

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

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

Lesson 3 “The Human Condition”

Read for this week’s study

Romans 1:16, 17, 22–32; 2:1–10, 17–23; 3:1, 2, 10–18, 23.

Memory Text

“All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Power of God
- III. All Have Sinned
- IV. Progress?
- V. What Jews and Gentiles Share in Common
- VI. The Gospel and Repentance
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. How would you summarize the human condition in more contemporary language than “sin”? Would it be appropriate to call human beings “hopeless” or “worthless”? What can human beings do and what can’t we do? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Read Romans 1:15-17. How is the gospel the “power of God”? Why does Paul always talk about “the Jew first”? Hebrews 8:6. Why does this text talk about “better promises”? What does Paul mean by “from faith to faith”? Do you have times when you question whether or not you are saved? What is it that brings on thoughts like these? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read Romans 3:23. How does this text describe the human condition? Why would many people in today’s world reject this analysis? Read Romans 3:10-18. Are things better or worse today? When you find yourself resisting this analysis, what can you do about it? Why is it so hard to be honest about our faults? What can we do to become more authentic? (Monday’s lesson)
4. At the beginning of the Twentieth Century, most intellectuals were very optimistic about where the human race was headed. Did the Twentieth Century support or destroy that optimism? Read Romans 1:18-32. What kind of people was Paul

describing here? What does Paul mean by “the wrath of God” and why is it revealed from heaven? (Tuesday’s lesson)

5. Read Romans 2:1-3 and 2:17-24. Who does Paul have in mind in this chapter, and what is he warning against? Self-analysis question: How often do you condemn others for things you are guilty of yourself? (Wednesday’s lesson)
6. Read Romans 2:4. How does the goodness of God lead people to repentance? What does that tell us about repentance? What does that tell us about God? Read Romans 2:5-10. What happens to those who refuse to repent and continue in rebellion? If I find myself in a state of unrepentance, what can I do about it? Is it really possible to change? (Thursday’s lesson)
7. Is there a difference between “missing the mark” and lawlessness in God’s eyes (see Romans 3:23)? If we find ourselves continually missing the mark, what does that tell us about our standing with God? (Friday’s lesson)
8. Why is it so important for us as Christians to understand basic human sinfulness and depravity? What can happen when we lose sight of our own depravity? (Friday’s lesson)

A Fresh Translation of Romans 1:16-17, Jon Paulien

Key

Bold = Quotation from the Old Testament

[] = Explanatory note by translator

- 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel:
for it is the power of God
leading to [Greek: into] salvation
to everyone who believes;
to the Jew first,
also to the Greek.
- 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed
out of faith
into faith;
as it is written,
**“The Righteous One will live
by faithfulness.”**

A Fresh Translation of Habakkuk 2:4, Jon Paulien

LXX The righteous one will live by My faithfulness.

Heb The righteous one will live by His faithfulness.

A Fresh Translation of Romans 3:23, Jon Paulien

Key

[] = Explanatory note by translator

²³ For all have sinned [aorist indicative—point in past time] and continually fall short [present continuous] of the glory of God.

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

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

The ultimate testimony of Jesus was, “If you want to know what my Father is like, he’s not the kind of person Satan has made him out to be. On the contrary, if you have seen me, you have seen the Father.” Many times he said, “You have faith in me, have faith also in my Father.”

If Jesus had gone back to heaven leaving a company of believers who trusted him but did not trust his father, he would have felt defeated. He came to reveal the trustworthiness of his Father. Did he do it? It says here, “There’s come a great revelation of the righteousness, and faithfulness, and trustworthiness of God through Jesus Christ”; that is, if we trust him; if we think he told the truth. Now, there’s no distinction. All have sinned and the Greek says, “continue to come short of God’s glorious ideal.” That’s one translation. What is the glory of God in a setting like this? It has many meanings in Scripture. Often it means his character; sometimes it means the brilliant glory that surrounds his person, his light. It has the appearance of fire we’re told many places in Scripture. But, in this setting what do you think of one version that translates, “We continue to come short of God’s glorious ideal.” That is, the thing that is of glory and honor with God, which of course, his own character reveals and commends to us. Have we not come short of what God wants of us? What does he want of his children? Isn’t it that they be like their Father, that they have characters like his? This is the glory of God. This is what we come short of because we’ve been stubborn and rebellious. We continue to come

short. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 3, recorded February October, 1977, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

