

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2022: *In the Crucible With Christ*

Lesson 3 “The Birdcage”

Read for this week’s study

Exodus 14; Exodus 15:22-27; Exodus 17:1-7; Proverbs 3; Luke 4:1-13; 1 Peter 1:6-9.

Memory Text

“In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials” (1 Peter 1:6, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. To the Promised Land via a Dead End
- III. Bitter Waters
- IV. The Great Controversy in the Desert
- V. An Enduring Legacy
- VI. Trial by Fire
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Read 1 Peter 1:6. What does the Bible mean when it speaks about rejoicing in the midst of suffering? It is easy to understand that Satan causes pain. He is the thief in Jesus’ analogy of the Good Shepherd (John 10:10). Would God Himself actively take part in guiding us into situations where we experience pain, confusion or hurt? Can you think of any examples in the Bible where God led people into experiences that included suffering? (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)
2. Read Exodus 14 in the light of Exodus 13:21. Read Exodus 14:1-3 again. What do you think God’s purpose was? If every part of the Israelite journey was guided by God, why did they end up in such unpromising places? Read Exodus 14:4-8 again. Weren’t the ten plagues glory enough for God? How did God harden Pharaoh’s heart? What did Israel learn from the whole experience (Exod 14:31)? Can you think of a situation in which God led you into difficulty? How did you know it was God? (Sunday’s Lesson)

3. Read Exodus 17:1. What is God doing here? How does Exodus 15:22-27 add to the picture? What did God reveal about Himself here? Read Exodus 17:2-7. What does it mean to test the Lord? What question did the Israelites ask at Rephidim? Why do people need to ask that question over and over? (Monday's Lesson)
4. Read Luke 4:1-13. Why did Jesus end up being tempted in the wilderness? Why did the Holy Spirit lead Him into trouble? What would have been wrong with creating bread? Why in this encounter does Jesus always quote Scripture? What are the implications of that for our own part in the cosmic conflict? What is the difference between a test and a temptation? (Tuesday's Lesson)
5. Read 1 Peter 1:6-9. What does Peter mean when he says that the people he is writing to are "exiles" and "scattered"? How might that location have added to their trials? What assurance is Peter giving the people in the midst of their trials? How can you have a living relationship with God when you have never seen, heard, or touched Him? (Wednesday's Lesson)
6. When someone follows God with all their heart and one disaster after another seems to follow them, what would you say to that person? What Bible verses might you use? What experiences have you had that you might want to share? (Thursday's Lesson)
7. How do you relate to situations where suffering seems to have no redemptive value, such as when someone is killed instantly in a car wreck? What are some of the possible responses one could give? (Friday's Lesson)
8. We often think of temptation as a personal thing. Is there such a thing as a corporate temptation? What are some temptations churches have to face? (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Now, it was very difficult for God to teach the children of Israel, first to revere him, but next, that he valued nothing higher than their freedom, because they would only revere a God who showed his power. Well, all right, the ten plagues helped with that, and the opening of the Red Sea. But when God did not show his power for a brief period of time, they ceased to revere him. You remember at Sinai, as soon as the earthquake ceased and the thunder was silent, they were dancing around the golden calf. Over and over Israel showed they would only respect a show of majesty and power.

But God is not through. When we're impressed with his power, and say, "Well, you have a right to say we should have no other gods but You. All right, we surrender." And God says, "Look. This isn't the end. This is only the beginning. Now I have your attention. You respect me. I wish you respected me for a much better reason." And later, when Jesus came, this was the majestic, all-powerful God of the universe, now here in person. And there was very little show of power. When he did show his power, he got crowds. When there were miracles of healing,

and miracles of feeding, large crowds gathered and he said, “This is not the way I wish to win followers. Not this time.”

Now, how many people revered Jesus, and regarded him with the awe that is due the creator of the whole vast universe, when they watched him on his knees, washing dirty feet? Or weeping on the Mount of Olives? Or on the cross, saying “I forgive you”? Not many. Yet that’s the kind of reverence God wants. It’s too bad that Uzzah had to die before they’d take God seriously. But God is willing to run the risk of appearing to be the kind of person that the devil has made him out to be. He appears, here, to be arbitrary, certainly exacting, and vengeful, and unforgiving, and severe. Isn’t that true? He appears to be that.

And then we’ll sometimes say, when God seems to have more power than anybody else, “Well, never mind if you look the way the devil describes. You do happen to be the most powerful God. We admit it. We surrender. Tell us what to do.”

