

Chosen By God

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[0 : 00] I want you to open up your copy of the Scriptures to the book of 1 Peter. We started a new series last week in this book, and we're going to be in it for quite a while. We are still on the first two verses this morning, but I promise we won't go this slowly through the entire book.

But we're going to just take a look at the first two verses again and try to better understand what it is that Peter is communicating at the very beginning of this letter to his readers, including us.

I want you guys to stand as we read these verses. 1 Peter 1, verse 1. Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who are elect exiles of the dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood, may grace and peace be multiplied to you.

Father, we ask right now that your Spirit would come and give us a right understanding of your Word, and that because of that, we would have a clearer vision of who you are and what you're doing among your people.

And because of that, our love for you would be greatly enlarged this morning. We ask this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

[1 : 32] You guys be seated. If you were having to write a letter to, as Peter is, or if you were speaking to a people who were suffering under persecution, to Christians who were being persecuted because of their faith, who were being slandered by people in their community and mistreated by their neighbors and probably even family members, if you had to speak to them or write to them, what is the very first thing that you would say?

I mean, there are a lot of things that we would probably want to say to them to encourage them, to comfort them, and to strengthen them. So there are a lot of things that I know that I think of, Bible verses I might want to bring to them or just encouraging words that I might want to say to them.

But I'm not sure what the first thing that I would say to them. I'm not sure how I would begin that conversation or how I would begin that letter. I don't know what the very first thing that I would say to them would be, but I know the first thing that Peter said to a people that he was writing to that we know as we read through this letter were suffering.

They were being slandered. They were being, as we saw last week, they were being treated as outcasts. That's why he calls them exiles of the dispersion. Because even in the places where they lived, it was as if they were foreigners.

It was as if they were exiles in a foreign land and in a foreign country, even in the places where they lived. And that's not only the case for these believers.

[3 : 07] It is, in a real sense, to varying degrees, it is the case for all believers that at various times in our walk with Christ, we will find ourselves feeling and experiencing the truth that in this world we are exiles.

We are pilgrims and foreigners traveling through a land that is not our home. And these particular people were having a rough go at it. And so Peter, as he addresses these people, as he addresses these people under persecution, these people facing imminent suffering in front of them, what does he say to them?

He says something that may seem a bit out of sorts in our world and even in the church culture in which we oftentimes find ourselves.

Because we find ourselves in a church culture that is more frequently, more often teaching us that in this world, right now, you can have the best life available to you now.

If you will believe more, if you will follow these particular steps, then God will automatically make your marriage all that you want it to be. If you will do these things and use these techniques with your children, they will become obedient children automatically.

[4 : 25] Those don't work, by the way. I read all the books. I tried them. They don't all work automatically. But if you will do the right thing, or if you'll believe enough, if you'll feel strongly enough, if you'll say the right words we're hearing from voices all around us, then right now things will go better for you.

But what the Bible tells us is that right now things often don't go well for us. Things don't always immediately improve when we begin to do the right things. Sometimes things get worse when we follow Christ more faithfully.

Sometimes as our faith grows, our pain increases along with it. And Peter understood that. And Peter knew that. And so Peter doesn't come to them with a shallow message. Peter doesn't come to them with short and shallow words of encouragement.

In fact, Peter does the opposite of what our impulse often is. Peter launches into the most theologically significant, the most theologically difficult doctrines that we have in the entire Bible.

That's what he opens with. Take a look. You'll see it right here. You'll see predestination or what we often call election. And you'll see the doctrine of the Trinity all right here in these opening verses.

[5 : 41] Before he says hello, which is at the end of verse 2, may grace and peace be multiplied to you. That's kind of like a New Testament greeting. You'll find it in almost all the letters of the New Testament. Grace and peace to you, okay, in some form or another.

That's Peter's way of saying hi. So before Peter ever even gets to hello, he tosses a theological hand grenade at him and says, here you go. Here's your encouragement. Take a look. He addresses them not only as exiles.

He addresses them to those who are the elect exiles. And then he speaks of their election in verse 2, saying that their election is according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ.

Father, Spirit, and Son. So you want encouragement. Here's your encouragement. Think about your election in relation to the Trinity. There's your encouragement right there.

We don't think that way. We run away from doctrine almost any chance that we get. We don't want to think too deeply because we become convinced by our culture that genuine, authentic spirituality does not think.

[6 : 44] And yet, the Bible requires us over and over to engage our minds if we are to understand what God has revealed about Himself.

And I believe, I believe that if our minds are engaged and they're connected with our hearts, that if we will think about these great truths that we find in the Scriptures, we will be greatly encouraged as we face trouble and suffering in this world.