[http://pkp.cc/5MMROMANS66 \(Part 1\)](http://pkp.cc/5MMROMANS66) [http://pkp.cc/6MMROMANS66 \(Part 2\)](http://pkp.cc/6MMROMANS66)

So what is the message of the cross? Evidently it's much more than the payment of a legal penalty so that somehow God can justly forgive you and me. The cross was needed by the loyal angels. And this truly suggests that we ought to go back to the foot of the cross and join the universe, the family of the universe, in watching closely just how Jesus died. And then listening very carefully to how Jesus cried, and what he cried, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" What does that mean? And how does that suffering and death bring peace—once again—to God's family? I believe that in the great controversy, all Christian beliefs take on much broader significance. Particularly does the gospel take on a much larger meaning. You see, while we're still preoccupied with our own salvation, the gospel quite naturally might be understood as the good news about what God has done for me and for you.

But in the larger great controversy setting, the gospel is the truth about our gracious God; the truth that ends the war, and confirms the loyalty of the universe, and wins some of us back to repentance and to trust. I believe that the most important of all our beliefs is the truth about our God. God is not the kind of person his enemies have made him out to be—arbitrary, vengeful, and severe. He is instead precisely as his Son revealed him to be. We believe the testimony of Jesus when he said, "If you have seen me, you have seen the Father." God is just as loving and gracious as his Son; just as willing to forgive and heal. Could there be any better news than that? To me, that's the everlasting good news that holds the loyalty of the universe. And wins us back, and will hold our loyalty and trust for the rest of eternity.

And this is the message we have the high privilege of sharing with people all over this planet, who may not know they are members of God's family, but who deserve to know, and who deserve to hear this truth. {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>

But to some of us, the cross is great good news. Yes it is true that sinners will die, but we have no need to be afraid of God; and he died to prove it. And this message has great power to win to repentance and to trust. Paul was so proud of this good news. Look at his understanding of it in the last verses. 1 Corinthians 1:17, 18:

For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel [what is the gospel, the good news, about]. And not with eloquent wisdom lest the cross of Christ [that's the Gospel], be emptied of its power [this good news has great power]. For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. (RSV)

Now compare with that Romans 1:16, that very famous righteousness by faith verse:

For I am not ashamed of the Gospel [this good news]: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith . . . [Wherein lies the power?] for in it [something is revealed] the righteousness of God is revealed. (RSV)

The good news is that God is not the unrighteous kind of person his enemies have made him out to be. And it's so wonderful to see all through the Bible that even before the cross God had good friends who trusted him always to do the right thing, the merciful thing, and they were proud to know him and proud to speak about him to others. Look at Jeremiah 9:24:

Let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight, declares the Lord. (NIV)

Jeremiah was able to repeat those words with feeling long before the cross. But now such confidence in God has been confirmed by the way Jesus suffered and died. And among God's friends whether angels or men this meaning of the cross will have power to hold God's great family together in loyalty and in peace forever. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #8, "The Most Costly and Convincing Evidence" recorded March , 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/8MMCAG>*

In the larger, great controversy view, it's God's righteousness that has been challenged, and if God is not proved to be righteous, there is no basis for our trust. The good news is that God is righteous. Well, those who feel there has never been a conflict over his righteousness, choose something else, "It's God's way of righting you and me." What's beautiful about this, though, is if you take this as it literally reads, the good news is about God's righteousness, the revelation of God's righteousness *is* the way in which he rights you and me. And so the larger view contains the smaller view, but the narrow view denies the larger view. That's what I like about the larger view. You can be much more generous when you hold it. You can say, the beautiful *Good News Bible*, "God's way of righting wrong," or something like that, "God's way of setting men right with himself." That's beautiful. But what is God's way of setting men right with himself? It is at infinite cost to reveal and demonstrate the truth about his own righteousness. So I can say, "That's a nice version, but that's the narrow view." The larger great controversy

view, which is our privilege to explain from the sixty-six books, allows the Bible to be translated very literally there, and even leaves room for these narrower views which are more preoccupied with what God has done for you and me. To many of our friends, the good news is what God has done for you and me.