And God says, “Don’t settle for that.” I think some settle for that for the rest of their lives. That’s only the beginning, and the whole Old Testament is a story of beginnings for hundreds of years until Jesus comes, and shows the way God wants to run his universe. I think those three and a half years show how God will run his kingdom for eternity, and to some that’s not the way a king behaves. A king who turns the other cheek? Kings can destroy at their will, if they wish, if we don’t obey them. God says, “I will not run my universe that way.” And if you wonder why the Bible suggests that only relatively few will be found safe to admit to the Kingdom, how many were impressed to the point of worship and wonder and awe by the behavior of Jesus when he was here? Do some of you, though, read the record in the gospels and say, “That is most wonderful! That’s awesome! That’s the most unbelievable thing. That the one who is infinitely powerful should show himself so incredibly gracious, and humble, and gentle.

Now, unless that’s what stirs us the most, then we’re really not safe to have around in the hereafter, because I understand that’s the way God will run his universe. But if we despise gentleness as weakness, we’re hardly safe to have around, and God will have to have a Sinai every week or two up there. And he’ll have to loosen those lions that eat straw like an ox, from time to time. He’ll have to put some teeth in them and send them after irreverent people in the New Jerusalem. Do you think he’s going to do that? No, the she bears will eat straw like an ox, too. And there’ll be no reason to be afraid. But we’ll stand in awe of God, as the angels do, and they know the truth about him, and they veil their faces in awe. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – 2 Samuel*, recorded November 1983, 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 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/15MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/16MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

If the building's on fire I hope that whoever's in charge won't come in here and say softly, "By the way, brethren and sisters, the building's on fire." I hope he really interrupts me and he raises his voice and thunders to us, "The building is on fire!" He wants us to get out. That's the way God is. He'd like to talk softly but we're not reasonable most of the time. We're not that polite and respectful. Some of us thank him for every one of these stories of the demonstration of his might and power.

The first born son would be the future priest and the first born son of Pharaoh would be the next Pharaoh. Pharaoh was even considered to be god. And when the first born son died even Pharaoh got the message. He acknowledged God's superior might and power and said, "Alright the people can go." Did God win Pharaoh's love and trust? No, he scared him into recognition of his power and he let the people go. He soon got over it after God went out with his people into the wilderness and Pharaoh sent soldiers after them.

A number of the Egyptians were impressed with God's might and power. And in those days you always wanted to worship the god who was the most powerful. So many Egyptians said to the Israelites, "Hey, your god just beat our god, can we go out with you?" And that bunch that went out into the wilderness who only knew God as mighty and powerful became the mixed multitude and caused nothing but trouble. People who only worship God for his might and power can often cause a lot of trouble.

God used his power to divide the Red Sea. He took them past Sinai. He divided the Jordan. He had power to take them into Canaan. But did he produce love and trust? Read the book of Judges. Read from Judges through to 2 Chronicles. Look at the miserable behavior of his people in the Promised Land. God had might and power to take them in but no might nor power could lead them to love and trust him. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, God's Use of Power, #2, "The History of God's Use of Power" recorded March 1985, Kettering, Ohio} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link:*

<http://pkp.cc/2MMOHIO>

Lou: There's another phrase in here that raises questions many times. I've wondered about this myself. When we pray, "Lead us not into temptation," what are we really praying? Does that imply, "God, be careful; please don't get me into temptation?" That God would really want to do that?

Graham: One thing that helps is the word "temptation" means trial or testing. Some versions have, "Lead us not into hard testing." The idea that God would tempt is unthinkable, as our heavenly Father. Remember James deals with this. That when we're tempted, don't even blame the devil. He says, "You are led away by your own lusts and enticements." Certainly don't blame

God. He wouldn't do any such thing. So "Lead us not into temptation" cannot mean, "Please, don't you tempt us." But "Lead us not into testing," Jesus prayed that in Gethsemane. He said, "Remove this cup from me, if possible." I don't think we should pray, "Lord, I'm ready for it. Bring on the trials; I feel very strong today." I believe we should say, "Lord, in all humility, I mean bring me not into trial; nevertheless, thy will be done."

I think, "Lead us not into testing" must be coupled with, "Nevertheless, thy will be done." Jesus did it in Gethsemane, and we do it in the Lord's Prayer. You know, the Lord's Prayer and the prayer in Gethsemane are very similar in a number of respects. "Lead us not into testing, Remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, thy will be done." So I think the prayer in Gethsemane helps us to understand the Lord's Prayer. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #15 with Lou Venden, "Talking to God as a Friend" recorded May 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/15MMCAG>*

Lou: The "substitutionary," that comes in, say more about that. The "vicarious."

