

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2022: *In the Crucible With Christ*

Lesson 6 “Struggling With All Energy”

Read for this week’s study

John 16:5-15; Colossians 1:28, 29; 1 Peter 1:13, Matthew 5:29; Genesis 32.

Memory Text

“To this end I strenuously contend, struggling with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me” (Colossians 1:29, NIV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. The Spirit of Truth
- III. The Divine-Human Combination
- IV. The Disciplined Will
- V. Radical Commitment
- VI. The Need to Persevere
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. How is it that in the face of great suffering some people become angry and bitter while others are transformed? What is the role of the will and will power in how we cope with the crucible of suffering? (Sabbath Afternoon’s Lesson)
2. If God has unlimited spiritual resources, why don’t we see more changed lives among church members than we do? Read John 16:5-15. In this passage, Jesus calls the Holy Spirit the “spirit of truth”. What does “spirit of truth” imply that the Holy Spirit does for us? (Sunday’s Lesson)
3. Read Colossians 1:28-29. How does Paul describe the interaction between what God does for him and the effort he exerts to become more like God? What does the word “toil” or “labor” in verse 29 mean? In what way is spiritual exertion related to physical exertion? (Monday’s Lesson)
4. What role do feelings play in the Christian life? What examples in the Bible can you think of where people made choices based on feelings rather than on the Word of God? Read 1 Peter 1:13. How do you prepare your mind ahead of time for

- difficulties? How do you know when you are basing your actions on feelings as opposed to rational decisions based on biblical evidence? (Tuesday's Lesson)
5. Read Matthew 5:29. What do you do with that statement? What was Jesus trying to say? Read Matthew 5:30. Are we really called to maim ourselves in order to follow Jesus? If not, what was he getting at in this verse? (Wednesday's Lesson)
 6. Read Genesis 32:1-32. What is the situation at the time Jacob wrestles with the angel? Who was it that brought him into this situation? What did he do to try and fix the situation with his brother? How is Jacob's perseverance in the face of fear and great discouragement relevant to us today? What picture of God does Jacob exhibit in this story? (Thursday's Lesson)
 7. "Many never attain to the position that they might occupy, because they wait for God to do for them that which He has given them power to do for themselves. All who are fitted for usefulness must be trained by the severest mental and moral discipline, and God will assist them by uniting divine power with human effort." — Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 248. How does counsel like this fit in with a focus on the picture of God's character? (Friday's Lesson)
 8. To what extent are our wills "given into the control of Satan"? 5T 515. Does a deep understanding of the character of God cause us to be more or less aware of our own sinfulness? (Friday's Lesson)
 9. Read Matthew 26:36-42. In what way is Jesus' relation to God in Gethsemane an example for us? (Friday's Lesson)

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

If you have self-control, you don't need to be ordered to behave. But the law does not give self-control, does it? The law is an emergency measure because we lack self-control. We need it until we recover self-control and love and trust, and so are able to use our freedom aright.

This is what Paul explained to the Galatian believers who were so prone to misunderstanding God's use of law. Look at Galatians 5:13, and several verses that follow. Look at Paul's clear understanding of God's use of law:

You, my brothers, were called to be free [and I was sorry to leave out any part of it; the whole section is magnificent. You, my brothers, were called to be free.]. . . The entire law is summed up in a single command: "Love your neighbor as yourself. . . . But if you are led by the Spirit [the Holy Spirit of love and truth], you are not under law. . . . But the fruit of the Spirit is love [which is the fulfilling of the law], joy [peace, the opposite of

war], peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness [people who can be trusted], gentleness [and look at the last one], self-control. (NIV)

