

## Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

### Fourth Quarter 2017: *Salvation by Faith Alone: The Book of Romans*

#### Lesson 2 “The Controversy”

#### Read for this week’s study

Hebrews 8:6; Matthew 19:17; Revelation 12:17; Leviticus 23; Acts 15:1–29; Galatians 1:1–12.

#### Memory Text

“The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

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

- I. Introduction
- II. A Better Covenant
- III. Jewish Laws and Regulations
- IV. As the Custom of Moses
- V. The Gentile Believers
- VI. Paul and the Galatians
- VII. Further Study

#### Questions and Notes for Consideration

##### Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. According to the lesson for this week, the letter to the Romans was written because many early Christians believed that Gentiles had to become Jews before they could accept Jesus. Why do you think the lesson author chose John 1:17 as the memory text for a lesson about Romans? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Read Hebrews 8:6. Why does this text talk about “better promises”? What were the inferior promises that God is replacing according to this text? Read Matthew 19:17, Revelation 12:17, Revelation 14:12 and James 2:10-11. Acts 6:1-14. What do these texts tell us about the moral law in the New Testament? Why do you think these are referenced in a lesson about Romans? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read Leviticus 12:1-8 as an example of the Mosaic regulations. Why would these be all but impossible to follow in today’s world or even New Testament times? What parts of the Mosaic legislation ended in Christ and what parts remain valid? (Monday’s lesson)
4. Read Acts 15:1. What major issue was causing dissension in the early church? Where did Paul’s opponents get the idea that circumcision was a requirement for salvation (see Genesis 17:10)? Read Acts 15:2-12. What process did the early church follow to resolve this dispute? (Tuesday’s lesson)

5. Read Acts 15:1-29. What decision did the Jerusalem council come to and what was their reasoning? What rules were placed on the Gentile believers and why these specific rules (Acts 15:20, 29)? Were these rules intended to be permanent or were they an emergency measure? What is the problem with placing unnecessary barriers in the way of people coming to the gospel? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read Galatians 1:1-12. What is the core issue that Paul was confronting in Galatia? What does he understand by the gospel in this passage? How were the Galatians believing and acting differently than Paul wanted them to? Why do you think the letter to the Romans is more positive toward law than Galatians is? (Thursday's lesson)
7. In what way do you think we are placing unnecessary burdens on people today? (Friday's lesson)
8. How do you respond to those who claim the Sabbath is an unnecessary burden to place upon Christians today? (Friday's lesson)
9. Is it possible to be unwavering in one's commitment to truth and yet be merciful and gracious toward others? (Friday's lesson)

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

**Recommended Listening:** The entire series by Graham Maxwell on the book of Romans is available at <http://pkp.cc/MMROMANS66>

Well, as Paul says, they had a zeal, but it was not enlightened, it was not intelligent, and it did not produce the faith and trust that God desired. All that is ever asked of any of his children, especially his children in trouble, is that we trust him. That the loyal ones go on trusting him, and all of us on this planet who've been disloyal and are reaping these consequences physically, mentally, spiritually, and in every other way, that we trust him enough to let him heal the damage done. It all depends on trust, righteousness by faith, however you want to break that down, justification by faith, sanctification by faith, it is all by faith, by trusting God.

And so having talked of the mistakes they made, can you see how 10:4 means, "Christ is the end of all this legalism. Christ is the end of law as a way of being saved, that everyone who has trust and faith may be," how shall we translate it? Set right, declared right, made right, rightified, righted, justified. What word should we use? Obviously there's something wrong that needs to be made right, and set right. If we trust God there's nothing that's wrong that cannot be set right, or made right. And I'd rather leave it right there. Because as you read all the way through the rest of Scripture you don't find much of Paul's more technical and sometimes legal sounding language. I think he did it on purpose as an illustration. But if you take the Bible as a whole, there's something wrong in this universe, think what God has done to set it right. On

this planet look what's wrong with us, and it all stems, every symptom that we suffer from, stems from our distrust in God. The remedy is to be won back to trust and faith. If we trust God, the most important thing has been set right, rebellion is gone, trust has taken its place, and if we trust him there isn't anything you can name that he cannot set right. So I'm leaning more and more towards "set right." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 10, recorded December, 1977, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/19MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/20MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

So, if we really want to be like Christ, and regard people as he did, we would be willing to pay any price rather than needlessly confuse or upset anybody, particularly over something like what we eat or drink. I think we should be able to say with Paul, and the balance is essential, I am free. Now some people will think I'm not eating this because I agree with this superstition. Well I'm willing to run the risk of being misunderstood. Actually I could eat that. In fact, I think it would be very good for me, but it would upset this new convert here, and I'm not going to do it. And that's what Paul, I think, is recommending here. So he says I'll not do this, that, or the other as long as I live if it would needlessly upset anybody.