I believe that because I don't think the Apostle Peter is an idiot and I don't think that the Spirit misguided him as he inspired him to write this letter. I believe that he speaks and he opens with these words for a reason.

And so we're going to take our time this morning to try to unpack what the Apostle Peter is teaching us about the doctrine of election, what it means to be chosen by God.

You see it there? It's the first word that he uses to describe these people. In the English Standard Version, which is what I'm reading to you here this morning, it's presented as if it's an adjective to the elect exiles, those who are elect.

[8 : 01] And that's a possible translation of it. I think that it gets at a lot of the truth because these people who are exiles are exiles precisely because they've been chosen by God. They're not chosen by God because God prefers to choose the exiles, even though at times He does.

They are exiles. They are foreigners in their own hometown precisely because they have been chosen by God. So construing it as an adjective, modifying exiles is helpful.

But I think, probably more likely, the word elect is a noun. And so if I were translating this, I would probably translate it as to the elect, comma, exiles of the dispersion.

So there's two nouns used to describe these people. They are first and foremost chosen. They are elect. And because of that, they are exiles. This is who they are. This is how Peter identifies the believers to whom he writes.

To the elect. To those who are chosen. And then verse 2 expands upon that word elect and helps us to better understand what it means for us to be chosen by God.

[9 : 12] In fact, if you read in some of your versions, in some English translations, the word elect or the word chosen is not even found in verse 1. They hold it off and they put it at the beginning of verse 2.

Because it's actually a very difficult decision when you're translating. Anytime you try to go from one language to another, whether it's from Spanish to English or in this case from Greek to English, it's very difficult when you're making translation decisions to decide exactly how you're going to communicate something.

And so some of the translations that you might have with you this morning, if, for instance, you're using the New American Standard Version, then you'll see that the word elect or the word chosen is at the beginning of verse 2.

So that this letter begins to the exiles of the dispersion and list the places who are chosen or who are elect and according to and it moves on and on.

The reason for translating it that way is because the translators want you to see that these phrases, these clauses in verse 2 are modifying the word elect.

[10 : 15] They are describing, explaining how election works. But in point of fact, the actual Greek word order has the word elect exactly where it is in the ESV.

So you have to make a decision when you're going to translate this. Are you going to put the word elect where it is in terms of word order in the Greek text so that you come with a fairly literal translation and risk people not noticing the connection between elect and these clauses?

Or are you going to move the word elect down to verse 2 and you're going to sacrifice accuracy for the sake of making the interpretation more clear?

What are you going to do there? It's a difficult decision to make. In fact, the New International Version just puts the word in there twice to avoid all confusion and to make sure that it's everywhere that it needs to be.

So you have a people who are called chosen. And there are three things, three actions of the members of the Trinity related to that election that we need to see if we're going to understand this very difficult doctrine.

[11 : 20] So here we are. Let's walk through these three. First of all, we are told that these people are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.

Now every one of these phrases, all three of these phrases are subject to misunderstanding and misinterpretation if you don't try to understand them within their broader biblical context and try to find other places where a similar language is used.

So, for instance, many people have seen ah, we're elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. And they've developed an understanding of election that works something like this.

That God, because He's able to see into the future, looks into the future, sees who will believe, and then, in turn, He chooses those who He sees will believe.

So that the final determiner is man. We're the final determiners of who gets saved and who's not saved because, according to this view, being elect according to God's foreknowledge means He sees that you will believe and then He elects you.

[12 : 27] Unfortunately, that doesn't square with the meaning of God's foreknowledge throughout the Bible. It doesn't square with the way that the Bible talks about God's knowledge of people in the Bible.

Whenever you find God knowing a person, okay, this is consistent throughout both Old and New Testament, if God says, or if Scripture says that God knows someone, it does not simply mean that He has information about them.

It means that He has set His love upon them. It means that He has singled them out from everyone else, that He has chosen them, that He has set His covenant love upon them.

Let me show you what I mean. You can turn to a few places. If you want to hold your place in 1 Peter, turn all the way back to Genesis chapter 18 where we're in the middle of the story of Abraham.

And God says something very interesting about Abraham in Genesis chapter 18 verse 19. He says, I have known him that he may command his children after him.

[13 : 35] I have known Abraham, God says. In fact, the English Standard Version doesn't even translate that word as known. It interprets it for us and my version actually says, I have chosen him because that's what the word means in this context.

It means that Abraham, out of all the people on the face of the earth, God has set His covenant love upon Abraham. Who was Abraham before God chose him?

