

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Fourth Quarter 2017: *Salvation by Faith Alone: The Book of Romans*
Lesson 5 “The Faith of Abraham”

Read for this week’s study

Genesis 15:6; 2 Samuel 11, 12; Romans 3:20, 31; 4:1–17; Galatians 3:21–23; 1 John 3:4.

Memory Text

“Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law” (Romans 3:31).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Law
- III. Debt or Grace?
- IV. The Promise
- V. Law and Faith
- VI. The Law and Sin
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Why do you think Paul chose Abraham as a prime example of righteousness by faith? Why didn’t he choose Moses instead? (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Read Romans 3:29-31. How is verse 29 related to the main point of chapters 1-3? What does Paul mean when he contrasts “by faith” and “through faith”? What is Paul’s point in verse 31? Why is this particularly important for Adventists? Read Romans 4:1-8. How does this passage show that even in the Old Testament, salvation was by faith and not by works of law? What part of the argument in Romans 3:21-31 is restated here? What is the key word that connects the texts regarding Abraham and David? (Sunday’s lesson)
3. Read Romans 4:9-12. How does Paul expand on the theme of justification by faith in this passage? How does Paul come to see circumcision as a sign of righteousness by faith in Abraham’s day already? What argument does Paul make to include the Gentiles in the category of “children of Abraham”? What implications does the cross have for racial, ethnic or national prejudice? (Monday’s lesson)

4. Read Romans 4:13-17. What does Paul add to our understanding of righteousness by faith in this passage? (Tuesday's lesson)
5. The lesson for Wednesday quotes a passage from *Desire of Ages* (pages 35-36): "The principle that man can save himself by his own works lay at the foundation of every heathen religion. . . . Wherever it is held, men have no barrier against sin." What does this mean? How is it that legalism leaves us so open to sin? In what way do all models of the atonement support the contention of the above statement? Read Galatians 3:21-23. How did Paul explain the relationship between law and faith there? (Wednesday's lesson)
6. Read Galatians 3:24-25, 1 John 2:3-6 and 3:4, and Romans 3:20. What do these texts tell us about the relationship between law and sin? If there were no divine law against adultery, would the act cause any less pain and hurt to its victims? (Thursday's lesson)
7. Why is it so important to understand salvation by faith alone without deeds of law? (Friday's lesson)
8. What reasons can you give for the continued validity of God's law even though we understand that obedience to law is not what saves us? (Friday's lesson)
9. According to the lesson, the basic issue at the core of the Reformation is *How are we saved?* Do you agree with that assessment? In what ways can we honestly address the difference between Protestants and Catholics in a politically correct world? (Friday's lesson)

A Fresh Translation of Romans 3:29-31, Jon Paulien

Key

Italics = Not in Greek text, but required by the context

Bold = Quotation from the Old Testament

[] = Explanatory note by translator

- 29 Or *is He* the God of Jews only?
Is He not also *the God* of Gentiles?
 Yes, of Gentiles also.
- 30 Since God is one,
 who will justify circumcision out of faith
 and uncircumcision through faith
- 31 Therefore,
 do we invalidate *the* law through this faith?
 May it never be!
 To the contrary, we establish [confirm] *the* law [here: Old Testament]

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

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

So, if possible, when you come to a verse like “Abraham had faith in God and it was reckoned unto him as righteousness,” don’t immediately let cash registers ring. You see, that’s only one way of reading that verse. It could mean, “Abraham trusted God, and God said, ‘That’s good.’ That’s what I want. That’s what I’m looking for. You’re my friend. And I will save all my friends.” And there are no legal connotations to that at all. Though of course the great majority of theologians for hundreds of years have read these words and phrases as legal. There is another way. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Acts, recorded April, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/59MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/60MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Then how do we win people, but by talking about God to them. But don’t just make claims. Say, “Here’s the evidence. Look at the way he treats sinners—Simon, and Judas, and all the rest. That’s the kind of God he is. He’s not only powerful, but he can be trusted to use his power in such a way that some of us are won to trust.” Abraham trusted God, and God said, “That’s good.” Or, Abraham trusted God, and cash registers rang, and there was imputing of things. Well, the language is in there. How are we to understand it? Romans is the best place to discuss it. But the best way to understand Romans is to read the rest of Paul’s epistles, which we will do, one after the other. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Acts, recorded April, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/59MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/60MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

But, why then the law? It was added to protect us until we had better understanding and better motivation. We thank God for the rules he gave us. Some are very stern. We needed them. But we must understand that they were emergency measures. Now look at Romans 3:31: “Does this mean, what we’ve been saying, that by this faith we do away with the Law? No, not at all; instead we uphold the Law.” (GNB)

Thank God for it because we needed it.

