

“The Chosen”  
1 Peter 1:1-2  
September 10, 2006  
1<sup>st</sup> in the series: “Resident Aliens –  
Living Christianly in a non-Christian World”  
Studies in 1 Peter

Have you often found yourself in situations where you asked, “What does God want me to do here?”

That is a very serious question for the genuine Christian.

The true Christian has an allegiance to the Lord and his kingdom that overrides allegiance to anyone or anything else.

But knowing what to do can be difficult and actually doing it can be even more difficult when seemingly everyone and everything around you says to do it differently.

A friend of mine was swindled out of all his assets.

He was wiped out by the illegal actions of another person.

The injustice of it was huge and consequences were devastating.

My friend rightly sought justice.

But he and I also talked about another desire that stirred within him, and in me as his friend - the desire to go after that swindler and take him down.

A lot of the counsel my friend was getting and his own fallen nature combined to make revenge a very enticing option.

But as a Christian, my friend, genuinely asked and responded to the question, “What does God want me to do in this situation?”

How to live Christianly in a non-Christian world is a very real issue.

- What do you do when your boss demands that you participate in some unethical behavior when you know your job is on the line?
- How do you rear your children to live by biblical values when the culture around is seductively modeling different values?

- How do you act when you are discriminated against by a boss, a co-worker, a neighbor or even family members merely because you are a Christian?

How do we live Christianly in a non-Christian world?

I ask that question because I believe it is the question being answered in the book of 1 Peter.

Today we start a series of messages from this NT book, written, as it purports, by an Apostle – the Apostle Peter.

In his second letter Peter would tell why his readers should listen to him:

2 Peter 1:16 “We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.”

And though he was speaking specifically of the OT, the NT writings are included as well when Peter writes:

2 Peter 1:20-21 “Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”

So Peter writes with authority under the inspiration of God, the Holy Spirit so that what he writes is God's word.

I said that I believe the question being answered in 1 Peter is, “How to live Christianly in a non-Christian world?”

To begin to show you why I believe this and how Peter begins to answer the question, we must read the text:

1 Peter 1:1-2 “Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God’s elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance.”

This is the opening greeting of the letter, similar in a way to our letters that begin with “Dear Susan” or “Dear Trent.”

But, oh, this greeting carries so much more content and intent.

I’ve already spoken of the writer as Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Look with me at who he is writing to: “to God’s elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia...”

The ones who received the letter were individual believers and groups of believers who lived in what is now called Turkey.

They lived in cities, towns and villages throughout the five Roman provinces that are named.

Some suggest there were a million Jews in Israel at that time and 2-4 million living in other areas. (Peter Davids, *The First Epistle of Peter*, 46)

Ever since the final overthrow of Israel and Judah, 600 years earlier, Jews had been scattered all over the Middle East.

Those scattered Jews became known as the Diaspora – the people dispersed throughout the world, living outside Israel.

When Peter thinks of the Jewish and Gentile Christians living in many places, he uses the same word – “Diaspora/scattered.”

The point is that these true Christians are a minority everywhere they live.

But the first indication we have that Peter is answering the question of “how to live Christianly in a non-Christian world” is found in the earlier words where he writes: “to God’s elect, strangers in the world.”

The juxtaposition of the words, “elect” and “strangers” is obviously intentional.

As we will see in a few minutes, the word “elect” refers to being chosen, to belonging, to being part of a select group.

The word “strangers” is quite the opposite – meaning outsiders or foreigners.

Peter is concerned with helping his readers understand how to live in one place while upholding the values of another;

how to reside in a non-Christian culture but to act according to another culture – the kingdom of God.

One of my son’s friends is eight-year-old Paul Pakhuongte from India.

Paul’s parents are partners of our church and are attending Denver Seminary for three years before returning to India.

Paul attends Front Range Christian School that regularly recites the Pledge of Allegiance.

I haven’t asked them, but I can imagine Paul’s parents telling him to be respectful of another countries rituals, but that he shouldn’t pledge allegiance to the American flag because Paul is an Indian.

And I’m certain that when the World Cup was played, Paul was rooting for India, not the U.S.

These are superficial issues to be sure, but they illustrate how a person lives in one culture while having his real identity in another.

In 1 Peter, God will show us how to engage the present culture while maintaining allegiance to the other.

