

## **Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes**

### **Second Quarter 2020: *How to Interpret Scripture***

#### **Lesson 12 “Dealing With Difficult Passages”**

#### **Read for this week’s study**

2 Timothy 2:10–15; 1 Chronicles 29:17; James 4:6–10; Galatians 6:9; Acts 17:11.

#### **Memory Text**

“And consider that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation—as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you, as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable people twist to their own destruction, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:15, 16, NKJV).

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

- I. Introduction
- II. Possible Reasons for Apparent Contradictions
- III. Deal With Difficulties Honestly and Carefully
- IV. Deal With Difficulties Humbly
- V. Determination and Patience
- VI. Deal With Difficulties Scripturally and Prayerfully
- VII. Further Study

#### **Questions and Notes for Consideration**

##### **Facilitator: Daniel Duda**

1. “We will take a look this week, not so much at difficult texts per se, but at what might be the reasons for these challenges and how, as faithful seekers of truth from God’s word, we can work through them.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. One of the most important gifts God gave to us is a free will. With that, however, comes the ability to misunderstand and twist the Scripture that he gave as a revelation of himself. What is the root cause of this misunderstanding and twisting? What are the results? How can we effectively deal with this?
3. What is the goal of dealing with the challenging statements or difficult passages of the Bible? Can you name some?

4. “We are imperfect and finite beings, and no person has a comprehensive knowledge of every area of learning, let alone of divine things. [...] Some discrepancies in Scripture might be due to minor errors of copyists or translators.” (Sunday’s lesson)
5. Are there other reasons besides our limited perspective/understanding and variance of manuscripts for “difficult passages” of the Bible? What about what the text says (Translation)? The difference in the culture (Contextualization)? The meaning of the text (Interpretation)? Different ethics of the Bible times (Generalization)? A contradiction with what we believe to be right (Application)?
6. The lesson gives us six adjectives (honestly, carefully, humbly, scripturally, and prayerfully) and two nouns (with determination and patience) describing how to approach “difficult passages”. Why are these important? Are some more helpful than others?
7. We need to ask: 1) What is the type of problem? Some are easier to solve than others. (If it is transcription or translation, compare with other Bible versions) 2) What is the tension? 3) What is at stake? 4) What if I am wrong (Acts 23:11)? 5) How should I apply it?
8. Ultimately our goal is not to solve every discrepancy, difficulty, or contradiction in the Scriptures. Our goal is to ask ourselves: How can I be open to what God wants to teach me? How can we broaden our view? How do we account for God’s dynamic way of leading his people in the storyline?
9. The fact that the Bible is inspired does not mean that all portions are of the same value for us today. Large parts are descriptive history, poetic writings, which have their spiritual value, but are not prescriptive for our lives.
10. Most of all, we need to keep in mind that interpreting the Bible is a journey. We need to keep the two horizons (the horizon of the biblical author and our horizon in 21<sup>st</sup> century) separate! What is the danger if the two are merged?
11. The church is not infallible; we believe in the present truth and ever increasing light on our path. In the “cosmic conflict” model, God ultimately must answer all serious questions if he is to win the minds of created beings and thus win the whole war!

### Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

When Moses repeated the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy, he gave a different reason than he gave in Exodus for keeping the Sabbath. You notice in Deuteronomy 5:15:

Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and the Lord your God brought you out with a strong hand and an outstretched arm, for that reason [the Exodus] the Lord your God commanded you to keep the Sabbath day. (NEB)

Now that's no contradiction or lapse of memory on the part of the elderly leader. The Sabbath is about God. He created us free in the beginning. But when we lost our freedom, he used his creative power to set us free again. Note that the Sabbath is always connected with freedom. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #10, "The Reminder of the 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/10MMCAG>*

Lou: As I was listening to your presentation this evening, it seems that you are asking so much of us by way of having to think and to study. There's a bumper sticker around that many have seen on the back of cars, which says, "God said it. I believe it. That's all there is to it." That sounds refreshingly simple. Why wouldn't that be the appropriate way to go?

Graham: The difficulty is that people pick the passages from the Bible that they want to label in that way, and they don't read all the others. For example, you read through where it says, "Take the tithe and buy strong drink with it, and rejoice before the Lord." Or you read another passage, "Give wine to the poor, that they may forget their misery."

