

*John Andrews Conference*

# *Called*

*Reflections in Ephesians*

*These notes belong to:*

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# *Schedule*

## Friday

*7pm - Registration & Tea and Coffee*

*7.30pm - Session 1*

*9pm - Event Finishes*

## Saturday

*9am - Registration & Tea and Coffee*

*9.30am - Session 2*

*11am - Tea and Coffee Break*

*11.30am - Session 3*

*1pm - Lunch Break*

*2pm - Session 4*

*3pm - Tea and Coffee Break*

*3.30pm - Session 5*

*5pm - Event Finishes*

# Called

## (Reflections in Ephesians)

Belief	Behaviour
1:3-14: <b>Called by 'grace'</b> "... He chose us in Him..." (v 4)	4:1-6 "Live a life worthy of the calling you have received." (v 1)
1:15-23: <b>Called to 'Father'</b> "... so that you may know Him better..." (v 17)	4:7-16 "... we will in all things grow up into Him who is the Head, that is, Christ." (v 15)
2:1-10: <b>Called from 'self'</b> "... you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live..." (v's 1-2)	4:17-5:2 "Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children..." (v 1)
2:11-22: <b>Called into 'Christ'</b> "But now, in Christ Jesus..." (v 13)	5:3-20 "Live as children of the light..." (v 8)
3:1-13: <b>Called as 'examples'</b> "His intent was that now, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known..." (v 10)	5:21-6:9 "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." (v 21)
3:14-21: <b>Called with 'community'</b> "To Him be glory in the Church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen." (v 21)	6:10-20 "For our struggle..." (v 12)

## 1. Called by 'grace'

### Ephesians 1:3-14 & 4:1-6

"For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight." (v 4)

The Church is the 'called community' of Jesus.

The word we translate Church in the New Testament is **ekklēsia**, which means 'out called'.

The community we call Church has been called out, and the book of Ephesians in particular helps us understand the richness of what being *called out* means.

As we read the first few verses of Ephesians we are thrust gloriously into the tension between divine will and human freedom and yet a proper understanding of these ideas are at the very foundation of our understanding of our calling.

Our **choice** - His **call**

Our **free will** - His **predestined will**

Our **actions** - His **purpose**

## Belief

1:3-14

Grace saturates the opening verses:

"Praise be... **who has blessed us** in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ." (v 3)

Then Paul explains what that means by illuminating God's actions toward us:

"... He **chose us** in Him..." (v 4)

"In love He **predestined us** to be adopted..." (v 5 & 11)

"**In Him** we have redemption..." (v 7)

"And He **made known to us** the mystery of His will..." (v 9)

"**In Him we have obtained** an inheritance (NIV... we also chosen)" (v 11)

We see in these verses three dynamic traits of Grace:

• **The Lord \_\_\_\_\_ - He \_\_\_\_\_ to us**

“He chose us in Him...” (v 4)

**The Lord \_\_\_\_\_ - He \_\_\_\_\_ for us**

“In Him we have redemption through His blood...” (v 7)

**The Lord \_\_\_\_\_ - He \_\_\_\_\_ to us**

“And He made known to us the mystery of His will...” (v 9)

Without Him we are nothing... (v 4)

Without Him we can do nothing... (v 7)

Without Him we have nothing... (v 9)

All of this seems to highlight the actions of the Lord toward us, leading some to believe that this is what God does and we have no real choice in the matter.

But look at how Paul concludes the section:

“... you also were included in Christ **when you heard the word of truth** the gospel of your salvation. **Having believed** you were marked in Him with the seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession - to the praise of His glory.” (v’s 13-14)

Having shown these marvellous actions of the Lord, Paul then affirms that our status as “adopted children of God”, is not just because He **called** and **chose** us, but also because we **heard** and **believed**.

He **called** - we **heard**

He **chose** - we **believed**

His **purpose** - our **freedom**

His **will** - our **choice**

“We learn from a correct account of election that God wants us to be free actors in a very real sense and so gifts us with agency for the simple reason that a loving relationship without some sort of freedom is meaningless.”<sup>1</sup>

**My freedom of choice is testament to His grace.**

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<sup>1</sup> Douglas A Campbell, *Pauline Dogmatics, the Triumph of God’s love*, Wm.B. Eerdmans publishing company, 2020, p.179

When it comes to our call, it might help us to think of the following ideas:

• **It is** \_\_\_\_\_

It is something He does **for us** not **to us**

He is committed to 'all humanity' not just to some of humanity.

