

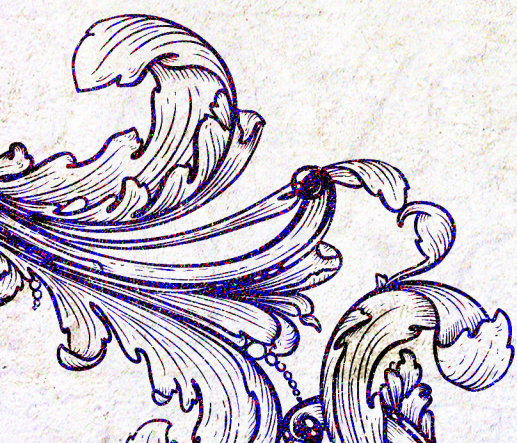


A COLORFUL MYSTERY

# CHURCH

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A STUDY IN EPHESIANS  
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*a field guide*



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# BLESSING, ON BLESSING, ON BLESSING!

DRAWING  
NEAR

The book of Ephesians opens with praise and wonder at God's love and grace for His people. Yet we often fail to appreciate that love and grace ourselves. The famed nineteenth century preacher Charles Spurgeon told a story of a minister who called on a poor woman with a desire to help her out of her financial straits. Money in hand, he knocked on her door

repeatedly, but she did not answer. Eventually he left. Later, he related the incident to her at church. "Oh dear," she said, "I heard you, sir, and I'm so sorry I did not answer. I thought you were the man calling for the rent."

**1] How does this story illustrate our tendency to misunderstand (and miss out on the riches we have in Christ?**

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**2] Think about your own relationship with God. Have you ever responded or felt as this woman did? What times stop you from opening up your heart to all God has for you?**

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**3] As you begin this study, ask God to help you receive what He wants to give you.**

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## Q THE CONTEXT

Paul spent three years pastoring the church at Ephesus and instructing them in the things of God. During that time he probably taught them all the great truths of this epistle. Because of Satanic opposition as well as the human tendency to forget what is true, however, Paul sensed the need for a letter of reminder and encouragement. He wanted to challenge his brothers and sisters in the faith to grow in grace and to stand firm in the midst of an evil age.

Rather than beginning with a long list of dos and don'ts, Paul began his letter with a refresher course in theology, answering questions such: How is salvation accomplished? Why did God bestow His grace on us? What does the future hold for those who put their faith in Christ?

Paul recognized that such an emphasis on difficult doctrines was necessary because God-honoring behavior always flows out of God-inspired beliefs. Christians who lack a proper theological foundation will not have a proper appreciation for what God has done, nor will they adequately understand the resources at their disposal in the life of faith.

In the following passage, Paul describes believers' infinite blessings in Christ. Specifically he gives a panoramic view of God's great salvation.



## KEYS TO THE TEXT

**PREDESTINATION:** Taught throughout Scripture, election is God's perfect plan for the destiny of His creatures; it conforms both with His love and grace and with human beings' responsibility to believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior. The energy that has driven God's plan of redemption from eternity past flows from the power of His love. He chose us

and predestined us "in love" (Eph. 1:4-5). It is solely "because of His great love with which He loved us" that He raised us from our hopeless state of spiritual death (Eph. 2:4). Because He loved us with an everlasting love, He drew us to Himself (Jer. 31:3). Christ died because of God's love for us (Rom. 5:8). In other words, election is the highest expression of God's love to sinful humanity. But in reality the doctrine of election is all about the eternal, inviolable love of God for all. Election is the highest expression of God's loving grace; and for Christians, the knowledge that we are saved because of God's choice is the supreme source of security.



# UNLEASHING THE TEXT

## Key Terms

### **BLESSED (V. 3)**

From the same Greek word as "eulogy," which means to praise or commend. It refers to God's kindness to us as well as the appreciation or thanks we express back to Him.

### **HE CHOSE US (V. 4)**

This refers to God's pretemporal, sovereign act of electing who will be saved, a common theme in Paul's writings (Rom. 8:29; 9:11; 1 Thess. 1:3, 4; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 2:10).

