

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

Third Quarter 2022: *In the Crucible With Christ*

Lesson 9 “A Life of Praise”

Read for this week’s study

Philippians 4:4-7; Joshua 5:13–6:20; Psalm 145; Acts 16:16-34; 2 Chronicles 20:1-30.

Memory Text

“Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I say, rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Framework for Praise
- III. Praying Down Walls
- IV. The Life of Praise
- V. A Witness Who Convicts
- VI. A Weapon That Conquers
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. The Study Guide describes the purpose of this lesson as: “Praise can transform even our darkest circumstances, maybe not in the sense of changing the facts around us, but in the sense that it can change us, and those around us, in a way that helps us face challenges.” (Sabbath afternoon)
2. Monday’s lesson discusses Philippians 4:4-7. Why do you think Paul was able to write such things when he himself was sitting in prison? This prison letter contains the word ‘rejoice’ seven times. How does that relate to Paul’s experience in Philippi (Acts 16:12-40)?
3. Monday’s lesson is titled ‘Praying Down Walls’ yet the Bible text speaks about marching and shouting. What is the lesson from Joshua 5:13-6:20; cf. Hebrews 11:30? What spiritual lessons can be learned from a historic event that happened only once? Why was a very different strategy used for capturing Ai (Joshua 7-8)?
4. What reasons for praise can you find in Psalm 145? (Tuesday’s lesson) What will the effect of such praise be, and on whom?

5. Wednesday's lesson focuses on the conversion of the jailer (Acts 16:16-34). What do you think caused the jailer to focus on his own need of salvation? Do you have any idea why the other prisoners did not escape after the earthquake?
6. Thursday's lesson discusses another singular historical event – Jehoshaphat's war against a 'vast army' in 2 Chronicles 20:1-30. What spiritual principles can we learn from a historical book? How can you then apply those principles to your own walk with God in our completely different time and place?
7. What role does community praise have in the life of a Christian? Why does the hymnal of the Old Testament community of faith contain Psalms 145-150 as the concluding section of the whole collection?
8. Most people lose the awareness of choice (especially when they are emotionally overwhelmed). How do we recover our volitionality (capacity to choose)? What is it that we can and cannot choose (emotions vs. actions)?
9. Albert Ellis, an American psychologist and psychotherapist, developed an ABC of Emotions, where A stands for an Activating Event, B for the Belief System and C for Consequent Emotion. This revolutionized our understanding that it is not only what happens to us in life that affects us and our responses. Why and how is that relevant to us as believers?
10. How can we experience the joy that Paul is talking about? Confusion and uncertainty can often provide us with the opportunity to experience the joy of our capacity to choose (volitionality). That can happen when we admit confusion and uncertainty and even embrace it, rather than running away from it by relying on pat answers. This kind of joy is not a continuous smile, but a deep realization of God's presence with us and awareness of what God is doing.
11. How can we effectively experience that on both an individual and a corporate level?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Does pardon bring peace? Have you ever wronged anybody seriously, and because he's so kind and generous, he has forgiven you? And every time you see him, you're embarrassed. In fact, it's so embarrassing you walk around the block to avoid him. Does God want us to avoid him in the hereafter because he's been such a generous forgiver? That says to me that justification is far more than mere pardon.

God says, "I not only forgive you, but I will treat you as if you had never sinned. In fact, I will treat you with dignity and respect, as if you'd always been my loyal children." To be covered with the righteousness of Christ is not a disguise. It means we'll be treated as if we had lived as righteously as the Son. God does not wish us to avoid him in the hereafter. There's peace that comes from knowing that God treats people that way. You know he does. Look how he treated Peter, and Mary, and all the others. He even treats unsavable people that way. Look at Judas.

Look at the men who brought the woman taken in adultery. God is gracious toward one and all. We have no need to fear his infinite memory in the hereafter. "This is the rascal of whom I have forgiven so much." No, we will be treated with incredible grace and dignity, and this brings peace. Now, if we have this peace, look at verse 3: "We even rejoice in our sufferings now, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces a hope that will never let you down."

Suffering is destructive, unless we've seen this larger view. God might be disciplining us. He might be allowing us to reap what we've sown. Or it might be we're just living on this dangerous planet, full of terrorists and viruses and germs and drunk drivers. With the larger view we understand this, and we have peace. Paul was beheaded, but he was at peace, and said, "I don't mind if I die. I won't be aware of my time of death. I'll be with the Lord," he said. He wasn't afraid to die. What makes people afraid to die? Isn't it that when we die, every one of us comes face to face with God? You can't avoid it. Saints and sinners alike, when they die, the next moment of consciousness will be face to face with God. Will it be terrifying to come face to face with someone who knows us so well? Every detail of our lives? Not if we've learned the truth about God. And how he even treated Judas. If I come face to face with God, and I'm Judas, he'd kneel down and wash my feet, if it would do any good. That's the way he is. Or will he change in the end?

