

Lessons from Ephesians

Chapter 1

Spiritual Blessings and God's Choice

- **Chosen in Christ:** SDA interpretation views corporate and individual election (predestination) not as an arbitrary choice of some for heaven and others for damnation, but as God's eternal plan to save all who choose to be "in Christ" before the world was made.
- **Holiness Over Sin:** God chooses believers so they can live holy and blameless lives through His transforming grace.
- **Justification and Grace:** The grace given to us in the "Beloved" provides free forgiveness and redemption through Christ's shed blood.

The Cosmic Plan of Unity

- **Uniting All Things:** God's ultimate purpose in history is to bring harmony and unity to all things in heaven and earth under the lordship of Jesus Christ.
- **Overcoming Divisions:** This unity breaks down human barriers (such as ethnic or social divides), creating one spiritual family in Christ.

The Seal of the Holy Spirit

- **A Guarantee:** Believers are sealed with the promised Holy Spirit upon hearing and believing the gospel.
- **Assurance of Salvation:** The Holy Spirit acts as a down payment or guarantee that God will fully complete the promised eternal inheritance for His people.

Paul's Prayer for Wisdom and Power

- **Spiritual Insight:** Paul prays that believers receive wisdom and revelation to truly know God.
- **The Power of the Resurrection:** SDA commentary emphasizes that the same resurrection power God used to raise Jesus and seat Him above all earthly and heavenly authorities is actively available to strengthen believers today.

Chapter 2

Grace Versus Works

- **Spiritual helplessness:** Verses 1–3 show that humanity is trapped in sin and unable to save itself. SDA teaching stresses that spiritual death means we have no inherent merit to claim before God.
- **A free gift:** Verses 8–9 state that salvation comes by grace through faith. Adventists affirm that keeping God's law does not earn salvation; rather, salvation is an unearned gift received by surrendering to Christ.
- **The role of good works:** Verse 10 explains that believers are created for good works. SDA commentary (echoing traditions like Ellen White's writings) notes that

good works do not generate grace, but they are the natural, necessary fruit and evidence of a genuine, living faith.

Unity and Reconciliation in Christ

- **The broken wall:** Verses 11–14 describe the hostility between Jewish believers and non-Jewish (Gentile) outcasts. Jesus tore down the "dividing wall of hostility".
- **One new humanity:** Christ abolished legalistic divisions to fashion one unified spiritual body. Seventh-day Adventists see this as a call to global racial, cultural, and social unity within the worldwide church family.
- **Access to the Father:** Verse 18 notes that through Jesus, all believers have equal access to God through one Spirit, removing any earthly hierarchy or segregation.

Citizenship in God's Family

- **No longer strangers:** Verses 19–22 shift the metaphor to a household and a holy temple. Believers are fellow citizens with God's people.
- **The cornerstone:** Christ Himself is the chief cornerstone, and the church is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, unified by the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 3

The Mystery of Unity and Equality

- **Equal Status:** Paul highlights that Gentiles are "fellow heirs" and partakers of God's promise. SDA theology views this as the dismantling of all racial, social, and national barriers within the body of Christ.
- **The Role of the Church:** The church functions as a living demonstration of God's wisdom to the universe. Adventist commentary stresses that a unified church reflects God's ultimate character of love to a watching world.

Suffering and Purpose

- **Prisoner of Christ:** Paul calls himself a prisoner for Christ, not of Rome. Adventists see a practical lesson here: human trials and confinement cannot trap a life fully surrendered to God's grand design.
- **No Loss of Heart:** Paul tells believers not to faint or lose courage because of his tribulations. Faith trusts that God uses steadfast endurance in the face of trial to strengthen the entire community of faith.

Paul's Prayer for Inner Transformation

- **Strengthened by the Spirit:** Paul kneels to pray for spiritual power in the "inner man". SDA teaching underscores that true obedience and victory over sin come only through the daily indwelling of the Holy Spirit, not human effort alone.
- **Rooted in Love:** Comprehending the vast dimensions of Christ's love (breadth, length, height, depth) anchors the believer against deception and lukewarmness in the end times.

Limitless Divine Power

- **Exceedingly Abundantly:** Ephesians 3:20 assures believers that God can do far more than anything they ask or think. Adventist devotionals (such as those by Ellen G. White) frequently point to this verse as a call to deep, expectant prayer, reminding believers that God is waiting to manifest His reviving grace through those who stay connected to His Word.

