

QUEEN OF THE EPISTLES 5. - THE GREAT DISCOVERY
ACTS 26:12-18 / EPHESIANS 3:1-21
2026-02-01

Paul wrote Ephesians emphasizing the unity of all humanity in Christ and God's purpose for the world through the church. When the church scattered because persecution broke out against Christians after Stephen was stoned to death, the Gospel spread with it and spread to the Gentiles, something grievous to the Jews who believed they alone were God's chosen people. The result was a great division between Jews and Christian-converted Gentiles.

From chapter one Paul showed us that **WE WERE CHOSEN BY GOD** before the beginning of the world. It was always God's plan to confer salvation on us. We've been in God's plans forever.

Then he shared **THE PLAN OF GOD**: "He predestined us for **adoption** as his children through Jesus." Jesus took us out of the power of sin and put us into His power then equipped you to be who He wants you to be. So believers find ourselves participating in God's eternal plan.

Jesus came into the world to wipe out all divisions. And all history is a working out of this, working out the will of God. **The purpose of God?** All life is found in and is central to Jesus.

We focused on **the Grace of God**. God infused us—we did nothing. Grace: all God. He airlifted us from death to life. Grace—undeserved, unattainable favour of God. This precious gift. Some how we slide into His will and are the benefactors of the faith He gives. We just accept it.

Before Christ, Gentiles had no hope of a Messiah. For Jews, history always had a direction. Gentile history, on the other hand, was going nowhere. For Jews, history was a march to God. With Christ's coming, Gentiles entered that "new" view of history, that humanity was always on the way to God. **After Christ's earthly walk, we've** never really had to think that way.

Israel was a theocracy. Every Israelite was a citizen of God; when they spoke to each other they spoke to the people of God. **By contrast, the Gentiles** were strangers to God's covenants. They were without hope and without God before Christ came to give him hope.

The ancient world had its barriers. Today, we know a little bit about barriers too, don't we? In any Christ-less society there can be nothing but middle walls of partition. But Paul says that **in Christ these barriers are down**. Just how did Christ destroy them?

Jesus is our peace.” When two parties are at odds with each other, the surest way to bring them together is through someone who they both love and respect. That is what Christ does. The cross awakens the hearts of people of all nations to a love for Christ. Only when they all love Christ will they love each other. **There can be peace only in Jesus Christ.**

Paul pictured each of us as a stone built into the church. And, of the whole church, **Jesus is the cornerstone**—the foundation stone or the setting stone—the first stone set in the construction of a masonry foundation. All other stones are set in reference to it, thus determining the position of the entire structure. Over time a cornerstone became a ceremonial stone set on the outside of a building, with an inscription indicating the construction dates and architect’s and builders’ names. For Christians, there’s only one cornerstone and only one name on the cornerstone—Jesus. Each part of the building is fitted into Christ. The building is a unity because through it all, it’s been used for the worship of God and for meeting with Jesus. **Our unity comes from Jesus.**

Paul reminds us (chapter 3:1) that we always have a double life and a double address. An outside observer would say Paul was a prisoner of the Roman Government, of Nero and he was. But Paul never thought of himself that way; he always thought of himself as the prisoner of Christ. Who are you serving? Who are you indebted to? Who holds your wellbeing? Is your work dedicated to your employer or to Christ? Are you into grumbles or are you the standard-bearer of some great cause? When we’re undergoing hardship, material loss or unpopularity for the sake of Christ, we may view ourselves as victims or as champions for Jesus.

Verse 2-6, Paul returns to the heart of his letter: the great secret of God was revealed to him—the love, mercy and grace of God were meant not just for the Jews but for all humanity. This is big! *“to open their eyes so they’d turn from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God, receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.”* (Acts 26:18)

Listen to this. This was a completely new discovery. The basic sin of the ancient world was contempt. Jews despised Gentiles as worthless in the sight of God (Isaiah 60:12; 45:14). The Greeks despised the barbarians and to the Greeks, all other nations were barbarians. This racial contempt didn’t end with the ancient world, did it? But in the ancient world the barriers were complete. No one ever dreamed God’s privileges were for all people. You might say if there’d been no Paul, conceivably there’d have been no worldwide Christianity.

Paul indeed thought of this secret as him being the recipient of a new revelation. He never thought of himself as having discovered the universal love of God. God revealed it to him—a secret not previously revealed to anyone. Truth and beauty are always given by God.

Second, Paul regarded himself as the transmitter of grace. Isn’t that a great tag! Do you think of yourself in that kind of light? (Galatians 2:7 & 9; Romans 15:15)—the Gospel being committed to him and the grace that was given to him. We’ve been given the precious things of

Christianity for the purpose of sharing them with others. If we keep them to ourselves, we lose them.

