

Do Not Be Surprised at the Fiery Ordeal Among You

An Expositional Journey Through 1 Peter

1 Peter 1:1-2

3 Chosen by Foreknowledge and Sanctified to Obey

September 17, 2017

1 Peter 1:1-2

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen² according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

To the Glory of God

Now it is certainly *possible* that I am making way too much about things like Doctrine and Biblical Precision. It is *possible* that I am simply a person who likes a lot of details, and so, that "bent" is present in my Ministry. Now I don't believe that is true, but I have to say it is *possible* because what I say and how I conduct my Ministry and the issues that I stress in my Sermons are *not* inspired. *Everything* I do and say and think is flawed to some degree, and it is tainted with flesh and my own fallenness. And so, even though I will be very quick to justify my propensity to "get the Gospel right", I must always leave open the possibility that I need to make adjustments and do a better job.

But whatever fallacies are present with *me* and my ministry simply do not exist with the Apostle Peter, at least they are not true with the Epistle that is before us. You see, **the Epistle of 1 Peter** is one of only 66 Books in the history of the world that *is* "inspired". And that means that this Book was literally "exhaled" by God. God the Holy Spirit moved upon Peter to *cause* him and *empower* him to write down what he thought the saved people of the 1st Century, who had been

scattered, needed. And Peter used his *own* language and his *own* terminology and his *own* ideas and his *own* judgment. And yet, *somehow* (and we really don't know how), what Peter wrote down was *exactly* what God wanted. And God wanted Peter to write these words down, not only for the scattered aliens of his day, but to all of us who love and serve Jesus faithfully in the 21st Century, and who simply don't fit in with the lost people of this world.

So, this Epistle is part of a very select and distinguished collection of Books that make up what is called "The Canon of Scripture", which is the "Rule" or the "Standard" of all that God has sovereignly revealed to Man. And the Canon of Scripture contains all that we need for both life and godliness. And it is the "measurement" of what it means to be a Christian and part of Christ's Church. So, Who God is, and Who Jesus is, and What Jesus said and did, And what all that means is told to us in these Books. So, what it means to be saved, and what it means to be holy and righteous, and how to obey God, and how the Church is supposed to function, and what we are to think about Money and Marriage and Children and Business and Government and Heaven and Hell are all contained in these 66 Books.

And that means, by default, that the Canon is "closed". It is "finished". It is "complete". All that God chose to reveal to us has been revealed and written down. There isn't any more information to be received. And that means that Christianity has already been *established* through what the closed Canon has revealed. The Church of Jesus has been "set up" on the earth, and it will never be "set up" again. Now, it is true that the Church and Christianity needs to be *propagated* around the world, but it doesn't need to be *established*. It has *already* been established from the Scriptures.

So, the gifting and the anointing and the Offices and the Ministries that God gave that *established* Christianity have faded away for the simple reason that they accomplished the task the God intended. Now we need the gifting and the anointing and the Offices and the Ministries that will help to propagate and herald and promote that which has already been established.

So, it isn't true, as the Roman religious organization teach, that the Church *created* the Scriptures. That simply isn't true. The Church *received* the Scriptures, but it was the Scriptures that created the Church. And this is why the Office of Apostle is closed today. The

Ministry that Jesus called these men to was successful, and the Church and Christianity was established on the earth through the Revelation that God gave to these men and to the men that these men designated, and the Scriptures were formulated. And so, nobody will ever establish the Church or Christianity again.

So, you don't have the Church unless and until the 66 Books of the Divine Revelation of Scripture are being preached and taught and understood and obeyed. And that is true precisely because without knowing and understanding the Word of God all we are doing is guessing and wandering.

And this is so true that when somebody lays claim to having "another revelation of Jesus", as the Mormons do, we categorically reject both them and that. But that also means that we reject what others say, when they tell us that God has spoken to them or God has given them further information, or when they say they died and went to heaven and came back to give us additional information.

You see, Christianity is the only religion in the history of the world that teaches that sinners are rescued from God's Wrath by what they "believe" and what they "confess" and what they "trust in", and *not* because of what they "do".