"Election is covenantal in the sense that God's loving relationship with us is irrevocable. God's commitment to us will outlast time itself."

"God does not withdraw the relationship if this response is inadequate or absent."<sup>2</sup>

It is therefore an invitation not an imposition

It is something **He wants us to do** not something **we have to do**.

**Creation** - made for and invited to

• **It is** \_\_\_\_\_

Abram was one man... made into many nations

Blessed... to be a blessing

• **It is** \_\_\_\_\_

We tend to read and apply the Scriptures individualistically and this can slant our view of Biblical truth in ways that can be unhelpful. We'll see this tension throughout the whole of our series together... many things should be read as **we** not **me**, and though there is of course a personal application as a finishing point, in truly understanding some texts, it can be the wrong starting point.

God chose **me**... God chose **us**!

This will help when dealing with passages such as Romans 9.

Paul quotes Malachi and tells us 'God loved Jacob but hated Esau.'

This must be understood in the context of nationhood not individuality.

"He chose us..."

**How might it change our reading if we think of our call being in the context of the Church, not just our individuality?**

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<sup>2</sup> Douglas A Campbell, *Pauline Dogmatics, the Triumph of God's love*, Wm.B. Eerdmanns publishing company, 2020, p.176

## Behaviour

4:1-6

What is our response to this belief if we grasp it with confidence and clarity?

“... live a life worthy of the calling...” (v 1)

How is that worked out?

The application is toward the community.

Consider the quadruple emphasis in verse 3:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”  
(v 3)

If we understand **grace**... grace that **initiates** (comes to us), **innovates** (creates for us) and **invites** (reveals to us), then our lives will consistently reflect the humility of one who understands the reality of our call to and through the community in which we believe and live. We understand, that although we **heard** and **believed**, we only got to do so because He **called** and **chose**.

A true understanding of grace will always lead to a life of generosity!

## 2. Called to 'Father'

### Ephesians 1:15-23 & 4:7-16

Paul makes it clear... that we are called **to Him!**

"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may **know Him better.**" (v 17)

Note who *Him* is in this context.

### Belief

Paul prayed that they/we would:

"... know Him better..."

So why does Paul want us to know 'the Father' better?

#### • **Paul identified the Father as the redemptive** \_\_\_\_\_

The language of the passage from verse 3 captures this powerfully for us...

"Praise be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has..."

*Blessed* us

*Chose* us

*Predestined* us

*Adopted* us

*Made known* to us

... and now continues into the passage we have just read together:

"... that you may know the hope to which **He has called you...**" (v 18)

"... the riches of **His glorious inheritance in the saints...**" (v 18)

"... and **His incomparably great power** for us..." (v 19)

In a community rightly built around the person and ministry of Jesus, Paul wants to ensure that the Father is not side-lined or forgotten. After all, the reason Jesus came was to enable us to engage *with Him!*



• **Paul realised that a revelation of the Father is** \_\_\_\_\_

How we see Him will influence and touch everything.

Our revelation of Him impacts our relationship with Him.

How we see Him is at the heart of how we **worship** Him.

How we see Him is at the heart of how we **walk** with Him.

How we see Him is at the heart of how we **work** for Him.

• **Paul accepted our knowledge of Him is** \_\_\_\_\_

Through both wisdom (learning) and revelation (receiving), Paul's prayer was for them to increase and grow in their understanding of the Father.

• **Paul wanted us to understand the Father's** \_\_\_\_\_

"And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the Church, which is His body, the **fulness** of Him who fills everything in every way." (v's 22-23)

The Church, which is the body of Jesus and of which He is the head, is to contain and represent the "fulness of Him who fills everything in every way."

The Father's purpose is that the Church should be the full expression of His Son Jesus, Who Himself fills everything there is.

