

# Letter To The Elect Jews

1 Peter 1:1-2

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who are elect exiles of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, 2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. (1 Peter 1:1-2 (ESV))

For the past several months, we have been enjoying learning about the special ministry that God commissioned the Apostle Paul to bring to the Gentile people in the City of Ephesus. And thanks be to God, through Paul's teaching, there were many who came to know Christ as Savior and Lord.

Now here, as we embark upon this study into the Books of 1st and 2nd Peter, we see that God does not set aside His ministry to one part of His family while He engages in ministry to another. In the opening words of this Epistle, we see that the Apostle Peter is God's chosen minister and caretaker, this time to a special group of His "first family", the Jews, who had been scattered to these distant cities of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.

And from the words here that describe these particular Jews as being from the "Dispersion", we can assume that they were not likely to have been some of those who were fleeing from the Romans in Jerusalem, but rather were Jews who had been part of the original "exile" to Assyria and Babylon and other such locations several hundred years earlier. Verse 1 again,

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May I quickly mention also that too often, as we begin to read the opening words of a book of the bible, we have the tendency to read quickly through the first few words and simply ascribe those words as being a "greeting", much like the greetings that we give when we write letters to someone. But we dare not do that with these precious words of God. Yes, some of these Books of the Bible were given in the form of a letter and have familiar letter type formats, but may we quickly understand that every word within the pages of these scriptures, though sometimes appearing to be mundane, are important beyond measure. They are the very breath of God, each word specially given to us to tell us who God is and all the things He is doing. And they are also given to bless and to equip you and me for all the many occurrences and encounters of our day. And we

must be ever so careful to honor each and every word. Listen, to how the Apostle Paul expressed it in 2 Timothy 3. He said,

16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:16-17 (ESV))

So then, while yes, these words of the Book of 1st Peter are written in a letter format and are clearly given through the heart and mind of the Apostle Peter, we know that every word and every thought expressed within them first originated within the heart and mind of God, and were “breathed” into the mind of the Apostle Peter as he wrote them. Peter was simply the “honored messenger” who was blessed to be the one who would present them to us, his readers.

And here, as Peter declares himself to be the writer of these words, we know that this is the same Peter who was the beloved disciple and friend of the Lord Jesus, the one most close to Jesus all throughout the days of His earthly ministry, the one who, along with James and John, made up the select “inner circle” of leadership of the twelve disciples, the same Peter who loved Jesus so very, very much, but found himself deserting Jesus in Jesus’ greatest hour of need; but this was also the same Peter who was restored to his position of leadership when Jesus met with him after His resurrection there on the beach of the Sea of Galilee.

And Peter’s position as an Apostle was one of very special importance. His Apostleship was not a position that he assigned to himself, but rather was appointed to him by Jesus Himself and was validated as a special “Spiritual Gift” given to Him by the Holy Spirit, a “Gift” that enabled Peter to be one of the special ones who was sent forth with the “gospel message” of Jesus Christ.

And again, the special calling and message that God had equipped Peter to minister was directly to his fellow Jews. And yes, Peter did minister also to the Gentiles, and he led some of them, Cornelius and others, to Christ, but as we can see here, his first and primary calling was to his fellow Jews.

And note here in these first few words that we again encounter this word “elect”, “chosen of God”, the same word we found to be prominent in the Book of Ephesians.

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As we found when we studied this word “elect” some months ago, the whole concept of “election”, of being “chosen by God”, is a source of some strong disagreement and

opposition within the “Body of Christ”. And though we studied the concept carefully there in the Book of Ephesians, I would like for us to take just a few moments to revisit some of the differences that stand as an obstacle between many of our fellow believers. And may I quote from a very reliable source, “gotquestions.org”. Regarding the meaning of this word “elect”? This source tells us,

Simply put, the “elect of God” are those whom God has predestined to salvation. They are called the “elect” because that word denotes the concept of choosing. Just as every four years in the U.S., we “elect” a President—i.e., we choose who will serve in that office. The same goes for God and those who will be saved; God chooses those who will be saved. These are the elect of God.

As it stands, the concept of God electing or choosing those who will be saved isn’t controversial. What is controversial is how and in what manner God chooses those who will be saved. Throughout church history, there have been two main views on the doctrine of election (or predestination). One view, (the Arminian view) which we will call the prescient or foreknowledge view, teaches that God, through His omniscience, knows those who will in the course of time choose of “their own free will” to place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ for their salvation. On the basis of this divine foreknowledge, God elects these individuals “before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4). This view is held by the majority of American evangelicals (and may I add, especially by the majority of our Baptist and Methodist brethren).

The second main view is the Augustinian (and Calvinist) view, which essentially teaches that God not only divinely elects those who will have faith in Jesus Christ, but also divinely elects to grant to these individuals the necessary faith to believe in Christ. In other words, God’s election unto salvation is not based on a foreknowledge of an individual’s faith, but is based on the free, sovereign grace of Almighty God. God elects people to salvation, and in time these people will come to faith in Christ because God has elected them.

The (basic) difference (between these two doctrines) boils down to the question of who has and makes the ultimate choice in salvation—God or man?

