

Seeing the Unseen



SABBATH—NOVEMBER 17

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Isaiah 40:27–31; John 14:1–14; Romans 8:28–39; Ephesians 1:18–23.

MEMORY VERSE: “Because of his faith, he [Moses] left Egypt. It wasn’t [was not] because he was afraid of the king’s anger. He didn’t [did not] let anything stop him. He saw the One who can’t [cannot] be seen” (Hebrews 11:27, NIV).

DESCRIBING FAITH is not always easy. The book of Hebrews says, “Faith is being sure of what we hope for. It is being certain of what we do not see” (Hebrews 11:1, NIV). How can we be sure about what we do not see? But this is exactly what Moses does, as we learn in our memory verse: “He persevered [continued] because he saw him [God] who is invisible [unseen]” (verse 27, NIV).

It is even more of a challenge to understand that we are called to see “him [God] who is invisible.” We are called to do this not just when times are good, but also when everything is going wrong. For this we need strong faith. It is a Christlike faith that must be shaped by the truth about God and God’s kingdom. These are truths about (1) our Father’s goodness, (2) the power in the name of Jesus, (3) the power of the resurrection (the return to life), and (4) the compassion (mercy) of God. They are very important truths that will help us to stand strong when we start to doubt everything.

THIS WEEK’S LESSON UP CLOSE: What truths about God can help sustain us through even the worst situations?

SUNDAY—NOVEMBER 18**OUR FATHER'S GOODNESS
(Romans 8:28–39)**

“If God really loved me, He would certainly do _____ for me!” How many times has that thought come across our minds? We look at our situations and then begin to wonder whether God really loves us. If He really did, things would be different.

There are two reasons that often lead us to doubt God's goodness. First, we have a burning desire in our hearts and minds for something that we believe is good. The idea that God might want something “bad” for us may seem foolish. Second, we may doubt God's goodness because our experience sometimes does not agree with what we believe. If something looks good or feels good or sounds good or tastes good, then it must be good. And so we get angry with God when we cannot have it.

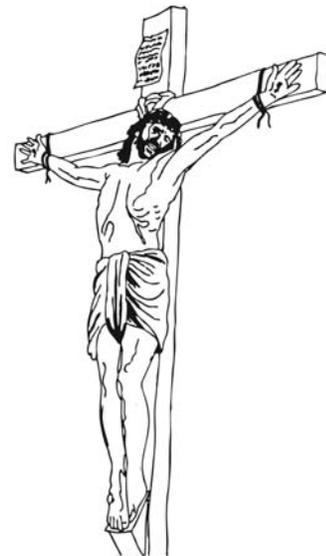
This is where faith becomes important. Faith comes into action at those times when we are tempted to doubt God and His goodness.

Romans 8:28–39 describe powerfully the goodness of God toward us. What reasons can you find in the verses that can guard our minds against doubting God's goodness?

In verse 32 there is an important reason that helps to guard us against

being made helpless by our situations. “God would not waste any time in putting everything first for us. He accepted our condition and exposed Himself to the worst by sending His own Son. So, is there anything else He would not gladly and freely do for us?” (*The Message*, adapted). How could we possibly think that God would send Jesus to die for us and then turn cruel and selfish?

This means that the truth of God's kindness to us is found in the death of Christ. Then this must have a stronger influence¹ on our thinking than all of the doubts that suffering may have caused us to have.



The truth of God's kindness to us is found in the death of Christ.

How is it possible for a truth (God's goodness) to have a more powerful influence on you than your doubts? Spend some time thinking about the truth that God

1. influence—the power to affect or change persons or things.

has given Jesus to die in your place. Also think about how this wonderful mercy continues in a thousand different ways for you today. What does this do for your faith?

MONDAY—NOVEMBER 19

IN THE NAME OF JESUS (John 14:14)

Jesus was not going to be with His disciples (followers) much longer. Jesus had given them support and encouragement, but soon He was going to heaven. And the disciples were beginning to feel confused and powerless. The disciples would not be able to see Him any longer. But Jesus gave them a wonderful promise.

Read John 14:1–14. In verses 13 and 14, Jesus promises to do for us “anything” that we ask in His name. Because of this, we should always add on to the end of our prayers, “In Jesus’ name, amen.”

