

## 1 Peter 1:2

“The Question Of Election”

Having developed in our last gathering *who* wrote this epistle, on the basis of *what* authority, *where* it was being circulated and *why*; today we want to make a quick entry straight into the text. Because even though I generally like to spend a few minutes introducing a text, the fact is that there is so much doctrine, so much substance *stuffed* into the single Vs that we’re going to survey that we want to get into it as directly as we can in hopes of giving adequate *attention* to it in the time we have allotted. So let’s read beginning in Vs 1

Vs1-2

Peter hasn’t even gotten beyond what would become Vs 2 and already he’s taken us out deep into doctrinal waters. I don’t know about you but to me it’s mind boggling how that he without any form of justification/clarification, without any explanation just jumps head 1<sup>st</sup> into these issues concerning *election*, God’s *foreknowledge*, *sanctification*, our *obedience* through the work of the Spirit in our lives and the cleansing power of the blood of Christ. All of it being wrapped up and handed to us (in what would become a single Vs) with a nice little ribbon regarding the reality of the tri-unity of the Godhead wrapped *around* it and woven through the fabric *of* it. He doesn’t *explain* any *of* it, or share his thoughts *pertaining to* it; he simply states it matter of factly (as if to say “have fun withit”) and moves on.

Did you see that by the way? The way that Peter effortlessly introduces the Tri-unity of the Godhead in his epistle? Don’t let anyone tell you that the bible doesn’t teach the doctrine of the Trinity, they try to say that because the word “Trinity” isn’t in the bible that the bible doesn’t teach it. Hey, it may not be a word that’s mentioned specifically, it’s just something that’s woven *obviously* into the very fabric of the scripture; the fact that there’s only 1 God but He’s represented in 3 distinct Persons. Now don’t ask me to explain it because this text is already full enough of things that will absolutely wrack our brains, we don’t need to try and wrestle withone more. We know there’s only 1 God, we mentioned that Wednesday evening, “*Thus says the Lord, the King of Israel, And his Redeemer, the Lord of hosts: ‘I am the First and I am the Last; Besides Me there is no God.’*” Isa 44:6 and Again, “*“Is there a God besides Me? Indeed there is no other Rock; I know not one.”*” Isa 44:8 Yet the bible is definite in its depiction and declaration of 3 distinct persons who make up the Godhead, even from the beginning where we read, “*Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness;’*” Gen 1:26

You read that and you think, “What’s this ‘Let *us*’ business, and the whole ‘*Our* image’ thing, who are You talking to?” But there it is, and we’re being let in on a conversation between the Divine counsel that God takes within Himself. “In the beginning *God* created the heavens and the earth.” (Gen 1:1) Yet as most of you well know the word “God” in that passage is the Hebrew *plural* form of the word, a reference to the Trinity, or the Tri-unity of God. Of course the Trinity is represented in numerous places throughout the N.T. Probably the most common place that’s sighted is at the baptism of Jesus there in Matt Ch 3 when after He was baptized the heavens opened up and the Spirit alighted upon Him and a voice came from heaven saying, “This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased.” So you see the Father, the Son and the Spirit all distinctly acknowledged and identified right there.

Jesus spoke on more than one occasion of the fact that *He* would ascend to the *Father* and send the *Spirit* to minister *to* and empower the believers. Here in 1<sup>st</sup> Peter Ch 1 Vs 2 we see the consent and the co-operation of the fullness of the Trinity in the accomplishing of our salvation. Their acts are commensurate, or proportionate and corresponding to one another. All 3 are involved; we have the election of the Father, the sanctification of the Spirit, and the redemption of the Son. You might understand it this way, whomever the Father elects the Spirit sanctifies and the Son cleanses and redeems. But to deny the power and place of even 1 is to offset and invalidate the work of the other, they work in tandem, together as one (because they are 1).

Vs2

“Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,” so what’s the deal with this whole “election” thing? Are people “elected” unto salvation? Well, there’s no real way around acknowledging the fact that those who believe in Christ for the forgiveness of sin, who’ve received Him as their Savior, the bible refers to that group of people as God’s “elect.” Jesus said, “*You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain,*” John 15:16 After God confronted Saul (who would be Paul) on the road to Damascus He told Ananias to go and minister to him saying, “*Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel.*” Acts 9:15 In 1<sup>st</sup> John we read it like this, “*We love Him because He first loved us.*” 1 John 4:19 Which is to say that God is the One who initiates the love relationship between Himself and the individual. It’s something that I call Divine initiative and human responsibility, God is always the initiator, man is the one who *responds* to His initiative.

