

The Promise: God's Everlasting Covenant

The New Covenant Life

Lesson #13 for June 26, 2021

Scriptures: 1 John 1:4; 4:16; John 5:24; 10:10; Romans 3:24-26; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Revelation 2:11; 20:6,14; 21:8.

1. How reliable are God's promises? How long will God's promise last if it is described as *everlasting*? If God has promised us a way to salvation and eternal life, shouldn't that be an important thing to study? We need to recognize that God's promises are not just for some future time in eternity; but they also have important implications even for now.
2. Do you feel the joy of trusting God's promise? Do you feel a burden of guilt? Do you think God can remove that guilt? And what does it mean to *have a new heart*?
3. There is no higher privilege than to become partakers of the divine nature.

He [Jesus] did not consent to sin. Not even by a thought did He yield to temptation. So it may be with us. Christ's humanity was united with divinity; He was fitted for the conflict by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And **He came to make us partakers of the divine nature.** So long as we are united to Him by faith, sin has no more dominion over us. God reaches for the hand of faith in us to direct it to lay fast hold upon the divinity of Christ, that we may attain to perfection of character.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 123.3.^{††} [Notice that it is only God who can do that! We choose to let Him!][‡]

4. It has often been thought that Christians are sad and weary, trudging their way toward some future goal. In light of that idea, how do we understand 1 John 1:1-4?

1 John 1:1-4: ¹We write to you about the Word of life, which has existed from the very beginning. We have heard it, and we have seen it with our eyes; yes, we have seen it, and our hands have touched it. ²When this life became visible, we saw it; so we speak of it and tell you about the eternal life which was with the Father and was made known to us. ³**What we have seen and heard we announce to you also, so that you will join with us in the fellowship that we have with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.** ⁴**We write this in order that our joy may be complete.**—American Bible Society. (1992). *The Holy Bible: The Good News Translation** (2nd ed., 1 John 1:1-4). New York: American Bible Society.[†]

5. The feelings of joy connected with our surrender to Christ are not a temporary flight of feeling or emotion. It is not some kind of mood. Whether we like it or not, we humans are creatures of feelings.
6. What would it mean *to have joy that is complete*? Think of the story of the disciple John. He spent most of the three and one-half years of Christ's ministry following Him, learning from Him, experiencing His life. He felt so close to Jesus that he came to be called the "beloved" disciple. We recognize, of course, that John was the one who called himself by that term. In the original language, that simply meant the one that God kept on loving.
7. Some scholars believe that John was actually a cousin of Jesus. That might be supported by this comment by Ellen White.

He [Jesus] had been separated from his mother for quite a length of time. During this period he had been baptized by John and had endured the

temptations in the wilderness. Rumors had reached Mary concerning her son and his sufferings. **John, one of the new disciples, had searched for Christ and had found him in his humiliation, emaciated, and bearing the marks of great physical and mental distress. Jesus, unwilling that John should witness his humiliation, had gently yet firmly dismissed him from his presence.** He wished to be alone; no human eye must behold his agony, no human heart be called out in sympathy with his distress.—Ellen G. White, *Spirit of Prophecy*,* vol. 2, 99.2 (1877).^{†‡} Compare 5SDABC 1132.2.

8. Is it possible for us today to have the kind of close relationship with Jesus that John had? We cannot follow Him, walking step-by-step through Galilee and Judea; (Compare Luke 8:1-3.) but, we can “exercise faith” which means to have a close friendship with Jesus. What kind of relationship do you have with Jesus? Does that relationship give you joy?

Romans 8:1: There is no condemnation now for those who live in union with Christ Jesus.—*Good News Bible*.*

9. Why would that be true? Contrast this story.

A young woman had been brutally murdered, her killer unknown. The police, setting a trap, placed a hidden microphone in her grave. One evening, many months after her death, a young man approached the grave and, kneeling and weeping, begged the woman for forgiveness. The police, of course, monitoring his words, nabbed him for the crime.

What drove the man to the grave? It was guilt.—*Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** for Monday, June 21.

10. Fortunately, few of us ever find ourselves in that kind of a situation. But, we feel guilt for other reasons? Are we able to experience the freedom that God’s love offers us? Do we really believe that God can take away our guilt? What does it mean to suggest that God treats us *as if* we were not guilty? What can we learn from the following verses about how God treats those who come to Him?