"God has said it. I believe it. That's all there is to it." You really can't do that. On the other hand, it could be an expression of humility and teachableness which would be very commendable. I would just suggest that those who use that bumper sticker live up to it. Because they are going to read *everything* God says. They're going to read *all* of scripture, which warns us of the hazard of plucking pieces out like that; but instead to read the Bible as a whole. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #6 with Lou Venden, "Evaluating the Evidence" recorded February 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/6MMCAG>*

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

God desires man to exercise his reasoning powers; and the study of the Bible will strengthen and elevate the mind as no other study can. {SC 109.3}

In order to arrive at truth, we must have a sincere desire to know the truth and a willingness of heart to obey it. And all who come in this spirit to the study of the Bible will find abundant evidence that it is God's word, and they may gain an understanding of its truths that will make them wise unto salvation. {SC 111.1}

There is an evidence that is open to all,—the most highly educated, and the most illiterate,—the evidence of experience. God invites us to prove for ourselves the reality of His word, the truth of His promises. He bids us "taste and see that the Lord is good." Psalm 34:8. Instead of

depending upon the word of another, we are to taste for ourselves. He declares, "Ask, and ye shall receive." John 16:24. His promises will be fulfilled. They have never failed; they never can fail. And as we draw near to Jesus, and rejoice in the fullness of His love, our doubt and darkness will disappear in the light of His presence. {SC 111.3}

By faith we may look to the hereafter and grasp the pledge of God for a growth of intellect, the human faculties uniting with the divine, and every power of the soul being brought into direct contact with the Source of light. We may rejoice that all which has perplexed us in the providences of God will then be made plain, things hard to be understood will then find an explanation; and where our finite minds discovered only confusion and broken purposes, we shall see the most perfect and beautiful harmony. "Now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." 1 Corinthians 13:12. {SC 112.3}

The Bible is its own expositor. Scripture is to be compared with scripture. The student should learn to view the Word as a whole and to see the relation of its parts. He should gain a knowledge of its grand central theme—of God's original purpose for the world, of the rise of the great controversy, and of the work of redemption. He should understand the nature of the two principles that are contending for the supremacy, and should learn to trace their working through the records of history and prophecy, to the great consummation. He should see how this controversy enters into every phase of human experience; how in every act of life he himself reveals the one or the other of the two antagonistic motives; and how, whether he will or not, he is even now deciding upon which side of the controversy he will be found. {LHU 115.2}

He who places himself unreservedly under the guidance of the Spirit of God, will find that his mind expands and develops. He obtains an education in the service of God which is not one-sided and deficient, developing a one-sided character, but one which results in symmetry and completeness. {1SM 338.2}

Angels from the world of light will be with those who in humility of heart seek for divine guidance. {SC 91.1}

Through the Scriptures the Holy Spirit speaks to the mind, and impresses truth upon the heart. Thus He exposes error, and expels it from the soul. It is by the Spirit of truth, working through the word of God, that Christ subdues His chosen people to Himself. {DA 671.1}

We may not, in this life, be able to explain the meaning of every passage of Scripture; but there are no vital points of practical truth that will be clouded in mystery. When the time shall come, in the providence of God, for the world to be tested upon the truth for that time, minds will be exercised by His Spirit to search the Scriptures, even with fasting and with prayer, until link

after link is searched out and united in a perfect chain. Every fact which immediately concerns the salvation of souls will be made so clear that none need err or walk in darkness. {2T 692.1}

To those who with steadfast perseverance strive to reveal the attributes of Christ, angels are commissioned to give enlarged views of His character and work, His power and grace and love. Thus they become partakers of His nature. {AG 118.6}

It was Christ who guided the Israelites through the wilderness. And it is Christ who is guiding His people today, showing them where and how to work (Letter 335, 1904). {3BC 1156.1}

The enemy cannot overcome the humble learner of Christ, the one who walks prayerfully before the Lord. Christ interposes Himself as a shelter, a retreat, from the assaults of the wicked one. The promise is given, "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." . . . {ML 316.2}

The mind devoted unreservedly to God, under the guidance of the divine Spirit develops generally and harmoniously. The weak, vacillating character becomes changed through the power of God to one of strength and steadfastness. Continual devotion and piety establish so close a relation between Jesus and His disciple that the Christian becomes like Him in mind and character. After association with the Son of God the humble follower of Christ is found to be a person of sound principle, clear perception, and reliable judgment. He has a connection with God, the Source of light and understanding. {TMK 124.4}

When the Christian takes his baptismal vow, divine help is pledged to him. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit stand ready to work in his behalf. God places at his command the resources of heaven, that he may be an overcomer. His own power is small; but God is omnipotent, and God is his helper. Daily he is to make known his wants at the throne of grace. By faith and trust, by availing himself of the resources provided, he can be more than a conqueror. {OHC 157.5}

The Christian always has a strong helper in the Lord. The way of the Lord's helping we may not know; but this we do know: He will never fail those who put their trust in Him. {PK 576.1}