Now, there's something that we need to get a grip on and wrap our understanding around regarding God's election and that is this; election is a term that the bible ascribes *only* to the family of believers. It is *never* employed with reference to *non*-believers. What that means is that though God elects unto *salvation*, He *never*, under *any circumstance* elects *anyone* for *condemnation*. As a matter of fact the bible tells us, "*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.*" 2 Peter 3:9 So God doesn't elect people for condemnation, as a matter of fact the *invitation* unto *salvation* goes out to every individual. The bible declares, "*For whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be (not "might be if they're of the elect") saved.*" Rom 10:13 Jesus said, "*If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink.*" John 7:37 He said, "*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*" Matt 11:28 and Again, "*All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.*" John 6:37 So we understand that His invitation to "whoever will" is "come unto Me," we further understand that it's a legitimate invitation, God's not playing games with us. However we also realize that there has to be a *response* to the invitation and that response is your responsibility, it's my responsibility. There's Divine initiative and human responsibility. Meaning "Yes" God elects, and "Yes" you have a choice. Remember the words of Joshua to the children of Israel? "*And if it seems evil to you to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve... But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.*" Josh 24:15 He exhorted them to exercise their capacity and responsibility of choice as to whether or not they were going to submit to and serve the Lord. Humanity has a choice there's just no way around it.

You see when you begin to crack into the concept of election you begin to get into topics like God's sovereignty, man's freewill, how they come together and balance one another out, and in reality there's no one on this planet who has all that figured out.

You've heard it said that if God is small enough for me to figure out than He's not big enough for me to worship. The illustration has been used of a set of train tracks, both running parallel to one another and both working in harmony to get the train to the desired destination.

Though they never really come together both are necessary and if one diverts the train derails. I suppose that's about as good of an illustration as anything because God's sovereignty and man's freewill are both equally true biblically, neither one canceling out the other but working harmoniously together in order to take us to our ultimate destination into the presence of the Lord. I'm not trying to confuse you on the issue, however it's simply a fact that we believe based upon what the bible teaches. God never asked us to *understand* all of His word, He asked us to *believe* all of His word.

“Ok, we get it; election is a truism of the scripture, (as is the reality of the human choice) how then do I determine if I’m of the elect?” That’s simple, receive Jesus Christ into your heart, ask Him to forgive you of your sin, believe upon Him for your righteousness before God, the salvation of your soul and you’ll discover you’re one of the elect. “Well, what if I never call upon the Lord, or don’t want Jesus to save my soul?” Then I guess you’re not one of the elect... But the promise is there for you, anytime, and anywhere should you (from your heart) call upon the name of the Lord, (it’s a standing invitation) you will be saved, and you’ll discover you’ve been elect from the foundation of the earth but that you only came into the realization of it when you were 19, or 24, or 44, or 79 or whatever.

“Ok, another question, what then is the basis upon which God elects?” Let me get to that in a brief moment, 1<sup>st</sup> let me tell you on what basis He does not elect. God *does not* elect on the basis of some quality that is found in me. The bible is clear that *in me* that is *in my flesh no good thing* dwells. God did not look upon me and see something of unique or particular quality about me and think, “I’ve got to have this guy on My team.” I’d love to think that, however the fact is it’s simply not true. The premise upon which God elects isn’t found within us, it’s found within Him, it’s an outpouring of His grace and mercy, it’s not about how good *I am* it’s about how good *He is*.

Peter tells us right here in Vs 2 the attribute that God exercises with regard to election, did you see it? He says, “Elect *according to the foreknowledge* of God the Father.” Which means a couple of things, #1 it means that God chooses based upon the knowledge that He has beforehand. The bible says, “*Known to God from eternity are all His works.*” Acts 15:18 Think about that. That means that God has known the end from the very beginning, every *detail* about *everything* God has perfect and precise knowledge of and from that data base of perfect knowledge He makes His decisions.

The other day I was just sort of thinking about and allowing my mind to be blown with the reality of exactly how much there is to know on this planet. How much information is there, how much knowledge and insight is there to be gleaned in this world? Think about it, how much is there to know in the world of agriculture? Has it all been tapped? Not even close, how about meteorology? How often does the weather man get it right? What about medicine, or science, history, or anatomy, what about things like ecology, or chemistry, there’s physics, music theory, oceanography, geology, the list is endless. But then there are specialties in each general category.

