Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Chosen by God, Part 1
Scripture: 1 Peter 1:1
Code: 60-2

Our text is 1 Peter 1:1-2. “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.”

Now, the essence of this salutation as Peter begins his letter is to emphasize that those to whom he writes are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. And thus does Peter take a theological plunge of profoundly deep proportions at the very outset of this letter. The lesson for us tonight is going to deal with the subject of election, or being chosen by God.

The gifted Bible teacher, scholar, A.W. Pink who, by the way, died in 1952, once began a sermon by saying this, “I am going to speak tonight on one of the most hated doctrines of the Bible, namely that of God’s sovereign election.” He was right. It is a hated doctrine. He later wrote these words - and I find them very insightful - “God’s sovereign election is the truth most loathed and reviled by the majority of those claiming to be believers. Let it be plainly announced that salvation originated not in the will of man, but in the will of God, that were it not so none would or could be saved. For, as the result of the fall, man has lost all desire and will unto that which is good, and that even the elect themselves have to be made willing, and loud will be the cries of indignation against such teaching.”

Then he says, “merit mongers will not allow the supremacy of the divine will and the impotency of the human will. Consequently, they who are the most bitter in denouncing election by the sovereign pleasure of God are the warmest in crying up the free will of fallen man.”

What he’s saying is it’s hard for some people to accept the biblical doctrine of sovereign election. It’s hard for man to acknowledge the fact that his salvation is an act of God. In his fallenness, he wants to assume some responsibility, even if it’s a small responsibility, for having believed. He wants some credit desperately for having made a right choice.

Furthermore, the doctrine of election seems repulsive to us because, by our standards, it seems unfair that God should, out of all the world of human beings, choose some at his own discretion to be saved, and not the rest. But you understand, don’t you, that the reason man so desperately wants to have a part is because in his fallenness, he wants to exercise his pride.

And so we can eliminate that as a real issue. It only is an expression of fallenness. What about the part about being unfair? Is God unfair? No, God is never to be measured by any human standard, certainly not by the human standard of fairness which is also a reflection of man's – what? - fallenness. Are we so foolish as to assume that we who are fallen, sinful creatures have a higher standard of what is right than an unfallen and infinitely and eternally holy God? What kind of pride is that? Therein lies the real problem.

It says in Psalm 97:2, "Righteousness and justice are the foundation of his throne." Righteousness and justice are the very foundation of the throne of God. That is to say whatever God does proceeds from a base of righteousness and justice. It may not be human righteousness and human justice, but it is divine.

In those familiar words of Isaiah 55:8-9, the scripture says of God, " 'My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways,' declares the Lord, 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.' " We are in no position as fallen creatures to determine whether what God does is just, right or fair. You've stepped out of bounds when you say that God does anything that isn't fair.

What is divine justice, then? Let me give you a definition. It is an essential attribute of God - that is, it belongs to his very essence - whereby he is infinitely and perfectly just in himself, of himself, for himself, from himself, by himself and none other.

James Usher, many years ago, wrote, "The source of God's justice is his own free will and nothing else. For whatsoever he wills is just and because he wills it, therefore it is just, not because it is just, therefore he wills it." You understand that? A thing is just because God wills it. He does not will it because it is just by human standards. He sets the standard. Divine justice is of an entirely different order and character than human justice.

And by the way, justice isn't the issue anyway. You don't want to talk too long about justice when you talk about salvation, because if God gave us all justice we'd all be sent to hell. You see, the creator owes nothing to the creature, not even what he graciously is pleased to give to the elect. He doesn't owe that. How then could God be called unjust when whatever he does is just, and the fact that he elected certain ones to be saved when they didn't deserve it anyway, how could that be unjust?

Salvation is never a matter of justice, it is always a matter of grace, pure grace. You really don't want to try to figure this thing out from the standpoint of "is it fair?" God did it. That makes it just. God sets the standard of what is just. If you don't understand what God does, that doesn't mean he doesn't live up to your standard, that means your standard doesn't live up to His standard. He is God.

Now in discussing the doctrine of election, really there is no better, more condensed section of scripture than the one before us. And Peter, frankly, gets into the thick of theology right off the starting blocks. He's not even out of the first verse before he introduces "chosen," and then launches into a very brief - but profound - statement about the essence of election.