Now Paul makes it plain that the rules are for the misbehaving members of the family. Look at that remarkable verse, 1 Timothy 1:8, 9:

We know that the law is good if a man uses it properly [it can be misused]. We also know that law is made not for good men but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful. (NIV)

And the *Phillips* translation of the same passage: “We also know that the law is not really meant for the good man, but for the man who has neither principles or self-control.”

If you have principles and self-control, you are led by the Holy Spirit, and you don’t need to be told to love God and to love each other. That is God’s ideal. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #11, “God’s Emergency Measures” recorded April, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/11MMCG>*

Now, the same understanding is true of the whole sacrificial system, which was certainly not against us to be taken out of the way. It was for us to teach things we needed to know. Most especially were the sacrifices given to remind us of sin and its consequences, how serious it was. Look at Hebrews 10:3, 4: “But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year [that’s its function]. For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sin.” (RSV) {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #11, “God’s Emergency Measures” recorded April, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/11MMCG>*

One of the charges of Satan is that God has lied that death is the result of sin. Is he beginning to answer that all through here; Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy? Though the ultimate answer is not until Calvary, is it? The fact that sin and death are related is a very important point in the great controversy. Look at Hebrews 10:3 to see if the New Testament so interprets it. That would be of great consequence to us. Look at Hebrews 10:3. Now, we really need to read all of Hebrews, or certainly the few chapters leading up to 10, but here is the heart of it, “In these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin, year after year.” Now there’s an interpretation. In the sacrifices which involved death and the participation of the sinner in that death; think of all that was involved, that was a reminder of sin year after year, not a solution. That’s made very plain in Hebrews, isn’t it? If it was a solution, there would have been no need for Christ to come. But it served as a reminder, which means it said something. Just as the Sabbath is a reminder week after week of something of great consequence, so the sacrifices were a reminder of something. Isn’t communion a reminder, isn’t foot-washing a reminder, of Thursday evening in the upper room? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Leviticus*, recorded October, 1981, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

*Audio links to the West Covina series recorded in 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/5MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/6MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Lou: Now is God, as he is revealed in Jesus in the New Testament, is he really gentler than in the Old Testament?

Graham: The only remedy for that is to go through the sixty-six, it seems to me, and note how much tenderness there is in the Old Testament. Things you've preached on many times: God in his vineyard. How tenderly that is told, "What more could I do for you?" Or "How have I wearied you, my people?" Of course, the whole book of Hosea is so moving. Or elsewhere, God says, "Anyone who touches you touches the apple of my eye." That is sometimes translated, "Anybody who hurts you, my people, sticks his finger in the eye of the Almighty." That would hurt! And God says, "That's the way I feel about you."

One of the most impressive, though, is God's treatment of David. Now, David sinned enough to be disfellowshipped periodically from this University Church, and yet God says to his son Solomon, "Solomon, obey me in all things, just as your father David did." That is one of the most generous things in the whole Bible, so I want to use it when we talk about the subject of perfection {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #13 with Lou Venden, "How God Treats His Erring Children" recorded April, 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*
<http://pkp.cc/13MMCAG>

Does God want us to avoid him in the hereafter because he has been so forgiving? Because we would be uncomfortable in his presence, in fear that perhaps he might bring up the subject of our sinful past? Mere pardon is no guarantee that he won't do that. So God not only forgives, he also treats us as if we had never sinned. More than that, he even treats us as if we had always been his loyal children.

How do we know that to be true? Is that based on a promise? Now, a promise is only a claim. Is there evidence and demonstration in Scripture that God not only forgives us, but he will treat us as if we have always been his loyal children? Look how God spoke to Solomon about his father, David in 1 Kings 9:3, 4: "The Lord said to him [Solomon] . . . 'If you walk before me in integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did. . .'" (NIV) Integrity of heart? Uprightness? Think of all the things that David did! And yet, because David had been set right with God and had been won back to trust and had received a new heart and a right spirit, God describes sinful David as if he had always been his loyal son. He did it to David. He is willing to do it to every one of us. {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>

Now we all in the ordinary, legalistic course of events ought to die, and if God let us die, it would prove the truthfulness of his words. But God did not ask us to prove that he told the truth. It was essential that the universe know that the consequences of the wages of sin is death, and to know that it is Satan who has lied when he says that is not true. God had told the truth. This had to be demonstrated. And back in Romans 3, Paul has said that God showed his Son publicly dying to answer that question, to demonstrate that God is righteous in having apparently overlooked men's former sins. "The wages of sin is death" has always been true; it always will be true. Disorderly rebelliousness in God's orderly universe will result in death. But the truthfulness of that has been demonstrated by God himself, he doesn't ask us to do it. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Romans, recorded May, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/61MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/62MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

