

# Salvation Planned and a People Chosen in Eternity Past

## Ephesians 1:1-6a

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### **John MacArthur wrote in his Commentary on Ephesians (pp.6-7)...**

People today are greatly concerned about identity, life purpose, self-worth, and self-acceptance.

Consequently, there is a plethora of books, articles, seminars, and schemes that attempt to fulfill these longings. But because God and His Word are not considered in most such attempts, the only source for finding the truth is eliminated, and men inevitably are led back to themselves for the answers. In spite of many variations and sometimes complex formulas, the end result is to tell men they are really all right after all and that what identity, worth, and meaning they find in life they must find in and for themselves.

We are told to think of ourselves first and are shown how to get on top by using and manipulating others, by intimidating before being intimidated. We are told how to be successful and how to be number one. We are counseled to find meaning in the heritage of our family and ethnic roots, with the expectation that finding out where we came from will help explain where we are and perhaps where we are headed. But such approaches give only a psychological gloss that helps cover, but does not help remove, the underlying problem of meaning in life.

Others set about trying to establish their worth by works righteousness, some even becoming heavily involved in church work and other Christian activities. They look for praise and commendation, and before long they are entrapped in the same kind of hypocritical religious games that characterized the scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day. As their self-satisfaction grows their spiritual lives shrivel, because such effort feeds the flesh and cripples the soul.

But every human effort at self-improvement or self-satisfaction – no matter what its religious covering may be – is subject to the law of diminishing returns. Genuine and lasting satisfaction is never achieved, and increased achievement only brings increased desire. More importantly, the guilt and fear that cause the dissatisfaction are suppressed but not alleviated. The longer such superficial games are played, the deeper become the depression, anxiety, and feelings of guilt.

The only way a person can achieve a true sense of self-worth, meaning, and significance is to have a right relationship to his Creator. A person without Christ has no spiritual value, no standing before God, no purpose or meaning in the world. He is like “chaff which the wind drives away” (Ps. 1:4).

A Christian, however, is a child of God and a joint heir with Jesus Christ. If he has no comprehension of those blessings he needs to understand the position he already has in his Savior. To give such Christians the right understanding of their position and possessions is the foundational thrust of Paul's Ephesian letter.

If we belong to Christ, Paul says, we can be sure that God put our name down as part of His church even before the world began. Out of grace and in divine sovereignty, He chose each one of us to belong to Him. It was not because we were more worthy than anyone else or more deserving or meritorious – but simply because God willed to choose us.

Though this is an incomprehensible truth to finite thinking, it is one of the most repeated in Scripture. The record of God's redemptive history is that of His reaching down and drawing to Himself those whom He has chosen to save.

In these opening verses of Ephesians Paul gives us a glimpse of eternity past. He lets us eavesdrop as God planned to save us – not only long before we were born but long before the earth was born.

## **1. (v.4) The Method: God's Sovereign Choice**

### **The Bible speaks of three kinds of election:**

1. One is God's theocratic election of Israel.
2. A Second kind of election is vocational.
3. The third kind of election is salvational; Individuals have been chosen by God for salvation.

John 6:65, 44-45

Romans 3:10-12

Ephesians 2:1-5

2 Thessalonians 2:10b-13

2 Timothy 2:25-26; 1:9; 2:10

Acts 13:48; 16:14

Romans 8:30

Romans 9:10-24

2 Thessalonians 2:13

## **2. (v.4) The Object: The Elect/The Chosen Ones/Us**

## **3. (v.4) The Time: Eternity Past**

## **4. (v.4) The Purpose: Holiness**

## **5. (v.4) The Motive: The Love of God**

## **6. (v.5) The Result: Redeemed Children of the King**

## **7. (v.6) The Goal: God's Glory**