What kind of medicine do you want to practice? How many options are there within the realm of science, what part of the anatomy do I want to understand most fully? Neurology, cardiology, optometry, how about dentistry...you see what I mean? What nuance of history do I want to study most fully? How many species of saltwater (or freshwater) creatures are there and what is there to know about each of them? What about mammals or insects? We've yet to consider things off this planet, terrestrial studies, universal/solar system type insights. Then we start to think beyond that about spiritual studies, theology, eschatology, various matters of doctrine, language studies...Now I've read that the average adult human brain weighs about 3lbs, and people will spend their whole lives pursuing the insight of 1 thing, or perhaps 2 or 3 really effectively.

Yet in every field of everything God knows everything there is to know, is there anything God *can't do*? Yeah, here's one of them...He can't learn, He knows *everything*, which means (listen) He knows all about...*you!* He knows you physically (your anatomy), He knows you mentally/psychologically, He knows where you're at emotionally and He knows where you're at *spiritually*. He knows the # of hairs on your head (or the lack thereof) every time you take a shower or comb your hair He receives automatic updates as to how many hairs you have remaining. Actually He knew how many you'd lose in advance. He knows how many grains of sand are on the seashores of the earth. The bible teaches that He's named all the stars, how many stars are there? I don't know, God does... "*To whom then will you liken Me, Or to whom shall I be equal? says the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, And see who has created these things, Who brings out their host by number; He calls them all by name, By the greatness of His might And the strength of His power; Not one is missing.*" Isa 40:25-26

For all of that we're just a spec in this universe, do you realize that about 1.3 million earths could fit in the sun? Of course the sun is a pretty small star in the grand scheme of things considering that somewhere to the tune of 150 million suns could fit into the giant star Betelgeuse, yet God knows every detail about all of it. Kinda makes us wonder why we have trouble trusting Him doesn't it?

Now, because He knows all He can't make wrong decisions, He always does the right thing, and in His foreknowledge He elects...He knows every decision you'll ever make, He knows if you'll respond to Him and if you will He knows when you'll do it.

Yet understand that foreknowledge speaks of more than a simple understanding of facts, when the bible speaks of God *foreknowing* it's not simply saying *what* He knows but *who* He knows, it speaks of knowing in the sense of relationship, to know intimately. Meaning to set one's love on a person, or persons in a personal way. God told Jeremiah, "*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; Before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.*" Jer 1:5

In speaking to Israel God said in Amos 3:2, “*You only have I known of all the families of the earth;*” God set His electing love upon the nation of Israel. Of course Jesus said, “*I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own.*” John 10:14 and Again, “*My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*” John 10:27 We read in, 1 Cor 8:3 “*But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him.*” Remember these words of Jesus? “*Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’*” Matt 7:22-23

You see it’s all about knowing Him, and being known by Him. One more, “*For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*” Rom 8:29 Here’s the idea, you’re not an afterthought in the heart or the plan of God ☺.

Now as I mentioned earlier salvation includes the full body of the Godhead, it goes beyond the foreknowledge of the Father and His electing love, it also includes the work of the Spirit. “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, *in sanctification of the Spirit,*” We read in 2 Thess 2:13-14, “*But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Once again all 3 persons of the Godhead represented in the work of Salvation. Chosen by God for *salvation* through *sanctification* by the Spirit.

There is not so much as a single aspect of the Christian life that the Holy Spirit is not essential to. He awakens us *to* and convicts us *of* the reality of sin, He woos me, draws me *to* the Lord comes into my life and seals me once I’ve laid down my life *before* the Lord. He then empowers me to lead a life that’s set apart (or sanctified) unto the Lord, no longer bound by the chains of sin. His work in me will bear fruit through me to the glory of God, the fruit of the Spirit is love (the agape all giving non self seeking love of God). Of course the attributes of love include joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Those godly attributes in you are the fruit of the Spirit in your life, He aids you in your prayers, assures you that you belong to the Lord and that your sins are forgiven...He sanctifies you, sets you apart, why? (See it) That you might be *obedient*, what that means is that God has a plan for you, a purpose that He’s prepared for you that you should walk in it. The bible says, “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*” Eph 2:10 You’ve been set apart by the Spirit of God that you might walk in obedience to the *word* of God and the *will* of God for your life. Jesus said, “*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*” John 14:15 What’s the idea there? Obedience.