Now as he addresses his readers, it is his intention in these first two verses to identify them as the ones who are chosen of God. He identifies them in two ways. First, he identifies them in relation to their place in the earth, and secondly, he identifies them in relation to their place in heaven.

As far as earth goes, they reside "scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia." As far as heaven goes, they are "the chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father by the sanctifying work of the Spirit who obey Jesus Christ having been sprinkled with His blood." So, he identifies their earthly identification and their heavenly, as well.

Now let's look briefly with regard to their earthly identification. The readers to whom Peter writes are said to be residing as aliens, or strangers, "scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia." Now we need to touch that, because we need to understand to whom he writes. Would you please notice the word "scattered." It is a familiar word to any student of the New Testament. It is the word *diaspora* in Greek.

You may have heard the word "diaspora." It means "dispersion." In the gospels, it is a technical term for the dispersing of the Jews throughout the world. It is so used in John 7:35. It is also used of Jews scattered throughout the world in James 1:1.

It is my conviction that Peter is not using it here in a technical way such as James does. Notice chapter 1 verse 17. He's writing to these people, scattered. He says, "If you address as Father the one who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth." The implication here is your earthly duration, your earthly stay, which leads us to believe that he's talking about people who are not so much strangers in an alien culture, as strangers on the earth itself.

Chapter 2 verse 11. "Beloved, I urge you, as aliens and strangers, to abstain from fleshly lusts, which wage war against the soul." And again, the alien and stranger here seems to be the person who is in environment that is foreign to his nature, and is doing war against his soul. So he's not concerned to talk about a Jew who is nationally an alien, as much as he is concerned to talk about a believer who is spiritually an alien - a much wider audience, which would certainly include some Christian Jews, as well as Gentiles. The Jews, perhaps, were in the minority. We would assume that in the Gentile provinces to which this epistle is addressed.

So, what he is saying is not, “To you Jews who are scattered throughout alien countries,” but, “To you Christians who are aliens in the earth, you are true aliens, and strangers, and pilgrims. You don’t belong here.” The church is a group of strangers scattered throughout the world, away from their true home.

In fact, in Philippians 3:3, Paul says, “We, Gentile Christians, all of us in the church, Jew and Gentile, the whole church, we are the circumcision of a spiritual nature.” And here, I think Peter is saying, “We are the scattered, the diaspora, in a spiritual sense.”

So the idea is that he’s writing to believers who, in the world, are aliens or strangers. He’s addressing the church. That’s simply it. He’s addressing the church, the church in Pontus, the church in Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia.

Those, by the way are provinces. They occupy what we know today as modern Turkey. They were part of the Roman Empire in the time of Peter. But he is writing to Christians scattered throughout those Roman provinces, and so we conclude, then, that the letter had a very wide audience.

In those provinces, there would be a number of churches. We know in the province of Asia, for example, of at least seven or eight churches. Seven of the churches in Asia have received letters from the Lord Jesus in Revelation 2 and 3. And there were other churches in Asia, like Colossae, not mentioned in Revelation. So there may have been a number of churches in Pontus, a number of churches in Cappadocia, a number of churches in Bithynia, as well. Christians, scattered as aliens in a foreign land, namely the unregenerate world.

So Peter is writing to a lot of folks. And why such a wide audience? Because the persecution that had come against the Christians as a result of them being blamed for the burning of Rome was sweeping through the Roman Empire. And everywhere that persecution went, Christians were going to have to pay the price of suffering. And so he writes as if to embrace them all in this epistle, which teaches them how to face suffering triumphantly.

But more important than their relationship to the earth is their relationship to heaven. And the thing that he wants them most to know is that they are chosen by God. He wants them to grasp that tremendously comforting reality. In the midst of their persecution when they might be questioning so much, he wants them to know they are the chosen of God. And so, at the end of verse 1 he says, “Those who reside as aliens scattered who are chosen.”

Let’s take the word “aliens” who are chosen. “Aliens” means “strangers,” as we said. Those who are dispossessed in a land not their own. It can mean “temporary residence,” it can mean “foreigners.” Either way, they were temporary residents and they were foreigners. Theirs was a city not made with

hands, eternal in the heavens. Theirs was a temporary stay until they were called to the Zion which is above, the writer of Hebrews calls it.