That's the real meaning of the *King James* "temperance." That is where real self-control comes from. Now, some people want God to command and control them for the rest of eternity. That seems to be so humble and safe, but it is telling God that we don't want the freedom that he has paid such a price for. How can we hand it back and say, "No, I don't want self-control. I want **you** to control me"? Isn't it marvelous; God says, "When you are fully under the influence of my Holy Spirit, I won't control you. You will have recovered the dignity and joy of self-control." Then we really will have freedom once again. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *Conversations About God*, #12, "God's Law Is No Threat to Our Freedom" recorded April 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/12MMCAG>*

When Jesus healed the paralytic at the pool, he was preaching by the very way in which he treated that man. It was a demonstration of the truth about God. Forbid the thought but imagine that you had terminal lung cancer. It was the result of a lifetime of smoking. You're sitting anxiously in the office of your physician. What would be the best possible news you could hear? Would it be for the physician to say, "I forgive you for smoking"? Would forgiveness heal the damage done? You would still die. The only difference is that you would die forgiven. Forgiveness would only help if your physician were accustomed to killing all his patients who contracted lung cancer because of a lifetime of smoking. If that is what he was accustomed to doing, it would be very relieving to have your physician say, "I forgive you." Now he won't have to kill you after all. But physicians do not kill their dying patients. Besides, the law would not permit it.

What if the physician should say instead, "I have very good news for you. I can completely make you well."

"How well did you say?"

"I can make you perfectly well, if you'll cooperate."

"You mean that though I have spent a lifetime smoking, and this is really my own fault, you can make me perfectly healthy again?"

"Yes, I can."

"Well, actually doctor, all I really want is to be forgiven."

Would you say anything so absurd? Yet so often we seem to say that to God. Would you rather say, "Doctor if that is true, how can I cooperate? What do you want me to do?"

The doctor might say, “Well this will require some changes. But if you trust me enough to follow my instructions, I can absolutely guarantee that you will be perfectly restored.”

Would you say, “One moment, Doctor. That word cooperation in there, I was counting on you to do it all. I am expecting you to put your hand on my chest and heal me by a miracle. If I have to work to get well, then I am going to look for another physician.” Would you do that? Or would you say, “You mean if I trust you enough to cooperate with you and follow the instructions you will give me, you can guarantee to make me well? Then, please tell me what I have to do.” And wouldn’t you also ask most eagerly, like the jailor during the earthquake at Philippi, “What must I do to be saved? What must I do to be well?”

As Christians we need more than mere physical healing. We have been damaged in many other ways. The most serious damage has been done to our ability to be the kind of people who can live in peace and freedom, our ability to trust and be trustworthy, to be loving, to be the kind of members of God’s family that he could really trust with all the privileges of eternal life.

{Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #14, “God Can Completely Heal the Damage Done” 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/14MMCAG>*

Now, what happens when we are fully under the influence of the Holy Spirit? We have phrases that sometimes describe this, such as “Let go and let God”. It all depends on what that means. That can mean all kinds of things! But do we eventually completely surrender our self-control to God’s control, and now he runs us day by day? Is that what we desire?

Well, it’s so interesting in this list of the fruits of the Spirit. If one is led by the Spirit, he will have all those good things mentioned until you come to the last one, translated in the *King James*, “temperance”. Do you have temperance in your version? You know temperance is something the Women’s Christian Temperance Union promoted through the years and gave temperance a certain understanding. It’s abstinence from liquor, tobacco, narcotics, and moderation in all other things. But is that what Paul has in mind? What do you have in your version for the last of the fruits of the Spirit?

Self-control? Anything else? Do they all agree, self-control? It might be self-discipline, self-mastery, self-control. And that’s exactly what the Greek word is. If I were to put it on the board, it’s, well it’s hard to put it quite into the English letters. Maybe I’ll just pronounce it: “*enkrateia*.” The “*en*” is “in”-inside, and “*krateia*” is the root for democrat, the rule of the people. Aristocrat; the rule of the few. Autocrat, and so on. So “*enkrateia*” means exercising power, or rule, inside. And that’s the word for self-control.

