

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2022: *In the Crucible With Christ*

Lesson 1 “The Shepherd’s Crucible”

Read for this week’s study

Psalm 23; Romans 12:18-21.

Memory Text

“He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake” (Psalm 23:3, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. A Guide for the Journey: The Shepherd
- III. Locations on the Journey
- IV. Unexpected Detour 1: The Valley
- V. Unexpected Detour 2: The Surrounded Table
- VI. A Certain Promise for the Journey
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. This lesson explores the issue of suffering through the larger lens of the suffering of Christ. We all know and experience suffering through the lens of our own personal experience. We experience our own griefs, our own sorrows. But Isaiah tells us that the Suffering Servant “has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows” (Isa 53:4, ESV), all of them. When God chose to create creatures with freedom to choose and to bear the consequences of those choices, God committed Himself to experience and understand all those consequences for our sakes. So, the very act of creation was an act of self-sacrifice. Jesus Christ was the Lamb “slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev 13:8, KJV). “The cross is a revelation to our dull senses of the pain that, from its very inception, sin has brought to the heart of God.” Ed 263. In whatever suffering we may experience in this world, we are never alone. So why would God create free creatures, knowing the likely consequences of that action? (Lesson Introduction)
2. This week’s lesson explores the topic of suffering in light of the shepherd psalm, Psalm 23, which mentions both pleasant and unhappy circumstances. At what times

have you grown more spiritually? In easy times or in hard times? (Sabbath Afternoon's Lesson)

3. Read Psalm 23:1. What is a shepherd's life like? Why would the Psalmist use such a metaphor for God? How is God like a Shepherd? What does "I shall not want" mean to you? What can we learn from the shepherd metaphors used in Isaiah 40:1, Jeremiah 23:3-4, Ezekiel 34:12, John 10:14-16 and 1 Peter 2:25? Read Psalm 23 as a whole and ask yourself the question, what does a shepherd do to care for the sheep? What does Psalm 23 add to your picture of God? (Sunday's Lesson)
4. Read Psalm 23:2-3. What is God's role when good things happen in life? What is the meaning of the word "righteousness"? Reread Psalm 23 as a whole. What different locations do the paths of righteousness lead to? Why are they called "paths of righteousness"? (Monday's Lesson)
5. Read Psalm 23:4. This is probably a reference to the deep, dark slot canyons of the Judean desert, where David was in hiding from Saul. What kind of dangers would a shepherd face in guiding sheep through a slot canyon? Would the sheep get into the canyon by themselves or would the shepherd lead them there? Might the sheep misunderstand the shepherd's intent when in a dark and scary place? (Tuesday's Lesson)
6. Read Psalm 23:5. What does David mean by table, oil and cup? How did David deal with the enemies in his life? How would you define "enemy" in the context of following Jesus? What do Matthew 5:44, Romans 12:18-21, 2 Timothy 2:24-26, and Ephesians 6:12 have to say about our response to such enemies? Is it possible to go too far with such an approach? (Wednesday's Lesson)
7. Read Psalm 23:6. In spite of his trials, what does David say he is certain of? What does this tell us about God? (Thursday's Lesson)
8. "Those who are finally victorious will have seasons of terrible perplexity and trial in their religious life; but they must not cast away their confidence, for this is a part of their discipline in the school of Christ." MYP, 63-64. What does this statement mean to you? (Friday's Lesson)
9. Can you think of a time in your life when "goodness and mercy" pursued you? (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

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 (more strongly than I believe anything) 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>

So in imagination let’s go to the cross, and watch Jesus die. Did he really die? The soldiers were surprised to find he was already dead. Crucifixion was a slow way of dying. Evidently something else had happened. Is it true that Jesus was dying the death of a sinner, to show us how the sinner really dies? Look at the next verse on our sheet, 2 Corinthians 5:21: “For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin.” (RSV) He did die the death of a sinner. And what caused Jesus to die? As you watch him dying on the cross, is God killing his Son? Is he torturing his Son to death? Is God pouring out his wrath on His Son; something the Bible so often pictures God doing toward sinners for whom there is no further hope?

Well, it all depends on the meaning of wrath. What is God’s wrath? One of the clearest explanations in the whole Bible is in Romans 1, the next passage. And I wish we could read at least the whole first chapter. But look at these few verses; Romans 1:18, 24, 26, 28:

For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth . . . [and it is the truth about God in

that whole section]. Therefore, God gave them up . . . For this reason God gave them up . . . And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up. (RSV)

Three times it states in Romans 1 that God's wrath is simply his turning away, in loving disappointment, from those who do not want him anyway; thus leaving them to the inevitable and awful consequence of their own rebellious choice. Was Jesus given up? Look at Romans 4:25: ". . . Jesus our Lord, who was put to death [given up] for our trespasses." (RSV)

