

A New People for an Old Message: A Study in 1 Peter, 1:1-2 Preached @ Harambee Church by Pastor Michael Gunn on February 29th, 2009

“...and the evangelical church has that same atmosphere. Give us how-to's not doctrine. So you have major conferences on how to grow successful churches that boldly say, "We don't get into doctrine and theology." And the vast majority of the church seems to hear that as a virtue. The more I read the Bible the less I sympathize with this view. The apostle's saw doctrine as tremendously practical. When Peter begins his letter with the phrase "elect aliens," he means to give practical help to aliens. And he believes it is practically helpful to know that you are among the elect. So I urge you not to be like the pragmatists who belittle doctrines like election. Rather, be like the apostles who cherish the doctrine of election and put it at the very front of their concerns, because it is so urgently practical for living like free and joyful aliens in a foreign world.”

John Piper

“Election, therefore, is but one aspect (Though an important aspect) of the saving purpose of the Triune God, and thus must not be viewed as salvation. For the act of election itself saved no one; what it did was to mark out certain individuals for salvation. Consequently, the doctrine of election must not be divorced from the doctrines of human guilt, redemption, and regeneration or else it will be distorted and misrepresented.”

David N. Steele

Intro

I am excited to get into a book study, and take a look at Peter's first epistle to those in Turkey who needed to be reminded of the hope of the gospel. This is what this book centers on, 'Hope in the midst of persecution and hard times!' If 1 Peter 3:15 asks us to give a defense to anyone that asks us *“To give an account of the hope that is in you”* maybe it's time to remember that great hope that we have. Because all this talk about mission, and “Doing” without understanding our identity in Christ, is useless! This book calls us to holiness (**1 Peter 1:15, 16**), and it would be easy to preach as a book to “get in shape”, “get better”, “try a little harder”, but that would only make us more self-righteous, or frustrated, knowing that we aren't really as “Holy” as we are trying to let everyone know we are. There are some things in this book that may drive us crazy, but my prayer is that it will drive us to our knees, in worship, and that it fills our lives with the hope of the gospel of Jesus Christ!!

From the Head...

Election, The Beautifully Misunderstood Doctrine

(1 Peter 1:1)

It's amazing that this book begins so quickly with this idea. Some of your translations either place it later in the text than earlier or (As The “Message” does) leaves it out all together. However, it is the 5th word in the best Greek manuscripts in existence. It is a doctrine that has often been divisive, and many have relegated talking about doctrines like this to some small group of theological nerds. We don't see conversations like this as “Relevant,” and there are some that have even stated that this doctrine is “Demonic.” That's why preaching through whole books are important to our understanding of God, because it forces us to talk about doctrines like this in the church. This word, and this concept is in here for a reason, and it is interesting to know that the author has placed it so quickly in his writing about enduring persecution and hard times. It's like Peter wants us to get this, because it's extremely relevant to our understanding of God, and of our understanding of what it means to be “In Him,” and that this doctrine has fantastic relevance for those that are experiencing exile, and persecution the way those hearing this text read for the first time. It reminds us that we trusting a God that is Sovereign in “ALL” things. Most of the teaching and books I have read in opposition to the idea that God elects some to salvation, while allowing others to continue in their rejection, have been sort of “Straw-Man,” and misunderstands the biblical teaching of the doctrine. Since I feel compelled to take a fair amount of time on this, I want to say up front that I believe this to be an incredibly “Relevant” truth about God and our salvation, and that this doctrine can never be understood apart from both the doctrines of fallen man, and the work of the Trinitarian God in salvation. Election is NOT salvation (See Quote; **2 Timothy 2:10**); it is God's marking work assuring salvation of some before time began.

Notes on Election

Election means that before the “Foundation of time,” God chose certain individuals from among fallen humanity to be objects of His Divine Mercy/favor (Not in any way according to any merit they did), while allowing others to be left to their own choices and rebellion. God is glorified in all of man's choices based on His justice/holiness and His grace/mercy.

- a. Election means God chooses some to salvation (**Deuteronomy 10:14-15; Psalm 33:12; Psalm 65:4; Matthew 11:27; Romans 9; 1 Peter 2:9**)
- b. Election means God Chooses ‘Before the Foundation of the World’ (**Ephesians 1:4; 2 Timothy 1:9; Revelation 13:8; 17:8**)

- c. Election means God's choice is NOT based on any foreseen merit/works (**Romans 9:11-13, 16; 1 Corinthians 1:27-29; 2 Timothy 1:9**)
- d. Election means God's choice is NOT based on a foreseen faith (**Acts 13:48; Philippians 1:29**)
- e. Election means God's choice is based on His mercy and sovereignty and not on man's will (**Exodus 33:19; Deuteronomy 7:6-7; Romans 11:4-6; Ephesians 2:8-9**)
- f. Election is part of a larger truth about God; His Sovereignty (**Job 42:1-2; Psalm 115:3; 135:6; Isaiah 14:24, 27; 46:9-11**).

