

## Chosen by God (1 Peter 1:1-2)

This is the second sermon in a series exploring First Peter. Last week, we looked at a portion of verse 1. In fact, I only made it through six words:

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.*

I do hope to pick up the pace a little bit, but in order to understand the great truths God the Holy Spirit is communicating through this letter, we needed to understand who Peter is. We need to understand his personality, and where he came from and we need to understand the work Jesus did in His life. Peter was an Apostle – an emissary, one who was sent on a mission and his mission was to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to lay the foundation of the Church.

This week, we need to focus on those to whom this letter was sent. We can see from the very first verse that it had a pretty wide distribution in the First Century and of course, it became part of the Canon of Scripture. So in a very real sense, it was sent to you and to me. The letter was sent to all those who are chosen by God.

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied. (1 Peter 1:1-2)*

There is an incredible amount of doctrine in this greeting and some of this teaching touches on one of the most hated doctrines in the Bible. I'm talking about the doctrine of God's sovereign election. People abhor this doctrine. People go to great lengths to try to explain away this doctrine, to try to make the Bible say something else. And many of those people are Christians. At least they claim to be Christians and I absolutely believe many of them are. This teaching just makes them really uncomfortable, but we dare not ignore a Biblical teaching just because it makes us uncomfortable.

Let's continue to unpack these first two verses this morning. Let's find out what it says. Let's find out what it means. And Lord willing, I want to explain why we should embrace being chosen by God. We certainly shouldn't hate this doctrine. In fact, it is a doctrine I have grown to love because it gives me great confidence in my salvation. It gives me the Lord's peace.

Right off the bat, Peter tells us he is writing to the pilgrims of the Dispersion. Now in our New King James Bibles, the word Dispersion is capitalized. That's because in the Greek, it is *diaspora* (*διασπορά*). It is a word typically used to describe Jews that were scattered abroad in Gentile territories. John uses it that way, and so does James, but Peter's meaning is a little bit different. The majority of Christians in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia were of Gentile heritage. This is modern-day Turkey.

The key to understanding what he meant is the word translated "pilgrims" [*parepidēmos* (*παρεπίδημος*)]. It is a compound word that literally means an alien alongside or a resident alien. This is really important for us to understand. As Christians, we are living in this world but we are not of this world. Paul, writing to the Colossians tells us:

*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things*

*above, not on things on the earth. For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (Colossians 3:1-3)*

If you are a Christian, you are not a citizen of this world. You are a citizen of His kingdom. This world is not my home; I'm just a passing through! Consider yourself a resident alien. You, like Paul, are here as an emissary. You are representing your King in a foreign country.

Then in verse 2, we come to that uncomfortable doctrine I was telling you about:

*elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father*

Let me just be blunt for a moment. People dislike the doctrine of election because it takes their own will completely out of the equation. People want to have control over their destiny. Folks want to take at least some credit for their salvation. It's part of our fallen state. It's part of our depravity. We want to get some of the credit for being such fine folks ... at least better than those unbelievers out there. But that's not what the Bible teaches.

*For by grace you have been saved through faith, **and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works**, lest anyone should boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)*

You cannot take credit for your faith because faith is a gift given to you by God. Your salvation does not come by your works. Without the intervention of God the Holy Spirit, you could not believe unto salvation. Jesus said:

*"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." (John 3:3)*

God brings you to saving faith. He chooses whom He is going to save and makes sure they come to Christ.

"So," you say, "God has chosen some to be part of His kingdom, and some He has chosen to remain reprobate? How can that be fair?"

Well first of all, I don't want fair. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23) and the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23) so God would be completely just and fair if He sent everyone to Hell. I don't want fair; I want grace!

But secondly, God is perfectly holy and just. It is His nature. He is the Creator. He defines the standards. God is never measured by human standards and we certainly have no right to determine whether or not He is fair by our standards. Paul makes it really clear in Romans:

*Therefore He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens. You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?" But indeed, O man, who are you to reply against God? Will the thing formed say to him who formed it, "Why have you made me like this?" Does not the potter have power over the clay, from the same lump to make one vessel for honor and another for dishonor? (Romans 9:18-21)*

It is a profound disrespect to reply against God. His universe; His rules. Do not presume to judge the fairness of Almighty God!