All of our "doing" in Christianity from "worshipping" to "obeying" to "loving" to "serving" to "preaching" to "reading" to "praying" to "going and telling" to "baptizing" and "holding each one accountable", all of that "doing" comes *after* we believe, *after* we trust, and *after* we confess. All false religions teach that human beings have to "do" something to earn God's Favor. And that is what makes them to be "false".

And that is pretty straight forward. But, since that is true, that means that *what* we believe and *what* we confess and *what* we trust in matters. And that is precisely *why* I say it *matters* what we are being taught and what we believe. Since we are saved by what we believe and what we trust in, we have to believe and trust in the "right thing", the "correct thing", that which God has spoken infallibly in Scripture.

And that is *why* we have to be so very careful to correctly and fully *interpret* the Word of God. So, if being "saved" is believing and trusting in the Truth, then being deceived is believing and trusting in a lie, something that *isn't* true, something *outside* of Scripture, and something that God did *not* say.

So, by default, we have to be on our guard about things like False Teachers and False Doctrine, even if we really would rather not. To stick our head in the sand and pretend that everybody who “names the Name of Jesus” is genuine is to be very foolish and very careless with your own soul, and it is to be willfully deceived. And sooner or later, somebody will take you up on it.

That is why it is so frustrating to me to hear so many leaders in the modern Church either *downplay* the importance of Sound, Biblical Doctrine or *eliminate* it altogether. And it is directly tied in with this effort to minimize Divine Truth that so many people in the visible Church of our day simply do not know *what* they believe or *why* they believe it.

Now Doctrine is defined as:

A particular principle, position, or policy taught or advocated. Something that is taught. A body or system of teachings relating to a particular subject

Now the Bible is the “Word of God”. The 66 Books of the Holy Bible are God-breathed Divine Truth. And by that definition, *everything* that the Bible teaches is, therefore, “Doctrine”. But we must understand that whatever you *personally* believe is *also* “Doctrine”. And the problem is that *some* or *all* of what we believe, as individuals, just isn’t true. What we believe as individuals is a *mixture* of what the Bible says, combined with something you heard in a song or read in a book or saw in a movie, combined with things that Momma taught you, combined with things you have experienced during your lifetime. So, our “personal doctrine” is really a hodge-podge combination of a lot of things, some of which are *not* Divinely Inspired.

Anything that anyone teaches, and that which they want you to accept and believe and trust in, is Doctrine. And so, there are three different classifications of Doctrine:

1. **Divine Truth:** that which God has revealed in Scripture.
2. **Man-made Doctrine:** that which people develop through experience, logic, and human reason versus Scripture.
3. **False Doctrine:** that which comes from satan for the purpose of deception.

Only the **Divine Truth** of Scripture is inspired, and thus, is the only infallible Doctrine that is free from all error. And during the fires of the Protestant Reformation, the concept of "Sola Scriptura" was hammered out that says all Teaching and all Doctrine of the Christian Church must come *from* the Scriptures, and from the Scriptures *alone*. And this concept *assures* that the Doctrine we have is in accord with Divine Truth, and is, therefore, correct, and something on which we can stake our eternal souls.

Now, whereas **False Doctrine** is of the devil and is *always* evil and *always* wrong, **Man-made Doctrine** is a bit harder to discern. There are times that people develop what they believe based on human reasoning or logic completely *excluding* the Scriptures. And that is wrong, and it places Man-made Doctrine under the heading of "False Doctrine" because that Teaching dishonors God and is destructive to people precisely because God didn't say it.

But there are also times that people develop entire *systems* of Theology based on human reasoning and logic *within* their honest understanding of what the Scriptures say. Now they're still wrong. But they're wrong *honestly*. They are *honestly* trying to teach the Truth, but they are taking some passages out of context or they are excluding a comprehensive understanding of that Passage.

And, in these cases, the only remedy is for somebody else to show them the Truth, using only the concept of Sola Scriptura. And, over time, most of these people can be convinced. At least, that is my prayer.

So, the purpose of preaching like this, and the purpose of serious and deep Bible Study, is to *expose* those fallacies and those Man-made inconsistencies and those flaws in our own personal Doctrine by revealing the Divine Truth of Scripture.