Now he doesn't relate that only to food and drink, it could be anything, couldn't it? Could it be something that we wear? Supposing you're in an area where wearing a certain something is very distressing and is much debated, and as the Bible instructors bring in new converts, they're coming in wondering whether or not this really needs to be done. Some feel very conscientious, say, about not wearing it, and then here are experienced leaders in the church wearing it, and they get confused. Well if you were aware that this was confusing a convert, wouldn't you throw it into the depths of the sea? I mean, who cares? And couldn't you list a thousand things that might come under that heading? And Paul's message is it doesn't matter what it is, even if you've decided it would be even good for you, if it would upset a new convert don't do it. If you really care about people in the way that would make you safe to live next door to in the hereafter, you'd be willing to make any concession there.

Now should one always be concerned lest one upset others? What if you're upsetting somebody who's been in the Way longer than you have? One has to weigh this upsetting. You remember Paul upset the leaders in Jerusalem because of the way he preached about freedom. And the brethren in the General Conference called Paul in to review his gospel. And they decided it wasn't as bad as they had heard, it really was very fine, there were just a few points Paul should emphasize.

"Paul, we want you to go out there and tell people to abstain from immorality, and to be generous in their offering" which thing he said I've always done, he was the most generous

supporter. But they added something else. “We want you to go out there and tell the people they must not eat food offered to idols.”

When Paul got out into the field, he said, “I’m sorry, but there’s nothing wrong with eating food offered to idols. Eat whatever you find in the meat market.”

It was very risky, and that got him into lots of trouble. But he wasn’t about to compromise on this, not with experienced leaders who had been with the Lord before he was. So he ran that risk. But look how Paul did it. He said, “You can eat that food, but you wouldn’t do it if it would needlessly upset a new convert. Now, maybe it does upset folk at Headquarters, what shall we do about that?” They called Paul in again, and they said, “Paul, you’re getting a reputation for being such a liberal; you’re going to have to prove you’re a conservative.”

I should have brought the book along. In *Acts of the Apostles* Ellen White describes this in great detail, on Paul’s arrest. She said Paul was brought in before the brethren and, I hesitate to tell it without reading it. She says so many at Headquarters were keenly jealous of Paul because he was such a persuader, so successful in his ministry. He won so many. People seemed to love to give offerings through Paul for the saints in Jerusalem. They had to admit he was the best worker they had, the most productive, very loyal, and yet they were very jealous. So they called him in. And the first thing Paul did was to present all the money. And Ellen White says even his harshest critics who were the most jealous of him when they saw that offering, they were for a few moments won over. You know, it does speak, doesn’t it?

But then she says their feelings of jealousy returned, and they were determined to straighten Paul out. And they said, “Paul, you had better undergo one of these old ceremonies to prove you’re a conservative. We want you to take a vow and go through all these purifications and prove you’re a conservative.”

And Paul thought if I do that what will they say in Rome? What will they say in Corinth? I’ve told them this is all nonsense. Jesus said its nonsense. These are the commandments of men learned by rote. How can the early Christian leaders in Jerusalem possibly be insisting on this at that time? The feeling would be the same, wouldn’t it, if one were called in now. And Paul thought this over, Ellen White says, with great anguish. He didn’t want to becloud the good news about freedom. But he did want to show he was loyal to leadership. She says sympathize with the great man in his concern to be loyal to leadership and his desire not to becloud the truth. Finally he agreed he would take the vow. Ellen White says it was cowardice on the part of the leaders and jealousy that led them to insist on this and the Lord did not authorize Paul’s compromising that far. And it cost him his life, and it was the end of his ministry. {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)*

The Jews received the principles of righteousness by faith at Mt. Sinai, didn't they? But because of their legalistic attitude toward this plan for their restoration, they soon turned it into righteousness by works. The ceremonial system was to teach and symbolize righteousness by faith. They turned it into righteousness by works.

I believe we can turn all the steps and symbols of righteousness by faith into righteousness by works today. Next time I would really like to go into that. I believe that much of the language used to explain righteousness by faith stops with the symbols only and never asks what the symbols mean. Now that's the assignment for next time: What does it mean to be justified by the blood of Christ? Those are symbols. When we say there's power in the blood, we're washed in the blood; that's symbolic language. If we don't ask what those symbols mean, we're doing exactly what the Jews did to the ceremonial system, and we thereby can turn righteousness by faith into righteousness by works. If today we're willing to settle for symbolic language without asking what those symbols mean in reality, I believe we could make the same mistake that was made by the Jews.

The fact that Abraham's faith was reckoned to him as righteousness does not mean that faith possesses in itself some merit that can earn justification. It was Abraham's faith in God that was accounted as righteousness. Such faith is a relation, an attitude, a disposition of man toward God. It implies a readiness to receive with joy whatever God may reveal and to do with joy whatever God may direct. Abraham loved and trusted and obeyed God because he knew him and was his friend. His faith was a genuine relationship of love, confidence and submission. Moreover, Abraham knew the gospel of salvation. He knew that his justification depended on the atoning sacrifice of the one to come. At the time of the making of the covenant, the plan of redemption was open to him, in the death of Christ, the great sacrifice, and his coming in glory. Abraham believed in the promise of the Messiah, and his faith was fixed upon the redeemer to come. That's *Patriarchs and Prophets*, page 154.