These aliens, the church, the redeemed, the believers are chosen, *eklektos*, to call out, “the called out ones.” It’s a verbal adjective here. It means to “pick out” or to “select.” In fact, you could even translate it this way - and this would be beautiful - “choice aliens. Select aliens.” It’s a term for Christians, that’s all. The chosen, the saved are the chosen.

By the way, it even was a term for Israel of old to identify them. Deuteronomy - you perhaps remember this very familiar verse – Deuteronomy 7:6, “For you are a holy people to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.”

Well, you better understand that. God wasn’t sitting up in heaven saying, “I hope some nation will believe me and choose me.” No. Out of all the people on the earth, “I chose you. Israel, Mine elect.” That’s Deuteronomy 7:6. Deuteronomy also 14:2, “For you are a holy people to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.” He repeats the same thing again. Chosen. Psalm 105:43 calls Israel “his chosen ones.” Psalm 135:4 says, “For the Lord has chosen Jacob for himself, has chosen Israel for his own possession.” Israel was elect.

You say, “Well, is that true also of the church?” God hasn’t changed His plan. God hasn’t changed His method. The Old Testament said, “No man seeks after God.” The Old Testament said, “There’s none righteous. No, not one.” God chose his people, Israel, by his own free choice. And so does he the church, and we are the elect.

Let me show you this. In Matthew 24:22, just pick up the thought that we are the elect. Verse 22. “Unless those days - ” that is the days of the great Tribulation “ - be cut short, no life would have been saved.” Listen to this. “But for the sake of the elect, the chosen, those days shall be cut short.” Who are the elect? The believers. Verse 24. “False Christs, false prophets will arise, will show great signs and wonders so as to mislead if possible even the - ” what? “ - the elect, the chosen, the believers.”

It is a term for believers, for Christians. Verse 31. “When he sends forth his angels with a great trumpet at the second coming, they will gather together his - ” what? “ - elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.”

In Luke's gospel 18:7 says, “Now shall not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to him day and night and will he delay long over them?” We come to Romans, the great epistle of Paul, that marvelous 8:33, “Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?” We’re elect.

Colossians 3:12. “And so as those who have been elect of God, chosen of God, holy and beloved, put on a heart of compassion,” and so forth. You’ve been chosen of God to be holy and beloved. He determined to set his love on you and me for no reason of ours at all, but strictly of his own free choice. The elect of God, that’s who we are.

2 Timothy 2:10, “For this reason - ” Paul says, “ - I endure all things in my ministry for the sake of those who are chosen, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus.” I am doing my evangelistic ministry to bring the gospel to the elect, the chosen. Titus. When Paul writes that letter, he couldn’t say it anymore straightforward. “Paul, a bond servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God.” 2 John, that little epistle, describes the church as “the chosen lady, the elect lady,” 2 John 1. 2 John 13, “the children of your chosen sister greet you.” Two churches, both elect.

So, you see, when Peter says, “I am writing to the elect of God,” or the chosen, he means believers. Now catch this, will you please? The term “elect” or “chosen” is synonymous with “Christian,” with “saved,” with “born again.” And the rich reality of that term is to remind us that we are the chosen of God. He made the choice, not us.

And what Peter is saying, I think, is so wonderful. What he’s saying to these persecuted Christians is, “Hey, you may not be the choice of the world, but you are the choice of God.” Can you grab that? That’s comforting. That’s a rich reality. And listen, it was intended to be an encouragement to persecuted believers.

Now as we look a little more closely at this, I’ll give you a little list of the elements of election. Let’s see how far we get.

Number one, the nature of our election - and we’re just going to take it phrase by phrase. It is so rich. The nature of our election. Verse 1, “Who are chosen.” Who are chosen. 2:9 - please notice it - Peter says, “you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession.” You are a chosen race.

Beloved, can you grasp that reality? You are a Christian because you are chosen to be one by God. That’s what the Bible says. It is the chosen who are the saved. The term, as I said, means to “select,” to “pick out,” to “call out from among.” And Peter is simply saying that Christians are people God has chosen to belong to himself. That’s the nature of election. The nature of election is God has chosen a people to belong to him, and we’re that people. God chooses people out of all the world to belong to him.

In Acts 15:14 - I think that's the right verse - we read this. Yes. "Simeon, or Peter, has related how - " this is the Council of Jerusalem - " how God first concerned himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name." God's whole plan is to take out a people, to choose a people.