So, whereas, you might criticize *me* for spending so much time being so precise about Doctrine, you would be hard-pressed to criticize Peter. And yet, Peter begins this inspired Epistle with Doctrine. In fact, he begins his Letter with one of the *deepest* and most *profound* and most *controversial* Doctrines in the entire Bible, the Doctrine of Sovereign Election or the Doctrine of Unconditional Election. Look again at verses 1-2:

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen

2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure.

Now the last phrase of verse 1 says something profound. It says:

... who are chosen

... so, Peter wrote this Epistle:

To those who reside as aliens, scattered... who are chosen...

So, the *first thing* that Peter wants you to know is that you are chosen. You are *not* aliens first. You have *not* been persecuted and scattered first. No, you are *chosen* first. And that means that our *alienation* with this present evil world and the persecution in the form of our *scattering* flows out from the fact that we have been chosen. So, contrary to what many in the modern Church believe, Peter thought that deep and serious and profound Doctrine would be helpful to those who are being persecuted.

Now we must understand that Peter and the other New Testament writers did not original pen their information down in English. The Biblical writers wrote in either Hebrew, Greek, or Aramaic. And so, the Bible that you hold in your hand this morning is an English *translation* of the Divine Revelation of God.

And, on a good day, it is very difficult to translate a regular book from one language to another. But when you're talking about the Books of the Bible, that effort is even *harder* because of what is at stake. And the way your English Bibles portray these two verses is slightly different than the Original Greek.

The very first word that Peter used to identify to whom this Epistle was written was the word "elect" or "chosen." Now you can't see that in the NASB, or the KJV. But you can in the ESV and the NIV. The word order that Peter used when he wrote the Greek was:

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the [God's] elect"... aliens [who are scattered] of the dispersion."

So, the very *first* thing that Peter wants these dear souls who are under terrible persecution to know is that they are chosen by God. So, right off the bat, Peter begins this Epistle with the Doctrine of Sovereign Election. Now the Greek word for "chosen" is *eklektos*, and it is the word from which we get the word "elect", or those chosen by God for Salvation. Interesting, this word is also the root word for *ekklesia*, or the assembly of the believers, or the Church.

Now the reason most of the English versions change the word order and put the word "chosen" or "elect" at the *end* of the list of the five Roman Provinces is so that it is more obvious that the three phrases of verse 2 are what *defines* God's election or God's choosing.

So, there are four words in verse 2 that define Sovereign Election:

- ✓ According to
- ✓ By
- ✓ To

So, Peter teaches here that we are chosen by God for Salvation: "according to" something, and "by" something else, and "to" a third aspect. So, just what is the Doctrine of Sovereign or Unconditional Election?

Unconditional Election is God's free Choice *before* Creation, to magnify the Glory of His Grace by mercifully granting Faith and Repentance to *some* of the fallen rebels of this world and pardoning them and adopting them into His everlasting Family of joy.

Now this is one of the most beloved and most hated Doctrines in the entire Bible. It is beloved by wicked sinners who have been made humble by this sovereign Act of God that has transformed their nature. But it is despised by those who desire to rob God of the Glory of His Grace, and take some or all of that Glory for themselves.

Now because we are fallen, Sovereign Election is hard to teach and hard to learn because it goes contrary to the normal and natural thinking of fallen Man. And, because of that, there is probably more misunderstanding and false concepts about this Truth than any other Teaching in the Bible. In my own personal experience, most of what people say they are against concerning this Truth, is *not* what

Sovereign Election is. So, usually, what they are objecting to, I'm against, too, and if they would simply take the time to learn, they would realize that Sovereign Election magnifies the Glory of God's Grace and humbles the pride of Man more than almost any other Doctrine in the Bible. And I simply don't understand why any truly born again soul would object to that.

But if Sovereign Election is so hard to teach and so hard to learn, and so fraught with danger and misunderstanding, why teach it? Why go to all the trouble? And there is only one answer to that question:

Because Sovereign Election is in the Bible

It is a Biblical Truth. It is Divinely inspired. It came out of God's Mouth. Peter believed in it and taught it right here. And so, if you're going to be honest about the Bible at all, you have to have *some* type understanding about Divine Election.