He was a moon worshiper in Ur of the Chaldeans. He was no one special. He was just another pagan, just another idolater. And God comes to Abram and He says to him, I am Yahweh.

You will go to a land to where you've never been. And Abraham obeys and Abraham goes. Three chapters later, he enters into covenant with God and God gives him great, great promises.

But Abraham was no one. God did not know information about Abraham when it says in Genesis 18, 19, Abraham I've known. God is saying, Abraham I chose.

[14 : 45] Abraham I set my love upon. Abraham. See a similar thing if you turn over toward the end of your Old Testament to the book of Amos. The prophet Amos says something very similar, almost identical, but he says it in reference to the nation of Israel.

In Amos chapter 3, verse 2, the prophet, God through the prophet speaks to the nation of Israel and he says, you only have I known of all the families on the earth.

God does not mean I don't have knowledge of other nations. That's not what God means. God doesn't mean, oh, I knew information about you, Israel, but I didn't know anything about everyone, about all the other families and nations on the earth.

That's not what he means at all. What he means when he says, you only have I known out of all the families of the earth is, you only have I set my love upon. You only have I chosen. You only have I made a plan to redeem.

You only have I known. That's what the word know means when God knows a person. Get a little more close to home, though, if you hit the prophet Jeremiah, a passage that many of us are familiar with because we often turn to this passage to defend the rights of unborn babies to life.

[16:00] In Jeremiah chapter 1, beginning in verse 4, we read this, that the word of the Lord came to me saying, Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you. And before you were born, I consecrated you.

I appointed you a prophet to the nations. So this is foreknowledge specifically. Before I formed you in the womb. So before Jeremiah existed, he hadn't even yet been formed in his mother's womb.

He doesn't exist. And before that, God knew him. God does not mean, I knew that you would be born. He tells us what he means. These parallel phrases expand upon the word know.

I appointed you. I consecrated you. That's what it means. I knew you before you were born. I appointed you to be a prophet. I consecrated you.

That is, I set you apart before you were ever born. God foreknows Jeremiah because before Jeremiah was born, God set his love upon him and God chose him for a particular purpose.

[17:06] That's what it means for God to foreknow a person. And we see that meaning even in 1 Peter. In chapter 1, if you look down a few verses, you will see 1 Peter chapter 1, I'll start reading in verse 18.

Peter says that you know that you were ransomed from the futile ways inherited from your fathers, not with perishable things such as silver or gold, but with the precious blood of Christ like that of a lamb without spot or blemish.

And then he says this about Jesus. He, Jesus, was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but was made manifest in the last times for the sake of you.

He was foreknown before the foundation of the world. What does that mean? Does it mean that God knew Jesus before the foundation? He knew about him? He had information? He knew what Jesus was going to do?

We take that for granted. We know that's true. But that's not at all the meaning in the context. The point is that before the foundations of the world, God loved his son. God had a relationship with his son.

[18:13] The father and the son have lived for all eternity past in perfect communion together. Before Jesus ever came on the scene, God loved him. He knew him.

Which is why his blood in context is so valuable and so precious and of such great worth. Because the father has loved him, he has known him since before the foundation of the world.

So when Peter says that we are chosen in accord with, according to the foreknowledge of God the father, what he means is that the father in eternity past set his love on certain people.

And those upon whom he set his love, he chose. It's very simple. You say, what is the basis of God's election? Upon which basis does God choose certain people?

on the basis of his covenant love that he freely set upon them in eternity past. That's why he chooses.

[19 : 24] He chooses because he loves. Those whom he loved, those whom he foreknew before the foundation of the world, those he chose. It's the action of the father in election.

But because God has set his love upon us, because God foreknew us and therefore chose us, things are going to unfold for God's elect in history.

And these next two clauses show us what those are. We're told not only that we are elect according to the foreknowledge of God the father, but we are elect in or through the sanctification of the spirit.

We are chosen through the sanctification of the spirit, in the sanctification or by the sanctification of the spirit. Now, most of the time or many times when we encounter the word sanctification in the New Testament, it has a very specific, very technical meaning.

And sanctification refers to the process throughout our lives by which we become more and more holy. That's the normal use of the word sanctification. So we will often say things like, we are justified by faith alone, and then all those who are justified are sanctified throughout their life.

[20 : 38] We'll make statements like that. What we mean by that is everybody that God saves, he makes holy. He makes them grow spiritually. That's what we mean by that. That is not, however, the way that Peter is using the word sanctification in this verse.

He's using it in a different way that we find used a handful of times in the New Testament. Here, Peter is using the word sanctification in a very literal sense because the word to sanctify means to set apart or to consecrate.