I want to camp on that for a minute.

God does not tell us to disengage from the present culture.

There is an old gospel song that says, “This world is not my home, I’m just a passin’ through.”

While there is truth in those words, too many took it to mean that we are to withdraw from the world, forming virtual Christian ghettos, and simply hunkering down until Jesus comes to rescue us.

But God doesn't suggest withdrawal; instead he calls us to engage the culture but to do so in ways whereby we influence it rather than the dominant culture influencing and assimilating us.

The Apostle Paul said it this way, Romans 12:2 "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its mold." (J.B. Phillips' paraphrase)

One man wrote, "Christians are the elect of God and thus only temporarily resident in the present world... (This) makes clear their status as 'resident aliens' so long as they remain in the world. (BUT) their **existence** receives its definition and direction from the future, not from the present, from God not from the world." (V.P. Furnish in Peter Davids, 47)

In other words, I live in the here and now, in a culture with very different values, goals, behaviors and attitudes than in the culture of the Kingdom of God described in the Bible.

How do I engage **this** culture while living by the values of another?

As Christians we see circumstances differently.

We see health, jobs, relationships, and even death itself differently.

We see all of life through the lens of Scripture.

We don't see death as the end.

We don't see circumstances as fate.

We don't see relationships as means to an end.

I know I've spent many minutes on this theme, but I'm convinced that we must have this "two-worlds" perspective in order to know how to respond to the specific situations we encounter day by day.

But to start his instruction on **how** to respond Christianly in a non-Christian world the Apostle starts at a different place.

He first writes: "to God's elect...who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood."

Peter wants to make it clear to them which culture, which kingdom is their true home.

More precisely, he wants to remind them of who they truly are.

I have repeatedly heard our cross-cultural missionaries speak of how they try to help their children learn and remember that they are Americans.

They celebrate American holidays, they watch American movies, and among still other things, they return to the States as often as they can so their children can experience American culture.

They want their children to know, in this respect, who they are.

Much more significantly, God wants us to know who we are.

Peter says in essence, let there be no question which culture, which kingdom, is your home.

Know beyond doubt that you belong to God.

To accomplish that goal the Apostle Peter uses a marvelous word – “chosen” – “to you who have been chosen.”

The word “chosen” is from the word that, earlier in the sentence, is translated “elect.”

Now don't get distracted by the words “elect” or “election.”

I don't know of any Christian theologian who denies that the Bible teaches “election” – that we are “elect.”

They may argue about the basis of God's election but they all understand that the Bible says God elects us.

We'll come back to that in a minute.

But for now, consider the great truth that God has elected, has chosen us.

I remember schoolyard baseball and football games

I remember that the two best players would be the captains and they each would choose who would be on their team.

Oh the humiliation of being chosen last or worse yet not being chosen and as one of the leftovers just being assigned evenly among the two teams.

But oh how good to being chosen first.

We look at the marvelous little faces of those who are being adopted by families of our church and we say, “How blessed, how fortunate, these little ones are – they have been chosen.”

If you’ve been in a orphanage, or have looked at a website with the pictures of children awaiting adoption, then you know something of the feeling that comes when you see or hear “Oh, that one’s been chosen.”

Now Peter is saying **we** have been chosen by God.

Now that wouldn’t be all that impressive **if God made his choice the way we make choices** and the way we are tempted to think God does.

We’re tempted to think God chose us the way we got chosen first for the schoolyard football team –

because we were the best, or we had something the captain needed, or simply because we begged to be chosen.

But what does the text say?

We have been “chosen **according to the foreknowledge** of God the Father...”

Now I must quickly point out that the Bible doesn’t usually use the word “foreknowledge” the way we do.

We think it means simply to know beforehand.

So we are tempted to say that since God is all-knowing, God chose people based on what he saw in the future they would do or believe.

We then think, he foreknew they would trust Jesus, so he chose them.

But let’s look at what the Bible says:

Ephesians 1:11 “In (Christ) we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of (the Father) who works out everything **in conformity with the purpose of his will...**”

On what basis were we chosen?

We were chosen on the basis of God’s plan and will.

Maybe, a little clearer and more convincing is the way the Apostle Peter, just sentences later, uses the same word (foreknowledge) to describe Jesus.