Lou: The plan of salvation.

Graham: The plan of salvation, you see. The larger view is the good news that God is not as his enemies have made him out to be. He is instead, like this. And to see him like that is to be won to repentance and faith. The plan of salvation has at its very heart the revelation and the demonstration of the truth about the righteousness of God. That's a more inclusive view. That's why we venture sometimes to call it the "larger view." {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #16 with Lou Venden, "God's last pleading with His Children" recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/16MMCAG>*

How you define faith and trust enters into this. And we need to read other places. To me, faith is just a word we use to describe a relationship with God as with a person well known; and we get to know him through the gospel. The good news is about God, that he is infinitely worthy of our trust. It implies an attitude toward God of love, and trust, and deepest admiration. It means having enough confidence in God, based upon the more than adequate evidence, all summed up in the good news, to be willing to believe what God says—as soon as we're sure *he* said it! And to accept what God offers, as soon as we're sure *he's* offering it, and to do whatever God wishes, without reservation, as soon as we're sure *he's* asking us, and not somebody else. Anybody who has such a trusting relationship with God, of love, trust, and admiration, willing to listen, is perfectly safe to save.

He could die just beginning that relationship, like the thief on the cross. He would arise loving, trusting, and admiring that kind one in the middle. He will be willing to listen, and accept all kinds of instruction and correction. He is therefore safe to save. But you can't regard God in that attitude without a new heart and a right spirit. So you are a new creature, which he's going to mention in a moment.

And that's what David eventually wanted—truth and honesty in the inner man. Mention honesty, and you remember Micah, Amos, Hosea, they all talked about this. All God asks of us is that we stand humbly in his presence with an honest willingness to listen, and let him do for us whatever needs to be done.

I would add that even though with the passing of time I'm finding more and more that everything God has asked us to do makes such good sense and I agree with him; I would have to say that being still somewhat ignorant and immature, I'm willing to obey this trustworthy

God when he instructs me to do something beyond my present understanding. Wouldn't that be safe? Because he's proved always to make such good sense in every other respect. And I think that's what Abraham said to him. "God, you've always made such good sense. But your command to sacrifice the son of the promise makes no sense to me. But I know it will. So God, I'm on my way." I believe faith says to God, "God, I hear you, and I've checked that carefully. It is you. And I am on my way. But as I go, in all reverence, may I ask why?" And that's how we come to know God. And for three days and three nights Abraham thought that through; and in the end he said, "God, I'm even beginning to think of ways in which you could work this out. I'm not telling you how, but I know you will; because you'll not contradict yourself in the promise you gave me about my son. Maybe you'll resurrect my son. Just as you gave him miraculously, you could easily resurrect him. Or maybe you'll provide a substitute."

And that's what God chose to do. And Abraham is cited in Hebrews 11 as one who trusted God, but thought it through. Faith is not blind. You can jump off a cliff if you take leaps in the dark, and call that faith. It is not safe. History is strewn with the wreckage of people who leap in the dark and call it faith. Light makes faith possible, and without it we ought to wait. {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>*

Then, while perhaps the Jews and the congregation in Rome were nodding their heads and saying, "How true is Paul's analysis of the sinfulness of the Gentiles", Paul then turns in chapter 2, and says, "But the sins of you Jews, you privileged Jews, are even worse." And I hope, when he was through describing the sins of the Jews, the Gentiles weren't smirking just a wee bit to see the Jews getting what was coming to them.