Chapter 4

Walk Worthy and Maintain Unity

- **A humble walk:** Believers are urged to act with lowliness, gentleness, and patience, bearing with one another in love.
- **The foundation of oneness:** SDA commentary stresses the "seven ones" (one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God) as the bedrock of Christian fellowship. Unity is not forced by human rules, but created by the Holy Spirit and preserved through peace.

Spiritual Gifts and Church Maturity

- **Christ's victory:** Verse 8 ("led captivity captive") is viewed in SDA tradition—via writings like *The Desire of Ages*—as Christ taking a group of resurrected saints as firstfruits to heaven upon His ascension, alongside His triumph over demonic powers.
- **Equipping the saints:** Christ gave gifts (apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers) to prepare every member for active ministry.
- **Spiritual growth:** The goal is to move away from spiritual instability (being tossed by false doctrines) and toward maturity and truth spoken in love.

Transformation: Putting Off the Old and Putting on the New

- **The renewed mind:** Christians must abandon the darkened, hardened lifestyle of the surrounding culture. SDA teachings emphasize that behavior change requires a deep, internal renewal of the mind by the Holy Spirit, not just outer conformity.
- **Practical Christian ethics:** Believers must stop lying, stealing, and using corrupt speech. Instead, they are told to speak words that build others up.
- **Do not grieve the Spirit:** Ephesians 4:30 is highlighted as a solemn warning that willful sin, bitterness, and malice push the Holy Spirit away and ruin the relational harmony of the church body.

Chapter 5

Walking in Love and Light

- **Imitate God:** Believers are adopted children called to model God's character of unselfish love in everyday actions.
- **Reject Impurity:** Sexual immorality, coarse jesting, and greed have no place in the life of a follower; gratitude replaces crude talk.

- **Expose Darkness:** Christians should not just avoid sin, but actively let Christ's light reveal and correct unrighteousness.

Wise Living and the Spirit

- **Redeem the Time:** Because these are evil days, believers must live carefully, seek God's will, and avoid foolishness.
- **Be Filled with the Spirit:** SDA teaching emphasizes that avoiding alcohol and artificial stimulants (Ephesians 5:18) opens the mind to a continuous, daily infilling of the Holy Spirit, which results in corporate worship, singing, and a thankful heart.

Marriage and Christ's Relationship to the Church

- **Mutual Submission:** True Christian order begins with mutual submission out of respect for Christ.
- **The Husbands' and Wives' Roles:** Paul uses marriage as a symbol of Christ and the church.
 - Wives are encouraged to respect and support their husbands' leadership.
 - Husbands are commanded to love their wives with profound, self-sacrificing *agape* love—nourishing, cherishing, and leading them spiritually as Christ cleanses and prepares the church for salvation.

Chapter 6

Christian Duties in Daily Life (Verses 1–9)

- **Children and Parents:** Children should obey and honor parents "in the Lord". SDA commentary emphasizes that this relationship is mutual; parents (especially fathers) are warned not to provoke children to anger, but to raise them with godly discipline and instruction.
- **Slaves and Masters (Workplace Principles):** Servants are instructed to work sincerely as serving Christ, while masters are told to treat workers fairly without threats, remembering that God shows no favoritism. SDAs apply this today to fair, respectful conduct between modern employers and employees.

The Great Controversy and the Armor of God (Verses 10–17)

- **Recognizing the Real Enemy:** SDAs view verse 12 as a core proof text for the Great Controversy. The struggle is not with human beings, but with unseen spiritual forces, fallen angels, and demonic powers of darkness led by Satan.
- **Putting on the Armor:** Believers cannot rely on human strength; they must rely on Christ's power and equip themselves daily with the pieces of armor:
 - *Belt of Truth:* Integrity and a solid grasp of biblical truth against Satan's deceptions.
 - *Breastplate of Righteousness:* The imputed and imparted righteousness of Christ protecting the heart.
 - *Shoes of the Gospel of Peace:* Readiness to share the good news.

- *Shield of Faith*: Trust in God to quench doubt and temptation ("flaming darts").
- *Helmet of Salvation*: Assurance of eternal salvation guarding the mind.
- *Sword of the Spirit*: The Word of God (the Bible), used effectively to counter error.

The Power of Constant Prayer (Verses 18–20)

- **A Life of Prayer**: Prayer is the vital link that activates and sustains the armor. Believers are urged to pray always in the Spirit, keeping alert and interceding for all fellow saints.
- **Boldness in Witnessing**: Paul asks for prayer so he can proclaim the gospel boldly, a call SDAs take as a personal duty to witness in these last days.