

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
First Quarter 2022: *In These Last Days: The Message of Hebrews*
Lesson 11 “Jesus, Author *and* Perfecter of Our Faith”

Read for this week’s study

Hebrews 10:35–39; Romans 1:17; Hebrews 11; Joshua 2:9–11; Hebrews 12:1–3.

Memory Text

“Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Hebrews 12:2, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Righteous Will Live By Faith
- III. By Faith Abraham
- IV. Moses: Believing in the Unseen
- V. By Faith Rahab and the Rest
- VI. Jesus, the Author and Perfecter of Our Faith
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “This lesson will explore what faith is and how it is obtained through the examples of the past but, especially and centrally, through the example of Jesus, “the founder and perfecter of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2, ESV).” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Why was the verse from Habakkuk 2:4 such a much-loved and quoted text in early Christianity (cf. Romans 1:16, 17; Galatians 3:11)? (Sunday’s lesson) How does God’s faithfulness towards us form the basis of our faithfulness? What did the text of Habakkuk 2:3 mean then (“it will surely come, it will not delay”)? What did it mean in Hebrews 10:37 (“the one who is coming will come and will not delay”)? And what does it mean for us today? When can we speak about the “delay”?
3. Hebrews 11 & 12 provides not only a description of faith which people need, but also a brief history of God’s people, particularly the key figures of the early period. The lesson focuses on Abraham (Monday), Moses (Tuesday), Rahab and the rest

Wednesday). As believers we are encouraged to follow all the great models of faith found throughout the story of the Scriptures.

4. What made Abraham a 'hero of faith'? How did he resolve the conundrum of God's instruction to him in Genesis 22 which clearly contradicted God's promises to him in Genesis 12-21? How did Abraham arrive at the conclusion that God would resurrect Isaac after he had sacrificed him, if no one had yet been resurrected? Why is the city mentioned here for the first time (11:10), and why does it then suddenly emerge as a main theme in the last chapters of the letter?
5. What makes Moses a 'hero of faith' according to Hebrews 11? Moses, like Abraham and the others, acted on faith in God that looks to the future and knows that God has planned something better than anything we could see or accomplish. Can we appreciate why this was meaningful to the first readers of the letter? How can the message be meaningful to us in our time? Where and how do we need to look at our future with faith?
6. Why was Rahab, a pagan prostitute, included in this text of sacred biblical characters and heroes of faith? She is a counterintuitive climax of the chapter, as you would expect (given the previous pattern), "by faith Joshua led the people into the promised land." But Joshua is passed over, and the prostitute takes his place. How was this relevant to the original audience? How can this be relevant to us?
7. The story reaches its culmination with Jesus in 12:2. What does it mean that Jesus is the author and 'finisher' or 'perfecter' of our faith? What did it mean for the author and the first audience of the Letter to the Hebrews?
8. The author next urges his audience to live within the story for themselves (12:4-17). Then he declares the goal of the journey (12:18-24) and what will happen at the end (12:25-29). Thus in Hebrews 11 & 12, the author tells the story from creation (11:2) to new creation (12:28); from covenant (11:9-29) to new covenant (12:24).
9. When we contemplate what Jesus went through, we realize that by comparison we have mostly had an easy journey. And when times are bad, we must keep going, **reminding ourselves of truth**, rather than conjure up a variety of *feelings*.
10. Instead of *looking back* or wanting to go back, we are encouraged to follow Christ's example and *look ahead* by faith. Jesus, and the heroes of faith, lived their present in the security of future realities. This enabled them to endure, and it will do the same for us too!

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Now it's said here that this measure of faith is a sign by God in verse 3. Would you understand that to mean that God looks over the human race and says, "I'll give that one so much faith and this one so much."

Is faith a gift of God? Is that why some have faith and some don't? He's given it to some and not to others? If God gives faith, why do some have it and some don't? And does he give more to some than to others? Does he practice favoritism here? Can faith actually be given? You say to God, "I don't trust you. I think you're an absolutely untrustworthy liar as the devil has said, but I wish I trusted you and thought you told the truth. I'm praying that when I wake up in the morning I will trust you and not think you're a liar anymore."