Presumably, by the time Paul got to chapter 3, they all realized as we do, that we have all sinned and we all continue to come short of God's glorious ideal. And all of us need healing and restoring, and all of us must trust God enough if we so choose, to stand in his presence and let him heal and restore us, and trust him enough to follow his instructions in every detail—a physician sometimes has to describe a very detailed program to save a very sick person. Which means often that the man of faith works even harder than the legalist. The difference is he isn't trying to save himself with his own surgery and medication. He's following the instructions of the Infinite Physician. It's so foolish of us to try to heal ourselves, when there is an Infinite Physician, who's never lost a patient who is willing to listen. Faith means we seek for healing God's way. But it may mean we go out and work twice as hard as we ever have before, doing everything God has advised us to do, if we wish to be well. So it doesn't mean if one seeks for salvation or accepts righteousness by faith, he's all through *doing* anything. He may be much more of a doer now, but he does it in harmony with the instructions of the Infinite One, rather

than trying to save himself. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 1, recorded September, 1977, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

[http://pkp.cc/1MMROMANS66 \(Part 1\)](http://pkp.cc/1MMROMANS66) [http://pkp.cc/2MMROMANS66 \(Part 2\)](http://pkp.cc/2MMROMANS66)

Even in the final awesome death of the wicked, God is still respecting the freedom and the individuality of his intelligent creatures. He has made it very plain all through the sixty-six, that he doesn't want to lose any of his children. Look at 2 Peter 3: 9 again: "The Lord is . . . patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance." (NIV)

It is emphasized all through the Old Testament as well as the New. Look at Ezekiel 33:11:

As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel? (RSV)

Like a physician, God stands ready to heal us. But he cannot force us to be well. If we prefer to leave him, he will respect our decision and sadly let us go. But as we leave him for the last time to reap the awful consequences, we will hear his sad cry in Hosea, "How can I give you up? How can I let you go?" We discussed it when we talked about why Jesus died. Do you remember that dramatic story in the book of Hosea? Then as God interpreted what Hosea had done, he said "I have pled so long, so many years, centuries, with my people Israel to please come home. Bring words of repentance with you, and I'll heal you and I'll forgive you."

You remember when the prodigal son did this. Jesus told the story to show how glad God is when anyone does come home. How eager he is to heal. How magnificent is that story, told so many times. Just a little of it now, look at Luke 15 on the reference sheet. Look what this says about the attitude of our Father toward his sinful children:

While he was still a long way off, his father saw him, and his heart went out to him. He ran to meet him, flung his arms round him, and kissed him. The son said, "Father, I have sinned against God and against you; I'm no longer fit to be called your son." But the father said to his servants, "Quick! Fetch a robe, my best one," and put it on him . . . and let us have a feast to celebrate the day. For this son of mine was dead and has come back to life; he was lost and is found." (NEB)

Jesus added that there is joy among the angels in heaven whenever anybody comes back. Even the angels are pleased when we come home. But Israel did not come back in the days of Hosea. So those sad words follow in Hosea 14:

But come home, Israel, come home to the Lord your God! Take words of repentance with you as you return to the Lord; . . . I will heal their unfaithfulness, I will love them with all My heart. (Phillips)

But they didn't come. Look at Hosea 11:7, 8: "My people are bent on turning away from me; How, oh how, can I give you up Ephraim! How, oh how, can I hand you over Israel." (Phillips)

As in Hosea, he will sadly hand us over if we insist on turning away. I understand that God will miss us if we are lost. He will miss us forever if we don't come home. You think of the eternal void that brilliant Lucifer will leave in the infinite memory of God. But for some of us, this magnificent picture of God leads us to repentance, and to trust. Remember the famous last verse on the list, Romans 2:4: "Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?" (RSV)

And the verse we've used a number of times already—when we hear this good news about God, it leads some of us to trust. So in trust and confidence, we actually look forward to seeing the Infinite One. And even though next time he comes, he will come in unveiled majesty and power, we will not be afraid. Sinners though we all have been, we will be comfortable in his presence for eternity. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #16, "God's last pleading with His Children" recorded May, 1984, Loma Linda, California}