(Again, those words from gotquestions.org)

I must tell you that for me this matter of being “chosen by God” remains one of the most profound and unfathomable mysteries of the “gospel”, that God can be the “first cause” of all that takes place on the earth, but yet also allow mankind to make “freewill

choices". Those two concepts, "foreordination of God" and "the freewill of man" are a "paradox of truth", but yet, they are both absolutely and without question true. And because both of these doctrines are true, I must believe them both, never allowing myself to question or deny either of them, the "foreordination of God" and "the freewill of man". And the only way that my mind can do that is to simply accept that this gospel truly is a "mystery".

Looking further into verse 2, God here spells out the "Source" and all the elements of this irreconcilable mystery that brings salvation to us. It is the "Trinity of God". If anyone still doubts that God is "Three Person" in One, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and that though they be One in Person, they are separate in the things they do, here is just one more of the many examples that these scriptures provide.

As the words of Deuteronomy 6 tell us, there is only "One God". In verse 4 of Deuteronomy 6 we read

4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. (Deuteronomy 6:4)

Folks, the Lord our God truly is only One Person, but in three individual Persons and having three individual functions. As one bible scholar words it,

"Each member of the Trinity, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit is co-equal, co-eternal and consubstantial with the others, and "each is God, whole and entire". Accordingly, the whole work of creation and grace is seen as a single operation common to all three divine persons, in which each shows forth what is proper to him in the Trinity, so that all things are "from the Father", "through the Son" and "in the Holy Spirit".

So then, in light of this truth, consider these words of verse 2 carefully. Here, for the salvation of our souls, we read,

2 according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in the sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and for sprinkling with his blood: May grace and peace be multiplied to you. (1 Peter 1:2 (ESV))

Folks, God has ordained that it takes all three within the Trinity to accomplish our salvation, and these words give us the special work of each member of the Trinity as they bring our salvation to completion, even to the inclusion of the "freewill of man". First, we have the "foreknowledge of God the Father", which means not only that God the Father knows all things even before they take place, even from long before the foundations of the world, but this word "foreknowledge" also has within its meaning the element of deep divine love, love that is never "passive" simply waiting to see what we

might do before His saving love acts, but instead intentionally fulfills all of God's plans for us.

And the only question that foolish man has inserted into this equation of grace is that of how the word "foreknowledge" is going to be defined. Again, I prefer to allow that definition to remain a part of the great "mystery of the gospel".

Next, in these words, we have the "sanctification of the Spirit". This is a specific function and work of the Holy Spirit. He is the Person within the Trinity that convicts men and women of "sin and righteousness and judgment" (John 16:8) and brings them to repentance for their sins. And then He, the Holy Spirit, "sets the saved person apart" from their old ways unto holiness and righteousness and redemption.

And then, as all of these things are taking place within a person's soul, the third member of the Trinity, the Lord Jesus, is washing the person's soul clean from their sins by the "sprinkling of His blood".

How wonderful that the "Trinity of God", God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are all three at work to guarantee our salvation. And God has ordained that it does take all three within the Trinity to accomplish our salvation.

But then wait, there is also one more element of our salvation that is spoken about here, that of man's "freewill" obedience to Christ. This also must take place. Yes, salvation can only take place because of the shed blood of Christ upon the cross, with no works of our own added to it. However, part of the "mystery of the gospel" is that for salvation to be ours personally, we must "personally receive it" into our souls, not as a matter of works, but as a matter of surrender.

And again, I do want to declare loudly and clearly that God truly is "One", but is "Three in One", God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, the three, although being distinct, yet are still "one substance", "one essence" and "one nature".

And again, while as I said a moment ago, the "mystery of the gospel" will remain as one of the greatest, unfathomable mysteries that will ever be presented to man, this matter of the Trinity also is equally, one of those greatest mysteries.

But thankfully, and praise be to God, our salvation and our eternity does not depend upon our being able to fully understand this mystery. All we have to do is "by faith receive it".

I personally am so thankful for “grace” and for “faith”, because I do not have the intellect to enable me to comprehend this mystery, nor the strength of character to receive it without the special enabling “unction” of the Holy Spirit. Those words again from Ephesians 2,

8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- 9 not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV))

One more thought that is provoked by these words is given at the end of verse 2, May grace and peace be multiplied to you. (1 Peter 1:2 (ESV))

Again, these words might equate to a similar greeting that we might write in a letter, such as, “I hope you and your family are doing well”. But again, these words are not just some platonic greeting; they are a divine declaration of God that is intended to bring real blessing to the receiver of this letter. Here, God declared

May grace and peace be multiplied to you. (1 Peter 1:2 (ESV))

I must tell you that I crave the “grace and peace” that comes from the hand of God. In Psalm 119:173, the Psalmist cries out, “let Your hand be my help oh God”. And I do want God’s hand to be my help and my grace and my peace every moment of this day.

So then, from these first few words that we so often push aside as a “greeting”, we find a “treasure” of knowledge and understanding to help us as we step on further and begin to examine the next many words of this Book.

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