Now, think what that says about God. That when we have come completely under his saving and healing power, we have not given up self-control; we have recovered it. Now, is that

tyranny? God's desire is not to run us all, like robots. God's desire is to lead us to the place where we will responsibly and reliably and consistently exercise self-discipline, self-mastery, self-control. And hasn't it cost God a great deal to give us back our self-control? If he hadn't given us this power in the beginning, there wouldn't have been the revolt in his universe. So I think the fruits of the Spirit are so significant that it ends with God's ultimate goal for us, that when we come into full harmony with his ideal for us, we have recovered the dignity of self-mastery and self-control. And as you know Ellen White appreciated those thoughts so very much. That's why she wrote:

Every human being, created in the image of God, is endowed with a power akin to that of the Creator; individuality, power to think and to do. [And] It is the work of true education [as it is of the whole plan of salvation] to [restore] this power, to train [people] to be thinkers, and not mere reflectors of other men's thought."

God doesn't want us to say we love him because we're so completely under his control we can't say anything else. I mean, God doesn't want to be talking to himself, when we tell him that we admire him. He wants that to be our own conviction. And the Spirit, working through truth and evidence leads us to the place where some of us, in the highest sense of freedom, say, "Yes, we trust, love, and admire you." He doesn't want to hear the Spirit telling him that. He wants to hear his children saying it, and really meaning it themselves. So I think Galatians 5:22 is a most significant revelation of the truth about our God. {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

I saw that the angels of God are never to control the will. God sets before man life and death. He can have his choice. {EW 221.1}

Christ has a treasure house full of precious gifts for every soul. {SD 125.5}

At all times and in all places, in all sorrows and in all afflictions, when the outlook seems dark and the future perplexing, and we feel helpless and alone, the Comforter will be sent in answer to the prayer of faith. Circumstances may separate us from every earthly friend; but no circumstance, no distance, can separate us from the heavenly Comforter. Wherever we are, wherever we may go, He is always at our right hand to support, sustain, uphold, and cheer. . . . {LHU 179.5}

The promise of the Holy Spirit is not limited to any age or to any race. Christ declared that the divine influence of His Spirit was to be with His followers unto the end. From the Day of Pentecost to the present time, the Comforter has been sent to all who have yielded themselves fully to the Lord and to His service. To all who have accepted Christ as a personal Saviour, the Holy Spirit has come as a counselor, sanctifier, guide, and witness. The more closely believers have walked with God, the more clearly and powerfully have they testified of their Redeemer's love and of His saving grace. The men and women who through the long centuries of persecution and trial enjoyed a large measure of the presence of the Spirit in their lives, have stood as signs and wonders in the world. Before angels and men they have revealed the transforming power of redeeming love. {AA 49.2}

The Lord is more willing to give the Holy Spirit to those who serve Him than parents are to give good gifts to their children.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 50. {ChS 251.2}

The Holy Spirit was sent as the most priceless treasure man could receive. {ML 36.5}

When Christ ascended to the Father, He did not leave His followers without help. The Holy Spirit, as His representative, and the heavenly angels, as ministering spirits, are sent forth to aid those who against great odds are fighting the good fight of faith. Ever remember that Jesus is your helper. No one understands as well as He your peculiarities of character. He is watching over you, and if you are willing to be guided by Him, He will throw around you influences for good that will enable you to accomplish all His will for you. {MYP 17.1}

When Christ took human nature upon Him, He bound humanity to Himself by a tie of love that can never be broken by any power save the choice of man himself. Satan will constantly present allurements to induce us to break this tie—to choose to separate ourselves from Christ. Here is where we need to watch, to strive, to pray, that nothing may entice us to *choose* another master; for we are always free to do this. But let us keep our eyes fixed upon Christ, and He will preserve us. Looking unto Jesus, we are safe. Nothing can pluck us out of His hand. In constantly beholding Him, we “are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.” 2 Corinthians 3:18. {SC 72.1}

