bring ourselves into harmony with God; while we must not trust at all to ourselves or our good works, our lives will reveal whether the grace of God is dwelling within us. A change will be seen in the character, the habits, the pursuits. The contrast will be clear and decided between what they have been and what they are. The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts. {SC 57.2}

The leaven hidden in the flour works invisibly to bring the whole mass under its leavening process; so the leaven of truth works secretly, silently, steadily, to transform the soul. The natural inclinations are softened and subdued. New thoughts, new feelings, new motives, are implanted. A new standard of character is set up—the life of Christ. The mind is changed; the faculties are roused to action in new lines. Man is not endowed with new faculties, but the faculties he has are sanctified. The conscience is awakened. We are endowed with traits of character that enable us to do service for God. {COL 98.3}

Christ abiding in the soul exerts a transforming power, and the outward aspect bears witness to the peace and joy that reign within. We drink in the love of Christ, as the branch draws nourishment from the vine. If we are grafted in Christ, if fiber by fiber we have been united with the Living Vine, we shall give evidence of the fact by bearing rich clusters of living fruit. If we are connected with the Light, we shall be channels of light, and in our words and works we shall reflect light to the world. Those who are truly Christians are bound with the chain of love which

links earth to heaven, which binds finite man to the infinite God. The light that shines in the face of Jesus Christ shines in the hearts of His followers, to the glory of God. {1SM 337.2}

While the wind is itself invisible, it produces effects that are seen and felt. So the work of the Spirit upon the soul will reveal itself in every act of him who has felt its saving power. When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven. No one sees the hand that lifts the burden, or beholds the light descend from the courts above. The blessing comes when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then that power which no human eye can see creates a new being in the image of God. {DA 173.1}

Received into the heart, the leaven of truth will regulate the desires, purify the thoughts, and sweeten the disposition. It quickens the faculties of the mind and the energies of the soul. It enlarges the capacity for feeling, for loving. {COL 101.1}

And the effort to bless others will react in blessings upon ourselves. This was the purpose of God in giving us a part to act in the plan of redemption. He has granted men the privilege of becoming partakers of the divine nature and, in their turn, of diffusing blessings to their fellow men. This is the highest honor, the greatest joy, that it is possible for God to bestow upon men. Those who thus become participants in labors of love are brought nearest to their Creator. {SC 79.1}

The opinion is held by many that God placed a separating wall between the Hebrews and the outside world; that His care and love, withdrawn to a great extent from the rest of mankind, were centered upon Israel. But God did not design that His people should build up a wall of partition between themselves and their fellow men. The heart of Infinite Love was reaching out toward all the inhabitants of the earth. Though they had rejected Him, He was constantly seeking to reveal Himself to them and make them partakers of His love and grace. His blessing was granted to the chosen people, that they might bless others. {PP 368.1}

Jesus had begun to break down the partition wall between Jew and Gentile, and to preach salvation to the world. Though He was a Jew, He mingled freely with the Samaritans, setting at nought the Pharisaic customs of His nation. In face of their prejudices He accepted the hospitality of this despised people. He slept under their roofs, ate with them at their tables,—partaking of the food prepared and served by their hands,—taught in their streets, and treated them with the utmost kindness and courtesy. {DA 193.2}

Christ recognized no distinction of nationality or rank or creed. The scribes and Pharisees desired to make a local and a national benefit of the gifts of heaven and to exclude the rest of God's family in the world. But Christ came to break down every wall of partition. He came to

show that His gift of mercy and love is as unconfined as the air, the light, or the showers of rain that refresh the earth. {MH 25.3}

The life of Christ established a religion in which there is no caste, a religion by which Jew and Gentile, free and bond, are linked in a common brotherhood, equal before God. No question of policy influenced His movements. He made no difference between neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies. That which appealed to His heart was a soul thirsting for the waters of life. {MH 25.4}

Jesus sat as an honored guest at the table of the publicans, by His sympathy and social kindness showing that He recognized the dignity of humanity; and men longed to become worthy of His confidence. Upon their thirsty souls His words fell with blessed, life-giving power. New impulses were awakened, and the possibility of a new life opened to these outcasts of society. {3SM 238.3}

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}

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}

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}

The blessings of salvation are for every soul. Nothing but his own choice can prevent any man from becoming a partaker of the promise in Christ by the gospel. {DA 403.2}