

## God's Chosen People

1 Peter 1:1-2 (05/15/16)

Ernie Godshall  
Faith Bible Church  
Evansville, Indiana

*1 Peter 1:1-2, Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.*

Imagine you are part of a five-man crew working on a house, it's a 95 degree scorcher, sweat is dripping. Oh, for a cold drink. Suddenly someone shows up with a large pitcher of lemonade, ice cubes clinking, condensation dripping down the sides. All the workers gather round to slake their thirst, but as the first drink is poured out someone begins an argument about lemonade. They don't believe in it. It's not good for you. Someone else begins to defend lemonade. Others get into the fray. Soon people are grabbing the pitcher and fighting over it. Unbelievably it flies through the air, all that refreshing cold drink spilling out on the ground. The pitcher falls onto a rock and shatters into a thousand pieces. The drink designed to bring refreshment has ended up in arguments and angry tempers.

So it is with the doctrine of election. God revealed this doctrine to bring great comfort and blessing to His people. Instead, people have argued, disagreed, and rejected it. You can almost hear minds snap shut when it is mentioned. Turn to 1 Peter 1:1-2. Last week we focused on that word "alien" in verse one. God's people are not at home in this world; we're just passing through. Peter wrote his letter to strengthen God's alien people, especially in view of the looming persecution about to hit the Christians because Nero pinned the burning of Rome on them. Nine more waves of persecution would fall on Christians in the first three centuries.

This morning we are starting with that word "chosen" or "elect." You may wonder why Peter starts his letter with all this deep theology. He's got his reasons. This doctrine is exactly what God's people who were going through the fires of persecution and suffering needed to hear. Regardless of your immediate circumstances of pain, hurt, difficulty, or disappointment, Peter wants you to look past your situation and know beyond a shadow of a doubt that God is in control. In fact, He has had you in His heart from all eternity past. He chose you knowing all about you and what you'd be going through. There are no surprises to Him. He chose you for His glory and your good. He planned for you to be alive at this time in history as His child. No matter how severe things become for you, you are not subject to the cruel crush of mindless fate, but rather you are in His eternal love and He will never fail you!

Let's try to get a grasp on Peter's short greeting with five simple questions. I hope your heart is open to hear God's Word and even if you have a hard time believing what it says here, you will prayerfully study it out and see if you don't find this doctrine of unconditional election all over the Bible.

**First, ask yourself, "Why am I a Christian?" "who are chosen..."**

I mean a real, bonafide Jesus-loving, Word-hungry, fellowship-craving, heaven-bound genuine Christian. Why are you such a Christian? Did you sign up for this? Are you such a good person that you deserve it? Did God know you would be such a faithful person so He saved you? Because you were smart enough to choose Jesus? Because you prayed a special prayer? Or went through a confirmation class?

Not even close. Let me tell you why you are a Christian. Because God, based on His own good sovereign will, chose you to be a Christian. God elected or selected you. And when did He do this? Not when you trusted Christ. Not when you were baptized. No, God chose you to be a Christian before He created the

heavens and the earth! You contributed nothing to that choice; you had nothing to contribute to it. You, like every other human being, were born spiritually dead and worse. You were born at enmity with God. You had absolutely no desire in yourself to come to Jesus. Let's be clear. If God hadn't chosen you in eternity past to be His child, and that choice based on nothing other than His good pleasure and grace, I can guarantee on the Word of God that you would not be a Christian.

Whoa, whoa! Wait a minute. I thought we were saved by our faith? True, but where did your faith come from? Why did you believe? When we back this salvation vehicle all the way to the beginning, we will come to the eternal council of God. And in that eternal council between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, you came up as part of the discussion and God said "Yes" to you. He determined way back then, "I am going to have mercy on guilty, sinful Joe Christian and bring him into an eternal relationship with Me. And I'm going to do all that is necessary to deal with his sin, rebellion, guilt, corruption through You, My Son. And then I'm going to send you, Holy Spirit, down there to ferret him out of the masses of humanity and knock on his door and bring him the gospel and give him a new heart so he has the capacity to believe and repent of his sin and trust in You, My Son." That's why you are a Christian! God chose you.

