

1 Peter 1:1-2

“The design of Peter in this Epistle is to exhort the faithful to a denial of the world and a contempt of it, so that being freed from carnal affections and all earthly hindrances, they might with their whole soul aspire after the celestial kingdom of Christ, that being elevated by hope, supported by patience, and fortified by courage and perseverance, they might overcome all kinds of temptations, and pursue this course and practice throughout life.” **John Calvin, Commentaries on the First Epistle of Peter**

Author: The letter claims to be from Peter (1:1), and seems to be from someone close to Jesus Himself (5:1). It makes sense that this is Peter's first letter with what is said in 2 Peter 3:1. Historically, by the end of the 2nd century and beginning of the 3rd century, the letter is explicitly identified as from the Apostle Peter (Schreiner, 1 Peter, p. 22). The most common argument against a Petrine authorship is the quality of the Greek used - how could a common fisherman have such a polished vocabulary? However, this argument loses its weight when one realizes that Greek was the language of commerce, and had deeply penetrated the culture in Galilee. Peter, being a businessman, would have most certainly known Greek, and been very well versed to advance in his business. Though not formally trained, Peter could have easily, been a very sophisticated writer, well versed in the Greek language. As Schreiner summarizes this argument, he remarks, “We must beware of an educational snobbery that refuses to recognize the intellectual and literary gifts of those in business.”

Date: Most likely in the mid 60s AD (5:13 says it was written from Babylon, which is most likely Rome). This seems to fit in with the history of the times. While his audience was suffering persecution, it does not appear that it was government sponsored (i.e., Nero or Domitian), so it is reasonable to conclude it was written around 62-63 AD, right before the great Nero persecution. If Peter was referring to the persecution under Nero, that would have occurred after July 19, 64 AD (the day Rome burned and Nero fiddled).

Audience: Both Jews (1:1) and Gentiles (1:14,18, 2:10, 4:3), but I would suggest most were Gentiles (1:14 – “living in ignorance” applies to Gentiles, as well as 1:18, “futile ways inherited from your forefathers”). The location of these exiles are in what is now Turkey, and they formed a circle that would be the postal route.

To these persecuted, oppressed believers, Peter begins his epistle by reminding them of the sovereign work of God in their salvation. While this world will hate them, oppress them, and even kill some of them, they can rest in the glorious salvation that has been worked out by the Triune God from before the beginning of time. And yet, many in our day shrink back from this great doctrine. We must approach such a weighty subject the same way we approach any thoughts of our infinitely, glorious God – with absolute humility and dependence upon Him, recognizing that His ways and thoughts are above ours (Isaiah 55:9).

“The only reason anybody believes in election is because he finds it taught in God's Word. No man or number of men ever originated this doctrine. Like the doctrine of eternal punishment, it conflicts with the dictates of the carnal mind and is repugnant to the sentiments of the unregenerate heart and like the doctrine of the holy trinity and the miraculous birth of our Savior, the truth of election must be received with simple unquestioning faith.” **Arthur Pink, The Doctrine of Election**

vs 1: Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ – Peter uses the name given him by Jesus, not his full name, Simon, son of John (John 1:42). Peter did not have to defend his apostleship (authority) as Paul often did (Galatians 1:1 Ephesians 1:1 2 Timothy 1:1). Peter had been directly chosen by Jesus (John 15:16), commissioned by Christ (Matthew 28:18-20) and had received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). But apostle does give the letter heightened authority – the words are from God.

Peter now addresses his readers from two perspectives: first, what is their heavenly identification, and second, what is their earthly identification.

Elect – Their heavenly identification (*eklektos*), they are “the called out ones,” the believers. Another way of saying it is they are chosen (Psalm 135:4, Matthew 24:22,31, Acts 13:48, Romans 8:33, Colossians 3:12, 2 Timothy 2:10). This

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sovereignty of God is the one characteristic of God that makes Him God (**Exodus 33:18-19**).

Exiles (aliens, pilgrims) – Webster defines an exile as “a person who is in a state of absence from his own country or home.” Believers on earth live as those who do not permanently reside here. We are not natives, we are not settled residents – we are not home. As Christians, our citizenship is in heaven (**Philippians 3:20, Hebrews 11:13-16, 1 John 2:15-17**).

When Peter puts these two terms together, we have a real paradox. We are the elect, chosen, saved ones of God, and yet we are called out to live in this present world as exiles and aliens. God is for us, but we must, as Jesus did, be made perfect through suffering (**Hebrews 2:10**). As such, we are called out by God to live in the wilderness, endure hardship and suffering, so that we may be properly prepared for glory (**Revelation 12:13-17**).

vs 2: Election “according to the foreknowledge of God”

Notice the following about this election:

1. The nature of our election – God chooses people to be His own (**1 Peter 2:9-10, Acts 15:14**). It is **NOT** due to any inherent redeeming value in those who are chosen, but God’s great grace and mercy on display (**Deuteronomy 7:6-7, 14:2, Romans 9:10-12**). Our election is a gift from the Father to the Son (**John 17:9**).