And I think what Paul is trying to say to the Jews is: Don't think I'm inventing something here in my message, in my version of the gospel. It's the everlasting good news. Abraham had exactly the same experience that you and I can have. He was won back by the good news about God, to trust in God, became a friend of God. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 4, recorded October, 1977, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/7MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/8MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

I personally feel that it is even dangerous, certainly a great waste, just to settle for these symbols without asking for the meaning, if we could dare to draw to this parallel. What was the terrible, disastrous, and destructive mistake many of the Jews made with respect to the

ceremonial system? Isn't it that they repeated those symbolic acts without ever asking what they meant?

And so they would sacrifice the animals because God said they should. And so, when Jesus came they never realized that those sacrifices pointed toward his coming, so they never recognized him when he came, nor understood his mission. I think we could do exactly the same thing if we settle for the symbols of the plan of salvation and do not ask for their meaning. It is not enough to say without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin. We must ask, "What does that mean? What does the blood mean? Why did Jesus have to die? Why do I have to kill that lamb?" The Jews should have asked, "What does it represent?" Then it could have led them to what God intended. That was just a visual aid; those were symbols of something that needed to be said. So the death of Christ said something. If we don't ask we'll never find out, and we might slip into the mere routine of repeating these phrases and formulas that make up what we call the plan of salvation by faith. And I believe we will be deprived of much of its meaning and benefit if we don't ask why. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from audio series, "Romans", chapter 6, recorded November 1977} {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 6, 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/11MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/12MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

Now it is true, we recognize that not all Christians have understood the Plan of Salvation in this larger view. Even the great theologians of the Reformation—and how we should be grateful for them and what they dared to do! But even the great reformers did not see it this way. Even Luther, maybe the greatest hero of the Reformation and so admired by many of us—even he was more preoccupied with God's gracious provisions to save you and me. But even that is understandable for Luther was unable to make much use of the sixty-sixth book, the book of Revelation. Much as Luther correctly insisted that we should use "the Bible and the Bible only"; you know that Latin phrase, *Sola Scriptura*. Even though he urged that, he himself was not able to use all sixty-six books. He particularly regarded Hebrews, James, Jude, and Revelation as inferior to the other books in the New Testament. In the book of Revelation he said he found "too little about Christ, and too much no one could understand." And then he summarized, "there's no way the Holy Spirit could have inspired the sixty-sixth book!" But as a result of not being able to use the book of Revelation, he missed the larger view—as do many of his admirers today. And we all admire him, to be sure. But we don't have to agree with every detail in his picture. I think if he were alive today, he too might rejoice in the larger view. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #1, "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>

In the great controversy model the emphasis is on the truth about God. The testimony of Jesus is essentially the truth about God. Unfortunately there is a call these days to return to a more legal model which was right in the reformation days, it was even progress, but it would be a reversal and a retreat for us to go back to that. We need to thank God for the legal model and say what a wonderful God spoke to us that way and ran the risk of being misunderstood by speaking to us that way. But we need to take the larger view and agree with that *Signs of the Times* article. The only way ultimately is to reveal the truth about God which is the essential testimony of Jesus. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Three Angel's Messages, #6, recorded October, 1981, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/6MM3ANGELSM>*

### 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. The Saviour typified in the rites and ceremonies of the Jewish law is the very same that is revealed in the gospel. The clouds that enveloped His divine form have rolled back; the mists and shades have disappeared; and Jesus, the world's Redeemer, stands revealed. 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 great principles of love to God, which He set forth as the foundation of the law and the prophets, are only a reiteration of what He had spoken through Moses to the Hebrew people: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." Deuteronomy 6:4, 5. "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Leviticus 19:18. The teacher is the same in both dispensations. God's claims are the same. The principles of His government are the same. For all proceed from Him "with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." James 1:17. {PP 373.2}

Promises are estimated by the truth of the one who makes them. Many men make promises only to break them, to mock the heart that trusted in them. Those who lean upon such men lean upon broken reeds. But God is behind the promises He makes. He is ever mindful of His covenant, and His truth endureth to all generations (MS 23, 1899). {7BC 942.12}

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}

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}

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}

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'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}

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. {SC 34.2}

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}

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’s ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” This command is a promise. The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning. {DA 311.2}

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 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}

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}

He passed by no human being as worthless, but sought to apply the healing remedy to every soul. In whatever company He found Himself He presented a lesson appropriate to the time and the circumstances. Every neglect or insult shown by men to their fellow men only made Him more conscious of their need of His divine-human sympathy. He sought to inspire with hope the roughest and most unpromising, setting before them the assurance that they might become blameless and harmless, attaining such a character as would make them manifest as the children of God. {MH 25.5}