When we say this, what do we normally think it means? What does Jesus mean when He encourages us to pray this way? What hints are there in these verses that help us to understand the point Jesus is making?

When we pray “in the name of Jesus,” we can be certain that all heaven is at work for us. We may not be aware of the angels working all around us. But they are! They are sent from the throne of heaven in the

name of Jesus to answer our prayers.



Jesus promised His disciples—and us—He would do “anything” we ask in His name (John 14:13, 14).

Sometimes when we pray in the name of Jesus, we open our eyes and expect everything to be different around us. But it all looks the same. The power of God may come with a great show. For example, Jesus calmed the storm. But His power may also come in quietly and unnoticed. For example, the power of God supported Jesus quietly in Gethsemane.² Something powerful may not suddenly happen. But that does not mean God is not at work for us.



When we pray “in the name of Jesus” we may be sure all heaven is at work for us.

2. Gethsemane—the name of the garden on the Mount of Olives, where Jesus spent His last night on earth.

Read again John 14:1–14. Imagine that Jesus is talking directly to you, face to face. What hope and encouragement can you get from these promises? At the same time, ask yourself, “What things in my life could prevent me from having these promises fulfilled? What changes must I make in my heart?”

TUESDAY—NOVEMBER 20

THE POWER OF THE RESURRECTION³ (Ephesians 1:18–23)

The Resurrection points to the problems of human⁴ helplessness and powerlessness. We often think about the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. When we do, we think about how the death of Jesus made us legally right with God. And that is true!

But the Resurrection adds an important part to salvation.⁵ The resurrection of Jesus means one thing—it shows us that one day we will be resurrected (raised from the dead), too. But the Resurrection also put Jesus at the right hand of the Father in a position of power and authority. This resurrection power is the same power that we can have from God today!

In Ephesians 1:18–23, Paul talks about the power of God. What do these verses teach us about the power of the Resurrection? What

hope and promises for yourself can you find in these verses?

Paul is praying that the Ephesians understand a few things with God’s help. He wants us to understand that there is the hope of change and an eternal (without end) future to which Jesus has called us. And Paul also wants us to understand the power that was shown us for our sake.

Paul then tries to describe how great this power is. Today we can have the same power that resurrected Jesus back to life and to the place of power at the Father’s right hand.

But Paul does not stop there. The Resurrection also gave Jesus the power to rule and to provide (give) every possible thing His people could ever need—for all eternity (time without end)!



The Resurrection gave Jesus the power to give us everything we would ever need.

3. resurrection—return to life; raising the dead to life from the grave.

4. human—concerning men, women, or children.

5. salvation—God’s plan for saving sinners from eternal (without end) death.

Make a list of the areas in your life where you need the power of the resurrected Jesus. When you have finished, pray that this power will be used in all these areas of need. At the same time, what can you do better and what choices can you make that can let this power work more freely in your life?

WEDNESDAY—NOVEMBER 21

TO CARRY ALL OUR WORRY (1 Peter 5:7)

There is a sign some people have in their homes that reads “Why pray when you can worry?” It makes us laugh because we know how often we worry rather than come to God with our problems.

Someone once said that when your life becomes all tied up, give it to God and let Him untie the knots. How God must want to do this for us. But we seem to hang on to our problems until we are about to go crazy. Why do we wait until we are hopeless before we go to the Lord?

Read 1 Peter 5:7. Peter is using Psalm 55:22 in 1 Peter 5:7. What is the basic message here for us? Read also Matthew 6:25–33.

1 Peter 5:7 is a very simple verse. There is no secret hidden in it. It means exactly what it says. To “cast” means to throw or to give away so that the pain and the worry will not bother

you anymore. But our worry is not just thrown anywhere. Our worry does not disappear into empty space. It is given to our Father in heaven, who promises to work it out. That is what Jesus is also telling us in the verses in Matthew 6:25–33. The problem is not that believing this is hard. Instead, it just seems too easy, too good to be true.

Worry is caused by all kinds of things. It could be pressure from work. Criticism⁶ that comes as a surprise. Feeling that we are unwanted or unloved. Health or financial (money) worries. Feeling that we are not good enough for God. Believing that we are not forgiven.

One reason why we hang on to our problems is that we think we can work them out better than anyone else. But Peter advises us to think again. The reason we do not have to worry is that God cares. But does God still care enough to act when a divorce is coming up or when we feel completely useless? The Bible says that God cares enough to change any situation.

