

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes
Third Quarter 2022: *In the Crucible With Christ*
Lesson 12 “Dying Like a Seed”

Read for this week’s study

Philippians 2:5-9; Romans 12:1, 2; 1 Samuel 2:12–3:18; 1 Samuel 13:1-14; Zechariah 4:1-14.

Memory Text

“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; . . . but if it dies, it produces much grain” (John 12:24, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Submission for Service
- III. Dying Comes Before Knowing God’s Will
- IV. Willingness to Listen
- V. Self-Reliance
- VI. Substitutes
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Daniel Duda

1. “Jesus’ picture of a kernel of wheat dying is a fascinating analogy of our submission to God’s will. [...] If we know that God’s will is best for us, why do we have such a hard time accepting it?” (Sabbath afternoon) What is the assumption behind that question? Do you sometimes find it difficult to accept God’s will? If yes, what might be the reason?
2. What is the role of the story in John 12:20-30 in the Gospel? How does it function as a sign? What is the significance of the story? Why did Jesus, instead of answering the request of Andrew & Philip, go into a meditative mode commenting on seeds and plants and about life and death? How does 12:32 answer that request?
3. How can something that seems to be a “tragedy” at the moment be turned into a triumph: the triumph of God’s self-giving love?
4. What makes the message of Philippians 2:5-9 important? (Sunday’s lesson) How do we determine when to assert our rights and when to give them up? What makes the

- gospel message so deeply subversive and utterly counter-cultural? How can this be reconciled with the contemporary emphasis on EDI (Equality, Diversity, Inclusion)?
5. In which aspects of life are Christians called to be counter-cultural (Romans 12:1-2)? (Monday's lesson) Why is the mind the key to all transformation? How does understanding why Christian life is meant to be lived in one way rather than another, lead to maturity? Why is it that mindless obedience to God's commands cannot achieve that? How does living as different members of a single family contribute to that (Romans 12:3-5)?
 6. What is the significance of the story from 1 Samuel 2:12-3:18 for highlighting the willingness to listen? (Tuesday's lesson) What can we learn for our lives today from a story of two wicked sons who did not listen and a little boy who did?
 7. What can we learn from the story in 1 Samuel 13:1-14 about the danger of self-reliance? (Wednesday's lesson) Do you suffer more from self-reliance or from self-doubt? Why that might be so? What might the solution to either problem might be?
 8. What kind of substitutes are you tempted to use instead of relying on God? Thursday's lesson names three: 1) Using human logic or past experience when we need fresh divine revelation. 2) Blocking problems from our minds when we need divine solutions. 3) Escaping reality and avoiding God when we need communion with God for divine power.
 9. How is the message of Zechariah 4:1-14 an antidote to that? What is the significance of 4:6 in the context of completing a building project? How does that apply to anything that God does in the universe?
 10. What practical steps can you take to submit to God's will? How does the story from John 12:20-36 and the example of Jesus help us with that? In what ways can we allow God to use us to help others know of His love and willingness to provide for us in all circumstances?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

"I appeal to you therefore, brethren," after all the theology, Paul comes down to the practical affairs of life; and if theology does not affect the way we live, it's a waste of time. "I appeal to you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God which is your..." What do you have?

King James had "reasonable service," and I remember hearing sermons on the fact that health reform is a reasonable thing to do. I believe it is, but that's not the message here at all. The Greek word for service is not the service of a slave, nor the service of a deacon. Those are different words. It is "worship". It's the service of a priest. It's worship. And the word "reasonable" is not the opposite of "unreasonable". It's the word that means, well, Peter says, "As newborn babes, earnestly desire the milk of the word [or spiritual milk], that you may grow thereby." He wasn't saying goat's milk, or cow's milk, or soy milk. He meant milk that pertains

to the mind, that you may grow thereby. This word means “intelligent, rational, spiritual” worship. In other words, to present ourselves to God not half dead, but as living sacrifices, is an act of “intelligent worship.” And what Paul is saying is, “Think of all the dead pigeons we used to bring to God. And it was right if we read the right meaning into it.”