John 5:24: [Jesus said:] “I am telling you the truth: those who hear my words and believe in him who sent me have eternal life. They will not be judged, but have already passed from death to life.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*‡}

Romans 3:24-26: ²⁴But by the free gift of God’s grace all are put right with him through Christ Jesus, who sets them free. ²⁵⁻²⁶God offered him, so that by his blood [Footnote: *by his blood; or by his sacrificial death.*] he should become the means by which people’s sins are forgiven through their faith in him. **God did this in order to demonstrate that he is righteous.** In the past he was patient and overlooked people’s sins; but in the present time he deals with their sins, **in order to demonstrate his righteousness.** In this way **God shows that he himself is righteous** and that **he puts right everyone who believes in Jesus.**—*Good News Bible*.^{*†§}

2 Corinthians 5:21: Christ was without sin, but for our sake God made him share our sin in order that in union with him we might share the righteousness of God.—*Good News Bible*.*

11. What does it mean to suggest that He shares our sin and we share His righteousness? Jesus agreed to demonstrate what happens to those who are separated from God by sin.

12. But, we know that guilt hangs onto us. It is hard to forget something evil that we did even by accident. We are all sinners. (Romans 3:23) We can never deny that. But, are we willing to look forward to a life with Christ and leave behind our guilt and sinful life of the past?

Romans 8:3: What the Law could not do, because human nature was weak, God did. He condemned sin in human nature by sending his own Son, who came with a nature like sinful human nature, **to do away with sin.**—*Good News Bible*.*†

13. How does Jesus deal with our sins? What is He doing, standing in the presence of the Father? These are verses that describe what happens in the judgment.

Zechariah 3:1-5: ¹In another vision the LORD showed me the High Priest Joshua standing before the angel of the LORD. And there beside Joshua stood Satan, ready to bring an accusation against him. ²The angel of the LORD said to Satan, “**May the LORD condemn you, Satan!** May the LORD, who loves Jerusalem, condemn you. This man is like a stick snatched from the fire.”

³ Joshua was standing there, wearing filthy clothes. ⁴The angel said to his heavenly attendants, “Take away the filthy clothes this man is wearing.” Then he said to Joshua, “I have taken away your sin and will give you new clothes to wear.”

⁵ He commanded the attendants to put a clean turban on Joshua’s head. They did so, and then they put the new clothes on him while the angel of the LORD stood there.—*Good News Bible*.*†

Daniel 7:9-10: ⁹ While I was looking, thrones were put in place. One who had been living for ever sat down on one of the thrones. His clothes were white as snow, and his hair was like pure wool. His throne, mounted on fiery wheels, was blazing with fire, ¹⁰and a stream of fire was pouring out from it. There were many thousands of people there to serve him, and millions of people stood before him. **The court began its session, and the books were opened.**—*Good News Bible*.*† [See also John 3:17-21; 5:27-29; 12:47-48.]‡

14. Notice four important things: (1) It is Satan who is accusing sinners—including us. (2) **How does Jesus respond when Satan accuses us? Jesus condemns Satan!** (3) Then, Jesus goes about removing our sinful past and “covering us” with brand-new clothes. (4) This takes place in the presence of millions of beings from the rest of the universe, all of whom are very interested in what kind of people God is planning to bring back to heaven.
15. If God has forgiven you and if you accept His forgiveness, shouldn’t that impact how you feel toward others whom you feel have sinned against you?
16. God is forgiveness Personified. He forgave the men who are nailing Him to the cross even though they had not asked for forgiveness. (Luke 23:34)

Ephesians 3:17-19: ¹⁷And I pray that Christ will make his home in your hearts through faith. I pray that you may have your roots and foundation in love, ¹⁸so that you, together with all God’s people, may have the power to understand how broad and long, how high and deep, is Christ’s love. ¹⁹**Yes, may you come to know his love—although it can never be fully known—and so be completely filled with the very nature of God.**—*Good News Bible*.*† [Italic type is added for emphasis.]‡