2. The condition of our election -- we are pilgrims (strangers) to this earthly home. As such, we do not love the things of this world, but seek that which is above (**Philippians 3:7-11, James 4:4, 1 Peter 2:11**).

3. The source of our election – the foreknowledge of God the Father. What exactly is this foreknowledge? Does this simply mean God ‘looked down the corridors of time,’ saw who would believe, and marked those people out as elect, chosen. While that is a popular view (maybe the predominant view), there are problems with this interpretation:

A. Contextually, the same word is used in **vs. 1:20**, where Peter says, “**He [Christ] was foreknown before the foundation of the world**” (*prognosis* in **vs. 2**, *proginosko* in **vs. 20** -- same roots). Now, did God look down the corridors of time and see that Christ would be the redeemer of the elect, and so He elected Him? Not a chance. What we can ascertain is, whatever the meaning of Christ being foreknown is the same way the elect people of God are foreknown.

To help us understand the meaning, let’s go to **Acts 2:23**: “This Jesus, delivered up according to the definite (predetermined) plan and **foreknowledge** of God” Here, we see foreknowledge is linked directly to the predetermined plan of God. In fact, this foreknowledge is the outworking of that predetermined plan -- it is the relational aspect. Jesus was predestined to be the redeemer, and was foreknown in that capacity (i.e., relational) with the Father. This idea of God knowing His people is all over the Scriptures (see **Jeremiah 1:5, Amos 3:2, John 10:14** -- see **Matthew 7:21-23** for the opposite view - word for knew is *ginosko*). So, this foreknowledge is really a relational thing -- God chose His elect people because He predetermined to have a relationship with them.

B. if God would have to wait to see who would believe before electing them, man would be sovereign, not God. Man would share the glory with God. However, we know God will not give His glory to another (**Isaiah 48:11, 1 Corinthians 1:26-31**).

“I believe the doctrine of election, because I am quite sure that if God had not chosen me I should never have chosen him; and I am sure he chose me before I was born, or else he never would have chosen me afterwards; and he must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find any reason in myself why he should have looked upon me with special love.” **Charles Spurgeon, A Defense of Calvinism**

C. Finally, salvation would ultimately be a work of man (all must have the moral ability to choose or reject), and those that choose to believe would do so because of something in themselves (i.e., their superior mental capacity, better educated, etc.). Yet we know the Scriptures reject man’s work as a means to salvation (**Romans 3:20, Ephesians 2:8-9, 2 Timothy 1:9**).

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4. The application of our election -- *in the sanctification of the Spirit*. There is a difference in being elect and being saved. We have been elect since before the beginning of time, but we are saved at a particular point in time. The plan of election (from the Father) comes to fruition through the regenerating (sanctifying -- setting apart) work of the Holy Spirit (**Titus 3:5-7, 1 Peter 2:9 (Acts 15:7-9)**, Spirit's work is linked to "purifying their hearts by faith"). The Holy Spirit is the one who applies the electing work of the Father and brings us to salvation (**2 Thessalonians 2:13**).

5. The purpose of our election -- *for obedience to Jesus Christ!* Peter makes it extremely clear here -- we are elect and sanctified so that we may be obedient. We are saved so that we may be obedient and bring God glory (**Ephesians 2:10, 1 Timothy 6:3, 2 Timothy 1:9**).

Romans 8:29-30 - I only want to look at the first part of this rich section. Paul tells us here that "*whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son*" (**vs. 29a**). Paul here also links predestination and foreknowledge as did Peter. For our purposes, it is of importance to note that Paul uses the same word (*proginosko*) here as Peter did in **1 Peter 1:20**. Again, it makes no sense to say the Father 'looked down the corridors of time' and saw what Jesus would do and therefore determined the plan of salvation, so it makes not sense to say the Father did the same for the saints here.

It is also very important to note here that the text says, "For *whom* He foreknew," not, "for *what* He foreknew." This again points to a relational aspect, not merely a looking into the window of the future.