But God is saying now, “Don’t bring me any more dead sheep or dead pigeons, but please bring yourselves. And bring yourselves in the best condition possible. This will be an act of intelligent worship. Because I have so much to tell you, if you could just listen. But some of you are in such miserable health, you find it very difficult to listen. So please, even this far from the tree of life, look after yourselves. Be living sacrifices and listen.” “Do not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewal of your mind,” so look after it, please, “that you may prove what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

What I like about this is, the kind of worship God desires is described as rational, intelligent, spiritual worship; not mechanical, not ritualistic, not ceremonial. But we worship an intelligent God. He wants us to worship him in spirit and in truth, Jesus said. So to do something mechanical, learned by rote, is a terrible misrepresentation of the truth about God. Remember Isaiah? “Your worship of me is but the commandments of men learned by rote.” You come into the temple, but your hearts aren’t in it. Remember the Sabbath-keepers in Amos? All that kind of unthinking obedience suggests an unthinking God.

So Romans 12:1, 2 is a magnificent passage. The kind of worship God wants is worship that is appropriate to the kind of God that he is. And I think that really affects the way we worship. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Romans, recorded April 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)

Do you know the word “obedience” in the Greek, and one can’t press the etymological meaning of the word too far, means literally “listening under, a humble willingness to listen.” A doorkeeper is called by this word. Now if you had a doorkeeper who said, “I’m listening, but I don’t intend to carry through with what I hear.” This isn’t just an idle, rude willingness to listen; it’s a *humble* willingness to listen. So when the doorkeeper listens, he hears his master knock, and he proceeds to open the door. Hence the word came to mean “obedience”, but the essence of the word is “a willingness to listen.”

Now does God expect of us perfect performance? He knows better. Can he expect of us perfect willingness to listen? What if we have a twenty-five percent reservation here? Then we’re not safe to save. I mean we’ve got a lot of listening to do in the hereafter. So God can demand

obedience in this sense, a willingness to listen. And without it he can't help us. And he says, "All the good things that have come to you have come by hearing; by a willingness to listen, in a mood of trust." That's all that is asked. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio presentation, Galatians, #3, recorded February 1978, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/3MMGALATIANS66>*

In the introduction to his letter to the believers in Rome, Paul states his conviction that he had been specially commissioned to bring about a new kind of obedience. It was to be different from the kind of obedience he himself had offered before he met Jesus on the Damascus road. It was to be what he calls literally "obedience of faith," "obedience of trust."

"Law-obedience" is what Paul used to practice with such zeal, and he was not at all pleased with the results. It had made him intolerant toward other people, even cruel. "Law-obedience" had actually led him to violate the whole spirit of God's law, the law of love.

By now urging "faith-obedience" or "trust-obedience," is Paul doing away with the law? "By no means!" Paul exclaims. "On the contrary, we uphold the law." (Romans 3:31, NSRV) Phillips interprets, "We put the Law in its proper place."

One proper place for the law has been to serve as "our attendant on the way to Christ." But the ultimate place is the one Jeremiah described. Paul agrees with the prophet. What the law requires may be written on the heart—the place, Paul explains to the Romans, where the conscience is active and people do their thinking. (See Romans 2:15)

"Trust-obedience" is the kind that results from "knowing" God, in the full meaning of that word. It comes from learning the truth about him and his use of law. It is the result of being won back to trust him as a Friend, to admire him for his wise and gracious ways.

This means that the Spirit of Truth has succeeded in writing the law "on our hearts." Now we freely do what the law requires, not because we've been ordered to, but because we're convinced in our own minds that what the law requires is right. {Maxwell, Graham. *Servants or Friends? Another Look at God*, 103-104. Redlands, California: Pine Knoll Publications, 1992.}

<http://www.pineknoll.org/graham/sof/chapter8.html>

Audience Comment: I feel that the issue, as far as Adam is concerned, is that he didn't trust God with his happiness. He could not see how he could live, emotionally speaking, without Eve.