When this truth, this reality, seeps into your soul, as you ponder it, it will deflate your pride and self-righteousness and fill your heart with gratitude and worship. Charles Spurgeon was a champion of the doctrine of election. He wrote this, *"I know nothing... more humbling than this doctrine of election. I have sometimes fallen prostrate before it when endeavoring to understand it, but when I came near it and the one thought possessed me 'God hath from the beginning chosen you unto salvation,' I was staggered by that mighty thought. And from the dizzy elevation, down came my soul, prostrate and broken saying, 'Lord, I am nothing, I am less than nothing, why me? Why me?'"* Good question, Mr. Spurgeon.

**Second, why did God choose you?** *"according to the foreknowledge of God the Father..."*

To be slightly technical here, you'll notice in verse two there are three prepositional phrases that explain election: the basis – foreknowledge, the means – sanctification, the purpose – to obey and be sprinkled. So that's our outline. And also notice the trinity here: the Father, Spirit, and Son. Now, on what basis did God choose you? Not because you were so handsome or pretty or faithful or religious. God didn't choose you because He saw you way down there in time and thought, "What a wonderful person she is. She'd make a really nice gift. I'll choose her for my Son."

Not even close. God chose you based on His foreknowledge of you. Foreknowing doesn't just mean God knew you would exist ahead of time. No, it's much deeper than that. Way back before God created the heavens and the earth, in eternity past, before howling monkeys howled through the jungles and humming birds sucked nectar from the blossoms, before earth rotated around the sun and galaxies silently moved through the vast universe, before time began, God thought of and determined to love every one of His people. Think about it carefully. He chose to set His love on you and bring you to His Son. In eternity past He knew you in a loving, personal relationship. Why? Why did He determine to love you when He knew you would be a sinner, that you would deserve His judgment and wrath? This is why. The God of all mercy had a plan. He had a plan to exercise His mercy and grace on you, as well as a vast multitude of people throughout history, and give you and them as a love gift to His Son!

What does all this mean? It means that God isn't stumbling through time trying to convince people to believe in His Son, hoping He didn't die in vain. It means that God's plan is not an experiment to see what would happen. You can be assured that even your trials and afflictions and difficulties are not accidental. Listen carefully to Ephesians 1:11, "Also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will."

Foreknowledge means not only that God loved you and chose you to be His child way back then, but He determined for you to exist, to live at this moment in history, in your situation, married to your spouse, with your children, with your trials and difficulties. You and everything about you was already in God's loving,

sovereign, gracious plan. God put His love on you personally. “But why me?” He is God; that is His prerogative. He is God and has mercy on whom He wills. “But what about other people who aren’t Christians?” Hang on, we’ll get to them. “But wait a minute, how do I know I’m chosen?” Another great question.

**Third, how do you know God chose you? “by the sanctifying work of the Spirit...”**

Oh, this is just tremendous, “by means of the sanctifying work of the Spirit.” Now we’re coming down into time, into your time and your life. After Christ came and paid the price of death for our sins, satisfying God’s wrath which our sins richly deserved, He rose again and ascended to the right hand of God and poured out His Spirit in Acts 2, and ever since then, God the Holy Spirit has been doing this sanctifying work. Sanctify here means mainly to set apart. It well may contain all of the saving work of the Spirit, but it definitely means the Spirit came and is at work in this world setting apart all those whom God chose in His eternal love and bringing them to salvation. Paul says this exact same thing in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, “God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.”

The Holy Spirit targeted you, chased you down, maybe as a youth, maybe as an older person, maybe while you were living a morally upright life or maybe while you were living a debauched, immoral, filthy life. He knew where you lived. He came to your house. He knocked on the door of your heart and mind. He drew you to open the door. He came and convicted you of your sin and probably made you miserable, but he brought you to hear about the cross of Christ and how Christ died for sinners. You remember the people God used to bring you this good news. You remember the Bible verses you believed. The Holy Spirit gave you a new heart and enabled you to repent of your sin and believe genuinely in Christ. He gave you the gift of eternal life, forgiveness, and justification by faith alone. He baptized you into Christ, poured out God’s love into your heart, and gave you new desires to love and follow Christ.

