

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2022: *In the Crucible With Christ*

Lesson 2 “The Crucibles That Come”

Read for this week’s study

1 Peter 4:12-19; 1 Peter 5:8-11; Romans 1:21-32; Jeremiah 9:7-16; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.

Memory Text

“Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ’s sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4:12, 13, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Surprises
- III. Crucibles of Satan
- IV. Crucibles of Sin
- V. Crucibles of Purification
- VI. Crucibles of Maturity
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. What is the function of a crucible in a chemistry lab? Why do you think the lesson author has chosen this as the primary metaphor for suffering? What are some of the causes you can think of for experiences of suffering in the course of our lives? (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)
2. Read 1 Peter 4:12-19. What is Peter saying about suffering in the life of Christians in verse 12? How does the context that follows verse 12 elaborate on Peter’s point? What does Peter suggest is the source of many Christian trials? (Sunday’s Lesson)
3. Read 1 Peter 5:8-11. According to this passage, what is one of the major causes of suffering in this world? What is the purpose of the lion metaphor in verse 8? How in this passage does Peter suggest that believers should react to Satan’s prowling? How does this metaphor apply to the cosmic perspective? What are the implications of the cosmic conflict for politics, religion and conflicts among the nations? How does

John 10:10 summarize the difference in character between Christ and Satan?
(Monday's Lesson)

4. Read Romans 1:18-24. What cause for suffering is highlighted in this passage? What stages of sin can be discerned here? What are the roots of rebellion and sin? What are the consequences of those sins? How do you understand God's wrath to be operating here? (Tuesday's Lesson)
5. Read Jeremiah 9:7-16. What is the source of suffering in this passage and what does that tell us about God? How does the metaphor of refining function here? What reasons does God give for the suffering of Judah and Jerusalem? Note the following from Oswald Chambers: "If the Spirit of God brings to your mind a word of the Lord that hurts you, you can be sure that there is something in you that He wants to hurt to the point of its death." How do you understand the main point of that quotation? Do you agree with it? (Wednesday's Lesson)
6. Read 2 Corinthians 12:7-10. What does "given to me" mean? Who gave it to Paul? How does Paul deal with his "thorn in the flesh"? The 'given' in this text is a Jewish divine passive, which implies God's involvement in Paul's 'thorn'. How can something be an act of God and a messenger of Satan at the same time? How closely do you think God and Satan work together? In what ways might God's plans for your spiritual development differ from your own? (Thursday's Lesson)
7. "In his providence (God) brings these persons into different positions and varied circumstances that they may discover in their character the defects which have been concealed from their own knowledge." MH 471. What do you think Ellen White means by "His providence"? How do you know when something happens as a result of "God's providence"? (Friday's Lesson)
8. How would you know if suffering is coming from God, Satan or is the consequences of your own choices? Does it matter, or should it matter, what brought the suffering on? (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

What does it mean to deal with sin? If sin is distrust and its consequences, forgiveness alone will not heal the damage done. Forgiveness does not do away with sin. For there to be lasting peace in God's universe, trust must somehow be restored. Questions must be answered. Satan's accusations must be met. And God must be seen to be righteous, and infinitely worthy of our trust. And so Christ came to set things right. And that's why he died.

Look at Romans 5:1: "Now that we have been put right with God by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." (GNB) Put right; or set right. Do you know what the Greek word is behind that? It's the word that's usually translated "justified." I love the translation "put right"; and we'll consider that more, later on.

There are at least three ways of looking at what went wrong in God's universe. I would like to mention these as a basis for our continuing discussion. And God looks different in these three ways. A very widely held view, held beyond the bounds of Christianity, is this: *Because we have broken God's rules, we have offended Him. And He's very angry with us. Can anything be done to assuage his anger and appease his wrath—so that somehow he can find it in his heart to forgive us, and not destroy us, and bless us once again?*

There is another view that's widely held, sometimes within the bounds of Christianity: *We have broken God's rules, and thus we are in serious legal trouble. Law and justice demand that God should destroy us, or even torture us for eternity. Can anything be done to make it legally possible for God to forgive us, and not destroy us, and still be just; to appear to be just in His own eyes, and in the eyes of the onlooking universe?*

Then there's a third view, not widely held on this planet. But I believe that this is the most widely held view throughout the universe. If it isn't, God has not won the war, and there is no basis for lasting peace. That's this view: *We have sinned. We have allowed ourselves to be deceived by Satan's lies. And so we have turned away from the true God to many substitutes. And the results have been disastrous. Left alone we all would die. Is there any way that Satan's lies can be corrected? Is there any way that the truth about God and his government can be made crystal clear? Is there any way that unquestionable evidence can be provided, that God is not the kind of person his enemies have made him out to be—and so some of us rebels may be won back to trust, and so be saved and healed?* For God can and will save all who trust him. That's why all God asks of us is trust.