You hop into bed, wake up in the morning, you love, trust and admire God, you now know he tells the truth. Would you trust that? Can God give us faith as an outright gift? And yet, if God had not given us the capacity to reason and to weigh evidence and to discern between the true and the false, if God had not given us the capacity to make decisions and commitments, if God had not given us the revelation of the truth about himself at such cost, if God did not preserve us from the enemy who would destroy us and confuse us and take away our chance to weigh the evidence, in fact, if God has not done all that he has done would there be any chance that we could see him as he is and trust him? In fact, who even instructs us and works with us and persuades us, and tries to lead us to truth and conviction? Aren't all these things the work of God and the work of the Holy Spirit? Is there anything, though, that God doesn't do in the matter of faith? Does he also cast our vote? Does God not only bring the evidence but also force our vote? If God has forced our vote then he's won the Great Controversy by stuffing the ballot box, hasn't he? He really hasn't won our vote. As Ellen White says repeatedly, our vote is offered in the highest sense of freedom. The vote is ours.

So God gives us every opportunity to have faith, but the decision to trust it is left with us. And many religions don't like that. They don't want anything left with us. But if it isn't left with us, how are we held accountable in the judgment? Are we not judged as to whether or not we've chosen to place our faith in the true God?

Isn't that the only thing we're held responsible for? The decision is ours, or else our trust in God would mean nothing to him, would it? If he had manipulated us so that we trusted him—I mean, if our wives said they loved us because we had manipulated them, we'd be talking back to ourselves. Does God just want to hear himself talking back, "I love you God"? Or does he want to hear us say in the highest sense of freedom, "We do love and trust you, that's our choice." Hasn't he paid a heavy price to preserve our freedom to cast our own vote in the Great Controversy? And to love him because we've decided he's lovable and trustworthy. And I think it's so cruel of many religions to suggest that even faith is not our decision. God does all of that. Yes, he brings everything to us. Without him there would be no chance to exercise faith. But the decision, the vote is ours, and for that we're held responsible.

In fact, Ellen White says if the Holy Spirit should be poured out on you with a hundred fold greater intensity, it would not make of you a Christian. (MB 142) The Spirit only leads to truth, leads us to conviction, but at the same time preserves our freedom to vote no. So when it says

faith is a gift of God, I think we have to reserve that one act that is assigned to us—the decision whether we’re going to respond to the evidence with trust or with rebellion and distrust. Why all the costly revelation these thousands of years and all the records of scripture that we might have the evidence, if God is the one who places faith in our hearts anyway whether we have evidence or not? If God just says, “Now you don’t trust me, now you do” why do you need any evidence? The fact that God has been such a teacher and has brought us so much evidence is clear support that he’ll bring us every opportunity; he’ll preserve our lives to give us those moments of freedom when we cast our vote. But casting that vote is our privilege, our responsibility; he’s created us capable of voting, and holds us responsible for the vote that we cast. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 12, recorded January 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/23MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/24MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

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 April 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/65MMPOGIA66>*

Further Study with Ellen White

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

As the wheel-like complications were under the guidance of the hand beneath the wings of the cherubim, so the complicated play of human events is under divine control. Amidst the strife and tumult of nations He that sitteth above the cherubim still guides the affairs of this earth. {PK 536.1}

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}

Amid the perplexities that will press upon the soul, there is only One who can help us out of all our difficulties, and relieve all our disquietude. We are to cast all our care upon Jesus, and bear

in mind that He is present, and is directing us to commune with Him. We are to keep our minds stayed upon God; and in our weakness, He will be our strength; in our ignorance, He will be our wisdom; in our frailty, He will be our enduring might. {SD 27.2}

These things were not written merely that we might read and wonder, but that the same faith which wrought in God's servants of old might work in us. In no less marked a manner than He wrought then will He work now wherever there are hearts of faith to be channels of His power. {CG 43.1}

Many hold faith as an opinion. But saving faith is a transaction, by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. Genuine faith is life. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering power. {GW 261.1}

Jesus does not call on us to follow Him, and then forsake us. If we surrender our lives to His service, we can never be placed in a position for which God has not made provision. Whatever may be our situation, we have a Guide to direct our way; whatever our perplexities, we have a sure Counselor; whatever our sorrow, bereavement, or loneliness, we have a sympathizing Friend. If in our ignorance we make missteps, Christ does not leave us. His voice, clear and distinct, is heard, saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." [John 14:6.] "He shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper." [Psalm 72:12.] {GW 263.1}