In Colossians 1:19 Paul wrote:

"For God was pleased to have all His **fulness** dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through His blood, shed on the cross."

"For in Christ all the **fulness** of the Deity lives in bodily form, and in Christ you have been brought to **fulness**." (Col.2:9-10)

He wants us to experience His fullness through Jesus

The fullness of the Godhead lives in Jesus. The fullness of Jesus fills His body and we have access to it. The Father's purpose is that this fullness would live in us and through us.

The purpose of the Father in the community of the called is the promotion of His Son.

## Behaviour

4:7-16

“It was He (Jesus) who gave some to be... to **prepare** God’s people... until we all reach unity in the faith and in the **knowledge** (as above v17) of the Son of God and become **mature**, attaining to the whole measure of the **fulness (as above v’s 22-23)** of Christ.”

(v’s 12-13)

Gifts are given by Jesus to...

•

“... prepare God’s for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up.” (v 12)

•

“... in the knowledge of the Son of God...” (v 13)

•

“... become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fulness of Christ.” (v 13)

“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will **in all things grow up into Him** who is the Head, that is Christ.” (v 15)

The purpose of the Father is the promotion of His Son.

In drawing near to the Father we are called to understand His purpose to promote the Son. His work becomes our work. As each part “does its work”, the body of Jesus, His called community, “grows and builds itself up in love.”

### 3. Called from 'Self'

#### Ephesians 2:1-10 & 4:17-32

Having seen what we've been called **by** and who we've been called **to**, Paul now outlines what we've been called **from**.

#### **Belief**

2:1-10

Paul's logic and journey is beautiful in this passage

*Firstly*, he shows us what we've been called **from**

#### **Death**

"... you were **dead** in your transgressions and sins..." (v 1)

#### **Disobedience**

"... when you **followed** the ways of this world..." (v 2)

#### **Desire**

"... **gratifying** the cravings of our sinful nature and following..." (v 3)

*Secondly*, he reminds us what took us from those things:

"But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **made us alive with Christ...**" (v 5)

#### **Concluding:**

"... it is by grace you have been saved." (v 5)

He drives this idea home further by stating:

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - **not by works**, so that no-one can boast."  
(v's 8-9)

*Thirdly*, this leads him to give us a dramatic destination of our journey **from**:

"For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do." (v 10)

In this climatic statement, four huge ideas are highlighted for us which are crucial to our belief when it comes to our call, and they provide a contrast to the first 3 verses of the passage:

• **From** \_\_\_\_\_ **to** \_\_\_\_\_

Verse 1 could literally read:

**“And you** being dead in the trespasses and sins **of you.**”

When we lead... death follows!

Verse 10:

**“We** are God’s workmanship...”

**“Of Him** for we are workmanship...”

This verse begins with Him.

If we are to live called there must be an understanding of the transfer of ownership from ‘me’ to Him!

• **From** \_\_\_\_\_ **to** \_\_\_\_\_

**“... when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air...”** (v 2)

Compare that to verse 10:

**“... created in Christ Jesus...”**

**We must understand our call in creational terms.**

We are not simply ‘revamped’ versions of what was, but, if we follow the call properly and embrace new ownership, our lives are made new from the inside out, starting with our thinking. The call takes us from conforming to the **pattern** of this world’s thinking (and the ruler of it), and **creates** a new framework of thinking and living. Romans 12:2!!

• From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

Look at verse 3:

“... **gratifying the cravings** of our sinful nature and **following its desires** and thoughts.”

### **Desire and decision!**

Look at verse 10:

“... to do good works, which God prepared in advance...”

The works of God here are also contrasted to **our own works in verse 3**, that lead to reckless living, **and our own works** which had no power to secure our salvation, **in verse 9**.

The call speaks to our desires and our decision. It wants not only to change what we do, but change what we desire. If we desire ‘His good works’, then we will do them. **Decision follows desire.**

• From \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_

There is a lovely mirror in the term Paul uses at the beginning of the passage with the one he uses to finish the passage.

“... in which **you once walked**, following the course of this world” (v 2 ESV)

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that **we should walk** in them.” (v 10 ESV)

Paul says ‘**you once walked**’ but now appeals through the call that ‘**we should walk**’.