17. How does God *write His law in our hearts*? How does He treat us after that happens?

Jeremiah 31:31-34: ³¹ The LORD says, “The time is coming when **I will** make a new covenant with the people of Israel and with the people of Judah. ³²It will not be like the old covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and led them out of Egypt. Although I was like a husband to them, they did not keep that covenant. ³³The new covenant that **I will** make with the people of Israel will be this: **I will** put my law within them and write it on their hearts. **I will** be their God, and they will be my people. ³⁴None of them will have to teach his fellow-citizen to know the LORD, because all will know me, from the least to the greatest. **I will** forgive their sins and **I will** no longer remember their wrongs. I, the LORD, have spoken.”—*Good News Bible*.^{*†} [Notice carefully Who is doing the promising!][‡]

18. Do we need a *new heart*? What difference would that make?

The words, “A new heart will I give you,” mean, A new mind will I give you. This change of heart is always attended by a clear conception of Christian duty, an understanding of truth. The clearness of our views of truth will be proportionate to our understanding of the Word of God. **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 grade of intelligence.**—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*,* November 10, 1904, par. 5.[†] Compare *1MCP* 95.1. [That is God’s plan for each of us!][‡]

19. God is interested in establishing a permanent, close, loving relationship with each one of us. When that happens, our lives, “our hearts,” are changed. We become new people with new thoughts, new desires, new goals, and the opportunity to look forward to an eternity of glorious bliss. Way back in the days of Moses, Jesus gave him two rules: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind” (Deuteronomy 6:5) and “Love your neighbor as you love yourself.” (Leviticus 19:18) Jesus Himself repeated those rules in Matthew 22:37-39. And what does that kind of love mean? Did Jesus ever remind His followers that He was the One who inspired Moses?

1 Corinthians 13: ¹ I may be able to speak the languages of human beings and even of angels, but if I have no love, my speech is no more than a noisy gong or a clanging bell. ²I may have the gift of inspired preaching; I may have all knowledge and understand all secrets; I may have all the faith needed to move mountains—but if I have no love, I am nothing. ³I may give away everything I have, and even give up my body to be burnt [Footnote: 13.3 *to be burnt*; some manuscripts have *in order to boast*.]— but if I have no love, this does me no good.

⁴ Love is patient and kind; it is not jealous or conceited or proud; ⁵love is not ill-mannered or selfish or irritable; love does not keep a record of wrongs; ⁶love is not happy with evil, but is happy with the truth. ⁷Love never gives up; and its faith, hope, and patience never fail.

⁸ Love is eternal. There are inspired messages, but they are temporary; there are gifts of speaking in strange tongues, but they will cease; there is knowledge, but it will pass. ⁹For our gifts of knowledge and of inspired messages are only partial; ¹⁰but when what is perfect comes, then what is partial will disappear.

¹¹ When I was a child, my speech, feelings, and thinking were all those of a child; now that I have grown up, I have no more use for childish ways. ¹²What we see now is like a dim image in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. What I know now is only partial; then it will be complete—as complete as God’s knowledge of me.

¹³ Meanwhile these three remain: faith, hope, and love; and the greatest of these is love.—*Good News Bible*. *†§

20. Is it really possible to have that kind of love in our lives? What changes might we need to make in order to have that happen?

21. Of course, God’s promises do not end with the life on this earth. Christians can live through all kinds of difficulties, sufferings, trials, and torture; but, they have a glorious promise that even beyond the grave, God has an eternal, wonderful kingdom for them to inherit. No matter what may happen to us now, we know for sure that we have a glorious future!

22. Jesus wanted that truth to be so impressed on our minds that He said to Martha, the sister of Lazarus who was at that point dead in the tomb:

John 11:25-26: ²⁵ Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me will live, even though they die; ²⁶and all those who live and believe in me will never die. Do you believe this?”—*Good News Bible*. *

23. How could that be true?

John 5:28-29: [Jesus said:] ²⁸ “Do not be surprised at this; the time is coming when all the dead will hear his voice ²⁹and come out of their graves: those who have done good will rise and live, and those who have done evil will rise and be condemned.”—*Good News Bible*. *†

John 6:39: [Jesus further said:] “And it is the will of him who sent me that I should not lose any of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them all to life on the last day.”—*Good News Bible*. *†

24. But, God does not regard the first death as something serious because He will raise to life everyone who dies the first death. What God is concerned about is that terrible second death which is a direct result of sin which separates us from God, the only Source of life. (Isaiah 59:2) And that is why no one needs to die if s/he has faith in Jesus and trusts Him.