Graham: What do you think about that suggestion? I mean, obviously, it was an excruciatingly difficult situation, where Adam, who was so delighted with his wife, is about to lose her. And

your suggestion is he would have done well to say, “God, I don’t know what you’re going to do with this. I can’t handle it, but I’m sure you can, and I trust you to take care of it.” Because a little later in Genesis we run into something very similar, when God said to Abraham, a very elderly gentleman, and his wife, “You will have a son.” And Abraham, it says in Romans “considered his own body now as good as dead, and the barrenness of Sarah’s womb,” and he said, “I don’t see how this can be.” And as time went by he consulted with Sarah, and they thought, “Well, I don’t see how the Lord can do this. I guess the Lord helps those who help themselves.” So Sarah says, “How about taking Hagar here? That’s a good way to do it.” And you know what came out of that! What an awful mistake they made. So your thought really appeals to me.

When a situation is so very, very difficult we would do well to trust God to handle it, if it’s just simply beyond our management. I sympathize first-off with Adam. He loved his wife; he didn’t want to lose her. I don’t think we should minimize that. But what could he do? He talked with God before. Why didn’t he wait until evening and say, “I’m in this terrible predicament”? Just as Eve didn’t know what to do at the tree. She was bewildered and amazed by the miracle that she saw, and she should have said, “I can’t handle this, and I guess I was warned not to be here in the first place. Let me consult with my husband.” And the two of them would say, “Well, let’s consult with the Lord.” Isn’t that the way to do it?

Abraham did this when God said, after miraculously giving him the son, “Take your son, and sacrifice him.” For awhile Abraham wondered how this could possibly make sense, and for three days and three nights he wondered how it could make sense. I don’t think his problem was so much, “How could God ask me to sacrifice and kill my son?”, but “How could God ask me to kill the son that he had given me so miraculously, and the one he said would be the father of many nations? That doesn’t make sense, God.” But faith and trust, as I understand it faith says, “God, now that I’m convinced that it’s you speaking, I am on my way. I don’t know how you are going to work this out, but I know it will make sense. So God, because I trust you to make sense as always, may I reverently ask you questions on the way?” And for three days and three nights Abraham asked questions. And in the end, he came to the conclusion that God would either provide a substitute, or he’d resurrect his son, so that he could fulfill the promise, you see, and the book of Hebrews says Abraham was right. So I don’t think trust means you don’t ask questions and wonder why. Trust means, “I’m on my way, but may I reverently ask you why?” And then we grow in understanding, and when it was all over, Abraham trusted God more than ever, it seems to me. So the point you make I think is a very crucial one. Adam tried to solve the problem himself; it was much too complicated, and it did show a measure of distrust. Eve distrusted. She accepted Satan’s lies, and Adam showed distrust also.

Is it possible that Adam reasoned, “I know God is so gracious, surely he won’t go through with that threatened penalty of death; he’ll forgive us”? But was that the problem? Did God forgive

them? But does forgiveness heal the damage done? See, they were changed by sin and distrust. They had become vulnerable now, as you suggested, to the deceptions of the adversary. And so God forgave them, but now there was need for discipline and healing and all those other things. So I think Adam misunderstood that warning, “In the day you eat thereof you will die,” as a threat, as a penalty, “In the day you eat thereof,” as a penalty, “I will have to execute you.” And he thought, “Here is my lovely wife, and this is our first offense. Surely he’ll forgive.” Yes, he forgave, but that doesn’t heal the damage done.

Did he still love them? Yes! He even told them there was a very costly plan to save them coming up. He hadn’t abandoned them, but evidently they were changed. I think that’s one of the most important things that begins to develop in the Bible. The tendency is to think of sin as an offense recorded in a book, to be stamped “forgiven” from time to time. But sin is something that happens in people, and even though we are forgiven, we never are quite the same. There is a scarring that comes. There is a change. And we know there’s a change, because what is it we seem to pass on to our children? It is not a perfect heritage, is it? It’s something that actually can be transmitted from one generation to the other. We have various names for it: “A fallen nature,” “a sinful nature.” We’re changed. It isn’t just a legal problem calling for forgiveness. We are affected by sin. Something happens within, and if we persist in this, God remains forgiveness personified, but we have become totally scar tissue, as it were, and God can no longer do anything for us. It’s not arbitrary. Sin is very real, and Adam and Eve had been changed by this. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, *The Picture of God in All 66 – Genesis*, recorded October 1981, 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/1MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/2MMPOGIA66> (Part 2)