What are things that cause you worry now? They may seem real, but is there anything too hard for the Lord? Maybe our biggest problem is that we may believe God knows about it and can fix it. But we do not believe that He will solve it the way we would like for Him to solve it. Think over that last point and ask yourself how true it is in your own life.

6. criticism—the act of finding fault; disapproval.

THURSDAY—NOVEMBER 22**STILL FAITHFUL WHEN GOD CANNOT BE SEEN (Isaiah 40:11)**

It is no fun to think that no one cares about what is happening to us. But it is more depressing to think that God does not know or care about us.

To the Jews who were taken to Babylon, God did not seem to care much about their situation. They were still slaves. They still felt forgotten by God because of their sin. But Isaiah speaks words of comfort to them. Isaiah 40 is a beautiful chapter. In this chapter Isaiah speaks so tenderly (kindly) to the people about their God: “He [God] takes care of his flock like a shepherd. He gathers the lambs in his arms. He carries them close to his heart. He gently leads those that have little ones” (verse 11, NIV). But after a while, the Jewish slaves in Babylon were thinking, *Where are You, O Lord? We cannot see any proof that You are still there—or care!*

In what ways does Isaiah describe God in Isaiah 40:27–31? How does this description of God answer their belief that “‘The Lord doesn’t [does not] notice our condition’? ‘Our God doesn’t [does not] pay attention to our rightful claims’?” (verse 27, NIV).

Another example of people who might have felt neglected by God is found in the book of Esther. In this

book, God is not named even once. But the whole story shows how God has acted to save His people from a law that would destroy them. This story describes the events of the past. But it also symbolizes (means the same as) a time in the future when God’s people will again suffer from a law that is planned to destroy them (Revelation 13:15). Can you imagine how easy it would be to believe that if such terrible situations were to happen, God must have forgotten His people? But we are not to fear. The same God who saved His chosen people in the story of Esther will save them again in the last hour of the earth’s history.

We have read how Isaiah described God to the Jewish slaves in Babylon. How would you describe God to people who felt that God had disappeared and forgotten them? How would you teach them to see through the eyes of faith? How do you tell them not to be dependent on what they see around them with their human eyes and human understanding?

FRIDAY—NOVEMBER 23

ADDITIONAL STUDY: Read Ellen G. White, “In the Days of Queen Esther,” pp. 598–606, in *Prophets⁷ and Kings*.

“God has said He would give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him. This Spirit is a real, true actual Guide. Some men seem afraid to hold God to His promises, as if this act would insult

7. prophets—men or women sent by God to warn us about what will happen in the future.

Him. They pray for the Lord to teach us, but they are afraid to claim His promises and believe we have been taught by Him. If we come to our heavenly Father with a humble and teachable spirit, why should we doubt God's ability [power] to keep His own promise? You must not doubt Him and dishonor Him by doing so. When you have tried to know God's will [God's plan for your life], you must believe that you will be led and guided and blessed in the doing of His will. We may mistrust [not trust] ourselves in the event we misunderstand His teachings. But we need to pray about His will and still trust that His Holy Spirit will lead us to fully understand His plans and His way of working them out."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Manuscript Releases*, volume 6, p. 225.

"Faith grows strong by wrestling [struggling] with doubts and negative [bad] influences. The experience gained in these trials is more valuable than the most expensive jewels."—Adapted from Ellen G. White, *Testimonies⁸ for the Church*, volume 3, p. 555.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ❶ As a class, talk about the kinds of unseen things we believe in. They are the things that we know are real, but we cannot see them. How can this help us understand what it means to know and see "God who is unseen"?
- ❷ Discuss the final question found at the end of Wednesday's lesson. How often do we find ourselves in that situation? What can we do that will better help us to trust that the Lord's way is the best—even if it is not what we want?
- ❸ "Faith grows strong by wrestling with doubts and negative influences." And this leads to something very valuable—"more valuable than the most expensive jewels." How should this influence the way we look at trials and troubles?
- ❹ Most of us have seen people, even fellow Christians, who have suffered much. Sometimes the worst thing happened, even though we had prayed. How do we understand why this happened from what we have been studying?

8. testimonies—the writings of Ellen G. White.