Revelation 20:6,14: ⁶Happy and greatly blessed are those who are included in this first raising of the dead. **The second death has no power over them;** they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and they will rule with him for a thousand years.... ¹⁴Then death and the world of the dead were thrown into the lake of fire. (This lake of fire is the second death.)—*Good News Bible*. *†

Revelation 21:8: [The One who sits on the throne (God) said:] “But cowards, traitors, perverts, murderers, the immoral, those who practice magic, those who worship idols, and all liars—the place for them is **the lake burning with fire and sulphur, which is the second death.**”—*Good News Bible*. *†

25. When we lie down at night and put our heads on the pillow, we do not worry about the fact that we falling asleep. We do not need to if we have the right kind of relationship with God. We do not need to worry if we have to lay our head down in death. It is simply a sleep in God’s eyes. But, if we lie down in death and we have been faithful, then, when we arise, it will be in a totally new body. We will experience, in the twinkling of an eye, immortality. It will not be natural for us; but, it will be given to us by God.

Christ became one flesh with us, in order that we might become one spirit with Him. It is by virtue of this union that we are to come forth from the grave,—not merely as a manifestation of the power of Christ, but because, through faith, His life has become ours. Those who see Christ in His true character, and receive Him into the heart, have everlasting life. It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us; and the Spirit of God, received into the heart by faith, is the beginning of the life eternal.—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 388.1.

26. Have you experienced the happiness and joy of having a complete trust in God so that you will experience eternal life no matter how bad things may be on this earth in any given situation? Christians realize that their ultimate fate is not here. The truth is that they have an everlasting life that will be theirs one day. That is the ultimate reality.

27. And that blessed hope comes to us because of that fabulous Sunday when Christ rose from the grave. What a glorious resurrection!

28. But, God does not give us all this joy, hope and promise just so we can sit and enjoy it.

Matthew 28:19-20: [Jesus said:]¹⁹ “Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,²⁰ and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age.”—*Good News Bible*.*†

29. Do you ever wonder if your life has any meaning? Do you feel that you are accomplishing something? Have you ever had the privilege of leading someone to Jesus Christ?

30. Most physicians work with patients every day. But, they realize that the very best they can do with the best treatments that are available now and the best medicines that they have is to extend a patient’s life temporarily. If we can lead him/her to Christ, we can give him/her a pain-free life that lasts forever.

31. That life Jesus offers us will be pain-free, trouble-free, and full of joy and peace forever.

32. More than that, if we with the help of the Holy Spirit have managed to convince someone to come to Jesus, we can bring rejoicing to heaven.

Luke 15:7,10:⁷ “In the same way, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over 99 respectable people who do not need to repent....¹⁰ In the same way, I tell you, the angels of God rejoice over one sinner who repents.”—*Good News Bible*.*

33. Would there be anything better to do with our lives than to work in partnership with the Holy Spirit and Jesus to prepare our world for the second coming? Are we prepared to follow Christ’s commission to: (1) Go? (2) Make disciples? (3) Baptize? And (4) teach? Every Christian is given that mission. Have we been doing those things? Can we do more?

34. We believe that Jesus has bridged the gulf between earth and heaven. With one arm, He grasps the throne of God; with the other, He reaches down to us. And He says:

Come, my brother, come just as you are, sinful and polluted. Lay your burden of guilt on Jesus, and by faith claim His merits. Come now, while mercy lingers; come with confession, come with contrition of soul, and God will abundantly pardon. Do not dare to slight another opportunity. Listen to the voice of mercy that now pleads with you to arise from the dead that Christ may give you light. Every moment now seems to connect itself directly with the destinies of the unseen world. Then let not your pride and unbelief

lead you to still further reject offered mercy. If you do you will be left to lament at the last: “The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*,* vol. 5, 353.3.

35. Those who have not experienced the Christian life have a very different understanding of life and our place in the universe.

“We see ourselves in relation to the cosmos,” wrote Francisco José Moreno, “and we are aware of our ignorance and final powerlessness; hence our insecurity. As a result, we fear.”—*Between Faith and Reason: Basic Fear and the Human Condition* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1977), p. 7.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 169].^{‡§}

36. Does that sound like living a life “completely filled with the very nature of God”? What does it actually mean *to be filled with the fullness of God*? Or, *to be completely filled with the very nature of God*?

