

Chosen by God, Part 2

Scripture: 1 Peter 1:2

Code: 60-3

INTRODUCTION

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

The aliens Peter referred to were Christians. They were citizens of heaven, and scattered in the world. Considered to be outcasts by the society in which they lived, they were enduring persecution that began with their being blamed for the burning of Rome in [sc] A.D. 64. It was important for those Christians to understand that though they weren't esteemed in the world, they were chosen by God. That's why Peter began the epistle as he did.

REVIEW

I. THE NATURE OF GOD'S ELECTION

LESSON

II. THE CONDITION OF GOD'S ELECT

A. A Special People

As Christians we are elect, and we reside as an alien race in the world. We live temporarily in the earth, but are citizens of heaven. We are a society within a society.

B. A Special Mission

As ambassadors of Christ, we have a ministry of reconciliation committed to us: telling men and women how they may be reconciled to God through Christ (2 Cor. 5:18-20). Jesus said, "You shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). As a supernatural culture within a culture, we live by a distinct standard. We are enemies of the world, yet we must speak to it. Our method of living should reinforce the message we

speak--the platform for what we say is what we are.

C. A Special Problem

Being an effective Christian witness is not easy. We tend to retreat into a society of our own. The persecution surrounding Peter's original readers encouraged that kind of inward retreat. The development of an inward focus for the sake of protection, support, love, companionship, and fellowship was natural. Yet Peter reminded his readers throughout his first epistle that they must not become ingrown. Christians are to love each other intensely, but not at the expense of their witness to unbelievers.

D. A Special Solution

The famous expositor Alexander MacClaren rightly observed that "seed in a seed-basket is not in its right place; but sown broadcast over the field, it will be waving wheat in a month or two" (Expositions of Holy Scripture: First and Second Peter and First John [N.Y.: Eaton and Mains, 1910], p. 6). We must resist the temptation to become ingrown. Otherwise we are no more than a society of people talking to ourselves, rather than to a lost world.

God prevents the church from becoming ingrown by the persecution and scattering of believers. Each time that has happened--beginning with Acts 8--the church has grown. The seed is emptied out of the basket and thrown over the field, resulting in waving wheat.

We don't belong in monasteries, holed up in caves, or ensconced in educational ivory towers. We must take the redemptive message into the world. The elect do not belong to the world, and should not expect to be treated as natives of the world. While we're in the world, we represent a far better place.

III. THE SOURCE OF GOD'S ELECTION

A. God's Decision

1. What it was

According to 1 Peter 1:2, the source of our election is the foreknowledge of God the Father. It is the Father who chose us, and He based His choice on His foreknowledge.

Romans 11:5 says, "There has ... come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice." Ephesians 1:4 says that the Father "chose us in Him [Christ]." God's choice was accomplished independently of both person and circumstance.

Daniel 4:35 says, "All the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What hast Thou done?'" Before they were created, God singled out certain angels (the elect angels of 1 Timothy 5:21) and men for eternal life and blessedness. The chosen

people are a people chosen.

2. What it was not

A common explanation of election is that the elect are chosen because God knew beforehand what they would do. That defines foreknowledge as foresight. I've heard it explained that God looked down through the eons of history, saw by virtue of His omniscience what you and I would do, and then chose or didn't choose us based on whether we did or didn't believe. That at first sounds like a good explanation--but it's not the truth.

B. Man's Decline

1. His fallen nature

There are several reasons for wanting to believe that God's foreknowledge means foresight. Our fallen nature desperately want some responsibility for our salvation. Likewise our fallen perspective makes God's sovereign choice appear unfair. But because our minds are polluted by sin, we are in no position to exalt our pride and call ourselves virtuous, or pull down the justice of God and call Him unfair.

2. His false presumptions

a) Man is not sovereign

The idea that foreknowledge equals foresight places man in the wrong position. If divine foreknowledge means that God previewed history and based His decisions on what we did, then man would be sovereign. We would act, and God could only react.

However Jesus said: "You did not chose Me, but I chose you" (John 15:16). Jesus did not view man as sovereign. God was not sitting in heaven trying to keep events in line while attempting to get the right person on the right side of the ledger.

b) Man gets no credit

If foreknowledge equals foresight, then man receives some of the credit for his salvation. He is allowed to share in the glory that belongs to God alone.