### **ADOPTION AS SONS (V. 5)**

The spiritual act whereby God brings a regenerated believer into His own family (see John 1:12)

### **REDEMPTION (V. 7)**

The Greek word means to "buy back" or "ransom." Used in a salvation context, it refers to Christ's death on the cross that paid the price required to purchase the elect from the slave market of sin.

### **DISPENSATION OF THE FULLNESS OF THE TIMES (V. 10)**

The Greek word translated "dispensation" is the word from which we get our English word "economy." It means God's perfect arrangement or administration of events and history to accomplish His plan. The phrase here refers to the millennial kingdom at the end of world history.

### **SEALED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT (V. 13)**

The spiritual act in which the Spirit of God, at the time of conversion, indwells a new believer and secures and preserves his or her salvation.

### **Greeting**

**1** Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, To the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus: **2** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Spiritual Blessings in Christ**

**3** Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, **4** even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love **5** he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, **6** to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved. **7** In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, **8** which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight **9** making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ **10** as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. **11** In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, **12** so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory. **13** In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, **14** who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.



**4] From this passage, identify the past, present, and future aspects of God's work in our lives (vv. 3-6, 6-11, 12-14). Why do you think Paul takes such a broad view?**

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**5] Go through and underline the various references to the members of the Trinity-God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. What unique role does each play in the salvation process?**

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**6] Several times in these verses we are granted insights into God's purpose(s) for salvation. Why did God predestine us to adoption as sons (v. 5)?**

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**7] What do you think "to the praise of the glory of His grace" (v. 6) means? How is this idea also reflected in the last phrases in verses 12 and 14?**

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**8] The text states clearly that God receives glory, pleasure, and praise from our salvation. What does Paul say that we receive from the gracious hand of God?**

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**Read Romans 3:21-26 for more insight into what Paul has to say about our salvation from the penalty of sin.**

**9] How does this passage in Romans compare & contrast with the teachings in 1:7?**

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**10] Read Romans 15:7. In this verse, Paul reminds the Christians at Rome that they have been received (that is, "accepted") by Christ. This theme is echoed in 1:6. What is so significant about this concept?**

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**11] What aspect of our salvation mentioned in 2 Corinthians 5:21 makes us acceptable in God's sight?**

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## TRUTH FOR TODAY

During the great depression of the 1930s, many banks would allow their customers to withdraw no more than ten percent of their accounts during a given period of time because the banks did not have enough reserves to cover all deposits. But God's heavenly bank has no such limitations or restrictions. No Christian, therefore, has reason to be spiritually deprived, undernourished, or impoverished. In fact, he has no reason not to be completely healthy and immeasurably rich in the things of God. The Lord's heavenly resources are more than adequate to cover all our past debts, all our present liabilities, and all our future needs-and still not reduce the heavenly assets. That is the marvel of God's gracious provision for His children.



# REFLECTING ON THE TEXT

Read Romans 3:21-26 for more insight into what Paul has to say about our salvation from the penalty of sin.

12] What one truth has impacted your life the most from this passage, and why?

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14] Take the time to write your own list of "riches of grace" and blessings for which you are thankful, and praise God for His love and grace in your life.

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## PRAYING THE TEXT

Blessed be Your name, my God, the Father of my Lord Jesus Christ. Through Christ, You have blessed me with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places. I know I will never be able to wrap my mind totally around how much that actually is, but God today would you help me to better understand how much we are talking here? I want to be properly grateful for what You have given me. I don't want to keep acting like I'm spiritually broke, when I actually have access to literally EVERY blessing in heaven.

You chose me to be with You before the foundation of the world, before anything was created, before anything fell apart. Before my failure and Your disappointment, knowing all that was to come, You still said "I chose you!" You chose me so that I would and could be holy and blameless in Your sight. Help me, Holy Spirit to walk holy and blameless before You. You predestined me for adoption as your child. Your desire is for me to be like You! I want to fulfill Your purpose in my life.

Thank You, God that I have redemption through Your blood! Thank You for forgiving me of my sin, according to the riches of Your grace which You have lavished on us. You are full of all wisdom and insight. Thank You for making known to us the mystery of Your will. You are so far above us - You could have easily kept us out of the loop, but You are so kind to show us Your long standing plan to unite all things together in Christ.

Thank You Father that You would even consider me for an inheritance. Thank You Holy Spirit for being my guarantee of that inheritance until I acquire possession of it.