And so what he's saying here is that those whom God has chosen, set his love upon, at a point in time in history, the Spirit is going to come and work upon them and set them apart and consecrate them.

In fact, there's only one other time that we find this exact same phrase, by the sanctification or in the sanctification of the Spirit. And we find it in 2 Thessalonians. You can turn back there if you want, but you don't have to.

It's helpful if you see it, though. In 2 Thessalonians 2, it's significant because it's the exact same phrase and in these verses it is once again connected to election.

[21 : 45] Chapter 2, verse 13. We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers, beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

See the elements there? They're beloved by God. God has set His love on them. He has known them. And therefore, God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved. And they're through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth.

So God is going to save us through this sanctifying work of the Spirit. He's going to save us through the work of the Spirit in our hearts as He sets us apart, as He consecrates us.

The term that we normally use for this activity of the Holy Spirit is regeneration or born again. So the Father in eternity past foreknows a people, sets His love upon them, chooses them, and then at some point in time the Holy Spirit causes them to be born again.

Why do I use that phrase caused to be born again? Well, because Peter does in the next verse. Take a look at verse 3 in 1 Peter 1. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. According to His great mercy, He has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

[23 : 12] God has caused us to be born again. That's what He means when He talks about our election being through the sanctifying work of the Spirit. Those whom God chooses, at some point in time He will direct the Spirit to cause them to be born again, to give them a new heart, to birth spiritual life within them.

That's how He applies the work of salvation to us. None of us on our own would ever believe in Jesus. None of us left to ourselves would ever choose to follow Christ.

None of us. Paul says there is no one righteous, not even one. Paul also says that we are incapable, we are unable, we cannot obey the law of God.

We are incapable of obeying God's commands and incapable of on our own, with our own strength of choosing to follow and believe in Christ. God must do something inside of us to fundamentally transform our hearts so that we will then believe in Jesus.

And the work that He does fundamentally inside of our hearts is the work that we call regeneration. Now I know that many of us who have been sort of steeped and raised on revivalistic type preaching have sort of absorbed this idea that we are born again because we believe in Jesus.

[24 : 43] When in reality it's quite the reverse. According to the New Testament we believe in Jesus because we have been born again. I'll show that to you.

I don't want to just tell you things as if my word is authoritative. You can just turn over a few pages to the book of 1 John. 1 John chapter 5 verse 1 Everyone who believes that Jesus Christ that Jesus is the Christ everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God.

In other words according to John the new birth precedes belief. If you believe that means you've already been born of God. You've been born again.

You've been regenerated. So that the activity of the Holy Spirit in giving us new spiritual life and causing us to be born again is what leads inevitably to faith in Christ.

And this is what Peter means when he says that we have been chosen through sanctification of the Spirit. There's one more thing that he wants us to understand about election.

[25 : 54] It begins with the Father setting his love upon us. It begins to affect us as the Spirit causes us to be born again. But then because we've been born again as we said we begin to believe.

And because we believe the blood of Christ cleanses us from our sins. You can see it there. It's maybe difficult to see it first but it's there at the end of verse 2.

Here's the purpose or here's the goal of election. We are chosen for or for the purpose of obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling with his blood.

So there's a two-fold purpose here. Obedience to Jesus and sprinkling with his blood. There's a two-fold purpose of election. God is going to accomplish two things at the same time as the Spirit works in our hearts.

Now that phrase obedience can be a little misleading because we always automatically associate the word obedience with the fulfilling of certain commands and rules.

[27 : 02] And many times most of the time that is exactly what it means. If I tell my children I want you to obey me what I mean is I want you to do what I tell you to do and that's typically what we mean. But occasionally in the New Testament the word obedience is used instead of referring to our fulfilling of commands it refers to belief to faith itself.

I want to give you one example outside of Peter and then I'll give you one from Peter. If you want to hold your place and turn back to Romans chapter 16 Romans chapter 16 at the very end of this letter that Paul has written in verse 26 he says this he says that but now has been disclosed through the prophetic writings it has been made known to all nations according to the command of the eternal God to bring about the obedience of faith.