And it is for that reason that I plan to spend a little time here and "camp" in these two verses that are so rich with deep Biblical Doctrine. But, before we get too deep into this, I want to make sure you understand what I'm doing. I'm *not* trying to encourage you to be an academic or an intellectual. I'm *not* trying to split hairs or get into such fine detail that it all just goes over your head. My goal in preaching this, as well as my goal in all of my life, is to honor God by worshipping Jesus Christ in Spirit and in Truth. And I don't think we can do that by either *being* or *remaining* ignorant of what God said in Scripture.

And, if we were all trapped on an island somewhere and didn't have a Bible and couldn't engage in a deep study like this, then I suppose we would have an excuse as to why we are either unconcerned or uncaring or nonchalant about what God took the time to put in His Word. But we're *not* isolated on some island. We are relatively safe and relatively comfortable and we lay claim to be saved. And, as saved people, we are commanded to not only love God with all our hearts, but with all our minds as well. So, we must teach this Truth and we must learn it, and we must come to love it and obey it, because we cannot escape it. It is in the Bible.

So, my goal in this mini-series is *not* simply to make you smart about a very deep part of the Bible,- but so that you may come to believe this Truth and *embrace* it as *part* of the way that God is glorified and

that our joy is made full. So, I want you to see the fact that God choosing to save *some* of Humanity, but not all, is not only true, but it is precious.

So, the first and foremost reason why we embrace Sovereign Election is because it is true. God's Word teaches it. And there are four *other* things about Sovereign Election that I want you to know before we start:

1. We Embrace Sovereign Election because God Designed it to Make us Fearless in our Proclamation of His Grace in a very Hostile World.

Romans 8:31-34

31 What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *is* against us?

32 He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?

33 Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies;

34 who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.

2. We Embrace Sovereign Election because God Designed it to Bring Himself Glory and to Make us Humble.

As we get into this, you will see that the single biggest objection to Sovereign Election is the Man-made Doctrine of "Human Free Will" or "Human Self-Determination". Part of what it means to be fallen is that Man, in his arrogance, wants to *initiate* everything, including Salvation. As rebellious and fallen creatures, we *always* want to be the "First Cause", we *always* want to take the initiative, we want to do something *first*. We are constantly seeking for something to "do" that will *earn* us Favor with God. And this sinful and fallen concept of pride and self-righteousness is the basis behind all of the "works-based religious systems" that are employed by the false religions of the world and the cults. And the Holy Bible condemns it.

The very first thing that Adam and Eve did in **Genesis 3**, when they knew they were fallen, was to make themselves aprons of fig leaves. And this was the "genesis" of all false religion. Adam and Eve were trying to make *themselves* acceptable to God by what they did for themselves, *without* Grace, and *without* God. And God would have

none of it. And so, God sovereignly killed an animal and shed its blood, and God made them skins to cover their nakedness.

The desire to always be in charge, the craving to be made much of, the urge to initiate everything, the impetus to want to be praised, the drive to act like God and make the decisive choice, those are *not* qualities to be *admired*; those are cursed qualities that came upon all Mankind when our parents fell into sin through the lies of satan when he deceived Eve by saying:

Genesis 3:5b

... you will be like God ...

At that moment, all of our desire and our ability to love God and serve Him gladly died. Sin destroyed us and ruined every aspect of human beings, *including* our ability to *voluntarily* delight in God. Salvation then, is God, mercifully and radically transforming wicked rebels, by what He alone does for them (through the Death of His Son), so that they now love God and find the fullness of their delight in Him. And by doing all of the Work of Salvation, sovereignly, all by Himself, magnifies the Glory of God's Grace more than anything else. And *that* is the only reason why God saves anybody.

1 Corinthians 1:27b-29

27 ... God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong,

28 and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are,

29 so that no man may boast before God.