Could I ask you which one of these three views you prefer? Which one of these gods do you prefer? Which one would you rather live with for eternity? Or does it really make any difference? {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #2, "What Went Wrong in God's Universe" 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/2MMCAG>

But a crisis of distrust developed in the family. And as we reviewed last time, our heavenly Father has been accused of being unworthy of our trust. Specifically, he has been accused of being arbitrary, exacting, vengeful, unforgiving, and severe. And thus sin entered our universe for the first time. For the Bible describes sin (in its essence) as a violation of mutual trust. Sin is much more than a mere breaking of the rules, serious as that might be. Repeatedly throughout the Bible sin is described and illustrated as a breakdown of trust and trustworthiness—a

suspicious and stubborn unwillingness to listen. It is an unwillingness to listen to the one who is so eager to help us in our predicament.

But doesn't the Bible specifically state that sin is breaking the rules? How about the key text we've learned from childhood up, "Sin is the transgression of the law"? 1 John 3:4. Actually, that's a rather free translation. Not all free translations are in *The Living Bible*, there are some in *The King James*; that's one of them. The Greek word that John used, if you'll forgive pronouncing the Greek, is *anomia*, a-n-o-m-i-a, and it means literally, lawlessness, rebelliousness. In other words, sin is described as a state of mind. And anyone in that state of mind is a continuing threat to the peace and security of the family. I would say that sin has not been dealt with until our lawlessness has either been changed or eliminated. And that's why I chose the translation I did for this Bible Reference Sheet. You notice the first verse there; it's the familiar verse, 1 John 3:4. But I'm using Williams' version, which I like very much: "Everyone who commits sin commits lawlessness; sin is lawlessness." (*Williams*) That's precisely the word. *Sin is lawlessness.*

Now the hazard of regarding sin as primarily breaking of the rules is that it tends to encourage an impersonal, even fearful relationship with our God. This is what he wishes to eliminate. If we regard sin as primarily a breaking of the rules, God's commandments may be regrettably misunderstood as arbitrary regulations designed to show his authority and test our willingness to obey. If we obey, we're rewarded. If we disobey, we're destroyed. Do you want to live under those circumstances?

Since we all have sinned, should we be fearfully awaiting the execution of the sentence? Unless perchance God should find some legal way to give us yet another chance? And if we turn down that second chance, oh will he punish us with even greater severity for our ingratitude! Would this understanding help produce the peace and the freedom, and the freedom from fear that God desires so much in his universal family?

Actually though, I believe if rightly understood you **can** say that sin is a breaking of the rules. But look again at the rules. Look at God's commandments, the ten in particular—The Decalogue. All those Ten Commandments require is that we love God, and we love each other. And if we really did that we would have peace and freedom. In fact in the tenth of the Ten Commandments it says that we should not even **want** to sin. If we lived in that state of mind, not even wanting to do anything unloving, we would have freedom to be sure, and all kinds of peace and good will.

But can love be commanded? Or produced by force or fear? To put it vividly, has God said to us children, "You either love me, and love each other, or I'll have to kill you. Do I make myself clear?" Have you husbands ever tried that on your wives and children? Did it work? If you husbands should see your wives and children standing trembling in front of you, and all saying

in unison “Oh, yes, daddy. We love you very much,” would you be pleased? Would you be satisfied? Then you’re a brute. And the God some of us worship would never settle for that. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #2, “What Went Wrong in God’s Universe” 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/2MMCAG>*

Is there some condition concerning which God would say, “Do not intercede with me for that”? How could that possibly be? Have any of us committed that sin? Is this the unpardonable sin, as it were? And that doesn’t suggest that God is unwilling to pardon. He’s forgiveness personified. But is there a condition where it would make no sense to forgive; because there is no hope, there is no remedy, there’s nothing more he can do? It would be like praying that God would heal someone who absolutely will not listen. There’s no point to it.