Our God is a very present help in time of need. He is acquainted with the most secret thoughts of our hearts, with all the intents and purposes of our souls. When we are in perplexity, even before we open to Him our distresses, He is making arrangements for our deliverance.—Letter 73, Feb. 1, 1905, to Drs. D. H. and Laretta Kress. {UL 46.6}

The Lord's care is over all His creatures. He loves them all and makes no difference, except that He has the most tender pity for those who are called to bear life's heaviest burdens. {FLB 63.2}

Remember that underneath you are the everlasting arms. "Rest in the Lord, and wait patiently for him" (Psalm 37:7). He is guiding you into a harbor of gracious experience. {HP 269.5}

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}

While slander may blacken the reputation, it cannot stain the character. That is in God's keeping. So long as we do not consent to sin, there is no power, whether human or satanic, that can bring a stain upon the soul. A man whose heart is stayed upon God is just the same in the hour of his most afflicting trials and most discouraging surroundings as when he was in

prosperity, when the light and favor of God seemed to be upon him. His words, his motives, his actions, may be misrepresented and falsified, but he does not mind it, because he has greater interests at stake. Like Moses, he endures as “seeing Him who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:27); looking “not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen” (2 Corinthians 4:18). {MB 32.2}

Christ is acquainted with all that is misunderstood and misrepresented by men. His children can afford to wait in calm patience and trust, no matter how much maligned and despised; for nothing is secret that shall not be made manifest, and those who honor God shall be honored by Him in the presence of men and angels. {MB 32.3}

Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, or a day. It is a continual growth in grace. We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. Satan lives, and is active, and every day we need to earnestly cry to God for help and strength to resist him. As long as Satan reigns we shall have self to subdue, besetments to overcome, and there is no stopping place. There is no point to which we can come and say we have fully attained (RH May 6, 1862). {7BC 947.5}

He who constantly depends upon God through simple trust and prayerful confidence, will be surrounded by the angels of heaven. He who lives by faith in Christ, will be strengthened and upheld, able to fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold upon eternal life. {HP 16.7}

Christ recognized no distinction of nationality or rank or creed. The scribes and Pharisees desired to make a local and a national benefit of the gifts of heaven, and to exclude the rest of God’s family in the world. But Christ came to break down every wall of partition. He came to show that His gift of mercy and love is as unconfined as the air, the light, or the showers of rain that refresh the earth. {RC 27.2}

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. {RC 27.3}

He passed by no human being as worthless, but sought to apply the healing remedy to every soul. In whatever company He found Himself, He presented a lesson appropriate to the time and the circumstances. Every neglect or insult shown by men to their fellow men only made Him more conscious of their need of His divine-human sympathy. He sought to inspire with hope the roughest and most unpromising, setting before them the assurance that they might become blameless and harmless, attaining such a character as would make them manifest as the children of God. {RC 27.4}

As the rays of the sun penetrate to the remotest corners of the globe, so God designs that the light of the gospel shall extend to every soul upon the earth. {AG 26.3}

Though He was a Jew, Christ mingled with the Samaritans, setting at naught the Pharisaic customs of His nation. In face of their prejudices, He accepted the hospitality of this despised people. He slept under their roofs, ate with them at their tables, partaking of the food prepared and served by their hands—and taught in their streets, and treated them with the utmost kindness and courtesy. {3SM 238.2}

Jesus sat as an honored guest at the table of the publicans, by His sympathy and social kindness showing that He recognized the dignity of humanity; and men longed to become worthy of His confidence. Upon their thirsty souls His words fell with blessed, life-giving power. New impulses were awakened, and the possibility of a new life opened to these outcasts of society. {3SM 238.3}

The opinion is held by many that God placed a separating wall between the Hebrews and the outside world; that His care and love, withdrawn to a great extent from the rest of mankind, were centered upon Israel. But God did not design that His people should build up a wall of partition between themselves and their fellow men. The heart of Infinite Love was reaching out toward all the inhabitants of the earth. Though they had rejected Him, He was constantly seeking to reveal Himself to them and make them partakers of His love and grace. His blessing was granted to the chosen people, that they might bless others. {PP 368.1}

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}