Look again at verse 29. God has established Salvation the way that He did, God decided that Redemption would be solely through His Sovereign Choice, so that no human being would be able to boast before God that he initiated his own Salvation by something that he did or that he made the right decision. So, more than any other Doctrine in the Bible, Sovereign Election glorifies God while humbling Man. Now look what the next two verses say:

1 Corinthians 1:30-31

30 But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,

31 so that, just as it is written, "*LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.*"

3. We Embrace Sovereign Election because God Made it a Powerful Moral Impetus for Compassion, Kindness, and Forgiveness.

Realizing that the *only* reason that we are saved is because God chose us doesn't make us proud, it humbles us. It breaks the staff of our pride and does great damage to our self-righteousness. Sovereign Election makes us grateful and thankful. The Reality of Sovereign Election constantly reminds us that God would have been perfectly Just to pass over us and allow all of us to burn in hell forever, and then create His people from the rocks in the field. And this divinely engineered Humility spreads throughout the entire Church.

Colossians 3:12-13

12 So, as those who have been chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience;

13 bearing with one another, and forgiving each other, whoever has a complaint against anyone; just as the Lord forgave you, so also should you.

It is biologically *impossible* for any human being to properly and fully understand the Truth about Sovereign Election, and then remain a hard, unforgiving, and ungrateful person. Those who are cold and bitter and unmerciful and unthankful have never known the Reality of being chosen by God.

4. We Embrace Sovereign Election because It is a Powerful Incentive in our Evangelism to Help Unbelievers, Who are Great Sinners, Become Worshipers.

What will our response be to God at the Judgment if He asks, "*Why did you believe in My Son when others didn't?*" Will we talk about some moral superiority that we seemed to have? Will we extol the virtues of our own self-determination? Or will we say, "*I am blessed*

to love and worship You only because You were merciful to choose me".
The Apostle John said that our capacity to love God is a gracious gift from God when he said:

1 John 4:19

We love, because He first loved us.

So, when you offer Christ freely to an unbeliever, how do you respond when he says:

"I have sinned too terribly. God could never choose to save me."

The most ultimate despair-destroying thing you can say to that person is this:

God chose those He will save, *before the foundation of the world*. And He did it based on absolutely nothing in any of us. So, before you were born or had done anything good or bad, God determined whether to give you Grace or Justice. Therefore, you cannot dare get in God's Face and tell Him what qualifications you lack in order to be chosen. There were no qualifications for being chosen.

"What then should I do?" he asks:

And you respond, **"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved"** (**The Acts 16:31**). That's how you begin to "confirm your calling and your election" (**2 Peter 1:10**). If you will embrace the Savior and delight in following Him, you will confirm that you are elect, and you will be saved, *regardless* of how bad you have been.

Now look again at **1 Peter 1:2**. Here, the Apostle defines Sovereign Election with three phrases: first, Christians are elected by God or chosen ...

"according to the foreknowledge of God the Father."

Secondly, Christians are elected or chosen by God...

"by (or in/through) the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit."

And thirdly, Christians are elected and chosen by God:

“to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with his blood.”

So, far from denying Sovereign Election, or even minimizing it, the Apostle Peter explains it in great detail at the very beginning of his Epistle. Here Peter gives us three things about our election:

1. We are told something about the origin and basis of Sovereign Election in God's Foreknowledge.
2. We are told something about the way Sovereign Election becomes real and actual in our lives by the sanctifying Work of God the Holy Spirit.
3. We are told something about the goal or the purpose of Election: so that we might obey Jesus and *go on* benefiting from His cleansing Blood.

... so, not only is Election true, all three Persons of the Trinity are intimately involved in it.

Now one thing we can say for sure about Peter is that, unlike many in the modern Church, his belief and Teaching about Sovereign Election is not vague or hidden. When you put something at the forefront of your letter, you're *not* trying to hide it. And that's important, because today many think that the Doctrine of Sovereign Election should be either hidden, marginalized, or outright ignored. Yet, that is *not* the case with the 66 Books of the Bible. Moses didn't hide it. David didn't hide it. Isaiah didn't hide it. Jesus didn't hide it. Matthew didn't hide it. Paul didn't hide it. John didn't hide it. And Peter didn't hide it. Election is spoken throughout Scripture to be as natural and normal for believers as Prayer or reading the Bible.