Is it that Israel had reached this point? Remember 2 Chronicles, at the end, when he let them go into captivity, “There was no remedy.” Did Jesus pray any longer over Lucifer when finally he had reached the place where the truth, spoken in love, would not touch him at all? There does come a time when nothing more can be done. Now, I think we need to be very careful in deciding that about each other. I don’t think we’re able to know this. I think we go on anyway. But I think that John and Jeremiah are simply warning us in very serious terms: There is a condition even God cannot remedy. If we finally in our stubborn rebelliousness, reach the place where we have lost both the desire and the capacity to respond to truth, since the truth spoken in love is God’s only means of persuasion, then that’s the end. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Jeremiah & Lamentations, recorded February 1982, 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 1984:

<http://pkp.cc/35MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/36MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

Your mind may often be clouded because of pain. Then do not try to think, but just rest and show that you have committed your soul to God as unto a faithful Creator. It is your privilege to show in your weakness and suffering that you do not doubt the love of God toward you, that you know that He is faithful who has promised, and that you trust soul and body in His hands, that He will keep that which is committed to His trust. {2MCP 512.5}

Hide in Him, and the wicked one will not harass or confuse your faith. Jesus has bequeathed His peace to you. {2MCP 513.2}

He who knows the end from the beginning has provided for the attack of satanic agencies. And He will fulfill His word to the faithful in every age. That word is sure and steadfast; not one jot or tittle of it can fail. If men will keep under the protection of God, His banner will be over them as an impregnable fortress. He will give evidence that His word can never fail. He will prove a light which shineth in a dark place until the day dawn. He, the Sun of Righteousness, will arise with healing in His beams. . . . {RC 129.5}

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. {COL 173.1}

Divine wisdom will order the steps of those who put their trust in the Lord. Divine love will encircle them, and they will realize the presence of the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. {OHC 324.6}

God 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. He provides opportunities and opens channels of working. If His people are watching the indications of His providence, and are ready to cooperate with Him, they will see mighty results. {PK 660.3}

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. . . . There is no limit to the usefulness of the one who, putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart and lives a life wholly consecrated to God. . . . Christ declared that the divine influence of the Spirit was to be with His followers unto the end. {ML 37.4}

Christ came to the world that we might become new creatures, created after the similitude of his own character; that we might have purity like the purity of God, have perfection like his perfection. In the work of regeneration, the original loveliness begins to be restored. The attributes of the character of Christ are imparted to the soul, and the image of the divine begins to shine forth. "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." It is plainly declared that a change takes place in the character of the human agent. {ST, August 21, 1893 par. 3}

As the will of man co-operates with the will of God, it becomes omnipotent. Whatever is to be done at His command may be accomplished in His strength. All His biddings are enablings. {COL 333.1}

Through the agency of the Holy Spirit, God works a moral change in the lives of His people, changing them into the likeness of Christ. Then, when the last trumpet call shall reach the ears of the dead who sleep in Christ, they will come forth to a new life, clothed with the garments of salvation. They enter in through the gates into the City of God, welcomed to the happiness and joy of their Lord. {UL 78.3}

As we partake of the divine nature, hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong are cut away from the character, and we are made a living power for good. Ever learning of the divine Teacher, daily partaking of His nature, we cooperate with God in overcoming Satan's temptations. God works, and man works, that man may be one with Christ as Christ is one with God. Then we sit together with Christ in heavenly places. The mind rests with peace and assurance in Jesus (RH April 24, 1900). {7BC 943.2}

Angels are belting the world, refusing Satan his claims to supremacy, made because of the vast multitude of his adherents. We hear not the voices, we see not with the natural sight the work of these angels, but their hands are linked about the world, and with sleepless vigilance they are keeping the armies of Satan at bay till the sealing of God's people shall be accomplished. {7BC 967.9}

The ministers of Jehovah, angels have skill and power and great strength, being commissioned to go forth from heaven to earth to minister to His people. They are given the work of keeping back the raging power of him who has come down like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. The Lord is a refuge for all who put their trust in Him. He bids them hide in Him for a little moment, until the indignation shall be overpast. {7BC 967.10}

The study of God's word is continually expanding the mind and strengthening the intellect. There is nothing that will so refine and elevate the character, and give vigor to every faculty, as the continual exercise of the mind to grasp and comprehend weighty and important truths. {4T 545.3}

God takes men as they are, and educates them for His service, if they will yield themselves to Him. The Spirit of God, received into the soul, will quicken all its faculties. Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the mind that is devoted unreservedly to God develops harmoniously, and is strengthened to comprehend and fulfill the requirements of God. The weak, vacillating character becomes changed to one of strength and steadfastness. Continual devotion establishes so close a relation between Jesus and His disciple that the Christian becomes like Him in mind and character. Through a connection with Christ he will have clearer and broader views. His discernment will be more penetrative, his judgment better balanced. He who longs

to be of service to Christ is so quickened by the life-giving power of the Sun of Righteousness that he is enabled to bear much fruit to the glory of God. {DA 251.1}

