

Third Quarter 2023

EGW Notes - Lesson 1, 24 – 30 June

Paul And The Ephesians



Sabbath Afternoon, June 24

Paul was a living example of what every true Christian should be. He lived for God's glory. His words come sounding down the line to our time: "For to me to live is Christ." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." He who was once a persecutor of Christ in the person of His saints now holds up before the world the cross of Christ. Paul's heart burned with a love for souls, and he gave all his energies for the conversion of men. There never lived a more self-denying, earnest, persevering worker. His life was Christ; he worked the works of Christ. All the blessings he received were prized as so many advantages to be used in blessing others.

***—E. G. White Comments, in The Seventh-day Adventist Bible
Commentary, vol. 6, p. 1112.***

In the council of heaven, provision was made that men, though transgressors, should not perish in their disobedience, but, through faith in Christ as their substitute and surety, might become the elect of God, predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself according to the good pleasure of His will. God wills that all men should be saved; for ample provision has been made, in giving His only-begotten Son to pay man's ransom. Those who

perish will perish because they refuse to be adopted as children of God through Christ Jesus.

Before the foundations of the earth were laid the covenant was made that all who were obedient, all who should through the abundant grace provided become holy in character and without blame before God by appropriating that grace, should be children of God. This covenant, made from eternity, was given to Abraham nineteen hundred years before Christ came. With what interest and what intensity did Christ in humanity study the human race to see if they would avail themselves of the provision offered.

—E. G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1114.

All the favors He has shown to His Son in His acceptance of the great atonement, are shown to His people. Those who have united their interests in love with Christ are accepted in the Beloved. They suffered with Christ in His deepest humiliation, and His glorification is of great interest to them, because they are accepted in Him. God loves them as He loves His Son. Christ, Emmanuel, stands between God and the believer, revealing the glory of God to His chosen ones, and covering their defects and transgressions with the garments of His own spotless righteousness.

—E. G. White Comments, in *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1115.

Sunday, June 25 Paul, Evangelist to Ephesus

As Paul was brought in direct contact with the idolatrous inhabitants of Ephesus, the power of God was strikingly displayed through him. The apostles were not always able to work miracles at will. The Lord granted His servants this special power as the progress of His cause or the honor of His name

required. Like Moses and Aaron at the court of Pharaoh, the apostle had now to maintain the truth against the lying wonders of the magicians; hence the miracles he wrought were of a different character from those which he had heretofore performed. . . . So the Scripture declares that the Lord wrought miracles by the hand of Paul, and that the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified, and not the name of Paul.

—*Sketches from the Life of Paul, p. 135.*

By burning their books on magic, the Ephesian converts showed that the things in which they had once delighted they now abhorred. It was by and through magic that they had especially offended God and imperiled their souls; and it was against magic that they showed such indignation. Thus they gave evidence of true conversion.

These treatises on divination contained rules and forms of communication with evil spirits. They were the regulations of the worship of Satan—directions for soliciting his help and obtaining information from him. By retaining these books the disciples would have exposed themselves to temptation; by selling them they would have placed temptation in the way of others. They had renounced the kingdom of darkness, and to destroy its power they did not hesitate at any sacrifice. Thus truth triumphed over men's prejudices and their love of money.

By this manifestation of the power of Christ, a mighty victory for Christianity was gained in the very stronghold of superstition. The influence of what had taken place was more widespread than even Paul realized. From Ephesus the news was widely circulated, and a strong impetus was given to the cause of Christ. Long after the apostle himself had finished his course, these scenes lived in the memory of men and were the means of winning converts to the gospel.

—*The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 288, 289.*

We may have an influence, a powerful influence, in the world. We are to have an eye single to the glory of God. We are to work with all the intelligence that God has given us, placing ourselves in the channel of light, that the grace of God can come upon us to mold and fashion us to the divine similitude. Heaven is waiting to bestow its richest blessings upon those who will consecrate themselves to do the work of God in these last days of the world's history.

—*God's Amazing Grace, p. 272.*

Monday, June 26 A Riot in the Amphitheater

In his speech Demetrius had said, "This our craft is in danger." These words reveal the real cause of the tumult at Ephesus, and also the cause of much of the persecution which followed the apostles in their work. Demetrius and his fellow craftsmen saw that by the teaching and spread of the gospel the business of image making was endangered. The income of pagan priests and artisans was at stake, and for this reason they aroused against Paul the most bitter opposition.