I remember hearing someone say, "I'm so glad I had the sense to receive Christ." I wanted to reply, "No you didn't. I don't know you, but I know you didn't have the sense to receive Christ, because no one has the sense to receive Christ." Receiving Christ as Savior is not an act of human sense. First Corinthians 1:29 says that "no man should boast before God." Ephesians 2:9 says that salvation is "not as a result of works, that no one should boast."

c) Man does not seek God

For God's foreknowledge to equal foresight, we must assume that fallen man can seek God--as if salvation is the process of sifting through the available data in search of God. But Romans 3:11 says, "There is none who seeks for God." We're saved not because we sought God, but because God sought us and moved our hearts toward Him.

d) Man has no ability to save himself

God's foreknowledge must be more than mere foresight: If man were able to believe on the basis of his own ability, then salvation would be appropriated by a human work. While salvation is a result of belief, the ability to believe is a gift granted by God (Eph. 2:8-9).

e) Man cannot victimize God

The perspective that foreknowledge equals foresight pictures God sitting in heaven saying, "Humph--that's going to make a difference in My plan. Boy, if that guy had only said yes, then I could have

done this and I could have worked that, but now it's just not going to work out!" That is a blasphemous view of God. God does all things by the counsel of His own will, and is never frustrated by the actions of anyone.

God Himself said, "I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is no one like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things which have not been done, saying, 'My purpose will be established, I will accomplish all My good pleasure'" (Isa. 46:9). God is not a victim.

C. God's Decree

1. Peter's teaching

The Greek word translated "foreknowledge" in 1 Peter 1:2 is *progn[ma]osin* (a form of the Greek word *progn[ma]osis*). We find the same term in 1 Peter 1:20, which says that Christ "was foreknown before the foundation of the world." *Progn[ma]osis* means the same thing in both verses. Since Christ was foreknown by God before the foundation of the world (v. 20), and we were foreknown by God before the foundation of the world (v. 2), we were foreknown in the same way Christ was foreknown.

A good example of what Peter meant by "foreknowledge" is found in Acts 2:23. Speaking about Jesus to a Jewish audience, he said, "This man, delivered up by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death." Here foreknowledge is linked to a predetermined plan. According to Peter, God's foreknowledge is a deliberate choice. God foreknew not by prior observation, but by bringing into reality His predetermined plan.

2. Scripture's affirmation

a) Jeremiah 1:5--God said to Jeremiah, "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you." God's foreknowledge of Jeremiah was a predetermined relationship with Jeremiah.

b) Amos 3:2--God also said, "You [Israel] only have I known" (KJV). God didn't mean that Israel was the only nation He knew about. Rather, Israel was the only nation with whom He had an intimate, predetermined relationship.

c) Matthew 7:22-23--Jesus said, "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord...' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you.'" Jesus knew to whom He was speaking. He meant He never had a predetermined relationship with those people.

d) John 10:14--Jesus also said, "I am the good shepherd; and I know My own." Christ's relationship with His own is based on a predetermined choice.

God predetermined to set His love upon certain people. If you are a Christian, you were foreknown by God as a part of that plan. God's foreknowledge of Christ serves as a model of God's foreknowledge of you. Christ is the elect stone--chosen and precious (1 Peter 2:6).

IV. THE SPHERE OF GOD'S ELECTION

According to 1 Peter 1:2, the sphere of our election is "the sanctifying work of the Spirit." Being elect and being saved are two different things. You can be elect and not be saved.

A. The Reality

1. Seen in 1 Peter

a) Chapter 1

Election becomes a reality for the elect in the sphere of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. That is how the divine and eternal decree becomes a fact of history. While the elect are elect from eternity, they are saved in time. In 1 Peter 1:2 the term "sanctifying" (Gk., *hagiasm[ma]o*) refers to the new birth--salvation, regeneration, faith, repentance--all that the Spirit produces in the life of a believer. It includes the concepts of being hallowed, consecrated, and separation from the world. As Christians we are all elect from eternity. But we were once part of the mass of unredeemed humanity. We existed in that unredeemed condition until the Holy Spirit set us apart for salvation.

b) Chapter 2

First Peter 2:9-10 says, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people [even though you were elect], but now you are the people of God; [at one time] you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy." Christians are chosen all along, but are saved in time--when the Spirit sets a believer apart from sin to God, from darkness to light, and from unbelief to faith.

2. Seen in other Scripture

a) Titus 3:5--"He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit." The Father planned our salvation and Christ purchased it for us, but it is the Spirit who applies it.

b) 1 Corinthians 6:9-11--"Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified." Sanctification includes all aspects of the life of a believer. It is a synonym for salvation, the critical work of the Holy Spirit at conversion whereby we are set apart--born of the Spirit. Once that has taken place, the Holy Spirit continues to work in us to make us more holy. That is the process of sanctification, and it continues throughout our lives.

B. The Requirement

While sanctification doesn't mean perfection, it does mean separation. Prior to salvation, we were not separate from sin, unbelief, and darkness. After salvation, the decreasing frequency of sin in our lives indicates there is an increasing reality of holiness and conformity to Christ.

God does not choose a person for salvation without making him holy. Salvation is separation from darkness to light, death to life, unbelief to faith, and sin to holiness. When God sends the Holy Spirit to save someone, that person is separated from sin. Note Paul's conclusion in Romans 6:22: "Now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life."

Some people think they're Christians but have never experienced a changed life. But the separation the Holy Spirit works in salvation is a transformation that will show up in the way a person lives. Prior to salvation a person is a slave of sin. After salvation he becomes a slave of righteousness (Rom. 6:16-18). A total change of nature takes place at salvation.

