

## **Ephesians 1:1-14 – Salvation planned**

Humans make plans. What do you plan to do this week? Where do you hope to be after 5 years time? Our maker also makes plans, and has from eternity. Unlike ours, he carries them out perfectly! We are studying in Ephesians to learn about salvation, and the first is that salvation was planned.

### **1. Salvation was planned in eternity**

When did you first believe in Christ? What led you to believe? Can you trace back the steps? Here Paul traces the steps back to the very beginning. This causes him to praise the Father through the Son (v3); once we understand, we will do the same! Verse 4 tells us that Christians were chosen in Christ before creation – before they had done anything. Verse 5 says God “predestined” his people – he chose their destination before they were even born, by his own pleasure and will. God has free will, and chooses our destination. Verse 11 tells us that all happens according to his will. This is the Bible's teaching. Many people object. They say “What about our free will?” But our will is not free; it is enslaved by sin. They say, “How can we be sure of our salvation if it depends on God?” But depending on God makes it sure; if it depends on us then we should worry. God's ultimate purpose in his plan is to lift up Christ; every verse points to him. Are we part of that plan; do we desire above all to lift up Christ, or do we not know him yet?

### **2. Salvation was planned by God alone**

Paul again and again emphasises that God did not consult anyone in making this plan; he consulted only himself. Verse 9 speaks of God's good pleasure – i.e. what pleased him. Verse 11 tells us he does everything by the counsel of his own will. Verse 8 reminds us that God has all wisdom and understanding; he does not need another to guide him. This includes all the details of the plan (v11). This is the teaching of all Scripture (Romans 11:36, Isaiah 46:9-10). Nebuchadnezzar, the mighty king of Babylon, was taught to acknowledge this (Daniel 4:34-35). This is for his glory: he is truly God. He does not have any rivals. The devil cannot change his plans, and man cannot spoil them. Therefore all the praise should go to God alone and not to any man. It is “to the praise of his glorious grace” (v6).

### **3. Therefore, salvation is by grace alone**

There are two ways in which we can receive something (Romans 11:6). It can be by grace (as a free gift), or we can earn it (by works). Our sins means we deserve nothing. God is free to do as he pleases. Therefore salvation is entirely by grace. God was free to choose to whom to give this gift, and whom to pass by. He did not chose people because he saw they were holy. He chose them in their sin with a plan to make them become holy (v4). In salvation, God gives and gives and gives, in Christ. He redeemed his people by Christ's own blood (v7). They do not merit reward, but he gives them forgiveness (v7). We hear the message and are saved by it, not by any of our own deeds (v13). God then gives us the Spirit of Christ as a mark. We are adopted as children in Christ by God's own decision (v5). What is your reaction? If you think you must find your own way to lift up yourself, then you are still lost. The true believer praises God's great glory (v14).