

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Second Quarter 2021: *The Promise: God's Everlasting Covenant*

Lesson 4 "An Everlasting Covenant"

Read for this week's study

Exodus 3:14; Genesis 17:1–6; Genesis 41:45; Daniel 1:7; Genesis 15:7–18; Genesis 17:1–14; Revelation 14:6, 7.

Memory Text

"I [God] will establish my covenant between me and you [Abraham] and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you" (Genesis 17:7, RSV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Yahweh and the Abrahamic Covenant
- III. 'El Shaddai
- IV. From Abram to Abraham (*Genesis 17:4, 5*)
- V. Covenant Stages (*Genesis 12:1, 2*)
- VI. Covenant Obligations
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Read Genesis 17:7. What does the concept of "everlasting covenant" mean? Was that something that began with Abraham or was God talking about something that went back all the way into eternity? When one reads Genesis in the Hebrew, it becomes evident that God's call to Abraham is related to everything that happened before it. What do you think the call of Abraham had to do with creation and the Fall? What role was Abraham intended to play? Why did God change his name from Abram to Abraham? (Sabbath Afternoon's Lesson)
2. Read Genesis 15:7. What is the significance of God introducing himself to Abram as "Yahweh"? If Yahweh is God's personal name, what does it mean? Which of the three purposes for a name is reflected in "Yahweh"? When you think of the name

Yahweh, what characteristics come to mind? When you think of the name Jesus, what characteristics come to mind? (Sunday's Lesson)

3. Read Genesis 17:1. God introduces himself to Abraham here with a different name, The Almighty or El Shaddai in the Hebrew. This name for God is used only in Genesis and in the book of Job. Read the larger context of Genesis 17:1-6. What is the point of using this name at this juncture in the Abraham story? (Monday's Lesson)
4. Read Genesis 17:4-5. Given what we have discovered earlier about Hebrew names, what is the significance of the name change from Abram to Abraham? What do each of these names mean? In Genesis 32:28, 41:45, and Daniel 1:7 we have other instances where names are changed. What situations are they addressing and why were the names changed in each case? (Tuesday's Lesson)
5. The lesson suggests that covenants happen in stages. The first stage of the covenant with Abraham is in Genesis 12:1-3. The second stage is in Genesis 15:7-18 and the third stage is Genesis 17:1-14. What three steps does God take in Genesis 12:1-2? Where do you see the same three steps in Genesis 15? What took place in the third and final stage of God's covenant-making with Abraham (Genesis 17:1-14)? What is said in this final covenant that echoes God's promise in Genesis 12:1-3? (Wednesday's Lesson)
6. Read Genesis 18:19. How does this verse fit into the idea that the covenant is solely by grace? What level of importance is obedience given to obedience here? Could the covenant have been fulfilled without Abraham's obedience? What does this tell us about God? (Thursday's Lesson)
7. The sign of the covenant with Noah was the rainbow. What is the sign of God's covenant with Abraham? What do you think was God's purpose in giving such a sign to Abraham and to the Israelites that followed him? Why is the one sign still in force but the other not? (Friday's Lesson)
8. What is the relationship between faith and works? Can the one really function without the other? Why, or why not? (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

As I mentioned earlier, I have had the privilege of doing this more than one hundred times with different groups. It takes a year each trip. One book a week. And on the authority of the sixty-six books, I am prepared to say in any company, that I believe that God is an infinitely powerful, (no question about it) but equally gracious person who values nothing higher than the freedom, and the dignity even, and the individuality of his intelligent creatures—that their love, their faith, their worship, their willingness to listen and obey may be freely given. And I believe that that is supported by a very great weight of evidence. That is, demonstration. {Graham Maxwell.

Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #4, “God’s Way Of Restoring Trust” 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/4MMCAG>

I believe that to be afraid of God is to misunderstand, even to deny, what he paid such a price to reveal. Though God is infinite in majesty and power, he values nothing higher than the freedom of his intelligent creatures; that their love, their worship, their trust, their willingness to listen may be freely given. I understand that God desires our trust to be freely given, not because he simply prefers it that way, as any parent would, but he knows that if our love and trust are not freely given, then there really is no freedom in his family. And God would rather die than preside over a universe that is not free.