Now something inside of you resists this, doesn't it? You say, "Now wait a minute, you mean we're just chosen?" And you fight against that. Your fallenness fights that because we would like to think in part it depended on us. That's pride. We'd also like to think, "Well, it sounds unfair." That's pride saying, "God, I'll straighten you out when I get to heaven." You don't understand what fair is. You have to retreat to faith, my friend. You have to retreat to faith.

What does the Bible teach? Does the Bible teach that we are chosen by God or doesn't it? Let's have a little Bible lesson, okay? Get your Bible, open it to Matthew chapter 20 and get ready, we're going to move. You must understand this. You have a parable here.

"The kingdom of heaven, like a land owner, went out in the morning to hire labors for his vineyard. He agreed with the laborers for a denarius, he sent them into his vineyard. He went out the third hour, saw others standing idle in the marketplace, went through the process, hired them." Hired them. Hired them. Hired them. Selected them. The whole parable, all the way down to the bottom, he picked out who he wanted and he rewarded them with eternal life. That's the essence of the parable. Very simple. He selected them. Called them into his service. Sent them out to serve. Rewarded them fairly, faithfully, generously. That is a picture of election.

John 15. John 15. Do you remember this verse? Jesus said it to his disciples, "You did not - " what? " - choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in my name he may give it you." You didn't choose me, I chose you.

You say, "Well, wait a minute. I chose you, too." "No, you didn't choose me, I chose you," that's what I said. That's how it is. Look at John 17:9. He says of Christians - praying to the Father does our Lord - "I ask on their behalf - " this is the high priestly prayer of Christ " - I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom thou hast - " what? " - given me." The Father chose us and gave us to Christ as a love gift, for they are thine.

Look at Acts chapter 13 - most interesting. Most interesting. Acts 13:48. Here Paul is preaching to the Gentiles, huge crowd on the Sabbath day. And it says, verse 46, let's pick it up there. "Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly, said it was necessary that the Word of God should be spoken to you first, since you repudiated it, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life. Behold we're turning to the Gentiles, - " that is turning from the Jews to the Gentiles, " - for thus the Lord has commanded us, 'I have placed you as a light for the Gentiles that you should bring salvation to the end of the earth.' And when the Gentiles heard this, - " that is, the gospel message, " - they began rejoicing and

glorifying the Word of the Lord, and as many as had been appointed to eternal life - ” what “ - believed.” The chosen believed. Those appointed to eternal life believed.

Look at Romans 9:14. Here is the obvious antagonist who’s going to reply. God is talking about choosing. He says, “Jacob I loved. Esau I hated.” God made His choice. Verse 14, “What shall we say then? There is no injustice with God, is there? May it never be - ” *m genoito*, in the Greek. No, no, no. It’s not injustice. For he said to Moses, “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy. And I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.” Which is to say, “I will do precisely what I want to do.”

Verse 16 - look at this. “So then it - ” salvation “ - does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.” Sovereign mercy. Hmm. And somebody in verse 19 says, “Well then, how can he find fault with somebody? Well, who can resist His will?” “On the contrary, ‘Who are you, O man, who answers back to God?’ ” Keep your mouth shut, it's beyond you.

“The thing molded will not say to the molder, ‘Why do you make me like this,’ will it? 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? And what if God, although willing to demonstrate his wrath and make his power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?”

Listen. God has just as much right to use his attribute of destruction and wrath, and put that on display against ungodly, as he does to put his grace, and love, and mercy on display for those he elects. Very clear. Don’t argue with God. You’re only showing your pride, and the ignorance of your finite mind. If you can’t understand it, believe it. That’s what it says. That’s exactly what it says. “It doesn’t depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who will have mercy on whomever he decides to have mercy.”

Romans 11:5, “In the same way then - ” as in the case of the prophet Elijah and 7,000 men who didn’t bow the knee to Baal “ - in the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according - ” listen to this “ - to God’s gracious - ” what? “ - choice.” God’s choice.

First Corinthians 1:9, “God is faithful, through whom you were called into fellowship with his Son.” Your salvation was a direct work of God. He called you into fellowship with his Son. Look at Ephesians 1:3. “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 - ” verse 4, are you ready, “ - just as he chose us in him - ” that is, in Christ, “ - before the foundation of the world.” When did it happen? When were we chosen? Before we were born. Before anybody was born. Before there was a world, we were chosen.