"Before salvation came into this world election marched in the very forefront. And it had for its work *the billeting 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, it mapped the road in which salvation should travel to that house. Predestination ordained every step of the great army of salvation. Predestination 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 to the house that salvation does never overstep the bounds and 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.*" **Charles Spurgeon, Things That Accompany Salvation**

For sprinkling with His blood - What exactly does this mean? We might initially think this refers to salvation, but that does not fit in with the chronology Peter has given to us here. We are told we are elect according to the foreknowledge of God (predestined), we are saved (sanctification of the Spirit), and the purpose of this salvation is for our obedience to God. Obedience and this sprinkling with His blood would seem to be something that occurs after one is saved.

If we look back into the Old Testament, there were only a couple of times the people were sprinkled with blood. It was not in any of the sin offerings, nor was it at the Passover. One time was in the consecration of Aaron and his sons for the office of priest (**Leviticus 8:30**). The other was when a leper was declared clean (**Leviticus 14:7**). Neither of these instances would seem to be what Peter would be referring to here.

However, we see one other time the people of God are sprinkled in blood (**Exodus 24:3-8**). We see Moses reading the word of God to the people, and the people committing themselves to obedience. To seal this covenant of obedience, Moses sprinkled half of the blood on the people. That is our response and responsibility when we are saved – to obey. However, rather than seeing this as bondage again, notice what happened to the other half of the blood – it was thrown against the altar (**vs. 6**). That signifies forgiveness – God's forgiveness for His people when they sin. And rather than the blood of an animal, we now have the blood of Jesus that atones for our sins. So, what we have here is the New Covenant. Our part is to obey, and God's part is to forgive when we fall short, and all of this is accomplished by the blood of Jesus. We cannot talk about being saved and not speak of forgiveness and obedience (**Acts 5:31-32**).

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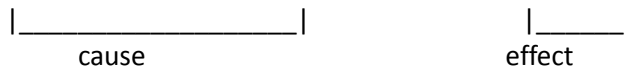
Peter ends his opening by praying grace and peace would be multiplied to his readers.

Grace - Encompasses the concepts of mercy, love and remission of sin. Grace is from God to man.

Peace - A state of internal joy (not based on external circumstances).

We have a cause/effect relationship here:

God's sovereign election ---> brings grace to us ---> leads to obedience and peace



So What?

1. The doctrine of God's sovereign electing grace brings humility – our salvation is by God's sheer grace and mercy.

"I know nothing, nothing again that is 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?'"

"I think election, to a saint, is one of the most stripping doctrines in all the world--to take away all trust in the flesh, or all reliance on anything except Jesus Christ. How often do we wrap ourselves up in our own righteousness, and dress ourselves with the false pearls and gems of our own works and doings. We begin to say, 'Now I am saved, because I did this or that.' Instead of that, it is faith and faith alone that saves; that faith and that alone unites to the Lamb, irrespective of works, although saving faith will produce works after salvation. How often do we lean on some work, other than that of our own beloved, and trust in some power, other than what comes from on high. Now if we would have this power taken from us, then we must consider election. Stop, my soul, and consider this. God loved you before you had a being. He loved you when you were dead in disobedience and sin, and sent His Son to die for you. He purchased you with His precious blood, before you could even pronounce His name. Can you then be proud?"

Charles Spurgeon, Election, sermon delivered September 2, 1855, at the New Park Street Chapel

2. Salvation, and the truth that we are elect, will drive us towards holy living (**Colossians 3:12-13**).

"Nothing under the gracious influence of the Holy Spirit can make a Christian more holy than the thought that he is chosen. Shall I sin, he says, after God has chosen me? Shall I transgress after such love? Shall I go astray after so much loving kindness and tender mercy? Nay, my God. Since thou hast chosen me, I will love Thee, I will live to Thee, I will give myself to Thee to be Thine forever, solemnly consecrating myself to Thy service." Spurgeon (as above)

3. Election will bring boldness in the midst of persecution, and patience and endurance in suffering (**Romans 8:31-38**).

"Election in the Christians should make him very FEARLESS and BOLD. No man will be so bold as he who believes that he is elect of God. What worry does he have about man, if he is chosen of his Maker? What will he care for the pitiful chirpings of some tiny sparrows when he knows that he is an eagle of the royal race? Will he care when the beggar makes fun of him, when the royal blood of heaven runs in his veins? Will he fear if all the world stands against him? If all the earth is at war, he dwells in perfect peace, for he is in the secret place of the tabernacle of the Most High, in the great pavilion of the Almighty. 'I am God's,' says he, 'I am distinct from other men. They are of an inferior race. Am I not noble? Am I not one of the aristocrats of heaven? Is not my name written in God's book?' Does he care for the world? No: like the lion that doesn't care for the barking of the dog, he smiles at all his enemies; and when they come too near him, he moves and cuts them to pieces." Spurgeon, (as above)

4. This doctrine fuels our desire for evangelism (**2 Timothy 2:8-10**).