Third, Paul regarded himself as having dignity of service—not a burden, but a great privilege. To teach for God, to sing for God, to administer affairs for God (hey, MinMan team!), to speak for God, to visit those in poverty and distress for God, to give of our talent and time and our substance for God should be counted as a privilege, and certainly not a duty.

Fourth, Paul regarded himself as a sufferer for Christ. He didn't expect his service to be easy or trouble-free. Unamuno, the Spanish mystic, used to say, "*May God deny you peace and give you glory.*" F. R. Maltby said "*Jesus promised His disciples three things: they would be absurdly happy, completely fearless, and in constant trouble.*" All three of these are worthy of personal reflection. Are you absurdly happy? Dwell on your position in Christ. Are you completely fearless or do you find yourself pulling back because of something bad that might happen? Finally, do you stay to the sidelines where it's safe and you won't be brought under the microscope for your action or your stand? When the knights of the Round Table came to King Arthur, they asked for dangers to face and dragons to conquer. To suffer for Christ isn't punishment, it's for glory. To share in the sufferings of Christ is an opportunity to demonstrate our loyalty to Him. Bring on the dragons!

Verse 8-13 So Paul had double privilege: both the one given the secret that all people should be gathered into God's love and being the instrument through which God's grace went to the Gentiles. Rather than becoming proud, he became intensely humble, referring to himself as "*less than the least of God's people.*" Whenever we do anything of service for Jesus, any greatness attributed to us lies not in ourselves but in our task and our message. It's too common a tragedy that so many are more concerned with their own status than the prestige of Jesus Christ—that they should be noticed rather than Jesus be seen.

Paul reminds us salvation of the Gentiles (us) isn't an afterthought—something that happened because the Jews rejected it. The ingathering of all people was part of God's eternal plan. He describes the grace of God (*polupoikilos*) as many-coloured. The grace of God will match any situation that life brings. It is completely adequate for anything. Paul emphasizes again that in Jesus we can freely approach God. In ourselves we have no right to approach God. But in Jesus' company, we have the right of entry—an open door to God's presence.

Verse 14-17 Paul prays to God the Father, so we get a picture of the fatherhood of God. Dave Hinds did a complete Bible Study on this last year. You might want to check that out.

- 1) Paul speaks of God as the Father of Jesus (1: 2, 3, 17; 6:23). Fatherhood describes the most intimate relationship of love and fellowship and care. The centre of the Christian sense of God is that He is like Jesus—as kind, as merciful, as loving as Jesus.
- 2) Paul saw the Father as accessible. This is a huge change. In the Old Testament, God was the person to whom access was forbidden. When Manoah, the to be father of Samson, realized who his visitor had been, he said, "*We will surely die, for we have seen God.*"

(Judges 13:22). Think of the Holy of Holies in the Temple. Only the High Priest and only on the Day of Atonement, could even enter it. That changed with Jesus and Paul declared it so.

- 3) God is the Father of glory. There is the wonder of the accessibility of God without ever forgetting His holiness and glory. Those who seek Him must be holy too.
- 4) God is the Father of all. No person, Church or nation has exclusive possession of God. The Jews made that mistake. We must, therefore, love and respect one another.
- 5) God is the Father to whom thanks must be given. The fatherhood of God implies the debt of humanity. It's wrong to think of God only helping us only in the great moments of life; God's gifts come to us so regularly that we can forget they are gifts. Not only our salvation, but life and breath and movement are His ongoing gifts.
- 6) God is the pattern of all true fatherhood. Remember, the only conception of fatherhood that our children can have is what we give them. Human fatherhood should be molded on God's fatherhood.

Paul prays for **strength in our inner being** (verse 16). He's praying we'll be better able to **reason**, to distinguish between right and wrong, that Christ would give us wisdom to keep life pure and safe. He prays that our **conscience** will be sensitive and not grow calloused. He prays that our will will be strong enough to back our knowledge and carry out our intentions. The **strengthening of our inner being** comes when Christ takes up permanent residence in us. Christ will gladly come into our life, but He will never force it; He awaits our invitation to bring us His strength.

Verse 18-21 Paul prays we're able to grasp the meaning of the breadth, depth, length and height of Christ's love—limitless in every direction and every way. Think of the pointing of the cross—it includes heaven, the spirits in hell, even those wandering away from Him (Jerome). The **breadth** includes everyone in every time; the **length** to which Christ would go (the cross); the depth it went to experience even death; and the height in heaven where He intercede for us. No one is outside the love of Christ; no place exceeds His reach.

He closes with a doxology—praise. God can do more for us than we can ask or imagine and He does it for us in the Church and in Christ. The world's not what its meant to be. It's torn by opposing force, by hatred and strife; nation against nation, person against person. Within each of us the fight rages between evil and good. It's God's design that all people and all nations should become one in Christ. To achieve this Christ is depending on us to go and tell of His love and mercy. We can't do that until we experience together the limitless love of Christ. Get that going this week.