Can you handle this thought? As long as there is God, we’ve been chosen. Grab that one. You say, “How long has God been around?” Forever. Forever. You want to know something? You were chosen

in eternity past. As long as God has existed, his elect have been in his mind. Whew. Unbelievable. Chosen.

On the basis of his choice, verse 5, “he predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to himself according to the kind intention of his will, so that it would be to the praise of the glory of his grace.” Not ours.

He chose us. As long as he’s been God we’ve been chosen. Whew! That’s an unbelievable thought. As long as God has existed, John MacArthur was in the plan. I was in his mind. So were you if you belong to him. That is an intensely thrilling thought.

Look at 1 Thessalonians 1:4. Paul is so encouraged by the Thessalonian church he says in verse 2, “We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers.” Like the Philippian church, this was a beloved congregation. He didn’t know them as well. He hadn’t stayed there as long, only three sabbaths. But he loved them. And he says, “I look at your life and I see - ” in verse 3 “ - your work of faith, your labor of love, your steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the presence of our God and Father, knowing, brethren, beloved by God his choice of you.” He chose you. That’s apparent. He chose you.

Second Thessalonians 2:13. Listen to this. “We should always give thanks to God for you - ” we shouldn’t thank you. We should thank God “ - brethren, beloved by the Lord.” Isn’t that good? “Because God has - ” what? “ - chosen you from the beginning.” You say, “What’s that?” I don’t know. I don’t know what that is - the beginning. What beginning? I don’t know. “From the beginning for salvation.” Did you get that? “God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation.” I don’t know how it could be said more clearly than that. How could anyone not see what that says?

Second Timothy 1:9. Here’s another one of these mind bogglers. He talks about God at the end of verse 8, then he says, “God, who has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.” Now we’re finding out what the beginning is. All eternity? He has known that we were the elect from all eternity. He has granted us in his mind as long as he has existed that we would be saved. And it’s all according to his plan and his purpose and his grace, and not us. Remarkable. Remarkable truth.

Look at 2 Timothy 2:10. Paul says, “In my ministry I endure all things - ” and he endured a lot “ - for the sake of those who are chosen, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.” “My ministry is to reach the elect,” he says, “Reach the chosen.”

Revelation chapter 13, in Revelation 13:8 - listen to this - it talks about the beast and the antichrist of the tribulation time in the future. It says, “All who dwell on the earth will worship him.” Everybody’s

going to worship him. The whole world's going to worship him, except everyone - it says - will worship him "whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the Book of Life of the Lamb who has been slain."

When was your name written down? From the foundation of the world. When was that? I don't know. But as long as God has existed, he's had me in his mind. As long as God has existed, he's had you and I who are Christians in his mind, and predetermined to love us and to make us like his Son, and he wrote our names in his book before the world began.

Revelation 17:8. And here again the beast will be worshiped and adored. And it says, "And those who dwell on the earth will wonder whose name has not been written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world." And again, we are told in a backhanded way that Christians are those whose names have been written in the Book of Life from beginning, from eternity, from the foundation of the world.

So when someone says to you, "What religion are you?" You can say, "I'm one of the chosen." "Chosen by whom?" God. "Really, when?" Forever. As long as God has been God, he's chosen me, loved me. "Why?" Certainly had nothing to do with me. I just showed up and I was elect. "Well, did you do some good works to deserve it?" No, there was no me when God decided it.

Revelation 17:14. "These will wage war against the Lamb - " that is, the host of the Antichrist " - and the Lamb will overcome them because he is Lord of lords and King of kings and those who are with him are the called and - " what? " - chosen and faithful." We're the chosen.

One final mention, chapter 20. This is amazing. Final judgment, great white throne. "If anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life he was - " what? " - thrown in the lake of fire." When were names put in the book? From before the foundation of the earth. Boy, elect. That's just part of what scripture says about it.

We resist that. Something in us struggles with that. Look at Luke 4. It will comfort you. You're not alone. Luke 4. Interesting. Jesus, in this marvelous synagogue event in Nazareth, opened the book of the prophet Isaiah, stood up in the synagogue, opened the book, read it. This is what he read, verse 18, and here was a prophecy that he was fulfilling right out of Isaiah 61.