We usually use 1 John 3:4, and we usually translate that, "Sin is the transgression of the law." But that's a rather expansive translation of one word. And it tempts one to put the Ten Commandments up on the wall and say, "Well, I haven't broken that one, and that one, and that one, and that one, so this has been a rather good day." Paul used to look down the Ten, and on a Tuesday night when he knelt to pray, he could say, "This has been a good day. I haven't murdered anybody. I haven't committed adultery today. I haven't stolen today. I haven't broken the Sabbath, because it was Tuesday anyway. I thank Thee, Lord, I am not like this publican over here." And then he looked at the tenth, and he realized he *had* been breaking them. Because sin in 1 John 3:4, is not "the transgression of the Law." The Greek says "sin is lawlessness." Sin is a state of mind. It's an attitude. And that's what is here. "Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, to him it is rebelliousness." "*Lawlessness*" is the literal Greek word in 1 John 3:4. Moreover, when you think of the fact that it's God who has told us what to do, and everything he has asked us to do is for our best good, and if we do not do it, that suggests distrust. And you remember in Romans 14, the last verse: "Whatever is not of faith and trust is sin."

Sin is a breach of trust. And I think we would protect ourselves from a rather mechanical understanding—or *misunderstanding* of sin, if we put these three verses together instead of one. Romans 14, James 4 and 1 John 3. "Sin is lawlessness." "Sin is knowing what you ought to do but not doing it." "Sin is a breach of trust." And I think they're all in harmony there, aren't they? You could even put Malachi with it: "Cursed be the cheat." Not that God hates cheats. He just can't help cheats. He can't save and heal cheats. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio

series, The Picture of God in all 66 – 1 and 2 Peter and James, recorded July, 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*
<http://pkp.cc/75MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/76MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

All who receive Christ as a personal Saviour are to demonstrate the truth of the gospel and its saving power upon the life. God makes no requirement without making provision for its fulfillment. Through the grace of Christ we may accomplish everything that God requires. All the riches of heaven are to be revealed through God's people. "Herein is My Father glorified," Christ says, "that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be My disciples." John 15:8. {COL 301.2}

When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature. The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan. {SD 23.2}

Christ is ready to impart all heavenly influences. He knows every temptation that comes to man, and the capabilities of every human agent. He weighs his strength. He sees the present and the future, and presents before the mind the obligations that should be met, and urges that common, earthly things shall not be permitted to be so absorbing that eternal things shall be lost out of reckoning. {SD 23.3}

Fallen man is Satan's lawful captive. The mission of Christ was to rescue him from the power of his great adversary. Man is naturally inclined to follow Satan's suggestions, and he cannot successfully resist so terrible a foe unless Christ, the mighty Conqueror, dwells in him, guiding his desires, and giving him strength. God alone can limit the power of Satan. . . . Satan knows better than God's people the power that they can have over him when their strength is in Christ. When they humbly entreat the mighty Conqueror for help, the weakest believer in the truth, relying firmly upon Christ, can successfully repulse Satan and all his host. . . . {AG 257.2}

The work of grace upon the heart is not an instantaneous work. It is effected by continuous, daily watching and believing the promises of God. The repentant, believing one, who cherishes faith and earnestly desires the renewing grace of Christ, God will not turn away empty. He will give him grace. And ministering angels will aid him as he perseveres in his efforts to advance.—Manuscript 55, 1910. {Ev 287.3}

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}

Christ recognized no distinction of nationality or rank or creed. The scribes and Pharisees desired to make a local and a national benefit of all 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. {9T 190.4}

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. {9T 191.1}

He passed no human being by 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 the children of God. {9T 191.2}

All heaven is interested in the restoration of the moral image of God in man. All heaven is working to this end. God and the holy angels have an intense desire that human beings shall reach the standard of perfection which Christ died to make it possible for them to reach. It is His desire that we shall be one with Christ, complete in Christ, that we shall be heirs of heaven; but we are left free to choose. God calls upon us to make our choice on the right side, to connect with heavenly agencies, to adopt principles which have a reviving, restoring influence, which will restore in us the moral image lost through disobedience. As by faith we adopt the principles which characterize the life of Christ, they are in the soul as a well of water, springing up unto everlasting life. The soul overflows with the riches of the grace of Christ, and this overflow refreshes other souls. {HP 286.5}