Graham: Ah. He died in our stead. He died as the substitution. In a way, it's very true. I mean, either he dies or we die. However that's where the comparison ends, because if God has let you and me and all other sinners die, all it would have done is prove the truthfulness of his warning, "If you sin, you will die." And God could say to the universe, "Was I right? I said sinners would die, and look, they're dead." But the universe would not have had answers to questions two and three that I just mentioned. When Jesus died, there was no doubt in the minds of the universe that God was not killing his Son. They were clear about that. And the death of Christ answers all those three questions. So it's not either us or him. His death was infinitely more significant than ours. But had he not died, then what else could God do but leave us to reap the consequences and we all would have died. So in a sense, yes. He died in our stead, but beyond that there's no comparison.

Lou: But not as a payoff. It's not one or the other.

Graham: It's not his death is equal to all of ours. His death is infinitely more significant than the death of every sinful man or angel who has ever lived. The death of angels and men would not have answered the questions.

Lou: What you're saying then, is that just a simple satisfaction idea doesn't encompass what's involved at all, does it?

Graham: Oh, it makes it much too small. I think it puts God in a very bad light, and it doesn't answer the questions of the Great Controversy. Many folk who prefer those understandings of the plan of salvation do not understand there has been a universe-wide great controversy over

the character and government of God. And do you remember at our first meeting, I brought along the evidence that even Luther, hero of the Christian world that he is, could not conceive of these larger issues because he couldn't include the book of Revelation—let alone Hebrews, James and Jude. And this has been the pattern through the years. Not many have seen the sixty-sixth book picture of a universe-wide controversy over the character and government of God. And so they have seen the death of Christ as primarily a plan just to save you and me, for which we are very grateful. It's just that the larger view makes the cross much more significant. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #8 with Lou Venden, "The Most Costly and Convincing 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/8MMCAG>

"Blessed are those whose iniquities are forgiven and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not reckon his sin."

Now who is God willing to treat like that? To whom is God willing to say, I'll never raise up your past again; don't worry about it. I'm not worried about it. I want to treat you as my son. I want to treat you as if you've been loyal all your life, as loyal as Jesus my son.

God says all these things to encourage us not to worry about our sinful past. What do we have to do to realize that God wants to treat us like that? Isn't it just to trust him? To trust him that he is forgiveness personified.

When that righteousness of Christ is "reckoned to us," it's not some kind of book balancing thing. It's God trying to find ways to explain to us how he's willing to treat us—as if we had never left his side at all, as if we had always been there as trusting children. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series Romans, chapter 4, recorded October 1977, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:* <http://pkp.cc/7MMROMANS66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/8MMROMANS66> (Part 2)

Solomon came to his senses, and he remembered God. He said, "God, I'm sorry. Can I come back? And I'd be willing just to sweep floors." Does God take people back that way? Or does he take them completely back? How about the prodigal son? Did he come back as a servant, or did he come back fully reinstated? So God took Solomon back. How fully did he take him back?

“Well,” Solomon said, “Can I do anything to help others not do what I’ve done?” And God says, “Yes. You can write me a book.” And Solomon said, “But only holy men of God, moved by the Holy Spirit, write books in the Bible.”

Isn't it stunning that a man who wasted so much is listed among the holy men of God and was asked to write yet another book in the Bible? Once again, I'm glad God is in charge, because when somebody disgraces himself in our church, from then on, he's a back pew man, isn't he? We don't let him up front very much. God puts them up front, and even asks them to write more of the Bible. Now, what about that? Are we too hard?" {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in All 66 – Joshua, Judges, & Ruth, recorded November 1983, 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 1983:

<http://pkp.cc/11MMPOGIA66> (Pt 1 Joshua & Judges)

<http://pkp.cc/12MMPOGIA66> (Pt 2 Joshua & Judges)

<http://pkp.cc/13MMPOGIA66> (Pt 1 Ruth & 1 Samuel)

<http://pkp.cc/14MMPOGIA66> (Pt 2 Ruth & 1 Samuel)

Further Study with Ellen White

In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan's control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God. {DA 466.4}

Satan is constantly urging men to accept his principles. Thus he seeks to counterwork the work of God. He is constantly representing the chosen people of God as a deluded people. He is an accuser of the brethren, and his accusing power he is constantly using against those who work righteousness. The Lord desires through His people to answer Satan's charges by showing the result of obedience to right principles. {6T 11.2}