"'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord.' And he closed the book and gave it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed upon him and he began to say to them, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.' And all were speaking well of him and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from his lips and they were

saying, ‘Is this not Joseph’s son?’ ”

So far, so good. So far, so good. But watch what happens. Verse 25. “I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah when the sky was shut up for three years and six months - ” no rain “ - when a great famine came over all the land.” There were many widows. “And yet Elijah was sent to - ” what? “ - none of them, but only to Zarephath in the land of Sidon to a woman who was a widow. And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha, the prophet, and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.”

You know what he’s telling them about? Sovereign grace. Lots of widows, and lots of lepers, and God picked none of them but a widow in Zarephath and a leper named Naaman who wasn’t even a Jew, he was a Syrian. “And all in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things, they rose up, they cast him out of the city, they led him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built in order to throw him down the cliff.”

Let me tell you something. The respectable religious leaders of Israel despised the doctrine of election, especially when it pointed out that they were not the elect. You can’t debate the truth. This is the truth. You can’t debate it. They didn’t want to hear it. Many today don’t want to hear it, but it’s the truth. You see, in Revelation 19:6 we are told, “The Lord God omnipotent reigneth.” God in heaven is the controller and the disposer of all creatures.

Scripture says as the Most High, he rules amid the armies of the heavens and none can stay his hand and none can say unto him, ‘What are you doing?’ He is the almighty who works all things after the council of his own will. He fulfills all his own purposes, makes all his own promises come to pass. He is the heavenly potter who takes the lump of clay, fallen humanity and fashions it the way he wants to fashion it. He is the decider and the determiner of the destiny of every person. He is the controller of every detail in every individual’s life, which is simply another way of saying that God is God.

Arthur Pink, again, said, “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.”

So the nature of election. God’s divine will selects some for salvation. Is that hard for you to handle? I confess to you that I struggle with that. I believe it with all my heart because the Bible teaches it. There’s something pretty thrilling about it, don’t you feel that way? Something pretty exciting about that reality. There’s something immensely humbling about it. Immensely humbling. I mean, it literally destroys pride. I mean, what can we claim? Nothing.

You say, “Well what about the people that aren’t elect?” Well, the Bible says they go to hell because of their unbelief. And God takes no responsibility for that. You say, “I don’t understand that.” That’s right. I don’t understand that either. But I understand my God, and I understand what he said in his Word. And he said, “You’re condemned because you believe not on me.” You say, “How do you harmonize this?” I don’t. God does in perfect justice.

The reason God gave us the doctrine of election was to tell us two things. One, he’s in charge. Two, he is so gracious to those of us who could never have earned it that we ought to spend our eternity praising his glorious name. The doctrine of election is not given to us to confuse us. It is given to us to devastate our pride and to elicit our praise. And we’re going to find out more about that next Lord’s day. That’s one out of five. John Zimmer didn’t think I’d finish one. Let’s pray together.

Lord, there’s so much more to say about this. We have just touched the surface. But, Lord, we’re beginning to understand what your Word says, even if we can’t fully grasp in our minds all that that implies. Help us to walk in faith knowing that you’re a God who is consistent, perfectly just, perfectly righteous, and that you have absolutely no contradiction in your person.

We who are saved are saved because we were chosen in your mind for as long as you have been God, and we did nothing to contribute. You even produced the faith in us, you even produced and granted us repentance. You produced obedience by your Spirit. And, Lord, we also understand that those who go out into eternity and don’t know you are responsible for their own unbelief, because that’s what Scripture says. And so we cry to the unsaved to believe, and we praise you for choosing us, and leave the resolution to you.

Thank you, God, for choosing us. Why, oh why? We are so grateful. And may that gratitude come forth in a life of loving, thankful commitment to you. And we long for the day when we can be in your presence and praise you unhindered and unrestricted forever, and ever, and ever, for choosing us.

We pray for those who do not believe. We pray, O God, that men might not turn their back on you. For Jesus said, “Him that comes to me, I will in no case cast away.” And may we who are saved be comforted by the doctrine of election, and may the lost not be turned away by that doctrine, but hear the words of Jesus, “Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.”

We’ve just begun to study this. We want to understand it as best our finite minds are able. Be with us. Help us that we might fully praise you for your sovereign grace. In the Savior’s name. Amen.

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