To bring about the obedience of faith. Faith is described frequently in the New Testament as the obedience to the gospel message.

you don't respond to the gospel message by following the commands of the Old Testament. You respond to the gospel message by faith in Jesus and so if we're going to say someone has been obedient to the gospel what we're going to say is they've believed the message because the command of the gospel is repent and believe and so the obedience of faith is the only saving response that we that we can have to the gospel which is why Peter says in this very letter that those to whom he is writing who he calls elect he says that they have rendered what he calls the obedience to the truth obedience to the truth so that I think in verse 2 when he says that the purpose of election is to bring about obedience to Christ what he means is that God chose us and because he chose us the spirit is going to impart spiritual life to us and the result of spiritual life in the heart of a once dead sinner is faith in Jesus that's what happens when the spirit works within the heart of the spiritually dead they come alive and they believe and because they believe

Peter says they are sprinkled with his blood that is a rich image in the Old Testament it was used at the beginning at the ratification of the covenant that God made with Israel through Moses the people stood there at the mountain and Moses took the blood from the sacrifice and he sprinkled it upon the people and it signified that they were entering into covenant with God often times on the day of atonement the priest would take the blood of the atoning sacrifices and sprinkle it upon the people who came to make sacrifices and when Peter says that God has chosen us and loved us and put spiritual life in us through the spirit so that we might believe and be sprinkled with his blood what he means is I am bringing you into covenant with myself and within the confines of this covenant all your sins are washed away by the blood of Jesus that's the purpose of election the goal of election is so that

[30 : 39] God might save and redeem lost hopeless sinners who were bound to hell he rescues us and by our faith our sins are washed away through the blood of Jesus this is the work of our triune God in election this is not this is not an intellectual problem to be solved this is not a theological difficulty to be avoided either these truths are not the sorts of things that we push to the deepest darkest corners of our minds so that we don't bother to think about them these are truths that can bring us great comfort in the times of our greatest trials the apostle Peter would not have been inspired by the Holy Spirit to open this letter to persecuted suffering people with a doctrine of election if it were not a comforting doctrine to those who believe it it brings great comfort to know that it's not my own doing that has brought me into relationship with

Christ but all my faith and all my hope and all my trust is there because he's birthed it within me and I don't fear that someday I will lose it because I didn't make it I didn't create it I didn't put it in myself I'm not afraid that I'm going to lose it which is exactly where Peter goes next we'll see this next week he refers in verse 4 to an inheritance that is imperishable undefiled and unfading and kept in heaven for you guarded reserved in heaven for you if salvation is entirely the work of God in the hearts of sinful lost people if that's what it is then we need not ever fear that we will lose it that it will slip out of our grasp because he always finishes the work that he begins and he's promised inheritance is being kept it's being guarded it's reserved for you so that when the suffering comes and you choose to either remain faithful to Christ or to abandon

Christ you remain faithful because you know because you know there is reserved in heaven for you imperishable undefiled treasure spiritual treasure unparalleled in this world and that no matter what you lose if you lose all that you own if you lose your family if you lose your wife if you lose your children for the sake of the gospel and for the sake of Christ there is a greater treasure however difficult it may be to imagine there is a greater treasure kept in heaven for the elect it's not a doctrine to be puzzled over it's not something to be pushed into the corner it's not something to be frustrated by or upset by or ignored or any other of those things it is a truth to be treasured and it is a comfort to be received it is not it is not our work to speculate on who may be chosen and who may not be chosen it is not our work to sit back and say well if God is going to do it he's going to do it and I have no influence in what happens that's not the proper response to a person who believes in this doctrine we are commanded to make disciples of all the nations we are commanded to repent and believe and commanded to command others to repent and believe we cannot see into the sovereign secret plans of God and so we cannot let the doctrine of election begin to shake our resolve to do all that we must do for the sake of the kingdom of Christ we allow the doctrine of election to come in and comfort us when everything else crumbles when our evangelistic efforts appear to be failing and fading we remember God has chosen a people and

Jesus has said I have other sheep who are not of this fold I must bring them in also and those sheep Jesus has said will hear my voice and so as we go out into the world and we proclaim the gospel of Christ we become in a very real sense the voice of Christ and his sheep will hear his sheep will respond it becomes not a deterrent to evangelism it becomes the motivating force behind evangelism never to be pushed in the corner never to be puzzled over never to be frightened by never to be angered by to be treasured to be believed to be comforted by to be motivated by that's what the doctrine of election is about and that is why Peter begins this letter to the elect let's pray perhaps there are some here father who wonder am I elect am I chosen it is my prayer that you would show them all they need to do is believe all they need to do is trust in

Jesus and then they will know I belong to them it is my prayer that we would not be a church that is consumed with the doctrine of election nor that we will be a church that is afraid of the doctrine of election but that we will in all ways and at all times submit to your word and receive it as sweet as honey good for our souls never bitter to the taste and always always pleasing to people help us to receive it in that kind of a way and encourage those encourage those who are facing suffering encourage them to bank their hope upon the fact that the father is at work spirit is at work the son is at work and all of their sufferings are not meaningless serve the purpose of the sovereign

[37 : 32] God and I say this in Christ's name Amen