Now many reject Sovereign Election on the basis that John Calvin taught it. But what they conveniently ignore is the fact that John Calvin never taught anything about Sovereign Election that Martin Luther had not taught before him. And Martin Luther didn't teach anything about Sovereign Election that Augustine had not taught before him. And Augustine didn't teach anything about Sovereign Election that the Apostles had not taught in their Epistles before him.

And the Apostles didn't teach anything about Sovereign Election that Jesus Christ had not taught before them. And Jesus didn't teach anything about Sovereign Election that Moses had not taught before Him.

So, the reality is that Sovereign Election is not new, it isn't some invention from the Protestant Reformation. John Calvin didn't create it, in fact, John Calvin would die by humiliation to know that a Biblical Truth was named after him. Sovereign Election is ancient and goes all the way back to Moses.

Another thing we can say is that Peter mentions Election in direct connection with our "alien status" in the world. And this probably tells us the main reason Peter begins this Epistle with Election. He wants to emphasize that we are aliens, *not* mainly because men have *rejected* us, but because God has *chosen* us. Now, to be sure, being an alien is painful. This whole Book is about the pain of being an alien in the world.

1 Peter 1:6b

... you have been distressed by various trials ...

1 Peter 2:11

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.

1 Peter 2:21

For you have been called for this purpose [suffering], since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

1 Peter 4:4

In *all* this, they are surprised that you do not run with *them* into the same excesses of dissipation, and they malign *you*;

1 Peter 4:13

but to the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation.

... and then in Chapter 5, Peter wrote:

1 Peter 5:10

After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen *and* establish you.

Now, normally, being an "exile" or an "alien" or a "stranger" means that you have been rejected by some group of people and forced to live in another place that's not your home. It means being a "refugee". Alienation and exile and refugee status is virtually synonymous with being rejected.

And Peter knows this. And so, he is going to really *emphasize* this "alien status" along with this suffering and rejection throughout this entire Book. But, he begins this Letter by saying: *"That is not the main meaning of your exile. That is not the main meaning of your alien condition in the world. The main meaning of your exile is that God chose you out of the world. Not Man's rejection, but God's Election is the main meaning of your life."*

I think that's *why* Peter starts with Election. He wants to give them a God-centered explanation of their alienation in the world. He tells these persecuted believers, *"Your lives are rooted in God's Eternal Election. Your pain is rooted in God's Eternal Election. Your rejection by men is rooted in God's Eternal Election. Don't think that all these things, all the troubles of being Christian foreigners, is caused by God rejecting you or abandoning you. No. It is caused by God electing you!"*

So, however fearful hirelings in the modern Church may act, Peter does not hide Election. Instead he puts it first and foremost, the first thing he says about the Christians. And he connects it with our persecution and our existence as aliens and exiles in the world. In other words, the Apostle wants us to hear a clear, up-front, forthright explanation that our lives get their distinctive Christian meaning from our being chosen by God. He wants us to have an identity, not merely as aliens, but as *elected* aliens. Our identity is *not* mainly that we are rejected by the world, but that we are chosen by God.

Now America is a very practical, "make-it-happen" country. And the modern Church has that same atmosphere. Give us "how-to's" and not Doctrine, especially not deep and profound Doctrine like Election. So, now there are major Conferences held by very famous men on how to grow successful churches that boldly begins by saying,

"We don't get into doctrine or theology."

And that would be bad enough but sadly, the vast majority of the people of the modern church seem to hear that statement as a virtue rather than being ashamed of it. But, just 150 years ago, a statement like that would have been seen as nonsense, not a virtue. It would not have been an attraction, it would have been something that would cause discerning believers to avoid.

And even though that disdain for Divine Truth *dominates* the modern Church, the more I read the Bible, the more I reject that view. The Apostles saw Doctrine as *tremendously* important. Because they understood what many Church leaders today seem not to, that what we "do" and how we "act" is based on what we believe. So, when Peter begins his letter with the phrase "elect aliens" he means to give real and lasting help to them. And he believes it is helpful for them to know that they are among the elect.