How did Jesus look at Judas when Judas went out to commit suicide? Isn't it the same way he looked at Peter? Exactly the same. We, even if we're lost, have no reason to be afraid of our heavenly Father. The worst thing he'll do is to sadly give us up. That is his wrath. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Romans, recorded May 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/61MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/62MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

A comparable place is Romans 5:3 where the same word occurs where Paul says:

Since we've all been set right and justified by faith let us go on enjoying the peace we have with our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God. More than that, we even rejoice in our sufferings [our troubles].

Now this is not a sick kind of rejoicing, he gives the reason why. He says, "Because we know that suffering produces" what do you have in your version? Endurance, it may say patience in some, but this is the word in Revelation 14:12.

COMMENT: Mine says perseverance.

Yes, perseverance is an excellent word for that, yes.

COMMENT: Produces character, and character produces...

That's what follows, you see, "endurance produces character and character produces hope, hope that does not let us down. So that's a marvelous message in there. Phillips' translation is superb. There is even a way to rejoice in our troubles because we know that troubles produce endurance, endurance produces character and character produces a hope that will never let you down.

But you can't interpret your troubles that way unless you've been set right with God, you see, unless you have faith in God. So Romans 5, the first few verses there. Now anyway, that's the word in Revelation 14. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Three Angels' Messages, #6, recorded October 1981, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/6MM3ANGELSM>*

The ten plagues were a demonstration of his might and power, the same power he always has and used during creation week. He demonstrated his power to encourage the Israelites that it would be safe to venture into the wilderness with him. The ten plagues were to demonstrate the impotence of the Egyptian deities in order to even give the Egyptians a chance. Maybe they'd like to go out with this powerful God. It's not the best reason, but it's a good beginning. Who wants to follow a weak God? So as we discussed this morning, God indeed used his might and power to get them started out of Egypt. And we understand why he used his might and power first.

And then he used his power to take them through the Red Sea. And he used it to take them through the Jordan. He used his power to bring the walls of Jericho down. He used his power to take them into Canaan. But for all God's might and power he couldn't win their love and trust which is all he really wants. He got them physically to the Promised Land but spiritually, well, might and power do not win us spiritually. Those things are done by the Spirit.

And in Hebrews 4 this is discussed. Now, one really needs to start back in Hebrews 3 where the apostle talks about the generation of Israel who didn't trust the report of Caleb and Joshua, you remember. And because of their lack of trust, which was shown in many other ways, God allowed them to die off in the wilderness, because of their lack of faith it says. Then at the end of the forty years he spoke to the next generation and he said, "You're not one whit better than your fathers who died in the wilderness," as described in the book of Numbers, "you're no better but I'm going to take you in because I need to say something about myself."

And so, they went in under Joshua. God showed his power, didn't he, that's when the walls came tumbling down. And he took them in and he helped them fight. But in a few years we're into the *awful* experiences described in the book of Judges when they defiled the land and made it an abomination. Might and power took them in but the gentle teaching of the Spirit

about love and truth, they resisted it and they turned it down. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, God's Use of Power, #3, "The Reminder of God's Way of Using His 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/3MMOHIO>*

If we still need lots of protection to be true to what we know to be true, then we're still babes, and we're not ready for the difficult times to come. And the Bible warns us of those, before the end comes. The message I get from the remaining books in the Bible is that once we've been reborn, we ought to grow up, without delay, and become mature people who do what's right because it is right, as Job did, even though everything seems to the contrary. And if we do not grow up and have nothing more after fifty years than the faith of a little child, we are all retards. When a person is physically retarded, we get worried. When he's mentally retarded, we become quite alarmed. When he's spiritually retarded, we say, "Isn't that sweet? The faith of a little child." No, that's the most dangerous respect in which to be retarded. And Ephesians really deals with this next time.

Nevertheless, if we don't have that beginning experience, nothing else matters at all. And that can't happen until we see the truth about God, and are won by it to repentance, and to faith. That answer Paul gave to the jailer, "All God asks of us is faith", still rings true all the way through. But there'd be no trust if we didn't believe God was trustworthy. Do you worship a God who is such a person that in your moment of greatest submission to his will, you feel marvelously free and at peace? Now, that's what's offered in here. {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

It is not the will of God that His people should be weighed down with care. But our Lord does not deceive us. He does not say to us, "Do not fear; there are no dangers in your path." He knows there are trials and dangers, and He deals with us plainly. He does not propose to take His people out of a world of sin and evil, but He points them to a never-failing refuge. . . . {TMK 225.2}

Christ is represented as stooping from His throne and bending earthward to send help to every needy soul who asks Him in faith. {TMK 260.5}