To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:

<http://pkp.cc/16MMCAG>

Further Study with Ellen White

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

It is no part of Christ's mission to compel men to receive Him. It is Satan, and men actuated by his spirit, who seek to compel the conscience. Under a pretense of zeal for righteousness, men who are confederated with evil angels sometimes bring suffering upon their fellow men in order to convert them to their ideas of religion; but Christ is ever showing mercy, ever seeking to win by the revealing of His love. He can admit no rival in the soul, nor accept of partial

service; but He desires only voluntary service, the willing surrender of the heart under the constraint of love. {AA 541.1}

While the sinner cannot save himself, he still has something to do to secure salvation. “Him that cometh to Me,” says Christ, “I will in no wise cast out.” John 6:37. But we must *come* to Him; and when we repent of our sins, we must believe that He accepts and pardons us. Faith is the gift of God, but the power to exercise it is ours. Faith is the hand by which the soul takes hold upon the divine offers of grace and mercy. {PP 431.2}

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}

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings 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. {FLB 84.7}

He could say to whom He pleased, “Follow Me,” and the one addressed arose and followed Him. The spell of the world’s enchantment was broken. At the sound of His voice the spirit of greed and ambition fled from the heart, and men arose, emancipated, to follow the Saviour. . . . {FLB 98.5}

He passed by no human being as worthless, but sought to apply the healing remedy to every soul. . . . 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. {FLB 98.6}

Satan had clothed the Father in his own attributes, but Christ represented Him in His true character of benevolence and love. In the character in which Christ presented Him to the world it was as if He gave a new gift to man. . . . {LHU 36.4}

The lily is a representation of Christ among men. He came to a world all seared and marred with the curse, but He was not polluted by His surroundings. He was the Light, the Life, and the Way. He voluntarily became an inhabitant of earth, that He might grasp the whole world in His merciful arms and lay it in the arms of His heavenly Father. What love is manifested in this sacrifice, that the Lord Himself should come to the help of the fallen sons and daughters of Adam! {TMK 36.5}

We are not to think of God only as a judge, and to forget him as our loving Father. Nothing can do our souls greater harm than this; for our whole spiritual life will be molded by our conceptions of God's character. {RH, April 5, 1887 par. 10}

It is growth in knowledge of the character of Christ that sanctifies the soul. To discern and appreciate the wonderful work of the atonement, transforms him who contemplates the plan of salvation. By beholding Christ, he becomes changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord. The beholding of Jesus becomes an ennobling, refining process to the actual Christian. He sees the Pattern, and grows into its likeness, and then how easily are dissensions, emulations, and strife adjusted. The perfection of Christ's character is the Christian's inspiration. When we see him as he is, desire awakes to be like him, and this elevates the whole man; for "every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure." {RH, August 26, 1890 par. 7}

Men put God out of their knowledge and worshiped the creatures of their own imagination; and as the result, they became more and more debased. The psalmist describes the effect produced upon the worshiper by the adoration of idols. He says, "They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them." Psalm 115:8. It is a law of the human mind that by beholding we become changed. Man will rise no higher than his conceptions of truth, purity, and holiness. If the mind is never exalted above the level of humanity, if it is not uplifted by faith to contemplate infinite wisdom and love, the man will be constantly sinking lower and lower. The worshipers of false gods clothed their deities with human attributes and passions, and thus their standard of character was degraded to the likeness of sinful humanity. They were defiled in consequence. {PP 91.2}

It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature, that by beholding, we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward. {GC88 555.2}

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

By beholding we are to become changed; and as we meditate upon the perfections of the divine Model, we shall desire to become wholly transformed, and renewed in the image of His

purity. It is by faith in the Son of God that transformation takes place in the character, and the child of wrath becomes the child of God. {AG 302.5}