Election's Relevance

1. It Heightens Our Praise (**Ephesians 1:5-6, 12, 14; 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 1:2, 4**)
2. It Assures Us of Our Salvation (**Philippians 1:6**)
3. It Comforts Believers (**Romans 8:29-30**).
4. It Encourages Evangelism (**2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1b "Exiles in Dispersion"**)

This leads us to the reason for this writing. These people are in dispersion. They are both Jewish and Gentile Christians¹ that have left Rome (Possibly by the force of persecution, some to work), and have been scattered by God's sovereignty to be as "*Aliens/Exiles/Sojourners*" in the land. Just like the term "Elect" which was usually reserved for Israel (**Deuteronomy 7:6; Isaiah 45:4; Psalm 105:6, 43**), he uses the term "Dispersion," which was also previously used for Israel.² The idea is that we are not citizens of this world (**1 Peter 2:11; Hebrews 11: 13, 25-26; Hebrews 13:14**), and it is because of this that we are willing to serve it sacrificially (**Hebrews 10:34**).

Election, According to the Work of a Trinitarian God

(**1 Peter 1:2**)

The Father As the Origin of Election

"According to the Foreknowledge of God the Father..."

As we saw above God doesn't choose on the basis of seeing into the future who would choose Him, He chooses based on His "Foreknowledge," (Prognosis), which is based on His intimate knowledge by which he knew us prior to the foundation of the world. The fact is we did not "Choose" Him, He chose us (**John 15:16**). Foreknowledge means an intimate knowledge by which He loves knows His people (**Palm 1:6; Amos 3:2**). We see that God "Chose" Abraham (**Nehemiah 9:7**) while he was a pagan (**Joshua 24:2-3**), and that was on the basis of Him "Knowing" him (**Genesis 18:19**).

The Spirit As the Means of Election

"In the Sanctification of the Spirit..."

This all occurs by God's work in our lives (**2 Thessalonians 2:13**). He is the "*Author and perfecter of our faith*" (**Hebrews 12:2**), and will complete the work He began in us (**Philippians 1:6**). Salvation is of the Lord. and because of that we can humbly fall before Him in praise!!

The Son as Fruit and Execution of Election

"For Obedience to Jesus Christ and for Sprinkling with His Blood"

This is only made possible by Christ's work on the cross, who has executed God's plan from the foundation of he world (**Acts 2:23; ; 4:28**) so that our lives could be lived in holiness to our Lord. Our righteousness is His (**2 Corinthians 5:21**), and we can rejoice that we can live a holy life because of what He has done. Our works of obedience are the result of God's work in us (**Ephesians 1:12; 2:10; John 15:16**), and a confirmation that His grace is evident in our lives (**1 Peter 1:5-11**).

...to the Heart

The doctrine of election is obviously on the heart of Peter an apostle, and one who is concerned about those dispersed throughout current day Turkey. It's hard to truly understand this doctrine and not fall in awe of a God who before he made one molecule has planned out , has thought through the ramifications of every choice and action of humanity, and uses everything to His glory, and our salvation. This is far from the hopeless doctrine of fatalism that has no personality behind the actions, just fate itself; and it's far from the idea of a mechanistic universe that with god as the master puppeteer. He is in control, but He continues to give humanity choice, which humanity continues to use to rebel against God and His holiness. He consistently says "*Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest*" (**Matthew 11:28**), and "*Come and let him who is thirsty come, let him who desires take the water of life without cost*" (**Revelation 22:17**). Election saves no one, the movement to God with the confession that He is Lord and risen from the dead results in salvation (**Romans 10:9-10**).

¹ Mostly Gentiles (**1:18; 2:10; 4:3**)

² The Jews were often scattered through Palestine and away from their home throughout the Old Testament (See the Prophets), and

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For further reading check out:

"The Reformed View of Predestination," Lorraine Boettner; *"Elect in the Son,"* Robert Shank (A good Arminian argument); *"Arminian Theology: Myths and Realities,"* Roger E. Olson (Another good Arminian argument); *"Systematic Theology,"* Wayne Grudem, pgs. 669-691; *"Putting Amazing Back Into Grace"* Michael Horton; *"Freedom of the Will,"* Jonathan Edwards; *"Easy Chairs, Hard Words,"* Douglas Wilson; *"The Institutes of the Christian Religion,"* John Calvin, Book 3, pgs. 460-582