The decision of the recorder and of others holding honorable offices in the city had set Paul before the people as one innocent of any unlawful act. This was another triumph of Christianity over error and superstition. God had raised up a great magistrate to vindicate His apostle and hold the tumultuous mob in check. Paul's heart was filled with gratitude to God that his life had been preserved and that Christianity had not been brought into disrepute by the tumult at Ephesus.

—*The Acts of the Apostles, p. 295.*

Paul, as well as laboring publicly, went from house to house preaching repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. He met with men at their homes, and besought them with tears, declaring unto them the whole counsel of God. Jesus came in personal contact with men. He did not

stand aloof and apart from those who needed His help. We must come close to the hearts of those who need our ministry. We must open the Bible to the understanding, present the claims of God's law, read the promises to the hesitating, urge the backward, arouse the careless, strengthen the weak.

Do not neglect speaking to your neighbors, and doing them all the kindness in your power. We need to seek for the spirit that constrained the apostle Paul to go from house to house, pleading with tears, and teaching "repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."

—*Reflecting Christ, p. 245.*

There are a thousand temptations in disguise prepared for those who have the light of truth; and the only safety for any of us is in receiving no new doctrine, no new interpretation of the Scriptures, without first submitting it to brethren of experience. Lay it before them in a humble, teachable spirit, with earnest prayer; and if they see no light in it, yield to their judgment.

Satan is constantly at work; but few have any idea of his activity and subtlety. The people of God must be prepared to withstand the wily foe. It is this resistance that Satan dreads. He knows better than we do the limit of his power and how easily he can be overcome if we resist and face him. Through divine strength the weakest saint is more than a match for him and all his angels, and if brought to the test he would be able to prove his superior power. Therefore Satan's step is noiseless, his movements stealthy, and his batteries masked. He does not venture to show himself openly, lest he arouse the Christian's dormant energies and send him to God in prayer.

—*Maranatha, p. 60.*

Tuesday, June 27 Hearing the Letter to the Ephesians

The apostle [Paul] continues: “That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith . . . that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.” While this divine fullness has been placed within our reach, how easily we are satisfied. We have accustomed ourselves to think that it is enough to have a knowledge of the truth without its sanctifying power. Just a little sip at the fountain of life quenches our thirst. We do not come again and again to drink. But this is not in accordance with the mind of God. Our souls should be continually athirst for the water of life. Our hearts should ever go out after Christ, longing for communion with Him. It is hungering and thirsting after righteousness that will bring us the full measure of His grace.

How did [Enoch] gain this sweet intimacy? It was by having thoughts of God continually before him. As he went out and as he came in, his meditations were upon the goodness, the perfection, and the loveliness of the divine character. And as he was thus engaged, he became changed in the glorious image of his Lord; for it is by beholding that we become changed.

— *The Signs of the Times, August 18, 1887.*

It is not only the privilege but the duty of every Christian to maintain a close union with Christ and to have a rich experience in the things of God. Then his life will be fruitful in good works. Said Christ, “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit” (John 15:8). When we read the lives of men who have been eminent for their piety we often regard their experiences and attainments as far beyond our reach. But this is not the case. Christ died for all; and we are assured in His word that He is more willing to give His Holy Spirit to them that ask Him than are earthly parents to give good gifts to their children. The prophets and apostles did not perfect Christian character by a miracle. They used the means which God had placed within their reach; and all who will put forth the same effort will secure the same results.

In his letter to the church at Ephesus, Paul sets before them the “mystery of the gospel” (Ephesians 6:19), the “unsearchable riches of Christ” (Ephesians 3:8), and then assures them of his earnest prayers for their spiritual prosperity.

— ***The Sanctified Life, pp. 83, 84.***

Wednesday, June 28 Ephesians in Its Time

Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity.

Ephesians 6:24.

Many take it for granted that they are Christians, simply because they subscribe to certain theological tenets. But they have not brought the truth into practical life. They have not believed and loved it, therefore they have not received the power and grace that come through sanctification of the truth. Men may profess faith in the truth; but if it does not make them sincere, kind, patient, forbearing, heavenly-minded, it is a curse to its possessors, and through their influence it is a curse to the world.

The world needs evidences of sincere Christianity. Professed Christianity may be seen everywhere; but when the power of God’s grace is seen in our churches, the members will work the works of Christ. Natural and hereditary traits of character will be transformed. The indwelling of His Spirit will enable them to reveal Christ’s likeness, and in proportion to the purity of their piety will be the success of their work.