During His earthly ministry Christ began to break down the partition wall between Jew and Gentile, and to preach salvation to all mankind. Though He was a Jew, He mingled freely with the Samaritans, setting at nought the Pharisaic customs of the Jews with regard to this despised people. He slept under their roofs, ate at their tables, and taught in their streets. {AA 19.2}

The Saviour longed to unfold to His disciples the truth regarding the breaking down of the "middle wall of partition" between Israel and the other nations—the truth that "the Gentiles should be fellow heirs" with the Jews and "partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel." Ephesians 2:14; 3:6. This truth was revealed in part at the time when He rewarded the faith of the centurion at Capernaum, and also when He preached the gospel to the inhabitants of

Sychar. Still more plainly was it revealed on the occasion of His visit to Phoenicia, when He healed the daughter of the Canaanite woman. These experiences helped the disciples to understand that among those whom many regarded as unworthy of salvation, there were souls hungering for the light of truth. {AA 19.3}

Thus Christ sought to teach the disciples the truth that in God's kingdom there are no territorial lines, no caste, no aristocracy; that they must go to all nations, bearing to them the message of a Saviour's love. But not until later did they realize in all its fullness that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us." Acts 17:26, 27. {AA 20.1}

No distinction on account of nationality, race, or caste, is recognized by God. He is the Maker of all mankind. All men are of one family by creation, and all are one through redemption. Christ came to demolish every wall of partition, to throw open every compartment of the temple, that every soul may have free access to God. His love is so broad, so deep, so full, that it penetrates everywhere. It lifts out of Satan's circle the poor souls who have been deluded by his deceptions. It places them within reach of the throne of God, the throne encircled by the rainbow of promise. {COL 386.2}

There is no caste with God. He ignores everything of the kind. All souls are of value with Him. Laboring for the salvation of the soul is employment worthy of the highest honor. It matters not what may be the form of our labor, or among what class, whether high or low. In God's sight these distinctions will not affect its true worth. The sincere, earnest, contrite soul, however ignorant, is precious in the sight of the Lord. He places His own signet upon men, judging, not by their rank, not by their wealth, not by their intellectual greatness, but by their oneness with Christ. The unlearned, the outcast, the slave, if he has made the most of his opportunities and privileges, if he has cherished the light given him of God, has done all that is required. The world may call him ignorant, but God calls him wise and good, and thus his name stands registered in the books of heaven. God will fit him up to do Him honor, not only in heaven, but on the earth.—*Gospel Workers*, p. 332. (1915) {Ev 566.1}

Each law of God is an enactment of mercy, love, and saving power. These laws, obeyed, are our life, our salvation, our happiness, our peace [Psalm 119:165 quoted] (Letter 112, 1902). {3BC 1153.6}

When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. {COL 311.4}

He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility. There is no safety for one who has merely a legal religion, a form of godliness. The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit. {DA 172.1}

The glory of Christ is revealed in the law, which is a transcript of His character, and His transforming efficacy is felt upon the soul until men become changed to His likeness. They are made partakers of the divine nature, and grow more and more like their Saviour, advancing step by step in conformity to the will of God, till they reach perfection. {1SM 240.3}

When we speak of faith, there is a distinction that should be borne in mind. There is a kind of belief that is wholly distinct from faith. The existence and power of God, the truth of His word, are facts that even Satan and his hosts cannot at heart deny. The Bible says that "the devils also believe, and tremble;" but this is not faith. James 2:19. Where there is not only a belief in God's word, but a submission of the will to Him; where the heart is yielded to Him, the affections fixed upon Him, there is faith—faith that works by love and purifies the soul. Through this faith the heart is renewed in the image of God. Romans 8:1. {SC 63.2}

Genuine faith is followed by love, and love by obedience. All the powers and passions of the converted man are brought under the control of Christ. His Spirit is a renewing power, transforming to the divine image all who will receive it. {5T 219.4}

This truth has been to many a cause of doubt and unbelief. When Christ came into the world,—the Son of God and the Son of man,—He was not understood by the people of His time. Christ stooped to take upon Himself human nature, that He might reach the fallen race and lift them up. But the minds of men had become darkened by sin, their faculties were benumbed and their perceptions dulled, so that they could not discern His divine character beneath the garb of humanity. {5T 746.3}

The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. This could not be done by force. The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government; He desires only the service of love; and love cannot be commanded; it cannot be won by force or authority. Only by love is love awakened. To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known. Upon the world's dark night the Sun of Righteousness must rise, "with healing in His wings." Malachi 4:2. {DA 22.1}