Previously we walked our way... with self at the centre, but the call now challenges us to deliberately walk **in them**... in the good works of the Father created for us in Christ Jesus.

## Behaviour

4:17-32

### So what do these 'good works' look like?

We often tend to think of good works as serving God in some grand way, but in our *mirror* passage, these works look like every day things. However, they are no less dynamic and transformation.

It breaks down into 4 sections (which correspond with our four previous ideas):

- **Change of \_\_\_\_\_ (v's 17-19)**

"... that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the **futility** of their thinking." (v 17)

"They are darkened in their understanding and **separated from the life of God.**" (v 18)

### From autonomy to ownership will require a shift in thinking!

- **Change of \_\_\_\_\_ (v's 20-24)**

"Surely you heard of Him and were taught in Him **in accordance with the truth** that is in Jesus." (v 21)

"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to **put off** your old self..." (v 22)

"... to be made new in the attitude of your minds..." (v 23)

"... and to **put on** the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness." (v 24)

We have a choice of which **pattern** we choose.

• **Change of \_\_\_\_\_ (v's 25-28)**

“Therefore each of you must **put off** (same as v 22) falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbour, **for we are all members of one body.**” (v 25)

Whereas before we lived recklessly, “gratifying our cravings” and “following our desires” (desire and decision), now we are being asked to boundary our behaviour and bring it under control for the betterment of the community.

When it comes to following the call, it is no longer just about **me**... it is now about **we**. If my call to ‘good works’ is not improving my conduct in community, it is dysfunctional.

**God's good works are not just about making *me* better...  
but they are about making *us* greater!**

• **Change of \_\_\_\_\_ (v's 30-32)**

This final mini passage begins with the Holy Spirit and ends with Jesus and the Father:

“Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God...” (v 30)

“Be kind and compassionate... forgive... just as in Christ God forgave you.” (v 32)

All the behaviour I'm being asked to engage in in-between these statements are to be understood in partnership with Him.

**The Holy Spirit...** (v's 31-32)

**The Father (and Jesus)...** (v 32)

(We should not separate them out artificially, but it helps simply to see the dynamic emphasis).

To summarise the truth at the heart of this,

**As we walk with Him... we will walk in them.**

Paul concludes the call *from self* by ‘commanding’:

**“Be imitators of God**, therefore as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave Himself up for us, as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” (5:1-2)

## 4. Called into 'Christ'

### Ephesians 2:11-22 & 5:1-20

Having seen the agency and work of the Father as the dominant driver up to this point, Paul now turns his attention to Jesus, picking up on an earlier idea alluded to in chapter 1:22-23:

“And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the Church, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills everything in every way.”

Now he aggressively, radically and in some senses controversially thrusts Jesus forward into the centre of the conversation ensuring that our understanding of our call and the community that emerges out of that call, cannot in any way, shape or form be understood outside of Jesus Christ. As a believer from a deeply rooted Jewish identity, and with a ministry on a firmly Gentile trajectory, these next few words represent the very heart of Paul's belief system and his vision of the Church. Those called, are called **into Christ** whether they be Jewish or Gentile, circumcised or uncircumcised.

### Belief

2:11-22

This section can be broken down into three sub-themes to help understand Paul's position:

• **In Christ we are** \_\_\_\_\_ (v's 11-13)

“But now **in Christ Jesus** you who were once far away have brought near through the blood of Christ.” (v 13)

This is important because Paul in verse 12 tells us that we (Gentiles) were:

“... **separate** from Christ...”

“... **excluded** from citizenship in Israel..”

“... **foreigners** to the covenant...”

Note the power of the triple emphasis.

Only Jesus could overcome such impossibility and make **two into one!**



• **In Christ we are** \_\_\_\_\_ (v's 14-18)

Note the emphasis on peace in our through Jesus here in this section:

**“He Himself** is our **peace**, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility.” (v 14)

He did this by destroying the barrier, “the dividing wall of hostility.”

Paul may be making an allusion to a barrier in the 2nd Temple (Herod's) at that time. A 5ft fence (balustrade) ran around the Temple between the ‘court of the Gentiles and those only for Jews’, warning Gentiles not to enter the temple (beyond the court of the Gentiles).