— ***God's Amazing Grace, p. 263.***

At times the difficulties that we shall meet will be most disheartening. The very greatness of the task will appall us. And yet, with God’s help, His servants will finally triumph. ‘Wherefore,’ my brethren, ‘I desire that ye faint not’ because of the trying experiences that are before you. Jesus will be with you; He will go

before you by His Holy Spirit, preparing the way; and He will be your helper in every emergency.

For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God.

—*Life Sketches, p. 439.*

For the believers at Ephesus the apostle prayed, “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and . . . what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe.”

Ephesians 1:17-19. The ministry of the divine Spirit in enlightening the understanding and opening to the mind the deep things of God’s holy word, was the blessing which Paul thus besought for the Ephesian church.

—*The Great Controversy, p. 9.*

Thursday, June 29 Ephesians: A Christ-Saturated Letter

The Saviour longed to unfold to His disciples the truth regarding the breaking down of the “middle wall of partition” between Israel and the other nations—the truth that “the Gentiles should be fellow heirs” with the Jews and “partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel.” Ephesians 2:14; 3:6. . . .

Christ sought to teach the disciples the truth that in God's kingdom there are no territorial lines, no caste, no aristocracy; that they must go to all nations, bearing to them the message of a Saviour's love. But not until later did they realize in all its fullness that God "hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation; that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him, though He be not far from every one of us." Acts 17:26, 27.

– *The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 19, 20.*

"This is life eternal," Christ said, "that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." Why is it that we do not realize the value of this knowledge? Why are not these glorious truths glowing in our hearts, trembling upon our lips, and pervading our whole being?

In giving us His Word, God has put us in possession of every truth essential for our salvation. Thousands have drawn water from these wells of life, yet there is no diminishing of the supply. Thousands have set the Lord before them, and by beholding have been changed into the same image. Their spirit burns within them as they speak of His character, telling what Christ is to them, and what they are to Christ. But these searchers have not exhausted these grand and holy themes. Thousands more may engage in the work of searching out the mysteries of salvation. As the life of Christ and the character of His mission are dwelt upon, rays of light will shine forth more distinctly at every attempt to discover truth. Each fresh search will reveal something more deeply interesting than has yet been unfolded.

– *Lift Him Up, p. 378.*

"God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation," the apostle Paul writes, "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth,"

2 Thessalonians :13. In this text the two agencies in the work of salvation are revealed—the divine influence, and the strong, living faith of those who follow Christ. It is through the sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth that we become laborers together with God. Christ waits for the co-operation of His church. He does not design to add a new element of efficiency to His word; He has done His great work in giving His inspiration to the word. The blood of Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the divine word, are ours. The object of all this provision of heaven is before us—the salvation of the souls for whom Christ died; and it depends upon us to lay hold on the promises God has given, and become laborers together with Him. Divine and human agencies must co-operate in the work.

—Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 22.

Friday, June 30 For Further Reading

God's Amazing Grace, “Source of Right Influence,” p. 272;

Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, “Pray for the Latter Rain,” p. 508.

Source of Right Influence

Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward. Isaiah 58:8. {AG 272.1}

The Lord has a special work to do for us individually. As we see the wickedness of the world brought to light in the courts of justice and published in the daily papers, let us draw near to God, and by living faith lay hold of His promises, that the grace of Christ may be manifest in us. We may have an influence, a powerful influence, in the world.... We are to have an eye single to the glory of God. We are to work with all the intelligence that God has given us, placing ourselves in the channel of light, that the grace of God can come

upon us to mold and fashion us to the divine similitude. Heaven is waiting to bestow its richest blessings upon those who will consecrate themselves to do the work of God in these last days of the world's history. {AG 272.2}

There is nothing in us of ourselves by which we can influence others for good. If we realize our helplessness and our need of divine power, we shall not trust to ourselves. We know not what results a day, an hour, or a moment may determine, and never should we begin the day without committing our ways to our heavenly Father. His angels are appointed to watch over us, and if we put ourselves under their guardianship, then in every time of danger they will be at our right hand. When unconsciously we are in danger of exerting a wrong influence, the angels will be by our side, prompting us to a better course, choosing our words for us, and influencing our actions. Thus our influence may be a silent, unconscious, but mighty power in drawing others to Christ and the heavenly world. {AG 272.3}

Personal influence is a power. It is to work with the influence of Christ, to lift where Christ lifts, to impart correct principles, and to stay the progress of the world's corruption. It is to diffuse that grace which Christ alone can impart. It is to uplift, to sweeten the lives and characters of others by the power of a pure example united with earnest faith and love. {AG 272.4}

Pray for the Latter Rain

[The Review and Herald, March 2, 1897.]

“Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain.” “He will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain.” In the East the former rain falls at the sowing time. It is necessary in order that the seed may germinate. Under the influence of the fertilizing showers, the tender shoot springs up. The

latter rain, falling near the close of the season, ripens the grain and prepares it for the sickle. The Lord employs these operations of nature to represent the work of the Holy Spirit. As the dew and the rain are given first to cause the seed to germinate, and then to ripen the harvest, so the Holy Spirit is given to carry forward, from one stage to another, the process of spiritual growth. The ripening of the grain represents the completion of the work of God's grace in the soul. By the power of the Holy Spirit the moral image of God is to be perfected in the character. We are to be wholly transformed into the likeness of Christ. {TM 506.1}

The latter rain, ripening earth's harvest, represents the spiritual grace that prepares the church for the coming of the Son of man. But unless the former rain has fallen, there will be no life; the green blade will not spring up. Unless the early showers have done their work, the latter rain can bring no seed to perfection. {TM 506.2}

There is to be "first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear." There must be a constant development of Christian virtue, a constant advancement in Christian experience. This we should seek with intensity of desire, that we may adorn the doctrine of Christ our Saviour. {TM 506.3}

Many have in a great measure failed to receive the former rain. They have not obtained all the benefits that God has thus provided for them. They expect that the lack will be supplied by the latter rain. When the richest abundance of grace shall be bestowed, they intend to open their hearts to receive it. They are making a terrible mistake. The work that God has begun in the human heart in giving His light and knowledge must be continually going forward. Every individual must realize his own necessity. The heart must be emptied of every defilement and cleansed for the indwelling of the Spirit. It was by the confession and forsaking of sin, by earnest prayer and consecration of themselves to God, that the early disciples prepared for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. The same work, only in greater degree,

must be done now. Then the human agent had only to ask for the blessing, and wait for the Lord to perfect the work concerning him. It is God who began the work, and He will finish His work, making man complete in Jesus Christ. But there must be no neglect of the grace represented by the former rain. Only those who are living up to the light they have will receive greater light. Unless we are daily advancing in the exemplification of the active Christian virtues, we shall not recognize the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain. It may be falling on hearts all around us, but we shall not discern or receive it. {TM 507.1}

At no point in our experience can we dispense with the assistance of that which enables us to make the first start. The blessings received under the former rain are needful to us to the end. Yet these alone will not suffice. While we cherish the blessing of the early rain, we must not, on the other hand, lose sight of the fact that without the latter rain, to fill out the ears and ripen the grain, the harvest will not be ready for the sickle, and the labor of the sower will have been in vain. Divine grace is needed at the beginning, divine grace at every step of advance, and divine grace alone can complete the work. There is no place for us to rest in a careless attitude. We must never forget the warnings of Christ, “Watch unto prayer,” “Watch, ... and pray always.” A connection with the divine agency every moment is essential to our progress. We may have had a measure of the Spirit of God, but by prayer and faith we are continually to seek more of the Spirit. It will never do to cease our efforts. If we do not progress, if we do not place ourselves in an attitude to receive both the former and the latter rain, we shall lose our souls, and the responsibility will lie at our own door. {TM 507.2}

“Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain.” Do not rest satisfied that in the ordinary course of the season, rain will fall. Ask for it. The growth and perfection of the seed rests not with the husbandman. God alone can ripen the harvest. But man’s co-operation is required. God’s work for us demands the action of our mind, the exercise of our faith. We must seek His favors with the

whole heart if the showers of grace are to come to us. We should improve every opportunity of placing ourselves in the channel of blessing. Christ has said, “Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst.” The convocations of the church, as in camp meetings, the assemblies of the home church, and all occasions where there is personal labor for souls, are God’s appointed opportunities for giving the early and the latter rain. {TM 508.1}

But let none think that in attending these gatherings, their duty is done. A mere attendance upon all the meetings that are held will not in itself bring a blessing to the soul. It is not an immutable law that all who attend general gatherings or local meetings shall receive large supplies from heaven. The circumstances may seem to be favorable for a rich outpouring of the showers of grace. But God Himself must command the rain to fall. Therefore we should not be remiss in supplication. We are not to trust to the ordinary working of providence. We must pray that God will unseal the fountain of the water of life. And we must ourselves receive of the living water. Let us, with contrite hearts, pray most earnestly that now, in the time of the latter rain, the showers of grace may fall upon us. At every meeting we attend our prayers should ascend, that at this very time God will impart warmth and moisture to our souls. As we seek God for the Holy Spirit, it will work in us meekness, humbleness of mind, a conscious dependence upon God for the perfecting latter rain. If we pray for the blessing in faith, we shall receive it as God has promised. {TM 508.2}