Through the ministry of the angels the Holy Spirit is enabled to work upon the mind and heart of the human agent and draw him to Christ. . . . But the Spirit of God does not interfere with the freedom of the human agent. The Holy Spirit is given to be a helper, so that man may cooperate with the Divine, and it is given to Him to draw the soul but never to force obedience. {TMK 57.2}

In the very fact that men are free moral agents, God teaches us not to be forced or compelled into any course of action, also that as responsible beings in copartnership with God we are to represent God in character. We are to have an interest in our brother, in our neighbor, in all around (Letter 65, 1895). {5BC 1098.1}

God had power to hold Adam back from touching the forbidden fruit; but had He done this, Satan would have been sustained in his charge against God's arbitrary rule. Man would not have been a free moral agent, but a mere machine (RH June 4, 1901). {1BC 1084.2}

Today the truths of Scripture are to be brought before the great men of the world in order that they may choose between obedience to God's law and allegiance to the prince of evil. God sets everlasting truth before them—truth that will make them wise unto salvation, but He does not force them to accept it. If they turn from it, He leaves them to themselves, to be filled with the fruit of their own doings. {AA 241.2}

It is not the plan of God to compel men to yield their wicked unbelief. Before them are light and darkness, truth and error. It is for them to decide which to accept. The human mind is endowed with power to discriminate between right and wrong. God designs that men shall not decide from impulse, but from weight of evidence, carefully comparing scripture with scripture (*Redemption: or the Miracles of Christ*, pp. 112, 113). {1BC 1120.5}

God does not force the will or judgment of any. He takes no pleasure in a slavish obedience. He desires that the creatures of His hands shall love Him because He is worthy of love. He would have them obey Him because they have an intelligent appreciation of His wisdom, justice, and benevolence. And all who have a just conception of these qualities will love Him because they are drawn toward Him in admiration of His attributes. {GC 541.3}

The law of ten commandments is not to be looked upon as much from the prohibitory side, as from the mercy side. Its prohibitions are the sure guarantee of happiness in obedience. As received in Christ, it works in us the purity of character that will bring joy to us through eternal ages. To the obedient it is a wall of protection. We behold in it the goodness of God, who by revealing to men the immutable principles of righteousness, seeks to shield them from the evils that result from transgression. {1SM 235.1}

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. {FE 124.1}

Our will is not to be forced into co-operation with divine agencies, but it must be voluntarily submitted. Were it possible to force upon you with a hundredfold greater intensity the influence of the Spirit of God, it would not make you a Christian, a fit subject for heaven. The stronghold of Satan would not be broken. The will must be placed on the side of God's will. {MB 142.1}

When Christ ascended to the Father, He did not leave His followers without help. The Holy Spirit, as His representative, and the heavenly angels, as ministering spirits, are sent forth to aid those who against great odds are fighting the good fight of faith. Ever remember that Jesus is your helper. No one understands as well as He your peculiarities of character. He is watching

over you, and if you are willing to be guided by Him, He will throw around you influences for good that will enable you to accomplish all His will for you. {AG 196.2}

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, quickens 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 fulfil 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 disciples that the Christian becomes like his Master in character. He has clearer, broader views. His discernment is more penetrative, his judgment better balanced. So quickened is he by the life-giving power of the Sun of Righteousness, that he is enabled to bear much fruit to the glory of God. {GW 285.3}

Through the gospel, souls that are degraded and enslaved by Satan are to be redeemed to share the glorious liberty of the sons of God. God's purpose is not merely to deliver from the suffering that is the inevitable result of sin, but to save from sin itself. . . . Eternity alone can reveal the glorious destiny to which man, restored to God's image, may attain. {MB 60.3}

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

Christ came to the world with the accumulated love of eternity. Sweeping away the exactions which had encumbered the law of God, He showed that the law is a law of love, an expression of the Divine Goodness. He showed that in obedience to its principles is involved the happiness of mankind, and with it the stability, the very foundation and framework, of human society. {Ed 76.3}

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}