

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2026: *Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians*

Lesson 1 “Persecuted *but* Not Forsaken”

Read for this week’s study

Ephesians 3:1; 2 Corinthians 4:7–12; Acts 9:16; Philemon 15, 16; Colossians 4:9; Philippians 1:1–3; Colossians 1:1, 2.

Memory Text

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

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Paul, the Prisoner of Jesus Christ
- III. Paul in Chains
- IV. Paul in Philippi
- V. Paul and Colossae
- VI. The Churches of Philippi and Colossae
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Just before ascending to heaven, Jesus gave His disciples a seemingly impossible task, to present the gospel to the whole world (Matt 28:19-20). Why would God give His people such an impossible task? What perspective can we get from Colossians 1:23? What is our role in that task (Matt 24:14)? (Introduction)
2. This lesson combines the study of two letters of Paul, Philippians and Colossians. Besides being written by Paul, both letters were written from prison (Phil 1:7, 13; Col 4:3). What other letters of Paul were written from prison? These two letters also focus on the nature and the work of Christ. How do you understand these two roles of Christ? (Introduction)
3. One thing these two letters do not have in common is personal connection with Paul. The church at Philippi was raised up by Paul himself, the church at Colossae is one that Paul had not visited before writing to them. How do you think the church at Colossae was formed without Paul’s direct missionary endeavors?

4. Read Ephesians 3:1 and Philippians 1:6-8, 12-14. According to Paul, what was God's purpose in his imprisonment? How can one learn to make the best out of tough situations we may find ourselves in? (Sunday)
5. Read 2 Corinthians 4:7-12. How was Paul able to endure the trials that he faced? What does he mean when he talks about "jars of clay"? What does he mean by "carrying in the body the death of Jesus"? Read 2 Corinthians 6:3-7. What resources did Paul draw on to help him face his difficulties? (Monday)
6. Read Acts 16:9-12. Why do you think Paul skips Samothrace and Neapolis and moves on to Philippi right away? Weren't there plenty of people in the first two cities who needed the gospel as well? Do an internet search on "ancient Philippi" and see what you can find about this city. Read Acts 9:16. How does this text help explain the centrality of suffering in Paul's ministry? (Tuesday)
7. If Paul never visited Colossae, how did the gospel get there (Acts 19:10; 20:31; Col 4:12; 1:7; Rev 1:4)? Do an internet search on "ancient Colossae" and see what you can find about this city. (Wednesday)
8. Compare the openings of both letters (Phil 1:1-3 and Col 1:1-3) What similarities and differences do you see? Who do you think these "faithful brothers" are (Eph 6:21; Col 4:7; 1 Pet 5:12)? (Thursday)
9. Read Philippians 4:4. Add this thought: "If you serve God faithfully, you will meet with prejudice and opposition; but do not become provoked when you suffer wrongfully. Do not retaliate." Ellen G. White, *Youth's Instructor*, November 9, 1899. Why is one to never retaliate? How is it possible to "rejoice always" in the midst of opposition and even physical pain? Rejoice always in what?

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Why didn't Paul start the Civil War? Why didn't he proclaim emancipation, and all the rest of it? Why didn't he start that back then? Well, let's look at Philemon, just very briefly. You remember that in those days there were more slaves than free people, and there was a fear around the Mediterranean world that someday the slaves might arise. And so repressive measures were used to prevent any such uprising. There was very harsh punishment if a slave ran away. In fact, they have found "Dead or Alive" notices. Wanted, Dead or Alive. And since many slaves had the privilege of marrying; well, you remember the "*paidagogos*" in Galatians whose duty was to take the children to school? He was a highly trusted slave. Some were married and had families. And the whole family might be slaughtered, just to get the message to the others, "Don't run away!"

And Onesimus ran away. And he went to the biggest city around to get lost in the crowd. That made sense. But somehow he came across Paul, and he was converted and became a Christian. And Paul says, "Now I want you to go home." And Onesimus would say, "But that's suicide! You

know I'll be killed." And Paul says, "Well, I'll give you a letter. And you present this letter to Philemon, your master, first." Can you imagine Onesimus arriving with this letter and hoping that Philemon would read it before he did anything violent. Maybe he pushed it through the door on a long stick! I mean, he did want that letter to be read first. I wonder if Onesimus had read the letter, so he'd have some reason to believe that it might be winsome enough to save his life or at least protect him from some discipline. Do you think it's a very winsome letter?

Is it maybe, just as the Corinthian letters, I think, are an example of how a church leader who now knows the truth about God will handle a very difficult and delicate problem. I think that is what we see in the Corinthian letters. Is this Paul, dealing with another very difficult and delicate problem, the problem of slavery?

There were more slaves than free. What should the early church do? Did he turn society upside-down? Or did he sow the seeds of real revolution here by saying to Philemon, "Take Onesimus back and treat him like a brother. And Onesimus, when you get back, be the best servant Philemon ever had. That'll do for now." Because if they had started a revolution then, they never would have had time to talk about the gospel. Have you noticed, the Bible doesn't start great wars of social change. But it sows seeds of real change from inside. And so that comes through in here, also. {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)

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:*

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Further Study with Ellen White

Christ knows our weakness, and to Him we can go daily for help. It is not necessary for us to gain strength a month ahead. We are to conquer from day to day (MS 28, 1886). {7BC 974.3}

He who called the fisherman of Galilee is still calling men to His service. And He is just as willing to manifest His power through us as through the first disciples. However imperfect and sinful we may be, the Lord holds out to us the offer of partnership with Himself, of apprenticeship to Christ. He invites us to come under the divine instruction, that, uniting with Christ, we may work the works of God. {DA 297.1}

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. {8T 19.1}

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}

In the great closing work we shall meet with perplexities that we know not how to deal with, but let us not forget that the three great Powers of heaven are working, that a divine hand is on the wheel, and that God will bring His purposes to pass. —Ev 65 (1902). {LDE 29.3}

As the wheel-like complications were under the guidance of the hand beneath the wings of the cherubim, so the complicated play of human events is under divine control. Amidst the strife and

tumult of nations, He that sitteth above the cherubim still guides the affairs of the earth. [See Ezekiel 1:4, 26; 10:8; Daniel 4:17, 25, 32.] —Ed 178 (1903). {LDE 29.4}

The precious Saviour will send help just when we need it. The way to heaven is consecrated by His footprints. Every thorn that wounds our feet has wounded His. Every cross that we are called to bear He has borne before us. The Lord permits conflicts, to prepare the soul for peace. The time of trouble is a fearful ordeal for God's people; but it is the time for every true believer to look up, and by faith he may see the bow of promise encircling him. {GC 633.1}

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}

Not a sigh is breathed, not a pain felt, not a grief pierces the soul, but the throb vibrates to the Father's heart. {AG 189.5}

To all who are reaching out to feel the guiding hand of God, the moment of greatest discouragement is the time when divine help is nearest. . . . From every temptation and every trial He will bring them forth with firmer faith and a richer experience. {SD 92.5}

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}

It was not the apostle's work to overturn arbitrarily or suddenly the established order of society. To attempt this would be to prevent the success of the gospel. But he taught principles which struck at the very foundation of slavery and which, if carried into effect, would surely undermine the whole system. . . . When converted, the slave became a member of the body of Christ, and as such was to be loved and treated as a brother, a fellow heir with his master to the blessings of God and the privileges of the gospel. On the other hand, servants were to perform their duties, "not with eyeservice, as men pleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart" (Ephesians 6:6). {CC 350.4}