Besides, he also knows, as he sought to explain to us at such cost, that the obedience that springs from fear will actually turn his children into rebels. Rebelliousness is the very essence of sin. God sent his Son to deal with sin. He sent his Son to do away with sin, you recall, in Romans 8. But in order to do away with rebelliousness and distrust, first he must do away with fear. Because it is fear that has turned so many away from God. It is fear that has inspired rebelliousness even in the hearts of those who seek to obey him, but do not know him well. God gave his life to make it eternally clear that there is no need for his children to be afraid of him. Surely a God who would go to such lengths to indicate that though he is infinite in power there is no need for us to be afraid, surely that God is worthy of our love, our reverence, our worship, and our willingness to listen and obey.

Now, if God really were the kind of person his enemies have made him out to be, arbitrary, vengeful, and severe, then obviously there would be no freedom under such a government. Any professions of love and trust on our part would be tarnished and compromised with our fears. How could God be satisfied with expressions of love from children who are afraid? Would you parents be satisfied from such expressions of love from your own children? But no wonder so many millions have turned away from God, when you consider Satan’s perversion of the truth in this matter. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #9, “There is No Need to Be Afraid of God” 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/9MMCAG>

My conviction is that Paul could read James and say, “Well said!” and vice versa. I see no conflict at all between the two—a matter of balance. Isn’t it true that faith without works is a dead faith? Is anyone saved by a dead faith? So you don’t really trust. I don’t see any disagreement between the two at all.

Now, if a man tries to be saved by works without any faith; can God save those who do not trust him? No matter how hard they work? No. There must be trust. But the man who says, “I trust you, but I don’t have time to listen, and I don’t intend to follow your instructions, because if I were to follow your instructions, that would be works.” That makes nonsense out of faith. “I trust you, but I’m not going to do what you say.” Try that on your doctor.

You say, “I’m very sick, and I trust you.”

And the doctor says, “Do the following.”

“Oh no! It would only be faith if I can go to bed tonight and wake up well in the morning.”

Well, it doesn’t come that easily, does it? It’s a faith that works. Faith is a willingness to listen and to carry through with the instructions as best one can. Now it’s true, our efforts may not be at all perfect—quite fumbling. But the trust must be complete. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in all 66 – 1&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

The precious Saviour will send help just when we need it. The way to heaven is consecrated by His footprints. Every thorn that wounds our feet has wounded His. Every cross that we are called to bear He has borne before us. The Lord permits conflicts, to prepare the soul for peace. The time of trouble is a fearful ordeal for God’s people; but it is the time for every true believer to look up, and by faith he may see the bow of promise encircling him. {GC 633.1}

Let all who are afflicted or unjustly used, cry to God. Turn away from those whose hearts are as steel, and make your requests known to your Maker. Never is one repulsed who comes to Him with a contrite heart. Not one sincere prayer is lost. Amid the anthems of the celestial choir, God hears the cries of the weakest human being. We pour out our heart’s desire in our closets, we breathe a prayer as we walk by the way, and our words reach the throne of the Monarch of the universe. They may be inaudible to any human ear, but they cannot die away into silence, nor can they be lost through the activities of business that are going on. Nothing can drown the soul’s desire. It rises above the din of the street, above the confusion of the multitude, to the heavenly courts. It is God to whom we are speaking, and our prayer is heard. {COL 174.1}

Never feel that Christ is far away. He is always near. His loving presence surrounds you. {FLB 62.8}

The Lord does not leave His wounded and bruised sheep to the power of Satan to be torn in pieces. He is ever strengthening His own when they are weak. He delivers the tried and tempted ones from the enemy's power. The Lord Jesus never forsakes any soul that puts his trust in Him. {UL 150.4}

He who slumbers not, who is continually at work for the accomplishment of His designs, can carry forward His great work harmoniously. That which appears to finite minds entangled and complicated, the Lord's hand can keep in perfect order. He can devise ways and means to thwart the purposes of wicked counselors, and those who plot out mischief. {4BC 1161.1}