Further Study with Ellen White

Had Christ come in His divine form, humanity could not have endured the sight. The contrast would have been too painful, the glory too overwhelming. Humanity could not have endured the presence of one of the pure, bright angels from glory; therefore Christ took not on Him the nature of angels; He came in the likeness of men. {5BC 1131.1}

For our sake Jesus emptied Himself of His glory; He clothed His divinity with humanity that He might touch humanity, that His personal presence might be among us, that we might know that He was acquainted with all our trials, and sympathized with our grief, that every son and

daughter of Adam might understand that Jesus is the friend of sinners (ST April 18, 1892).
{7BC 927.1}

The man who attempts to keep the commandments of God from a sense of obligation merely—because he is required to do so—will never enter into the joy of obedience. He does not obey. When the requirements of God are accounted a burden because they cut across human inclination, we may know that the life is not a Christian life. True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. It springs from the love of righteousness, the love of the law of God. The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer. This will lead us to do right because it is right—because right doing is pleasing to God. {COL 97.3}

When Jesus speaks of the new heart, He means the mind, the life, the whole being. To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world, and fasten them upon Christ. To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives. What is the sign of a new heart?—A changed life. {OHC 159.5}

In the Bible the will of God is revealed. The truths of the Word of God are the utterances of the Most High. He who makes these truths a part of his life becomes in every sense a new creature. He is not given new mental powers, but the darkness that through ignorance and sin has clouded the understanding is removed. The words, “A new heart also will I give you,” mean, “A new mind will I give you.” A change of heart is always attended by a clear conviction of Christian duty, an understanding of truth. He who gives the Scriptures close, prayerful attention will gain clear comprehension and sound judgment, as if in turning to God he had reached a higher plane of intelligence. {ML 24.2}

When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature. The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress, which He holds in a revolted world, and He intends that no authority shall be known in it but His own. A soul thus kept in possession by the heavenly agencies is impregnable to the assaults of Satan. {DA 324.1}

If the human agent consents, God can and will so identify His will with all our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His Word, that when obeying His will, we are only carrying out the impulses of our minds. {UL 187.5}

But notice here that obedience is not a mere outward compliance, but the service of love. The law of God is an expression of His very nature; it is an embodiment of the great principle of love, and hence is the foundation of His government in heaven and earth. If our hearts are renewed in the likeness of God, if the divine love is implanted in the soul, will not the law of God be carried out in the life? When the principle of love is implanted in the heart, when man is renewed after the image of Him that created him, the new-covenant promise is fulfilled, “I will

put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.” Hebrews 10:16. And if the law is written in the heart, will it not shape the life? Obedience—the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of discipleship. Thus the Scripture says, “This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments.” “He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.” 1 John 5:3; 2:4. Instead of releasing man from obedience, it is faith, and faith only, that makes us partakers of the grace of Christ, which enables us to render obedience. {SC 60.2}

But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. When Satan rebelled against the law of Jehovah, the thought that there was a law came to the angels almost as an awakening to something unthought of. In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator. Obedience is to them no drudgery. Love for God makes their service a joy. {MB 109.2}

The Lord would have every soul strong in His strength. He would have us look to Him, receiving our directions from Him (RH May 16, 1899). {4BC 1179.5}

It is the love of God continually transferred to man that enables him to impart light. Into the hearts of all who are united to God by faith the golden oil of love flows freely, to shine out again in good works, in real, heartfelt service for God. {COL 418.5}

In the great and measureless gift of the Holy Spirit are contained all of heaven’s resources. It is not because of any restriction on the part of God that the riches of His grace do not flow earthward to men. If all were willing to receive, all would become filled with His Spirit. {COL 419.1}

Through His Spirit God makes His word a vivifying power. It is quick and powerful, exerting a strong influence upon minds, not because of the learning or intelligence of the human agent, but because divine power is working with the human power. {8T 55.2}

The Holy Spirit never leaves unassisted the soul who is looking unto Jesus. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them unto him. If the eye is kept fixed on Christ, the work of the Spirit ceases not until the soul is conformed to His image. The pure element of love will expand the soul, giving it a capacity for higher attainments, for increased knowledge of heavenly things, so that it will not rest short of the fullness. “Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled.” {DA 302.1}