

## STUDIES IN FIRST PETER (God's Elite Election – 1:1-2)

### Introduction:

- I. Every Bible student knows that Simon Peter was one of the apostles of Christ. In studying the life of Peter, one is drawn in by the complexity of his character. The scriptures reveal to us both the good and the bad; the successes and the failures of Peter as he strove to be an apostle of Christ. Peter was a man revealed as having great courage, yet he denied Christ out of fear. He was a man of great intelligence, yet on more than one occasion he spoke without thinking. In the end though, Peter triumphed as a major force for the cause of Christ and the furthering of the kingdom of God on earth.
- II. Somewhere around 64 AD Peter wrote the letter we call First Peter. It was a time when the persecution of the infamous Nero was at its height. It is not surprising, then, that throughout the letter Peter makes references to the sufferings and trials that Christians must endure. The idea of suffering occurs 26 times in the book. Thus, the epistle itself is meant to encourage Christians to remain strong in times of trials and tribulation, for suffering is the lot of every true Christians. And why should we not expect to suffer in this world when it was this world that crucified our Savior? If Jesus suffered, those of us who are His followers should expect to suffer as well (1 Pet. 2:21; 4:1).
- III. Someone might say, "If suffering is the common lot of the Christian, then I think I will pass on becoming a Christian." Well the truth is whether you are a Christian or not, you are going to suffer in life. suffering is not simply the lot of Christians, it is the lot of all. The fact is the presence of sin in the world makes suffering inevitable (Job 14:1). But as Christians, we have a safety net. We have God to help us through all of the storms of life. And in 1 Peter, Peter encourages us to remember that while some of our sufferings are directly related to being children of God, there are far more benefits to being a believer than a non-believer.
- IV. One of the great benefits of being a believer is that we are God's chosen people. If you are a Christian, you should never lose sight of the fact that God has selected you to be on His side and a part of His family. As a Christian, you have become a part of God's *elite election* (1 Pet. 1:1-2). The New Testament uses the word "elect" to describe the choosing of God's people (Rom. 8:33; Col. 3:12; 1 Thess. 1:4). The Greek word for "elect" means, "picked out, select or by implication, favorite" (Strong's). Listen to me: to be a part of God's elect is to be favored by God. And that is what the New Testament says we are. People of the world may think that we are unwise; the lovers of pleasure may think that we are boring

and that we never have any fun; those engulfed in the darkness of sin may laugh at us and ridicule us, but none of that matters when we realize what we have in Christ. We may be rejected by man, but we have been selected by God. We may be passed over by the world, but we have been picked up by the King of kings. We may be unwanted, unattractive and unappealing to society today, but know this: we are God's favorite and what could be more beneficial than that? But now let's take a closer look at what Peter says about this election.

## **Lesson:**

### **I. We Are Elected "According to the Foreknowledge of God."**

The word for "foreknowledge" is *prognōsis* and simply means "*forethought*" or by implication *that which has been prearranged*. There are some things which God arranged before the foundation of the world, and who His elect would be is one of those things.

Now, it should be noted that this election of God was collective, not individual. God didn't predestinate a person, He predestinated a people. The people He predestinated were those who would believe on His Son and obey the gospel of Christ. This is what God had in His mind before the foundation of the world. To view this election otherwise, i.e., to view God as predetermining that specific individuals would be saved, is to make God a respecter of persons and to charge Him with designating specific individuals to be lost. You see, where ever you have an election, you also have a rejection. And the rejection process must be the same as the election process. So then, if God, as Calvinism purports, predestinates specific individuals to go to heaven, than He predestinates specific individuals to go to hell as well. This, ladies and gentlemen, the Bible simply does not teach. We must remember two things about God's election:

**A. It comprehends "all men" potentially (Heb. 2:9; Rev. 22:17).**

**B. It comprehends "no man" unconditionally (Phil. 2:12; Acts 2:40).**

Now then, God has a plan in regard to who He is going to save, and if you are a Christian, you are a part of that plan. And listen to me: you are not a part of the plan because you are so great or so wonderful or so perfect. You are a part of the plan in spite of yourself. You are a part of the plan, not just because you chose God, but more importantly because God chose you. You are a part of God's plan because God extended mercy, grace and forgiveness to you according to His own good pleasure (Rom.

9:7-11). And so all praise and glory belongs to God. This is why Paul could so often emphasize that we are saved by grace and not by works.

*Eph 2:8-9*

*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

There can be no boasting by the elect. We are saved because God had a plan. A plan that involved an election by grace. And not only that but a plan that involved the suffering and sacrifice of His Son on our behalf.

*Acts 2:23*

*Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.*

The question has been asked, "*who was responsible for the crucifixion of Christ?*" Well from the standpoint of desire and demand, the Jews were responsible. They cried out, "crucify him, crucify him," and they got their wish. From the literal standpoint, the Romans were responsible. They were the ones who actually lifted up the Son of man upon the cross. But these players were just wicked pawns in God's scheme of redemption. The fact is, the sacrifice of Jesus was predestined, prearranged and predetermined by God Himself. You see, God knew beforehand that a plan would be necessary and so He acted, and as a result, it was possible for you and me to be selected by God. Thus, Peter says that our election is according to the foreknowledge of God.

## **II. We Are Elected "By the Sanctification of the Spirit."**

The word "sanctification" can signify either positional sanctification (a separation to God) or progressive sanctification (the holy and moral lifestyle of the saint). In this text, Peter is speaking of positional sanctification and the emphasis is on the sanctifying agent which is the Holy Spirit. We are sanctified, Peter says, "through (*by*) the Spirit."