It read:

**“Foreigners** must not enter inside the balustrade or into the forecourt around the sanctuary. Whoever is caught will have himself to blame for his ensuing death.”

This might be what we see in Acts 21:28 when Paul was accused of:

“... And besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple and defiled this holy place.”

With that in mind... the following verses take on more significance:

“His purpose was to **create in Himself** one new man out of the two, thus making **peace**...” (v 16)

“He came and preached **peace** to you who were far away and **peace** to those who were near. For **through Him** we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.” (v's 17-18)

So thus far... Jesus through His death is seeking to bring two parts into one. This leads Paul to his dynamic climax:

• **In Christ we are** \_\_\_\_\_ (v's 19-22)

“... Christ Jesus as the **chief cornerstone**...” (v 20)

The cornerstone was a vital and critical stone in the corner of the foundation that ensures that a stone building is square and stable.

**“In Him** the whole building is **joined together** and rises to become a **holy temple in the Lord**.” (v 21)

**“In Him** you too are being **built together** to become a **dwelling** in which God lives by His Spirit.” (v 22)

## **A Temple motif is unmissable.**

The 'old temple' represented a powerful barrier and division. Jesus through His death has broken and annulled the barrier, and in its place has built a 'new temple', where no such barriers exist and where the 'two can be made one'.

The new temple '**in Him**' is no longer a place but a people... and it's no longer centred around one people, but **all** are included into the 'citizenship in Israel.'

## **Behaviour**

5:1-20

"For you were once in darkness, but now **you are light in the Lord**. **Live as children of light** (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord." (v's 8-10)

Having left us with a 'temple motif' at the end of chapter two, Paul now describes the 'new man' created in Christ as "**light in the Lord**", and from this we are encouraged to live as children of the light.

If there is a Temple allusion here, then Paul may be connecting shadows from what has been to the substance of what is now in Christ.

Two things to consider

Firstly, **Jesus declared Himself as The Light:**

"I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life." (v 12)

He said during the Feast of Tabernacles.

During this Feast there was a great ceremony called the **Illumination of the Temple**, which involved the ritual lighting of four golden oil-fed lamps in the Court of Women. These lamps were huge menorahs/candelabras (seventy-five feet high) and were lit in the Temple at night to remind the people of the pillar of fire that had guided Israel in their wilderness journey. All night long the light shone, potentially illuminating the entire city.

It is no coincidence then that Jesus declared Himself as the Light that will radiate not from this Temple, but from a **new temple** He is about to build.

Secondly, **John tells us that Jesus said these words**

“... in the temple area near the place where the offerings were put.” (v 20)

In other words, He was standing close to the huge **Temple Menorah**, the seven branch candle stick burning continuously in the presence of God. **Zechariah** had a powerful vision concerning the Menorah in chapter **4:1-14**

Two things are worthy of note from Zechariah:

Firstly, it is in the context of **‘rebuilding the Temple’**, and that it will be done, “... not by might nor by power but by My Spirit,” says the Lord.”

Secondly, the **Menorah** is flanked by two olive trees, one on each side. Zechariah asks what they are and the answer is given:

**“So he said, “These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth.” (v 14)**

The phrase **“two who are anointed”** can be translated, **Sons of fresh oil.**

In Romans 11 Paul speaks of the natural ‘Olive tree’ and the ‘wild one’.

Is this the allusion?

Is one olive tree the circumcised and the other the uncircumcised, united in the Light of the world, The Menorah, and charged with serving the Lord of all the earth not as two, but as one?

So when Paul says:

“... you are light in the Lord”, and “walk/live as children of the Light”, He is telling us that we, the **New Temple** have the light of Jesus at the centre of the building and that we must let that light shine out to the world through “goodness, righteousness and truth”, so that all He came to accomplish will be fulfilled.

Soon the old Temple was destroyed... and the Menorah carried off. Its light extinguished from Jerusalem... but now through the **New Temple**, the light continues to shine, with Christ at the centre and with Christ as the cornerstone. His light in us cannot be extinguished.