We read in 1 John 2:3-5, “*Now by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments He who says, ‘I know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoever keeps His word, truly the love of God is perfected in him.*” Chosen by the Father, set apart by the Spirit, (for the purpose of obedience), and cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ

Or as we read it here, “and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” All 3 represented in the work of Salvation. You might think of it like this; as far as the Father is concerned I was saved when He chose me in Christ before the foundations of the earth. As far as the Son is concerned I was saved when He laid down His life and shed His blood for me upon the cross of Calvary. But as far as the Spirit is concerned I was saved in the spring/summer of 1991 when He was dealing with me while I was all alone on my folks back porch and I cried out to God realizing that my will was taking me to hell and I needed His will in my life. Then it all came together, but each Person of the Godhead had a part in bringing me to salvation; God’s sovereignty was at work, my freewill was being exercised and by the power of the Holy Spirit the blood of Christ was imputed to me and I was cleansed. Since then the Holy Spirit has been working on me, and in me, maturing me, working His will out through me. Listen, God wants to work in you, He wants to bring you into maturity. How many people will have been believers for 50 yrs yet go into the presence of God as babes? That’s why you’ll find some guys who are maybe only 25 yrs old who are elders in the church.

While others who are 55 or 65 are still immature in the word of God, one is open to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit in their life, the other doesn’t really pursue it, isn’t really open to it. Oh, they know the Lord, they’re just sadly content where they’re at rather than moving on it to maturity.

But it’s important that we see that, an essential result of election will be sanctification and obedience. Some fall short of that understanding thinking that election has only to do with either going to heaven or hell, yet Peter reminds us that in a very real way it touches earth as well. I would doubt one’s claim to be elect if there were no evidence of *sanctification* and *obedience*.

Now, before we wind down and wrap up I want to comment briefly upon the sprinkling of the blood of Christ. We realize that the blood of Jesus didn’t save us while it was still flowing through His veins, it was when His blood was willingly shed, when His life was poured out that we received life. He gave His life that we might have life.

But I want to comment on this “sprinkling” aspect of the blood. 3 Occasions that we find in the scriptures where we find the ceremonial sprinkling of the blood on people. The 1<sup>st</sup> of which was at the establishing of the old covenant at Sinai, you can find that in Ex 24:8. The 2<sup>nd</sup> time was at the ordination of Aaron and his sons into the priesthood (Ex 29:21). The 3<sup>rd</sup> occasion was reserved for the ceremonial cleansing of a leper (Lev 14:6-7). Now as you know leprosy in the scripture is also a picture of sin in that it corrupts, it decays, it numbs it’s victim to things that work ruin and do damage.

What I’m saying is that the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus on us accomplishes the same things. Through the blood of Christ God forms a covenant with us, through His blood we’re ordained as a royal priesthood unto God; and through the cleansing flow of His blood we’re washed from our sin and the corruption found therein. That’s what the blood of Christ does for you and for me.

The question of election...if it’s about as clear as mud for you now, that’s about all I can do with it. Oh we could dig deeper I suppose but your end result would be essentially the same. Once you choose the Lord you realize that it was in reality He who chose you. Don’t wrestle with it, rejoice over it. If you’re wondering about where you’re at that’s probably because the Lord is tugging on your heart strings as well, don’t kick against it, surrender to it. Let the Lord, *be* the Lord...of your life.

#### Prayer Points:

Father, I don’t know why we as people wrestle with things like Your electing love, but at times we do. Would You forgive us and help us to simply rest in the fact that You are good, that Your plans for us are good, and that You’re not willing that *any* should perish, that’s Your heart. Empower us by Your Spirit to lead lives *set apart* to You, in *obedience* to You, and to Your word. We thank You for Your grace, and the fact that we were in Your heart even before the foundations of the earth, and we give You praise.

If you’ve not come to Christ I want to encourage you that you no longer fight against Him, but that you willingly surrender *to* Him. He’s poured out His blood for you. God wants you to enter in to the covenant He’s extended to you in Christ, His righteousness for your sin, beauty for ashes, The oil of joy for mourning, The garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; He wants to welcome you into a royal priesthood and cleanse you of your sin, don’t resist it, receive it. You’ll never be the same...