

## Special Studies in 2 Peter Peter's Teaching Concerning Election

**Intro:** If I use the words "election," "foreordination," "predestination," what do you usually think? Most people would think of the teaching of John Calvin or the Reformed theologians who have made these words a prominent part of their teaching.

But of course, these are Biblical terms; and they occur often in the writings of Paul. But interestingly they also occur quite often in the writings of Peter. Let's consider tonight as a special study Peter's teaching concerning divine election.

### The Father's choice of the believer

**At least four times in his two epistles Peter identifies the people of God as the "elect" or those who were "chosen" by him.**

Peter's greeting identifies them as God's elect:

*PETER, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure." (1 Peter 1:1-2, NASB)*

Peter describes the church's identity:

*But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;" (1 Peter 2:9, NASB)*

Peter sends His greeting from another sister or congregation:

*She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you greetings, and so does my son, Mark. (1 Peter 5:13, NASB)*

Peter encourages the believers:

*Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; (2 Peter 1:10, NASB)*

**But these statements raise the challenging question of how or in what way did God elect or choose these people?**

Calvinism or Reformed theology affirms that God elected individuals to salvation before the creation of the world, foreseeing their salvation and bringing it about through irresistible grace working in their hearts to cause them to respond to the word and to remain saved.

Is this true? If not, in what sense could we say God elects or chooses the saved?

### Divine election in the NT

**Divine election is grounded in the authority or sovereignty of God.**

Because God is the creator, He has the right to choose to whom He will reveal Himself and who He will receive as His people. Paul appeals to God's role as creator to counter any human arrogance that suggests that humans may dictate to God who He can or cannot do:

*"On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use?" (Romans 9:20-21, NASB)*

By using the metaphor of potter or molder, Paul declares the authority or sovereignty of God in human redemption.

**Because all are sinners, God's election is a matter of grace, not works.**

Paul in Romans 11 explores the Jewish rejection of the gospel. Does this mean God has totally rejected His people. Not at all! In fact Paul says:

*In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God's gracious choice. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace. (Romans 11:5-6, NASB)*

God's choice then did not depend upon what people did. His choices were made before they did anything! So that His choice is a matter of grace.

**God chose that those who believed in His Son would be His people.**

Peter meets Calvinism on a several levels:

God did not arbitrarily choose certain individuals to be saved and others to be lost, else Peter's affirmations about God would be absurd:

*The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9, NASB)*

Peter affirmed the conditionality of salvation that involves the exercise of human free will.

*Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; (2 Peter 1:10, NASB)*

So we must seek another position consistent with all Scripture!

Before the foundation of the world, God planned a way for human redemption from sin by sending His Son to be a sacrifice for the world. Peter stresses Jesus as the focal point of God's sovereign and gracious choice:

*For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. (1 Peter 1:20-21, NASB)*

*And coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected by men, but choice and precious in the sight of God, you also, as living*

*stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture:*

*“BEHOLD I LAY IN ZION A CHOICE STONE, A PRECIOUS CORNER stone, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM SHALL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED.”” (1 Peter 2:4–6, NASB)*

Likewise Paul makes this statement about the saved:

*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.” (Ephesians 1:3–6, NASB)*

Here the all the concepts of divine sovereignty, grace, and God's choice of Jesus as the Redeemer come together.

Consequently Peter's greeting in his first epistle makes perfect sense then in light of these texts:

*“PETER, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, that you may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure.” (1 Peter 1:1–2, NASB)*

Peter's readers could be said to be chosen in accord with God's foreknowledge, since God had determined that those who believed in His Son would be His people.

***Since God chose that those who believe in His Son are His people, then those who reject Jesus can no longer be called the chosen people.***

Many Jews who did not believe in Jesus found it objectionable that Paul should no longer consider them the people of God. Paul meets their objection by reminding them that they had no problem with God's choice of Isaac over Ishmael or Jacob over Esau. Consequently they have no right to question His decision to choose the saved in Jesus Christ.

*“But it is not as though the word of God has failed. For they are not all Israel who are descended from Israel; neither are they all children because they are Abraham's descendants, but: “THROUGH ISAAC YOUR DESCENDANTS WILL BE NAMED.”” (Romans 9:6–7, NASB)*

Again Peter's statement that the church is the New Israel fits perfectly with this concept that God's true Israel consists of those who believe in Jesus.

*But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, that you may proclaim the*

*excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;" (1 Peter 2:9, NASB)*

Furthermore, practically speaking, it means that some of those whom God has created have been created for eternal destruction while others have been created for eternal life.

*Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use? What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction? And He did so in order that He might make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy, which He prepared beforehand for glory, even us, whom He also called, not from among Jews only, but also from among Gentiles." (Romans 9:19–24, NASB)*

That of course makes being sure about our election a matter of great consequence.

**By living the lifestyle of faith, believers make certain about His calling and choosing them.**

*Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you." (2 Peter 1:10–11, NASB)*

Being among the chosen of God does not ensure entrance into the eternal kingdom. Instead believers must be diligent to add to their faith the qualities of the divine nature that Peter lists. In other words, we have an obligation in response to God's choice to live the life of faith we have been called to live in Jesus Christ.

### **Why does it matter?**

**Understanding the nature of God's election should humble us and make us feel great gratitude for His gracious choice.**

There is nothing about believing in Jesus that should make us self-congratulatory. God made the choice of the way of salvation and the conditions of salvation and provides the means by which saving faith is produced. Not anything left for humans to boast about.

**At the same time it challenges us to take responsibility to live out the life which we have been foreordained to live.**

There is something immensely important about the lifestyle God planned for us, if before He created the world, He provided for this salvation and lifestyle.

**God's election motivates us to share the good news of Jesus to others.**

Jesus wanted the gospel to be preached to every creature, since it is possible for any person to hear and believe in Him if their heart is right.

By preaching the gospel

**God's election keeps us from being discouraged when others reject the gospel.**

What God has planned for all will only be accepted by a few. And though it is discouraging that people reject the truth, they are only fulfilling what God in His eternal wisdom had foreseen.

*And Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. (Acts 13:46, NASB)*

**Conclusion: Can you say tonight, "I am among the elect or chosen of God?"**