Why? Because God chose you! “All the Father gives Me shall come to Me!” (John 6:37). None slips through. God forgets none. Not one of His chosen ones is cast away. John 10:27-28, “My sheep hear my voice, I know them, they follow Me, and I give them eternal life, and none will ever perish.” How is that for assurance? God infallibly targets His chosen ones and brings them to the feet of His Son, our Savior.

It is the sanctifying work of the Spirit which sets you apart and brings you out of darkness into the kingdom of Jesus Christ. All your desires for Christ and His Word are the direct result of the Spirit’s work in you. This is how you know God chose you! This is how God the Father implements His eternal unconditional election. He uses means to do it. He sends His chosen people out to preach the gospel. Jesus said in Mark 16:15, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.” But the only way our evangelizing and preaching and urging people to come to Jesus is effective is as the Spirit of God deals directly in the heart of those God has chosen. Has the Spirit of God dealt with you, troubling you in your heart and mind, making you aware that you need Christ as your Savior?

**Fourth, what is God’s purpose in choosing you? “to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood.”**

Don’t miss this phrase. God didn’t choose you just to fill empty spaces in heaven. When God the Holy Spirit sanctifies a sinner and brings him or her salvation, He always gives that saved sinner a heart to obey Christ and walk with Him. That’s God’s ultimate purpose for you. You see it in Romans 8:28-29, “God causes everything to work for good for those who love Him, who are called according to His purpose.” And what is His purpose? Verse 29, “Those whom God foreknew (loved beforehand in eternity past) God predestined to ultimately be conformed to the image of His Son!” This is God’s purpose in election – to bring you into loving obedience to Christ. In all the challenges of your alien life in this world, God has called you to obedience to Christ, to follow Christ, to become like Him.

In Exodus Moses sprinkled blood over the people of Israel, setting them apart as God’s people. You too are set apart to God through the sprinkling of Christ’s blood on your life. We were completely forgiven by Jesus blood once for all when we came to Christ in faith. But His blood represents for our entire lives that

we only have access to the Father through Jesus blood. Hebrews 10:19 says we have boldness to enter the holy place, heaven itself, by the blood of Jesus! When you sin as a believer, the blood of Jesus assures you of forgiveness.

**Fifth, what are God's resources for us to live as His alien people in this foreign world?** *"May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure."*

God didn't plop you down in Evansville as His chosen son or daughter and leave you on your own. No, Peter prays for us that grace and peace not just be added to us, but be multiplied to us. God provides you with wave after wave of grace to strengthen you for whatever He allows to come into your life (1 Corinthians 10:13). And peace is that inner confidence, that inner assurance that you are at one with God! If you're like me, you need infusions of grace and peace every day. As you're heading to the hospital, going to a new job, dealing with a really annoying person, standing up to teach, trying to parent that rebellious child, a child is tragically swept away, or the bottom drops out of your finances, you need lots of grace and peace and God says He has both in rich supply, multiplied, not just added!

Let's drink with deepest humility and greatest gratitude this refreshing doctrine that God has chosen you to be His beloved child. Ponder that you were in God Almighty's mind in eternity past in a special, redeeming way. You were not an afterthought. **ELECTION IS THE VERY FOUNDATION AND ORIGIN OF YOUR SALVATION.** If God had not chosen you, you would not be in His wonderful plan in Jesus Christ.

Now you may wonder, "Wait a minute. Am I one of God's chosen people? How about my spouse, or child, or parent?" Friends, our business is to proclaim the wonderful message that Christ came to save sinners. Christ today invites and calls and welcomes all sinners of every stripe. Do you want Christ? Do you want to be saved? Do you want to be accepted by God? Do you want your sins forgiven? Do you want to turn from those sins? Do you want heaven to be your home? Then Christ says to you, "Come to Me." John 6:37, "All the Father gives me shall come...the one who comes I will never, ever cast out." Christ never turned away a sinner who wants to be saved.

"But I thought you said you had to be chosen to be one of God's people." Picture a door into God's salvation with a sign above the door, "Whoever will, may come." If you are a "whoever" who wants salvation, you qualify to walk through that door. In you go, through the door of Christ. After you enter, you look back and see this amazing message, "Chosen before the foundation of the world!" and you realize that you are part of God's chosen people! That's why we sing from our hearts, "Thank you Lord, for saving my soul!" Have you entered through that door?