It is any wonder Paul is so urgent in his directives:

“Wake up, O sleeper...” (v 14)

“Be very careful, then, how you live - not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity.” (v 15)

“Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is.” (v 17)

“Do not get drunk on wine... instead, be filled with the Spirit.” (v 18)

**As the light in the Lord, we are called to live as children of the Light.**

## 5. Called as 'Examples'

### Ephesians 3:1-13 & 5:21-6:9

Having established that we are the **New Temple** that is being built into and around Jesus, Paul now shows that this *new man* is to be a shining example of the will of God revealed in and through Jesus.

### Belief

3:1-14

In this passage, two massive statements of belief give focus and expression to Paul's argument.

“**This mystery** is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.” (v 6)

“His intent was that now, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God should be **made known** to rulers and authorities in heavenly realms...” (v 10)

Paul alludes to a 'mystery' that the Church then 'makes known' to the spiritual world and by inference our physical world. Even though the word mystery doesn't actually appear in verse 6, many translators insert it (NIV and ESV) because they want to make sure we are getting the connections that Paul is trying to make.

Note the patterns in this passage, all highlighted for us in his statement in verse 3:

“... that the mystery made known to me by revelation...”

The idea of **Mystery** is repeated three times:

v's 3, 4, v 9

“... that the mystery made known to me by revelation...”

“... in reading this then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ...”

“... and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery...”

## How did that mystery come?

Here we have two ideas combining in Paul's thinking, namely that of revelation and made known.

## Revealed<sup>3</sup> and Made known<sup>4</sup> v's 3 & 5

"... that the mystery **made known** to me by **revelation**..."

"... which was not **made known** to men in other generations... has now been **revealed** by the Spirit to God's holy apostles and prophets."

## What is the mystery?

"**This mystery** is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus." (v 6)

**Push back against the gnostics...** the power in revealed or 'secret' knowledge.

Though Paul clearly argues for revelation and learning by 'received knowledge', this does not become a *them and us* dynamic... but rather he immediately reveals the mystery. Thus he dissipates the power of those who claim have knowledge over those who don't.

## What do we do with the mystery?

### To help see:

"... **to make plain** to everyone the administration of this mystery..."

Where have we heard that idea before?

### To make known:

"His intent was that now, through the Church, the manifold wisdom of God should be **made known** to rulers and authorities in heavenly realms..." (v 10)

But note something else Paul adds. What are we to "make known"?

"... the **manifold** wisdom of God..."

Paul teaches us that this mystery of the inclusion of the Gentiles has come to us by revelation. He then argues that those who have received that mystery, are not called to keep it to themselves (like the gnostics might) but to let the world see it, so that they too can come to know the mystery.

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<sup>3</sup> Same word used of Peter's experience in Matthew 16:17

<sup>4</sup> There's a third reference to 'made known' in verse 10 which we'll come to

We the called ones are the beneficiaries of a mystery, not learned or earned but revealed and given, and we in turn are called to example and export it to our world!

Paul specifically speaks of the Church making known the “manifold” wisdom of God, pointing to the inclusivity and diversity of the Church...

Now hold that thought as we go to chapter 5.

## Behaviour

5:21-6:9

“**Submit** to one another out of **reverence** for Christ.” (v 21)

With verse 21 as our guide, we are now introduced to 3 dynamic couplets that are part and parcel of Roman society and at the very heart of Christian community.

### Observations:

- He starts with the ‘lessor’ person in each case (according to societal values).
- However, the stronger directives are given to the so called ‘superior’ members of the couplets. For example, Paul devotes three times more space to the husband’s call (nine verses) than to the wife’s (three verses).

#### • **Wives and husbands** (5:22-33)

Women ‘commanded’ to submit... men ‘commanded’ to love

#### **Wives submit**

v22 (implied by context) “... as to the Lord...”

v24 “Now as the Church submits to Christ, so also wives...” (as verse 21)

v 33 “... and the wife must **respect** her husband.” (as verse 21)

(In the context of being loved by her husband... Christ and Church link)

#### **Husbands love**

v25 “Husbands **love your wives** just **as Christ loved the Church...**”

v28 “In this same way, husbands ought to **love their wives as their own bodies**. He who loves his wife loves himself.”

v 33 “However, each one of you also must **love his wife as he loves himself...**”

#### • **Children and parents** (6:1-4)

#### **Children obey**

“Children **obey** your parents in the Lord...” (v 1)

“... in the Lord...”