1 Peter 1:20 “(Jesus) was **chosen before** the creation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.”

The words “chosen before” come from the same word translated “foreknowledge” in verse 2.

Here, speaking of Jesus, it says that the Father chose him before. Obviously this doesn't mean that the Father simply knew ahead of time but it means that God was making a choice ahead of time.

Speaking of Jacob and Esau of the Old Testament, the Apostle Paul writes in Romans 9:11-12 Jacob was chosen, “before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls.”

So if God doesn't make the choice of us based on how he foresees we will believe or act, **on what basis does he choose?**

Ephesians 1:5 God, “predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will...”

Do you see it? We are chosen not based on anything we have done or will do or even based on foreseeing that we will believe; we are chosen solely because out of his grace, God has set his affection on us.

It's somewhat like the families that are adopting children from other countries without ever meeting the children.

They don't choose the child based on the child's looks or behavior. They choose the child because they chose to choose – they chose to love, to set their affection on that child.

It was not anything they saw or foresaw in the child but solely what was in the adopting parents that caused the choice.



And God's choice of us is even better than that!

God chose you and me not after he saw a sweet little baby who cooed and slept through the night.

God chose you even when he knew that you would follow your parents and their parents and their parents all the way back to Adam and Eve in sinning against him, ignoring him, and refusing his love and rule in your life.

A closer analogy is to talk about people who choose to adopt a grandchild who has lied, stolen and abused them and their love.

Romans 5:8 "God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Westminster Shorter Catechism:

Q. Did God leave all mankind to die in sin and misery?

A. From all eternity, and **merely because it pleased him**, God chose some to have everlasting life. These he freed from sin and misery by a covenant of grace and brought to salvation by a redeemer.

We don't belong to God based on us and our fickle faithless ways; we belong to God based on God's sovereign, unchanging choice.

No believer should ever feel threatened by the doctrine of election because it is always used as a basis of encouragement; we are under the preserving and protecting power of God to fulfill his promises to us.

Are you a Christian?

You have been "chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father."

**But that is not all:**

**We have been "chosen ... through the sanctifying work of the Spirit..."**

We now know **why** God chose us – because in his love he decided to.  
But **how** did he accomplish it?  
How did he actually bring us into a relationship with him?

You might say, “Well that’s simple, God offered and we responded.”  
But that is not what the text says; it says that the Holy Spirit had to do something.

The Bible says, spiritually speaking, we are dead in our sins.  
We are unable to respond to God on our own.

1 Corinthians 2:14 “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned (understood).

The Holy Spirit of God must come into us and open our blind eyes to see the Savior for who he is (John 16:8).

The Holy Spirit of God is the one who sanctifies or sets us apart for God. (2Thessalonians 2:13)

Nearly 400 years ago, one of the great post-Reformation pastor-theologians captured it well:

“It is very difficult work to draw a soul out of the hands and strong chains of Satan and out of the pleasing entanglements of the world, and out of its own natural perverseness, to yield itself unto God – to deny itself, and live to God, and in so doing, to run against the mainstream, and the current of the ungodly world without and corruption within. The strongest rhetoric, the most moving and persuasive way of discourse, is all too weak; the tongue of men or angels cannot prevail with the soul to free itself, and shake off all that detains it... The hand of man is too weak to pluck any soul out of the crowd of the world and to set it in amongst the select number of believers... Only the Father of spirits has absolute command of the spirit of a man. This powerful, this sanctifying Spirit knows no resistance; works sweetly and yet strongly; it can come **into** the heart, whereas all other speakers are forced to stand (outside). That still voice within persuades more than all the loud

crying without... There is a secret (power) in a word, or look, or touch of this Spirit upon the soul, by which it is forced, not with a harsh, but a pleasing violence, and cannot choose but follow it..." Robert Lieighton, *1 Peter*, 18-19

You didn't come to Jesus of your own accord, you couldn't and wouldn't.  
But God chose you based on his love.  
And after he chose you, he drew you out of sin's grip and to himself.

**But that is not all:**

**1 Peter 1:3 You have been chosen... "for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood."**

We have seen that in love God chose us and then he sent his Spirit to free us from the death-grip of sin, to give us life.

Peter next says, that is what made it possible for you to respond to Jesus.

The phrase "obedience to Jesus Christ," refers first of all to the obedience of faith.