The Lord's care is over all His creatures. He loves them all and makes no difference, except that He has the most tender pity for those who are called to bear life's heaviest burdens. . . . {MH 199.3}

It is when we come into difficult places that He reveals His power and wisdom in answer to humble prayer. Have confidence in Him as a prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God. He will reveal Himself to you as One who can help in every emergency. He who created man, who gave him his wonderful physical, mental, and spiritual faculties, will not withhold that which is necessary to sustain the life He has given. He who has given us His word—the leaves of the tree of life—will not withhold from us a knowledge of how to provide food for His needy children. {MH 199.4}

It is for our own benefit to keep every gift of God fresh in our memory. By this means faith is strengthened to claim and to receive more and more. There is greater encouragement for us in the least blessing we ourselves receive from God than in all the accounts we can read of the faith and experience of others. {MH 100.3}

He who has given His precious life because He loved you, and wanted you to be happy, will be a Captain who will always be mindful of your interest. {SD 160.4}

How precious are these assurances that we shall never be left to take one step in our own finite strength, for He has said, “I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Hebrews 13:5. We are fighting in the presence of invisible hosts. Unseen intelligences survey the whole array of evil, and help is at hand. We shall not only be provided with that which is necessary but shall be placed upon vantage ground. . . . {OHC 311.4}

God will do great things for those who trust in Him. The reason why His professed people have no greater strength is that they trust so much to their own wisdom, and do not give the Lord an opportunity to reveal His power in their behalf. He will help His believing children in every emergency if they will place their entire confidence in Him and faithfully obey Him. {PP 493.2}

By the repeated manifestations of His power in behalf of Israel, God would lead them to have faith in Him—with confidence to seek His help in every emergency. He is just as willing to work with the efforts of His people now and to accomplish great things through weak instrumentalities. All heaven awaits our demand upon its wisdom and strength. God is “able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think.” Ephesians 3:20. {PP 554.1}

God never asks us to believe, without giving sufficient evidence upon which to base our faith. His existence, His character, the truthfulness of His word, are all established by testimony that appeals to our reason; and this testimony is abundant. Yet God has never removed the possibility of doubt. Our faith must rest upon evidence, not demonstration. Those who wish to doubt will have opportunity; while those who really desire to know the truth will find plenty of evidence on which to rest their faith. {SC 105.2}

A life in Christ is a life of restfulness. There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there should be an abiding, peaceful trust. Your hope is not in yourself; it is in Christ. Your weakness is united to His strength, your ignorance to His wisdom, your frailty to His enduring might. So you are not to

look to yourself, not to let the mind dwell upon self, but look to Christ. Let the mind dwell upon His love, upon the beauty, the perfection, of His character. . . . It is by loving Him, copying Him, depending wholly upon Him, that you are to be transformed into His likeness. {SC 70.2}

The Christian always has a strong helper in the Lord. The way of the Lord's helping we may not know; but this we do know: He will never fail those who put their trust in Him. {PK 576.1}

Though enemies may thrust them into prison, yet dungeon walls cannot cut off the communication between their souls and Christ. One who sees their every weakness, who is acquainted with every trial, is above all earthly powers; and angels will come to them in lonely cells, bringing light and peace from heaven. The prison will be as a palace; for the rich in faith dwell there, and the gloomy walls will be lighted up with heavenly light as when Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises at midnight in the Philippian dungeon. {GC 627.1}

He finds His faithful ones, and holds communion with them, encouraging and strengthening them. And angels of God, that excel in strength, are sent forth by God to minister to His human workers who are speaking the truth to those who know it not. {8T 17.3}

We are witnesses for God as we reveal in ourselves the working of a power that is divine. Every individual has a life distinct from all others, and an experience differing essentially from theirs. God desires that our praise shall ascend to Him, marked by our own individuality. {DA 347.3}

Christ has identified His interests with those of His people. He has plainly stated that we can minister to Him by ministering to His suffering ones. Words of encouragement and cheer, spoken when the soul is sick and the pulse of courage is low, these are regarded by the Saviour as if spoken to Himself. . . . {RC 198.6}

And in blessing others they will themselves be blessed. God gives us the opportunity to impart grace, that He may refill us with increased grace. Hope and faith will strengthen as the agent for God works with the talents and facilities that God has provided. He will have a divine agency to work with him. {AG 238.6}

Holiness is wholeness to God. The soul is surrendered to God. The will, and even the thoughts, are brought into subjection to the will of Christ. The love of Jesus fills the soul, and is constantly going out in a clear, refreshing stream, to make glad the hearts of others (MS 33, 1911). {6BC 1076.2}

Righteous words and deeds have a more powerful influence for good than all the sermons that can be preached.—ML 114. {VSS 52.1}

In every emergency we are to feel that the battle is His. His resources are limitless, and apparent impossibilities will make the victory all the greater. {CC 217.5}