Each imperative is linked to our relationship with the Lord.

He is the centre... He is the cornerstone... in Him we are built.

“**Honour** your father and mother...”

## Fathers invest

“Fathers, do not **exasperate** your children; instead, **bring them up** in the **training and instruction** of the Lord.” (v 4)

## Why target fathers?

In Roman culture they might devolve their duties to guardians or mentors. Paul wants them to intentionally connect and engage in a way that mothers don't have to be told.

### • **Slaves and Masters** (6:5-9)

It is estimated that slaves composed about one-third of the population of a city like Ephesus. They were considered an integral part of a family, so Paul's instructions for slaves were a natural part of his dealing with family relationships. In both Greek and Roman culture, slaves had limited rights and were subject to exploitation and abuse.

## Slaves obey

“Slaves **obey**... with **respect** and **fear**, and with **sincerity** of heart, just as you would obey Christ (as unto).” (v 5)

These words must be understood in how we obey Jesus!

“Obey them not only to win their favour... **slaves of Christ**...” (v 6)

“Serve whole-heartedly, **as if you were serving the Lord**, not men... because you know...” (v's 7-8)

## Note the link to the end of verse 8:

“... whether he be slave or free...”

## Masters include

Masters in the 1st Century world had the power of life and death over their slaves. Beatings, imprisonment, or sale into harsher servitude were other punishments masters meted out. The duty of masters and all in authority is to do good to those in submission and not to take advantage of their authority by threatening them. We see a strong sub-text to this through Paul's deeply intimate letter to Philemon, a letter that is tender yet radically counter-cultural.

“... Masters, treat your slaves **in the same way** (as unto the Lord?)...” (v 9)

The same principles apply to Masters as to slaves... **plus!**

“Do not threaten... there is **no favouritism with Him**.” (v 9)



We cannot move on without alluding to Paul's bedrock belief as expressed to the Galatians:

“There is neither **Jew nor Greek**, there is neither **slave nor free**, there is no **male and female**, for you are **all one** in Christ Jesus.” (Gal.3:28)

As a community exempling the ‘manifold wisdom of God’, the ‘called out ones’ are to be a community of...

• \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

• \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

• \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

All of these are based on...

**Who** \_\_\_\_\_

Not how society sees us

**How** \_\_\_\_\_

Not how society says we should/can behave

**Our** \_\_\_\_\_

Esteeming Him above our own position

This is a community living as an example of the Kingdom of God, a counter-cultural community living in resistance to the ‘thinking and expectation’ of the world around. They are called to be a community exempling the fulness of Jesus through their **inclusion, diversity, equality** and **emancipation**.

## 6. Called with 'Community'

### Ephesians 3:14-21 & 6:10-20

As Westerners we tend to read the Scriptures from an individualistic framework, because in general, that is how we've been raised. Individuality is not only celebrated but in many cases rewarded. "I did it my way".

However, although the Bible **celebrates individuality** it **resists individualism**.

Individuality says "**I am special**", while individualism says "**I am enough**."

If raised in a culture that values and esteems individuality, it is no surprise that we read the Bible through such a lens... reflecting how we've been trained both within and without the church. However, much of the Bible was written not only *from* what might be called a collectivist culture, a '**we**' **culture**, but with the expectation that the called ones would understand their calling *within* a '**we**' **context**.

In these two passages, one centred on belief and the other focused on behaviour, Paul reminds us (as he has done throughout) of the power of **we**, and that our call is not just about '*me and the Lord*', but it is about '*we and the Lord*'. When understood in this way, it can transform good ideas into great ones!

### Belief

3:1-14

"For this reason..." (v 15)

This sends us back to what we've just reflected on previously.

"I pray..." (v 16)

What Paul is about to pray is in line with the previous passage (think verse 6 and 10) and so he's praying that we can have what we need to fulfil this calling and express His fulness.