The continued communication of the Holy Spirit to the church is represented by the prophet Zechariah under another figure, which contains a wonderful lesson of encouragement for us. The prophet says: “The angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, and said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof:

and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof. So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord? ... Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the Lord unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.... And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves? ... Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.” {TM 509.1}

From the two olive trees, the golden oil was emptied through golden pipes into the bowl of the candlestick and thence into the golden lamps that gave light to the sanctuary. So from the holy ones that stand in God’s presence, His Spirit is imparted to human instrumentalities that are consecrated to His service. The mission of the two anointed ones is to communicate light and power to God’s people. It is to receive blessing for us that they stand in God’s presence. As the olive trees empty themselves into the golden pipes, so the heavenly messengers seek to communicate all that they receive from God. The whole heavenly treasure awaits our demand and reception; and as we receive the blessing, we in our turn are to impart it. Thus it is that the holy lamps are fed, and the church becomes a light bearer in the world. {TM 510.1}

This is the work that the Lord would have every soul prepared to do at this time, when the four angels are holding the four winds, that they shall not blow until the servants of God are sealed in their foreheads. There is no time now for self-pleasing. The lamps of the soul must be trimmed. They must be supplied with the oil of grace. Every precaution must be taken to prevent spiritual declension, lest the great day of the Lord overtake us as a thief in the night. Every witness for God is now to work intelligently in the lines which God has appointed. We should daily obtain a deep and living experience in the work of perfecting Christian character. We should daily receive the holy oil,

that we may impart to others. All may be light bearers to the world if they will. We are to sink self out of sight in Jesus. We are to receive the word of the Lord in counsel and instruction, and gladly communicate it. There is now need of much prayer. Christ commands, “Pray without ceasing;” that is, keep the mind uplifted to God, the source of all power and efficiency. {TM 510.2}

We may have long followed the narrow path, but it is not safe to take this as proof that we shall follow it to the end. If we have walked with God in fellowship of the Spirit, it is because we have sought Him daily by faith. From the two olive trees the golden oil flowing through the golden pipes has been communicated to us. But those who do not cultivate the spirit and habit of prayer cannot expect to receive the golden oil of goodness, patience, long-suffering, gentleness, love. {TM 511.1}

Everyone is to keep himself separate from the world, which is full of iniquity. We are not to walk with God for a time, and then part from His company and walk in the sparks of our own kindling. There must be a firm continuance, a perseverance in acts of faith. We are to praise God; to show forth His glory in a righteous character. No one of us will gain the victory without persevering, untiring effort, proportionate to the value of the object which we seek, even eternal life. {TM 511.2}

The dispensation in which we are now living is to be, to those that ask, the dispensation of the Holy Spirit. Ask for His blessing. It is time we were more intense in our devotion. To us is committed the arduous, but happy, glorious work of revealing Christ to those who are in darkness. We are called to proclaim the special truths for this time. For all this the outpouring of the Spirit is essential. We should pray for it. The Lord expects us to ask Him. We have not been wholehearted in this work. {TM 511.3}

What can I say to my brethren in the name of the Lord? What proportion of our efforts has been made in accordance with the light the Lord has been pleased

to give? We cannot depend upon form or external machinery. What we need is the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit of God. “Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.” Pray without ceasing, and watch by working in accordance with your prayers. As you pray, believe, trust in God. It is the time of the latter rain, when the Lord will give largely of His Spirit. Be fervent in prayer, and watch in the Spirit. {TM 512.1}

[For further study: Early Writings, 36-38, 269-273.]

How shall we follow Him to learn of Him who is our Teacher? We can search His word, and become acquainted with His life and works. His words we are to receive as bread for our souls. In every sphere where man shall be placed, the Lord Jesus has left us His footprints. We do well to follow Him. The Spirit by which He spake, we must cherish; we are to present the truth as it is in Jesus. We are to follow Him especially in heart purity, in love. Self must be hid with Christ in God; then when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory. — Special Testimonies to Ministers and Workers, Series A 9:58 (1897). {TM 512.2}