

Gathering Question – Famed 19th 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. “O dear,” she said, “I heard you knock but I thought it was the man coming for the rent.”

Thinking about your relationship with God, what kinds of things keep you from opening up the door of your heart to all the riches that God has for you?

The Riches of His Grace

During the three years that Paul spent with the church in Ephesus he probably taught them about all the great truths that we find in his letter to them. There are all kinds of things that cause us to forget what is true. His whole purpose of this short letter was to encourage his brethren to stand firm in their faith and to grow in grace every day.

Rather than begin with a long list of dos and don'ts, Paul began his letter with a refresher course in the nature of God, answering important questions and discussing salvation. Why did God give us his grace? What does the future hold for those who put their faith in God, and many others.

Right behavior always begins with right beliefs, so even though it might sometimes be a bit difficult to wade through some of Paul's teaching, it is necessary to do so, to provide some basis for the way we live our lives.

Chapter one has often been the center of controversy for many believers. There is a doctrine that some believers hold to called “predestination.” Basically the doctrine states that God chose the ones he planned to save before the world was created and that if you were meant to be saved you would respond to him in faith but if you were not meant to be saved you would not respond to his love. You have no choice in the matter, either you are among the elect or you are not.

If you carefully look at Ephesians 1 you begin to see something important. Notice in verse 1, the letter is written to the saints, not to individuals. The word “you” in verse 2 is plural. Then beginning in verse 3 there is a procession of “us's,” and “we's.” Notice, “blessed **us**” vs 3, “chose

us" vs 4, "predestined **us**" vs 5, "made **us**" vs 6, "**we** have redemption" vs 6, and on the list goes. Paul is not writing about individual predestination but the fact that in God's plan he would have people who would be saved and conformed to his will. There has been, there is, and there will always be a group of people who will respond in faith to the Lord. But we each have to make a decision to accept his wonderful grace. Just because God has predestined for there to be a people who would live for him, that does not mean that I am either forced to follow him or refused his grace because I am not individually selected. The wonder fact is that I have decided to accept the beautiful gift of his grace and for that gift I am extremely grateful each day.

Read and Reflect –
Ephesians 1:1-14

1. Notice in the reading if and where Father, Son, or Holy Spirit appears. What role does each member of the God family have in our salvation?
2. Paul writes that we are blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ. List five of your spiritual blessings.
3. In verse 5, Paul writes that we are "adopted" to be his children. Is there anything special about the idea of adoption? How does that affect our relationship with the Father that we are adopted?
4. God has made known to us "the mystery of his will" which he purposed in Christ. What is the mystery?
5. What are some of the ways that we can live for the "praise of his glory?"
6. In what ways is the Holy Spirit a "deposit" guaranteeing our inheritance?