God does not force the will or judgment of any. He takes no pleasure in a slavish obedience. He desires that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy of love. He would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom, justice, and benevolence. And all who have a just conception of these qualities will love Him because they are drawn toward Him in admiration of His attributes. {GC 541.3}

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

In the opening of the great controversy, Satan had declared that the law of God could not be obeyed, that justice was inconsistent with mercy, and that, should the law be broken, it would be impossible for the sinner to be pardoned. Every sin must meet its punishment, urged Satan; and if God should remit the punishment of sin, He would not be a God of truth and justice. When men broke the law of God, and defied His will, Satan exulted. It was proved, he declared, that the law could not be obeyed; man could not be forgiven. Because he, after his rebellion, had been banished from heaven, Satan claimed that the human race must be forever shut out from God's favor. God could not be just, he urged, and yet show mercy to the sinner. {DA 761.4}

But even as a sinner, man was in a different position from that of Satan. Lucifer in heaven had sinned in the light of God's glory. To him as to no other created being was given a revelation of God's love. Understanding the character of God, knowing His goodness, Satan chose to follow his own selfish, independent will. This choice was final. There was no more that God could do to save him. But man was deceived; his mind was darkened by Satan's sophistry. The height and depth of the love of God he did not know. For him there was hope in a knowledge of God's love. By beholding His character he might be drawn back to God. {DA 761.5}

From the opening of the great controversy it has been Satan's purpose to misrepresent God's character and to excite rebellion against His law, and this work appears to be crowned with success. The multitudes give ear to Satan's deceptions and set themselves against God. But amid the working of evil, God's purposes move steadily forward to their accomplishment; to all created intelligences He is making manifest His justice and benevolence. Through Satan's temptations the whole human race have become transgressors of God's law, but by the sacrifice of His Son a way is opened whereby they may return to God. Through the grace of Christ they may be enabled to render obedience to the Father's law. Thus in every age, from the midst of apostasy and rebellion, God gathers out a people that are true to Him—a people "in whose heart is His law." Isaiah 51:7. {PP 338.2}

It was by deception that Satan seduced angels; thus he has in all ages carried forward his work among men, and he will continue this policy to the last. Should he openly profess to be warring against God and His law, men would beware; but he disguises himself, and mixes truth with error. The most dangerous falsehoods are those that are mingled with truth. It is thus that errors are received that captivate and ruin the soul. By this means Satan carries the world with him. But a day is coming when his triumph will be forever ended. {PP 338.3}

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

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

Before the entrance of evil there was peace and joy throughout the universe. All was in perfect harmony with the Creator's will. Love for God was supreme, love for one another impartial. Christ the Word, the Only Begotten of God, was one with the eternal Father,—one in nature, in character, and in purpose,—the only being in all the universe that could enter into all the counsels and purposes of God. By Christ the Father wrought in the creation of all heavenly beings. "By Him were all things created, that are in heaven, . . . whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers" (Colossians 1:16); and to Christ, equally with the Father, all heaven gave allegiance. {GC 493.1}

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

When Christ took human nature upon Him, He bound humanity to Himself by a tie of love that can never be broken by any power save the choice of man himself. Satan will constantly present allurements to induce us to break this tie—to choose to separate ourselves from Christ. Here is where we need to watch, to strive, to pray, that nothing may entice us to *choose* another master; for we are always free to do this. But let us keep our eyes fixed upon Christ, and He will preserve us. Looking unto Jesus, we are safe. Nothing can pluck us out of His hand.

In constantly beholding Him, we “are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 3:18. {SC 72.1}

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

In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan’s control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God. {DA 466.4}

The only condition upon which the freedom of man is possible is that of becoming one with Christ. “The truth shall make you free;” and Christ is the truth. Sin can triumph only by enfeebling the mind, and destroying the liberty of the soul. Subjection to God is restoration to one’s self,—to the true glory and dignity of man. The divine law, to which we are brought into subjection, is “the law of liberty.” James 2:12. {DA 466.5}

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