So, I beg you *not* to be like the pragmatists who *belittle* Biblical Truth like Election. Rather, be like the Apostles who *cherished* the Doctrine of Sovereign Election and put it at the very front of their concerns.

I absolutely believe that one of the reasons that the modern Church is so weak today is because they are constantly trying to take practical short cuts to Strength and Growth. But Peter believed that we are meant to be strong in Faith and Love and Hope and Joy and Service, not *in spite of* Doctrine, not in the *absence* of Doctrine, but precisely because we know and love the Truth. And he proved that by putting the single deepest Doctrine in all the Bible at the very beginning of his Letter.

And Peter really wants them and us to understand our lives in this world in relation to God. Peter didn't believe that we all come to Church on Sunday, and then we live like the rest of the world for the rest of the week, and we shouldn't either. And I'm not talking about wicked sin, I'm talking about how you relate every area of your life to God. Peter wants us to see all our life connected to God in a certain way.

And the first clue is that he engulfs you with God's "Electing Initiative". So, Peter puts Election *behind* you. And then he puts

Election *in* you. And then he puts Election out *in front* of you. That's what those three phrases in verse 2 do. Putting Sovereign Election *behind* you means that we understand that the *basis* or the *foundation* of God's choosing us in what he called "the Foreknowledge of God". And then Peter says that "in you" is the *experience* of Election in the "sanctifying Work of God the Spirit". And then "in front of you" is the *destiny* of Election is "so that we may obey Jesus Christ and take refuge in His sprinkled Blood". So, Peter doesn't tippy-toe around this deep and controversial Doctrine, he *engulfs* us with Election. He really wants us to get this. And he wants us to live *out of* it and to live *in* it and to live *for* it.

The second clue is that these three dimensions of Sovereign Election are each related to a different Divine Person of the Trinity. Our Election is *rooted* in the Foreknowledge of God the Father. Our Election is *experienced* by the sanctifying Work of God the Holy Spirit. And the aim of our Election is that we obey Jesus Christ, God the Son.

So, what becomes crystal clear from this is that Peter is *not* throwing words away. Everything is chosen to *engulf* us in God. And Peter thought that the best way to *engulf* us in God is to press home the Doctrine of Election with its past origin and its present experience and its future purpose, and to show that the whole Trinity is involved in your life from beginning to end.

Doesn't it strike you as strange that the Apostle of the Lord Jesus, writing to struggling Churches in trial and distress, should begin with such profound teaching on Divine Election, even before his greeting is out? And yet today many of the church growth gurus begin their Conferences with, "*We don't get into theology.*" I simply do not agree with this and I condemn it.

But I know what God called me to do here. And that is to teach and herald the Biblical Gospel the way the Apostles did, with clear, unashamed, forthright, up-front Truth about God and His powerful and wonderful Ways to the children of men. And that includes the issue of Sovereign Election. So, take the first phrase of verse 2. We are elect:

"according to the Foreknowledge of God the Father."

... so, what is the *basis* of our Election? *Why* did God choose me and you for His Own? Or, to put it very personally, what will be your bottom-line

answer to God when He asks, *"How is it that you came to believe on Him and be saved while others did not?"*

Peter's answer is, *"God foreknew me."* He said that believers were chosen according to God's Foreknowledge. But what does that mean? Over the next several Lord's Days, I'm going to get into each of these three aspects very deeply, but suffice it to say that this is a big deal.

And what we can begin with is that "God's Foreknowledge" does *not* mean that God simply "knew before-hand" that one day I would elect *myself*, and therefore, God *responded* to what I did by choosing me on the basis of my own self-election. That is *not* what "God's Foreknowledge" is.

Our choosing God is based on God's choosing us, not vice versa. Jesus said in **John 15:16**:

You did not choose Me but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

God's Foreknowledge of His people is not merely His "awareness" of what they will do in the future. People take the two words, "fore" and "knowledge", and they use human reason and logic and say that "fore" means: *before*, and "knowledge" means: *to know*. And then they make up a Doctrine that isn't true and say that "Foreknowledge" is simply another way of understanding God's Omniscience. So, God "knew before" who would choose Him. And that simply isn't true. Omniscience is Omniscience, and Foreknowledge is Foreknowledge. There is a reason why they are two different words. So, after Jesus said that He chose them, look at what Jesus said next:

... and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you.