Two... potentially three parts to his prayer:

#### Part 1:

"... He may strengthen **you** with power through His Spirit in your (the) inner being..." (v 16)

## Part 2:

“... that **you**, being rooted and established in love, may have power, **together with all the Lord’s holy people**, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge —that **you** may be filled to the measure of all the **fullness** of God.” (v’s 17-19)

“... that you...” (plural)

“... together with all the Lord’s holy people...”

“... that you...” (plural)

“... may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”

As previous seen... this fulness is located in the collective... in the community of the believers, the church.

“... which is **His body, the fulness of Him** who fills everything in every way.” (1:23)

## Part 3:

Not clear if this bit is part of his prayer or a declaration, but it finishes with an “amen”:

“Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all **we** ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within **us**, to Him be **glory in the Church** and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.” (v’s 20-21)

“... all **we** ask or imagine...”

“... His power that is at work **within us**...”

“... glory **in the Church**...”

“... and throughout all **generations**...”

Of course there is a double application... to both the individual and the community, but our problem is that we tend to **only** read it as individuals with an individual application. What if we read this, understood this and applied this to the community also... how would it change both our belief and behaviour?

My rule of thumb when reading the Scriptures is that unless it is clear this is speaking to me as an individual, I try to interpret it through a we lens first, then to me.

So we re-read Paul's prayer then:

The Lord wants to strengthen you, *the called community*

The Lord wants that we, *the called community* know the dimensions of His love

The Lord wants us to realise that His power is at work within us and that His glory is in us, *His called community*.

**This understanding is vital in positioning a post lockdown narrative.**

## Behaviour

6:10-20

“Finally, be **strong** in the Lord and in His mighty power.” (v 10)

“**Put on** the full armour of God so that **you** can take your stand against the devil’s schemes.” (v 11)

“For **our** struggle...” (v 12)

“Therefore **put on** the full armour of God...” (v 13)

“Stand firm...” (v 14)

All these directives are plural...

**What if we translated the armour of God corporately?**

**If this wasn’t just something ‘I put on’, but something ‘we put on together’?**

There is undoubtedly an allusion to the ‘armour of the Lord’ in Isaiah (11:4-5, 52:7 and 59:17), as well as a clear reference to the context of Roman armour. In combining both, **Paul is using a common example to point to armour that is ultimately divine in origin and supernatural in power.**

**Again, we can think of the armour being put on by an individual soldier, but what if we didn’t stop there but applied the ‘collective’ language of Paul to a fuller application?**

The strength is not just in the armour... but in the unit/regiment/ we are with. Even a Roman alone could be overcome, but the regiments together were a formidable force! Could it be that though the image is individual, the application is also corporate? A soldier would never be expected to go to war and face a powerful enemy **alone!** Are we being asked to go forward as a unit.

The armour we are being asked to put on as individuals can also be put on as a community... **truth, righteousness, gospel of peace, faith, salvation** and the **word of God**. Paul then concludes with **prayer**.<sup>5</sup>

This has been the theme all the way through the text... **TOGETHER!**

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<sup>5</sup> So **truth** (1:13; 4:15, 21, 24, 25; 5:9), **righteousness** (4:24; 5:9), **peace** (1:2; esp. 2:14–18; 4:3; cf. 6:23), the **gospel** (1:13; 3:6; cf. 2:17; 3:8) or **word of God** (1:13; 5:26), **salvation** (1:13; 2:5, 8; 5:23), and **faith** (1:1, 13, 15, 19; 2:8; 3:12, 17; 4:5, 13)

Could our call to be strong and put on the armour of God be a collective appeal, because our struggle is against “**rulers... authorities... powers... spiritual forces of evil**”?

**How would our approach to warfare and responsibility change if we saw this as essentially or vitally as we and not just as me?**

**If one was enough, then the Lord would not have made two.**

However we chose to interpret and applicate these ideas, Paul makes it clear to us that we cannot understand or fulfil our mandate as **called ones** if we **worship** alone, **walk** alone, **work** alone and **warfare** alone.

“Peace be to the brothers, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace **be with all who love** our Lord Jesus Christ with love incorruptible.”  
(6:23-24 ESV)