He who walked with the Hebrew worthies in the fiery furnace will be with His followers wherever they are. His abiding presence will comfort and sustain. In the midst of the time of trouble—trouble such as has not been since there was a nation—His chosen ones will stand unmoved. Satan with all the hosts of evil cannot destroy the weakest of God's saints. Angels that excel in strength will protect them, and in their behalf Jehovah will reveal Himself as a "God of gods," able to save to the uttermost those who have put their trust in Him. {CC 252.5}

He finds His faithful ones, and holds communion with them, encouraging and strengthening them. And angels of God, that excel in strength, are sent forth by God to minister to His human workers who are speaking the truth to those who know it not. {8T 17.3}

In the annals of human history, the growth of nations, the rise and fall of empires, appear as if dependent on the will and prowess of man; the shaping of events seems, to a great degree, to be determined by his power, ambition, or caprice. But in the word of God the curtain is drawn aside, and we behold, above, behind, and through all the play and counterplay of human interest and power and passions, the agencies of the All-merciful One, silently, patiently working out the counsels of His own will. . . . {CC 250.3}

God does not ask us to do in our own strength the work before us. He has provided divine assistance for all the emergencies to which our human resources are unequal. He gives the Holy Spirit to help in every strait, to strengthen our hope and assurance, to illuminate our minds and purify our hearts. {8T 19.1}

In the whole Satanic force there is not power to overcome one soul who in simple trust casts himself on Christ. {COL 157.3}

Every manifestation of creative power is an expression of infinite love. The sovereignty of God involves fullness of blessing to all created beings. {PP 33.2}

To give glory to God is to reveal His character in our own, and thus make Him known. And in whatever way we make known the Father or the Son, we glorify God (MS 16, 1890).
{7BC 979.4}

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 courts, 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 influence those who have been deluded by his deceptions, and places them within reach of the throne of God, the throne encircled by the rainbow of promise. In Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free. {PK 369.3}

Heaven's plan of salvation is broad enough to embrace the whole world. God longs to breathe into prostrate humanity the breath of life. And He will not permit any soul to be disappointed who is sincere in his longing for something higher and nobler than anything the world can offer. Constantly He is sending His angels to those who, while surrounded by circumstances the most discouraging, pray in faith for some power higher than themselves to take possession of them and bring deliverance and peace. In various ways God will reveal Himself to them and will place them in touch with providences that will establish their confidence in the One who has given Himself a ransom for all, "that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments." Psalm 78:7. {PK 377.1}

The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God. {COL 97.3}

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}

But while everything in nature is governed by natural law, man alone, as an intelligent being, capable of understanding its requirements, is amenable to moral law. To man alone, the crowning work of His creation, God has given a conscience to realize the sacred claims of the divine law, and a heart capable of loving it as holy, just, and good; and of man prompt and perfect obedience is required. Yet God does not compel him to obey; he is left a free moral agent. {1SM 216.2}

In calling them to His service, God offers them freedom. Obedience to God is liberty from the thralldom of sin, deliverance from human passion and impulse. {TM 247.1}

Our sanctification is the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is the fulfillment of the covenant God has made with those who bind themselves up with Him, to stand with Him, His Son, and His Spirit in holy fellowship. {7BC 908.11}

If man had kept the law of God, as given to Adam after his fall, preserved by Noah, and observed by Abraham, there would have been no necessity for the ordinance of circumcision. And if the descendants of Abraham had kept the covenant, of which circumcision was a sign, they would never have been seduced into idolatry, nor would it have been necessary for them to suffer a life of bondage in Egypt; they would have kept God's law in mind, and there would have been no necessity for it to be proclaimed from Sinai or engraved upon the tables of stone. And had the people practiced the principles of the Ten Commandments, there would have been no need of the additional directions given to Moses. {PP 364.2}

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. {PP 373.2}

The law of love is the foundation of God's government, and the service of love the only service acceptable to Heaven. God has granted freedom of will to all, endowed men with capacity to appreciate His character, and therefore with ability to love Him and to choose His service. So long as created beings worshiped God they were in harmony throughout the universe. While love to God was supreme, love to others abounded. As there was no transgression of the law, which is the transcript of God's character, no note of discord jarred the celestial harmonies. {TMK 366.2}