So, here, Jesus choosing us (and us not choosing Him) involves not only God's Knowledge about what we would do in the future, but also God's Own Sovereign "appointment" or "ordination" that those whom He chose would bear fruit. And then He goes even further by saying that the fruit that these chosen ones would bear would not be

temporary, but would remain. And the end of all the choosing and all the appointing is "so that" we would be so radically transformed that we would never want anything that isn't God's Will.

So, Foreknowledge is not simply that God "knew before", but that He "loved before" and "acted before". So, God's Foreknowledge of His people is His "setting His Love" upon them so that they will be saved. So, this is a "knowing" that is far deeper and far more powerful than simply being aware of the future. And please allow me to give you two examples of this kind of "knowing".

Psalm 1:6

The Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.

Now this does *not* mean that God is aware of the way of the righteous but is ignorant of the way of the wicked. It means that God *acknowledges* or *approves* or *blesses* or *sanctions* or *takes delight* or is *glorified* in the way of the righteous. And it also means that God does *not* acknowledge, He does *not* approve, He does *not* take delight, and He is *not* glorified in the way of the wicked. So, here God "knowing" His people is His *approving* and *acknowledging* and *delighting* in His people and being glorified in them.

Amos 3:2

You only have I chosen among all the families of the earth; Therefore I will punish you for all your iniquities.

Now this does not mean that God is only aware of the existence of Israel. God knows everything about everything. This is saying that God only *acknowledges* Israel as being His Own. God was saying here that He *recognizes* Israel as His people, *exclusively*. Also, this does not say that Israel is the only group that God will punish for sin. No, God will punish everyone who sins. But the Punishment that God exerts on those He chose will always be *redemptive* in nature, and *not* eternally damning.

And this Reality is the background for Peter's words in **1 Peter 2:9** when he said to the Churches:

"You are a chosen race."

He doesn't mean that God looked for a people who already believed on Him and then chose them for His Own. It means that He sovereignly chose Abraham to be the father of His people, while Abraham was worshipping the moon. Abraham wasn't seeking God at all. Abraham wasn't hungering for Truth. Abraham was a wicked idolater, and a lost, fallen sinner, who cared nothing for God or God's Ways. And suddenly, God appeared to him, while Abraham was still in sin, and called him and chose him, and then imposed His Will on him and told him to leave his family and move.

On what basis did God do all that? Because Abraham was more moral than everybody else? No. There was no good thing in Abraham. God chose Abraham for the very *same* reason He chose you, because He wanted to. And that "choosing" is called "knowing". **Genesis 18:19** says:

For I have chosen him, so that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice, so that the Lord may bring upon Abraham what He has spoken about him.

That's the background behind *why* Peter said that we are elected or chosen by God...

... according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.

So, before the foundation of the world, God determined to set His Love upon certain individuals, so that the Glory of His Grace would be displayed and praised. And that's the "Foundation" of Sovereign Election. It is *not* connected in any way to our birth or our ethnicity or our family background or our achievements or our religion or our works or our virtue or our faith. It is brought about solely on the basis of God's free Acknowledgement of whom He will save, in the Counsel of His Wisdom.

So, I speak to believers this morning to establish your hearts in the Truth. God wants you to know today that none of the hardships you undergo as aliens and exiles in this world is a surprise to God. He has

chosen you for this. It is part of your purifying discipline. Your troubles as an exile here are not absurd, meaningless results of your own shortsighted, fallible choices. They are the loving Plan and Wisdom of God's all-seeing, infallible Choice.

Your exile life is rooted in God. You are engulfed in the electing Love of God the Father, God the Spirit, and God the Son. Your life is from him and through him and for him. So, dwell on this Truth. Let it sink in and touch the deepest core of your identity. God the Father has chosen you. God the Holy Spirit is sanctifying you. And, as we will see next week, Jesus covers you with His Blood and receives your obedience.

Amen. Let's pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.