As we near the time when principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places will be brought into warfare against the truth, when the deceiving power of Satan will be so great that if it were possible he will deceive the very elect, we must have our discernment sharpened by divine enlightenment, that we may know the Spirit that is of God, that we may not be ignorant of Satan's devices. {MR311 49.1}

From the beginning it has been Satan's studied plan to cause men to forget God, that he might secure them to himself. Hence he has sought to misrepresent the character of God, to lead men to cherish a false conception of Him. The Creator has been presented to their minds as clothed with the attributes of the prince of evil himself,—as arbitrary, severe, and unforgiving,—that He might be feared, shunned, and even hated by men. Satan hoped to so confuse the minds of those whom he had deceived that they would put God out of their knowledge. Then he would obliterate the divine image in man and impress his own likeness upon the soul; he would imbue men with his own spirit and make them captives according to his will. . . . {5T 738.1}

Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, full of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. The thick darkness with which Satan had endeavored to enshroud the throne of Deity was swept away by the world's Redeemer, and the Father was again manifest to men as the light of life. {5T 738.4}

We are not to think of God only as a judge, and to forget him as our loving Father. Nothing can do our souls greater harm than this; for our whole spiritual life will be molded by our conceptions of God's character. {RH, April 5, 1887 par. 10}

Men put God out of their knowledge and worshiped the creatures of their own imagination; and as the result, they became more and more debased. The psalmist describes the effect produced upon the worshiper by the adoration of idols. He says, "They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them." Psalm 115:8. It is a law of the human mind that by beholding we become changed. Man will rise no higher than his conceptions of truth, purity, and holiness. If the mind is never exalted above the level of humanity, if it is not uplifted by faith to contemplate infinite wisdom and love, the man will be constantly sinking lower and lower. The worshipers of false gods clothed their deities with human attributes and passions, and thus their standard of character was degraded to the likeness of sinful humanity. They were defiled in consequence. {PP 91.2}

It is a law both of the intellectual and the spiritual nature, that by beholding, we become changed. The mind gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is allowed to dwell. It becomes assimilated to that which it is accustomed to love and reverence. Man will never rise higher than his standard of purity or goodness or truth. If self is his loftiest ideal, he will never

attain to anything more exalted. Rather, he will constantly sink lower and lower. The grace of God alone has power to exalt man. Left to himself, his course must inevitably be downward. {GC 555.1}

We are not to regard God as waiting to punish the sinner for his sin. The sinner brings the punishment upon himself. His own actions start a train of circumstances that bring the sure result. Every act of transgression reacts upon the sinner, works in him a change of character, and makes it more easy for him to transgress again. By choosing to sin, men separate themselves from God, cut themselves off from the channel of blessing, and the sure result is ruin and death. {1SM 235.2}

The Holy Spirit will not compel men to take a certain course of action. We are free moral agents; and when sufficient evidence has been given us as to our duty it is left with us to decide our course. {RH, July 17, 1888 par. 4}

The trials of life are God's workmen, to remove the impurities and roughness from our character. Their hewing, squaring, and chiseling, their burnishing and polishing, is a painful process; it is hard to be pressed down to the grinding wheel. But the stone is brought forth prepared to fill its place in the heavenly temple. Upon no useless material does the Master bestow such careful, thorough work. Only His precious stones are polished after the similitude of a palace. {MB 10.3}

The Lord will work for all who put their trust in Him. Precious victories will be gained by the faithful. Precious lessons will be learned. Precious experiences will be realized. {MB 11.1}

It is for our present happiness and our future good that God subjects us to discipline. The greatest blessing that His children have is the discipline that He sends them. He never leads them otherwise than they would choose to be led if they could see the end from the beginning and discern the glory of the purpose that they are fulfilling, as workers together with Him. {TDG 122.3}

The work of transformation from unholiness to holiness is a continuous one. Day by day God labors for man's sanctification, and man is to co-operate with Him, putting forth persevering efforts in the cultivation of right habits. He is to add grace to grace; and as he thus works on the plan of addition, God works for him on the plan of multiplication. Our Saviour is always ready to hear and answer the prayer of the contrite heart, and grace and peace are multiplied to His faithful ones. Gladly He grants them the blessings they need in their struggle against the evils that beset them. {AA 532.2}

There is a mighty power in prayer. Our great adversary is constantly seeking to keep the troubled soul away from God. An appeal to Heaven by the humblest saint is more to be dreaded by Satan than the decrees of cabinets or the mandates of kings. {HP 82.5}

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. {MH 482.1}

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. {MH 482.2}