Now let me quickly point out that there isn't anything miraculous about the Spirit's work here. The Spirit works in this area of sanctification through the medium of the Word of God. This is why Jesus prayed for sanctification by truth.

*John 17:17*

*Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth.*

Was Jesus praying for something that was contrary to His Father's will? Of course not! Jesus knew that the Spirit would be the agent in sanctification, but He also knew that the Spirit would use the Word to do the job. Paul knew this as well. Listen to him:

2 Thess 2:13

*But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:*

If the Spirit sanctifies us apart from the Word of God, that means He is changing and shaping us morally. I challenge anybody, anywhere to give me one biblical example of God ever changing the heart of a person morally, separate and apart from His word. God has always changed people by and through instruction (John 6:40-45; Acts 2:36-38; Nehemiah 9:20, 30).

No, the truth is the Spirit works on and in us only through the instrumentality of God's Word. So then, whatever influence or action which is ascribed to the Holy Spirit within us is also affirmed of the Word of God.

#### Things Attributed To Both the Spirit and the Word

<b>Spirit</b>		<b>Attributed To</b>		<b>Word</b>
Neh. 9:20	→ → →	<b>Instruct</b>	← ← ←	2 Tim. 3:17
Jn. 16:7	→ → →	<b>Convict</b>	← ← ←	Tit. 1:9
Jn. 3:5	→ → →	<b>New Birth</b>	← ← ←	1 Pet. 1:23
1 Cor. 6:11	→ → →	<b>Save</b>	← ← ←	Jas. 1:21
Rom. 15:16	→ → →	<b>Sanctify</b>	← ← ←	Jn. 17:17
1 Cor. 6:11	→ → →	<b>Wash</b>	← ← ←	Eph. 5:26
Acts 9:31	→ → →	<b>Comfort</b>	← ← ←	Rom. 15:4
Rev. 21:17	→ → →	<b>Call</b>	← ← ←	2 Thess. 2:14
Eph. 3:16	→ → →	<b>Strengthen</b>	← ← ←	Acts 20:32
2 Cor. 3:17	→ → →	<b>Set Free</b>	← ← ←	Jn. 8:32

Now how are we specifically sanctified by the Spirit? It is by, not only our belief of the Spirit's teaching, but by our acceptance of that teaching and following of it. In other words we must obey the truth (1 Thess. 1:4-6).

### III. We Are Elected "unto Obedience and Sprinkling of the Blood of Jesus Christ."

This is speaking of something more than our initial obedience to the gospel of Christ. The word "unto" here carries the meaning of *purpose*. While obedience to the gospel is a part of the election process, here Peter is telling us that obedience is also the purpose of our election. And listen to me: since this is the purpose of our election, it should be our plan for

living. One reason there is so much disobedience to God is because we allow ourselves to forget who we are serving.

*John Kenneth Galbraith, in his autobiography, A Life in Our Times, illustrates the devotion of Emily Gloria Wilson, his family's housekeeper: It had been a wearying day, and I asked Emily to hold all telephone calls while I had a nap. Shortly thereafter the phone rang. Lyndon Johnson was calling from the White House. 'Get me Ken Galbraith. This is Lyndon Johnson.' 'He is sleeping, Mr. President. He said not to disturb him.' 'Well, wake him up. I want to talk to him.' 'No, Mr. President. I work for him, not you. When I called the President back, he could scarcely control his pleasure. 'Tell that woman I want her here in the White House.'"*

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Listen to me: we must never, never, never forget the One for whom we are working. Don't give in to the passion to please man because you don't work for man, you work for God. Don't give in to the want of being wealthy because you don't work for Mammon, you work for God. Don't give in to the foolishness of the flesh because you don't work for the flesh, you work for God. You see, we can avoid a lot of the misery and misfortune of sin if we just remember for whom we work. We work for God and God demands that we obey Him above everything and everybody else.

This does not negate the importance of God's grace and the place of our Father's love and mercy in regard to salvation. We have already observed the place of grace in our election. But God still demands obedience and He always has. Faith only advocates refute it. Those who say we can't fall from grace repudiate it. But the inspired pen of Peter revealed it with clearness and clarity when he wrote that obedience was the very purpose of our election in the first place. And Peter isn't the only one who affirms this. Even Paul, the man faith only folks esteem as their champion, taught the necessity of obedience as well (Rom. 1:5; 16:26).

Finally, if there is any doubt of the worth and weight of obedience in the eye's of God, Peter removes all doubt when he refers to the sprinkling of blood in verse two. Clearly Peter's mind has drifted back to the old law of the Old Testament. William Barclay tells us that there were three occasions when blood was sprinkled in the Old Testament. (1) When a leper was healed, he was sprinkled with blood as a symbol of *cleansing* (Lev. 14:1-7). (2) When Aaron and his sons were set apart for service, they were sprinkled with blood as a sign of their sanctification (Ex. 29:20-21). (3) When the people pledged to obey God in all things, the sprinkling of blood served as a token of that commitment (Ex. 24:1-8).

Listen to me: when we obeyed the gospel of Christ and came into contact with the blood of Jesus, not only were we cleansed by that blood, and sanctified by that blood, but we were making a pledge to God that we would obey Him in all things. At the moment of our baptism we are

literally dedicating ourselves to God for all time and that, ladies and gentlemen, was the purpose of our election.

**Conclusion:**

So then, Peter opens this great epistle by emphasizing our elite election. And in doing so he teaches us three things about this election. It was...

- I. According to the foreknowledge of God
- II. By the sanctification of the Spirit
- III. Unto Obedience

We should thank God everyday that we are a part of God's chosen people. We are God's favorite, not because we deserved it, but because we have been elected.