There is nothing in the Greek that says he was put to death. It says what is in the brackets there. "Jesus our Lord, who was given up for our trespasses . . ." and it is exactly the same word as in Romans 1:24, 26, 28. And versions ought to leave them the same to show the point that Jesus died under the wrath of his Father. But look at the real meaning of God's wrath. And this was not new with Paul. It's all through the Old Testament; most dramatically in Hosea 11. Again, I wish we could read the whole chapter. Hosea 11 just verses 7 and 8: "My people are bent on turning away from me . . . but How, oh how can I give you up, Ephraim! How, oh how, can I hand you over Israel!" (*Phillips*)

Did Jesus understand that this is the experience he was passing through? Did Jesus know he was being given up as Hosea describes it? And Paul later in Romans 1 and 4? What did Jesus cry just before he died? "My God, my God, why are you beating me up? Why are you torturing me? Why are you killing me?" No! "Why have you given me up?" He knew.

We should have come earlier, though—to Gethsemane. For he began this awesome experience of demonstrating the truth about God's gracious but awful warning, that the wages of sin is death. We should have come to Gethsemane. And there Jesus fell to the ground dying. The angels were watching. Was God killing his Son in the Garden of Gethsemane, or did Jesus feel his unity with his Father breaking up? He began to feel the awesome loneliness of being given up. Had Jesus been left in the Garden of Gethsemane, and had he died there, could you say that the Father had killed the Son? Now had he been a mere creature you wouldn't know; but the angels knew who Jesus was. They knew that he was God. And they knew the meaning of his words. I should have included the verse in John 10:18. Jesus said, "No one takes my life from me. No one can. I lay it down of myself. I have the power to lay it down and I have the power to take it up." The angels knew that was the truth. And if Jesus died it was not because his Father had killed him. The Father was giving him up and both of them suffered and the Father was crying, "How can I give you up?" The Son who had assumed humanity was the one who died.

And so two questions were answered in Gethsemane. Is death the result of sin? Indeed it is. Is it because God kills his wayward children? He did not lay a hand on his Son.

But there was a third question that needed to be answered. Why is it so important that we understand that God does not execute his sinful children? This had to be answered, too. And so an angel came to strengthen Jesus to go out to Calvary. And there, once again, he answered the

first two questions. But he was also this time tortured and crucified. By whom? By the Father? Or by most devout group of Sabbath-keeping, tithe-paying, health-reforming, Bible-quoting Adventists the world has ever known? They even said he had a devil before they tortured him to death. You see, they obeyed God from fear. Because, as the prophet had said so many times before, they did not really know God.

Look at John 19:31:

Then the Jewish authorities asked Pilate to allow them to break the legs of the men who had been crucified, and to take the bodies down from the crosses. They requested this because it was Friday, and they did not want the bodies to stay on the crosses on the Sabbath, since the coming Sabbath was especially holy. (GNB)

You see, they nailed their Savior to the cross and then rushed home to keep that Sabbath especially holy. To prove they were God's true people. That's the awful result of serving God from fear because you do not know the truth about God. The three questions were answered. Does sin result in death? Indeed, it does! But is it torture and execution at the hands of our gracious God? Indeed, it is not! But what's so dangerous about misunderstanding this and serving God from fear? The service of fear produces the character of a rebel. And can even turn people who are dedicated to obedience into harsh rebels, and God's worst enemies! {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #8, "The Conflict in God's Family" 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>*

Further Study with Ellen White

In the darkest days, when appearances seem most forbidding, have faith in God. He is working out His will, doing all things well in behalf of His people. The strength of those who love and serve Him will be renewed day by day. {LHU 219.8}

He is able and willing to bestow upon His servants all the help they need. He will give them the wisdom which their varied necessities demand (*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 481, 482). {LHU 219.9}

But though the conflict is a ceaseless one, none are left to struggle alone. Angels help and protect those who walk humbly before God. Never will our Lord betray one who trusts in Him. As His children draw near to Him for protection from evil, in pity and love He lifts up for them a standard against the enemy. Touch them not, He says; for they are Mine. I have graven them upon the palms of My hands.—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 571. {ChS 166.2}

Every redeemed one will understand the ministry of angels in his own life. The angel who was his guardian from his earliest moment; the angel who watched his steps, and covered his head in the day of peril; the angel who was with him in the valley of the shadow of death, who marked his resting place, who was the first to greet him in the resurrection morning—what will it be to hold converse with him, and to learn the history of divine interposition in the individual life, of heavenly co-operation in every work for humanity! {Ed 305.2}

All the perplexities of life's experience will then be made plain. Where to us have appeared only confusion and disappointment, broken purposes and thwarted plans, will be seen a grand, overruling, victorious purpose, a divine harmony. {Ed 305.3}

Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Saviour died. The distress of every one touches His heart. The cry for aid reaches His ear. He came to draw all men unto Himself. He bids them, "Follow Me," and His Spirit moves upon their hearts to draw them to come to Him. Many refuse to be drawn. Jesus knows who they are. He also knows who gladly hear His call, and are ready to come under His pastoral care. He says, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me." He cares for each one as if there were not another on the face of the earth. {DA 480.1}

God's ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect." This command is a promise. The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning. {DA 311.2}

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}

By beholding Jesus we receive a living, expanding principle in the heart, and the Holy Spirit carries on the work, and the believer advances from grace to grace, from strength to strength, from character to character. He conforms to the image of Christ, until in spiritual growth he attains unto the measure of the full stature in Christ Jesus. Thus Christ makes an end of the curse of sin, and sets the believing soul free from its action and effect. {1SM 395.1}

Christ has made every provision for us to be strong. He has given us His Holy Spirit, whose office is to bring to our remembrance all the promises that Christ has made, that we may have peace and a sweet sense of forgiveness. If we will but keep our eyes fixed on the Saviour and trust in His power, we shall be filled with a sense of security; for the righteousness of Christ will become our righteousness. {ML 45.5}

Every weak, doubting, struggling soul who yields fully to the Lord is placed in direct touch with agencies that enable him to overcome. Heaven is near to him, and he has the support and help of angels of mercy in every time of trial and need. {AA 299.1}

If in our ignorance we make missteps, the Saviour does not forsake us. We need never feel that we are alone. Angels are our companions. The Comforter that Christ promised to send in His name abides with us. In the way that leads to the City of God there are no difficulties which those who trust in Him may not overcome. There are no dangers which they may not escape. There is not a sorrow, not a grievance, not a human weakness, for which He has not provided a remedy. {MH 249.1}

How graciously and tenderly our heavenly Father deals with His children! He preserves them from a thousand dangers to them unseen and guards them from the subtle arts of Satan, lest they should be destroyed. {3T 373.1}

Our God has heaven and earth at His command, and He knows just what we need. We can see only a little way before us; “but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” Hebrews 4:13. Above the distractions of the earth He sits enthroned; all things are open to His divine survey; and from His great and calm eternity He orders that which His providence sees best. {8T 272.1}

Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father’s notice. Satan’s hatred against God leads him to delight in destroying even the dumb creatures. It is only through God’s protecting care that the birds are preserved to gladden us with their songs of joy. But He does not forget even the sparrows. “Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.” Matthew 10:31. {8T 273.1}

That prayer of Christ embraces all His followers to the close of time. Our Saviour foresaw the trials and dangers of His people; He is not unmindful of the dissensions and divisions that distract and weaken His church. He is looking upon us with deeper interest and more tender compassion than moves an earthly parent’s heart toward a wayward, afflicted child. He bids us learn of Him. He invites our confidence. He bids us open our hearts to receive His love. He has pledged Himself to be our helper. {5T 237.2}

We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and his teaching in our past history. {RH, October 12, 1905 par. 22}

In his own strength man cannot rule his spirit. But through Christ he may gain self-control. In His strength he may bring his thoughts and words into subjection to the will of God. The religion of Christ brings the emotions under the control of reason and disciplines the tongue. Under its influence the hasty temper is subdued, and the heart is filled with patience and gentleness. {MYP 136.1}

The heart of God yearns over His earthly children with a love stronger than death. In giving up His Son, He has poured out to us all heaven in one gift. The Saviour's life and death and intercession, the ministry of angels, the pleading of the Spirit, the Father working above and through all, the unceasing interest of heavenly beings,—all are enlisted in behalf of man's redemption. {SC 21.2}

Many are the ways in which God is seeking to make Himself known to us and bring us into communion with Him. Nature speaks to our senses without ceasing. The open heart will be impressed with the love and glory of God as revealed through the works of His hands. The listening ear can hear and understand the communications of God through the things of nature. The green fields, the lofty trees, the buds and flowers, the passing cloud, the falling rain, the babbling brook, the glories of the heavens, speak to our hearts, and invite us to become acquainted with Him who made them all. {SC 85.1}

The love of God to man is incomprehensible, broad as the world, high as heaven, and as enduring as eternity. {HP 115.5}

In word and in deed the Messiah, during His earthly ministry, was to reveal to mankind the glory of God the Father. Every act of His life, every word spoken, every miracle wrought, was to make known to fallen humanity the infinite love of God. {PK 696.3}

His heart was constantly burning with the love that brought Him from heaven to our world. His goodness and His power enabled Him to reveal in His life the truth that He came to this earth to bring to the fallen race. In every word, in every act, He manifested the love of God, cheering and encouraging the downcast and distressed. In heavenly wisdom He asserted His true majesty by bending all things to the present and future happiness of human beings. He came to teach men and women how to live, here below, the life of which He gave them an example—the life that will make them fit to enter the abodes of bliss. {UL 229.3}