37. Look at what Jesus said to His disciples.

John 10:10: “The thief comes only in order to steal, kill, and destroy. I have come in order that you might have life—life in all its fullness.”—*Good News Bible*.*

38. Many human philosophers have looked at the universe and at the world in which we live and decried meaninglessness, lack of hope, and fear.

“The life of a man,” David Hume lamented, “is of no greater importance to the universe than that of an oyster.”—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 171. [These are the thoughts of an evolutionist!][‡]

39. Obviously, these are the words of someone who has not experienced Christianity.

Humanity is so important that the God who created the universe became part of it. (Compared to what it took to make the universe in the first place, becoming part of it would be easy.) **The One whose creation is measured in light-years shrank into Someone measured in feet and inches.**—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 171.[†]

40. How do you understand the following words?

And faith, like a chariot wheel, rolls us to the portals of grace. To *believe in* Christ means to believe that Christ’s death possesses the omnipotence to eradicate every past sin. This is called justification by faith. To *believe on* Christ means to believe that the *Paraclete* (the cosmic Comforter), through Christ’s priesthood, can impart omnipresent grace to overcome our character deficiencies. This is called sanctification by faith. To *believe* Christ simply means to trust His omniscience. It means to lean the entire personality on the flawless, life-changing mind and heart of the Resurrection and the Life. Yes, we are saved by *grace*, but faith is the bus ride that transports us to the venue of grace.—*Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 172.[§]

41. Once again, I would remind you that justification is by faith; sanctification is by faith; salvation is by faith. So, what we need to attain is a clear understanding of faith. We need to have that kind of relationship with God that transforms lives.

“Throughout the NT [New Testament] this good news about the resurrection is far more than interesting data about the future. It transforms life in the present by investing it with meaning and hope. Because of their confidence about their destiny, Christians already live a new kind of life. Those who live

in the hope of sharing the glory of God are transformed into different people. They can even rejoice in suffering, because their lives are motivated by hope.”—John C. Brunt, “Resurrection and Glorification,” in *Handbook of Seventh-day Adventist Theology*, p. 349.—[as quoted in *Adult Teachers Sabbath School Bible Study Guide** 172].^{‡§}

42. Many people have despaired of achieving the kind of relationship with God that promises eternal life. We need to remember the story of the two thieves who hung beside Jesus. One mocked Him; the other asked for salvation. But, the background of these two thieves was not the same.

To Jesus in His agony on the cross there came one gleam of comfort. It was the prayer of the penitent thief. Both the men who were crucified with Jesus had at first railed upon Him; and one under his suffering only became more desperate and defiant. **But not so with his companion. This man was not a hardened criminal; he had been led astray by evil associations, but he was less guilty than many of those who stood beside the cross reviling the Saviour. He had seen and heard Jesus, and had been convicted by His teaching, but he had been turned away from Him by the priests and rulers.** Seeking to stifle conviction, he had plunged deeper and deeper into sin, until he was arrested, tried as a criminal, and condemned to die on the cross. In the judgment hall and on the way to Calvary he had been in company with Jesus. He had heard Pilate declare, “I find no fault in Him.” John 19:4. He had marked His [750] godlike bearing, and His pitying forgiveness of His tormentors. On the cross he sees the many great religionists shoot out the tongue with scorn, and ridicule the Lord Jesus. He sees the wagging heads. He hears the upbraiding speeches taken up by his companion in guilt: “If Thou be Christ, save Thyself and us.” Among the passers-by he hears many defending Jesus. He hears them repeat His words, and tell of His works. **The conviction comes back to him that this is the Christ.** Turning to his fellow criminal he says, “Dost not thou fear God, seeing thou art in the same condemnation?” **The dying thieves have no longer anything to fear from man. But upon one of them presses the conviction that there is a God to fear, a future to cause him to tremble. And now, all sin-polluted as it is, his life history is about to close. “And we indeed justly,” he moans; “for we receive the due reward of our deeds: but this Man hath done nothing amiss.”**—Ellen G. White, *The Desire of Ages** 749.3.[†]

43. Would it be better to experience the truth in love and joy that Christ offers throughout our entire lives instead of having a deathbed experience like that thief on the cross? Do we enjoy living with guilt, fear, trouble, and pain without the promises of Jesus?
44. If we really have experienced the wonderful things which Jesus promises, shouldn't we be excited about sharing the details of those promises with others? Are we doing that?

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