Now, some would take this verse and twist it. They say "Oh, yes, I agree that God chooses who He's going to save, but his choice is based on His foreknowledge of how we respond to the offer of salvation. See, it says so right here: *elect according to the* Chosen by God

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*foreknowledge of God the Father.* God looked down the tunnels of time and saw who would accept Christ and based His election on those decisions.”

But that’s not at all the sense of the word translated foreknowledge. It is far more than God’s ability to predict future events. This involves God’s absolute sovereignty in determining and implementing His decision to save. God is active in the process, not passive. Read all of Romans chapter 9 and Ephesians chapter 1. Read the words of Jesus responding to those who would not believe:

*Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand. (John 10:25-29)*

Now at this point, there will be those who say “Then, what’s the point? If God has already chosen who He is going to save, why even try? Why witness? Why pray for the lost? Why do we even make a prayerful commitment to Jesus Christ?

The glib answer is this: Because God told us to. It is clearly spelled out in His Holy Word and it is our duty to be obedient. But the more complete answer is this: God has determined to work through means. He is God and He can do anything He wants. He certainly doesn’t need my help but He loves me so much that He wants to work through me. He wants me to be part of His process. He wants you to be the means of grace to those in your circle of influence. He wants you to love your neighbors. He wants you to pray for your neighbors. And like He told the Geresene Demoniac, you are to ...

*"Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you." (Luke 8:39)*

Now here’s a bit of a puzzle. Despite God’s sovereign election, every person is awesomely responsible for his or her response to the offer of salvation. Nobody has an excuse for rejecting Jesus Christ.

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. (Romans 1:18-19)*

We have the witness of creation:

*The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork. (Psalms 19:1)*

And we have the witness of scripture, God’s special revelation:

*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)*

*So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)*

You are responsible for accepting or rejecting Jesus Christ. God does not send you to hell; your rebellion sends you to hell. In our fallen state, because we were totally depraved. We would not choose Christ unless God intervened. The dissonance between Chosen by God

God's sovereignty and our responsibility is spelled out beautifully in the letter to the Philippians:

*Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (Philippians 2:12-13)*

Now, I am not smart enough to perfectly reconcile God's sovereignty with human responsibility but I'm convinced that God is smart enough to work it out. I'm going to put my faith in Him. From our perspective, we choose to follow Jesus Christ. We have to place our faith and trust in Him. But from God's perspective, He chooses those who would come to faith.

I want you to know that it is a great blessing to be chosen by God. Look again at verse 2, if you would:

*... elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied. (1 Peter 1:2)*

Do you see that the entire godhead is involved in your salvation? God the Father elects; He chooses. God the Holy Spirit sanctifies. The Spirit sets us apart for a holy purpose. He brings us to spiritual life so we can respond to the Gospel and He works in us to slowly conform us to the image of Jesus Christ. And of course, Jesus purchased our salvation on the cross at Calvary. He paid the death penalty for your sins ... and for mine. He was separated from God so you could be reconciled. Then He conquered sin and death, rising to life on the third day and by His stripes we are healed!

Can you believe? Will you believe it is true? Will you place your faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ? Will you call Him your Lord? Will you believe God raised Him from the dead so you can have a living relationship with Him? Will you believe He has secured a place for you in the kingdom forever?

Do you even want to believe? If you just want to believe the Gospel, it's evidence that you are chosen by God. As an act of your will, believe unto salvation. Call on the name of the Lord. Pray "Yes Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief."

Here is why being chosen by God is such a blessing. If my salvation were dependent on me, I would be in a world of trouble. Check that; I would be in an eternity of trouble. If I had to keep myself saved by my own faithfulness ... well, I might as well resign myself to hell right now, because I know I would fail. But that's just not the case. Jesus isn't going to lose anybody who belongs to Him.

*You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, (John 15:16)*

To underscore that, let's take a sneak peek at a couple verses we'll dive into next week: God has begotten us ...

*... to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, **who are kept by the power of God** through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (1 Peter 1:4-5)*

If you trust Jesus, you are kept by the power of God. The same power that called the worlds into being is keeping you saved! The same power that holds the universe together is keeping you saved! Do you really think anyone can snatch you out of His hands?

That should give you incredible confidence. It should give you supernatural peace. You are being kept by the grace of Almighty God.

*So Grace to you and peace be multiplied.*

What a salvation Jesus has provided for us! So along with the Apostle Paul, I beg you to take the Lord up on His offer.

*Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, **be reconciled to God.** For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:20-21)*

*Soli Deo Gloria; To God alone be the glory!*