

Sabbath School Lesson #14 – Ephesians in the Heart – 23-29 Sep 2023

Christ would have us commit the book of Ephesians in the heart. Paul says, “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8-10). Christ is everything to us. “This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent” (John 6:29). In Christ all things are sustained, that are in heaven and in earth, whether things that may be seen, or things unseen (Colossians 1:16). He is “the beginning of the creation of God” (Revelation 3:14) – creation began in Him, and in Him is complete. The same power by which the worlds were created, is the power which works righteousness in men. For as “the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork” (Psalm 19:1), so “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them.” So as all creation is perfect in Him, whoever believes in Him is “complete in Him” (Colossians 2:10).

Sunday: We Are Blessed in Christ – Let us dwell on Ephesians 1:4, which says that we have been chosen in Him, Christ, “before the foundation of the world.” What does that mean? How does it reveal to us God’s love for us and His desire for us to be saved? Everything is in Christ. We receive all spiritual blessings in Him; we are chosen in Him unto holiness; in Him we are predestined unto the adoption of children; in Him we are accepted; and in Him we have redemption through His blood. “God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thessalonians 5:9). All are chosen to serve and be saved, but many reject God’s calling to salvation. Paul was “called to be an apostle” (Romans 1:1). That God chose Saul to be an apostle, before Saul himself had any thought that he should ever be even a Christian, is evident from the sacred narrative. On his way to Damascus, whilst, “breathing out threatening and slaughter,” he was proceeding with full authority to seize, bind, and drag to prison all Christians, both men and women, Saul was suddenly arrested, not by human hands, but by the overpowering glory of the Lord. Three days afterward the Lord said to Ananias, when sending him to give Saul his sight, “He is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear My name before the Gentiles” (Acts 9:15). God arrested Saul in his mad career of persecution, because He had chosen him to be an apostle. So we see that the pricks against which Saul had been kicking were the strivings of the Spirit to turn him to the work to which he had been called. How long before this had Saul been chosen to be the messenger of the Lord? – from his mother’s womb (Galatians 1:15). From his birth Saul had been “separated unto the Gospel of God.” This was no new thing. The work of Samson and of John the Baptist was laid out for them before they were born (Judges 13:2-14; Luke 1:13-17). Jeremiah was chosen before his birth for a prophet of God (Jeremiah 1:4-5). Pharaoh, the haughty, defiant king of Egypt, had also been chosen to make the name of God known throughout all the earth (Exodus 9:15-16), but he refused to do it as the acknowledged servant of the Lord, and so the work had been accomplished through his obstinacy. Judgment will reveal wonderful opportunities men have recklessly flung away.

Monday: We Are Redeemed for Community – In what way does the book of Ephesians teach that we are redeemed for community? The word near to community is commonwealth of Israel. In the second chapter of Ephesians we learn that as Gentiles, the Ephesians had been “aliens from the commonwealth of Israel,” “having no hope, and without God in the world.” That is, those who are not of the commonwealth of Israel are without God; or, those who are without God are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. Now Christ is the only manifestation of God to man, and “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not” (John 1:11). Therefore the mass of the Jewish nation were without God, just as surely as the heathen were, and consequently were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel. The same chapter of Ephesians tells us that Christ came to reconcile both Jews and Gentiles unto God, showing that both were separate from Him. Still further in the same chapter we learn that the commonwealth of Israel is the “household of God,” and is composed of saints, those who are reconciled to God. Only such are not “strangers and foreigners” from Israel. As believers – as a ‘community’ of believers in Christ, – we are of the commonwealth of Israel.

Tuesday: We Are the Church of the Living God – How are we the church of the living God? The living God dwells in a living house; and only a spiritual house befits Him who is Spirit. Accordingly we read that, coming unto the Lord, “a living Stone, rejected indeed of men, but with God elect, precious, ye also as living stones are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:4-5). Of the house of God, “Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord; in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:18-22). The household of God is the church of the living God (1 Timothy 3:15), but only because each individual member is the dwelling-place of God. To each person the word comes: “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?” (1 Cor. 6:19). “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are” (1 Cor. 3:16-17). When Jesus was asked how it was that He would manifest Himself to His disciples and not to the world, He replied: “If a man love Me, he may keep My words; and My Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” (John 14:23). The Word abiding in the heart sanctifies, so that the heart of each believer is the sanctuary of the living God.

Wednesday: The Unity of Faith – The Lesson writer asks: “What are ways that we can contribute to the unity of our church, both at the local and worldwide levels? Why is it important that we do what we can?” It is for establishing the body of Christ that spiritual gifts are given to us. “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal” (1 Corinthians 12:7). What is the profit? “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-13). Before the end, is “the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God.” The knowledge of the Son of God is the eschatological culmination of the church! True unity at the local and worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church level is only possible by the knowledge of the Son of God. It is by the Sonship of Christ that we are united into the household of God, for God accepts us only through His Son; we are “accepted in the beloved” (Ephesians 1:6). Satan knows that it is the Sonship of Christ that unites us and he seeks to destroy our knowledge of the Son of God. The unity that only comes by “the knowledge of the Son of God,” is destroyed by our Seventh-day Adventist theologians who say that the Sonship of Christ is a mere metaphor, not real. Note what the Biblical Research Institute – the official body that is responsible for enhancing the understanding of our Seventh-day Adventist church doctrines and beliefs – says. In an article entitled “A Question of Sonship” published in 2015, the Bible Research Institute says, “Christ is the eternal Son of God. ... We are dealing with metaphorical use of the word ‘son.’ Metaphorical significance: The Son is not the natural, literal Son of the Father” (website; reprinted in *Adventist World*, November 2015, p 42). What does the Bible say about those who reduce the Sonship of Christ to a mere metaphor, denying the relationship between the Father and Son is real? “He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son” (1 John 2:22).

Thursday: We Are Recipients and Givers of Grace – The Lesson writer asks: ‘How does Ephesians 5:2, which tells us to “walk in love,” help us understand what Paul means in Ephesians 5:1 about being “imitators of God”?’ All young animals learn by mimicry, – by imitating their parents. But the reason why they can follow the example of their parents, and imitate them, is because they are their own young ones, – they have the same nature. And so it is only *the children of God*, those who have His own nature, who can copy the example, and be and do as He is and does. “What things soever He doeth, these *the son* also doeth in like manner” (John 5:19). We are to be imitators of Him as His dear children. If we are to imitate God, we also must have His life, and God has put His Life in His Son (John 5:26), which life He has offered us in His Son (1 John 5:11). Without the Son of God, we have no life of God, and can do nothing (John 15:5). If you have a metaphorical Son in your heart, your imitation is metaphorical. Let Christ “dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, might be filled with all the fulness of God” (Ephesians 3:14-19).