But when we give ourselves wholly to God and in our work follow His directions, He makes Himself responsible for its accomplishment. He would not have us conjecture as to the success of our honest endeavors. Not once should we even think of failure. We are to co-operate with One who knows no failure. {COL 363.1}

The law of love being the foundation of the government of God, the happiness of all intelligent beings depends upon their perfect accord with its great principles of righteousness. God desires from all His creatures the service of love—service that springs from an appreciation of His character. He takes no pleasure in a forced obedience; and to all He grants freedom of will, that they may render Him voluntary service. {PP 34.3}

The character of God as revealed by Christ invites our faith and love, for we have a Father whose mercy and compassion fail not. At every step of our journey heavenward He will be with us to guide in every perplexity, to give us help in every temptation. {HP 16.4}

It is God's glory to encircle sinful, repentant human beings in the arms of His love, to bind up their wounds, to cleanse them from sin, and to clothe them with the garments of salvation. {PK 668.3}

In the secret place of prayer, where no eye but God's can see, no ear but His can hear, we may pour out our most hidden desires and longings to the Father of infinite pity, and in the hush and silence of the soul that voice which never fails to answer the cry of human need will speak to our hearts. {MB 84.3}

God has made ample provision for His people; and if they rely upon His strength, they will never become the sport of circumstances. . . . It is not in the power of earth or hell to compel anyone to do evil. Satan attacks us at our weak points, but we need not be overcome. However severe or unexpected the assault, God has provided help for us, and in His strength we may conquer. {PP 421.2}

No man without his own consent can be overcome by Satan. The tempter has no power to control the will or to force the soul to sin. He may distress, but he cannot contaminate. He can cause agony, but not defilement. The fact that Christ has conquered should inspire His followers with courage to fight manfully the battle against sin and Satan. {GC 510.3}

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

In the future life we shall understand things that here greatly perplex us. We shall realize how strong a helper we had and how angels of God were commissioned to guard us as we followed the counsel of the Word of God. {HP 257.3}

To all who receive Him, Christ will give power to become the sons of God. He is a present help in every time of need. . . . All who choose can come to Christ and find the help they need. {HP 257.4}

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 men, and He will bring to confusion the counsels of them that plot mischief against His people. {5T 754.2}

All things in nature testify to the tender, fatherly care of our God and to His desire to make His children happy. His prohibitions and injunctions are not intended merely to display His authority, but in all that He does He has the well-being of His children in view. He does not require them to give up anything that it would be for their best interest to retain. {RC 153.2}

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}

God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him. {FLB 64.3}

Our heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us of which we know nothing. Those who accept the one principle of making the service of God supreme, will find perplexities vanish and a plain path before their feet. {FLB 64.6}

“All things work together for good to them that love God” (Romans 8:28). Could your eyes be opened, you would see your heavenly Father bending over you in love; and could you hear His voice it would be in tones of compassion to you who are prostrate with suffering and affliction. Stand fast in His strength; there is rest for you. {HP 272.5}

Our God is an ever-present help in every time of need. He is perfectly acquainted with the most secret thoughts of our heart, with all the intents and purposes of our souls. When we are in perplexity, even before we open to Him our distress, He is making arrangements for our deliverance. Our sorrow is not unnoticed. He always knows much better than we do, just what is necessary for the good of His children, and He leads us as we would choose to be led if we could discern our own hearts and see our necessities and perils, as God sees them. But finite beings seldom know themselves. They do not understand their own weakness. . . . God knows them better than they know themselves, and He understands how to lead them. . . . {OHC 316.4}

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. You who feel the most unworthy, fear not to commit your case to God. {HP 82.4}

Our present peace must not be disturbed by anticipated trials, for God will never leave nor forsake one soul who trusts in Him. God is better unto us than our fears. If we would encourage a diligent remembrance and recital of our mercies, counting up instances in which God has wrought for us, has been better to us than our fears, in which He has interposed His power and His grace when sorely perplexed, sustained us when falling, comforted us when sorrowing, we would see that it is unbelief to distrust God or be filled with anxiety. Let mercies be remembered and enjoyed daily. We must live by faith daily. . . . Rejoice in God always. Today praise God for His grace, and continue to praise Him every day.—Letter 11a, Feb. 19, 1884, to Elder and Mrs. Uriah Smith. {TDG 58.4}