Galatians 4:6 says, "Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts."

The indwelling Holy Spirit makes Christians into different people. Some teach that a person can be saved but not believe in Christ. Others teach that separation from the world is unnecessary for Christians. Such teaching directly contradicts what Scripture teaches about the work of the Holy Spirit in salvation.

C. The Realization

Election is manifested in salvation. The sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit makes the unholy person holy. Second Peter 1:3 says of Jesus, "His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness." When we come to know Christ through the Spirit's work, we obtained all that pertains to life and godliness. That includes repentance, faith, virtue, righteousness, love for God, and delight in the work of the Spirit. Those qualities are realized in salvation, which is the sphere of election.

V. THE PURPOSE OF GOD'S ELECTION

God's purpose in election is that "you may obey Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 1:2). That is not expressed as a wish--obedience is to be a fact in every Christian's life. Ephesians 2:10 says the same thing: "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." The doctrine of election is both practical and powerful. An understanding of your personal election by God will change the way you live and deal with your pride. It will increase your worship of God and your joy in salvation. You will understand all you need to know about your spiritual benefits and privileges. It will compel you to certain kinds of behavior that no other doctrine could ever produce in you. Understanding the doctrine of election will produce a power in your life that you would otherwise never comprehend.

CONCLUSION

Charles Haddon Spurgeon, the famous nineteenth-century English preacher, eloquently said, "Before Salvation came into this world, Election marched in the very forefront, and it had for its work the billeting [lodging] of Salvation. Election went through the world and marked the houses to which Salvation should come and the hearts in which the treasure should be deposited. Election looked through all the race of man, from Adam down to the last, and marked with sacred stamp those for whom Salvation was designed. 'He must needs go through Samaria,' said Election; and Salvation must go there. Then came Predestination. Predestination did not merely mark the house, but it mapped the road in which Salvation should travel to that house; Predestination ordained every step of the great army of Salvation; it ordained the time when the sinner should be brought to Christ, the manner how he should be saved, the means that should be employed; it marked the exact hour and moment, when God the Spirit should quicken the dead in sin, and when peace and pardon should be spoken through the blood of Jesus. Predestination marked the way so completely that Salvation doth never overstep the bounds, and it is never at a loss for the road. In the everlasting decree of the Sovereign God, the footsteps of Mercy were every one of them ordained" (The Treasury of the Bible: New Testament, vol. 4, "Things That Accompany Salvation" [London: Marshall, Morgan and Scott,

1963], p. 77).

That is a beautiful picture of what God has done in electing His people. The doctrine of election reveals that salvation is entirely the gift of a loving God.

Focusing on the Facts

1. Why did Peter begin his epistle with a reminder to his readers that they were chosen by God?
2. God's people don't belong in monasteries, holed up in caves, or ensconced in educational ivory towers. What is God's purpose for His people in this world?
3. Is God obligated by what we do in this life in choosing us for salvation? Why or why not?
4. What is the source of our election?
5. List five problems with the idea that God's foreknowledge is merely foresight.
6. What concept does Peter associate the word "foreknowledge" (Gk., *progn[ma]osis*) with in Acts 2:23?
7. What passages in the Old Testament illustrate the concept of divine foreknowledge?
8. Is it possible to be elect from eternity without being saved? Explain.
9. What does the term "sanctifying" refer to in 1 Peter 1:2?
10. What is necessary for the elect to become saved?
11. God planned salvation. Christ purchased salvation. What does the Holy Spirit do?
12. Does sanctification mean that we are now perfect? Why or why not?
13. Does the Holy Spirit work salvation in a person without separating him from sin? Explain.
14. In their description of Christians, do the writers of Scripture express obedience to Christ as a wish, or as a fact? What does that imply about the necessity of a Christian's experiencing a changed life?

Pondering the Principles

1. We have seen that man is not sovereign, that he is not to receive credit for his own salvation, that he does not seek God, and that he does not have the ability to believe on his own. Romans 3:10-18, which is a series of quotations from the Old Testament (see Psalm 5:9; 10:7; 14:1-3; 36:1; 53:1-4; 140:3 and Isaiah 59:7-8), paints a very bleak picture of fallen man. Why was it necessary that God choose the elect purely in accordance with His own will?

2. The Puritan Thomas Watson wrote that "the growth of grace is the best evidence of the truth of it. Things that have no life will not grow: a picture will not grow, a stake in the hedge will not grow; but a plant that has a vegetative life grows. The growing of grace shows it to be alive in the soul" (Thomas Watson, *A Body of Divinity* [Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1890], p. 274). Under the misunderstanding that the doctrine of salvation by grace precludes the necessity of evident transformation in the life of a believer, some have taught that salvation need not result in spiritual growth. How does an understanding of the doctrine of the sovereign election of God answer the teaching that salvation may occur apart from transformation?

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