As we've already seen, it takes the power of the Spirit of God to open our blind eyes to see the Savior for who he is.

1 Corinthians 2:10 "God has revealed it ("the deep things of God") to us by his Spirit."

We see that it takes the power of the Spirit to enable us to believe; he grants to us the very ability and will to trust Jesus.

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.

Again from the Westminster Catechism:

Q. 31. What is effectual calling?

A. Effectual calling is the work of God's Spirit, whereby, convincing us of our sin and misery, enlightening our minds in the knowledge of Christ, and renewing our wills, he persuades and enables us to embrace Jesus Christ, freely offered to us in the gospel.

We have been chosen for “obedience to Jesus Christ.”

We have been chosen **to trust Jesus** and trust him we do by the Holy Spirit’s heart-changing work in us.

**But that is not all:**

**The Apostle Peter completes this description of God’s choice of us by adding: 1 Peter 1:3 You have been chosen...“for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood.”**

God sets his affection on us, he frees us and draws us to himself by his Spirit, he grants us the ability and desire to trust in Jesus and then, **then he makes us holy so that we can have a relationship with a holy God.**

The phrase, “sprinkled by (Jesus’) blood” is very likely a reference to Exodus 24 when the people responded in faith to the Lord and then the priest sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices on the people.

This indicated that the sins of the people were forgiven based on the sacrifice of animals’ lives for theirs.

We know from the NT that those OT sacrifices looked forward to the final and sufficient sacrifice – the death of God’s own Son, Jesus.

Hebrews 10:11-12 “Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when this priest (Jesus) had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God.”

Earlier, with a reference to the sprinkling of blood, the author said,

Hebrews 9:13-14 “The blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkled on those who are ceremonially unclean sanctify(ies) them so that they are outwardly clean. How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!

Later in his letter Peter would write,

1 Peter 1:18-19 “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but (you were redeemed) with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.

Will you remember with me again this morning how essential it is that we be sprinkled, washed, cleansed from our sin by the blood of Jesus.

We forget that!

Robert Leighton reminds us and I paraphrase him:

We think that forgiveness is easy and that the pollution of sin in us is easily removed.

We are not easily convinced of the depth of the stain of sin in us.

We don't realize how depraved we are; how every part of our person is affected by sin.

Some of us think that if we resolve sufficiently to quit our sins that will relieve us of the guilt.

And when we manage to actually quit those sins, amending our ways, we assume we truly have cleansed ourselves; we have done what is necessary.

Or we assume that if we are sufficiently sorry for our sins that we are relieved of the guilt.

No, our greatest sorrow and even a complete changing of our ways do not relieve the guilt or cleanse the stain of sin in us.

It is true that a cleansed heart will change but it is not the change that cleanses, it is the blood of Jesus.

“It is easier to make a man (aware) of the necessity of repentance and amendment of life, though that is very difficult, than of (his need) of this purging by the sprinkling of this precious blood.” (Leighton, *1 Peter*, 15)

The words of an old gospel song say it, "What can wash away my sin, nothing but the blood of Jesus."

Listen to it all once again:

1 Peter 1:1-2 "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to God's elect, strangers in the world, who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance."

If we are going to live Christianly in a non-Christian world, it is important for us to know who we are, whose we are, and what culture is our home.

We are children of God, we belong to him, and we are most "at home" in the culture of the kingdom of God.

It is no wonder that the Apostle then breaks into praise, "Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, <sup>4</sup> and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, <sup>5</sup> who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time."

Other sources on election:

R.C. Sproul, *Chosen by God*

C. Samuel Storms, *Chosen for Life*

Other quotes:

1 Peter 1:1-2

**NIV** Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia, <sup>2</sup> who have been chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, for obedience to Jesus Christ and sprinkling by his blood: Grace and peace be yours in abundance."

**NASB** "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to those who reside as aliens, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, who are chosen <sup>2</sup> 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.

**Greek** "Petros apostolos Iōsou Christou **eklektois** parepidōmois diasporas Pontou, Galatias, Kappadokias, Asias, kai Bithunias, kata **prognosin** theou patros, en hagio pneumatos, eis hupakoōn kai hrantimon haimatos Iōsou Christou: charis humin kai eirōnō plōthuntheiō.

Peter's authority:

"In the first Century of the Christian church, the primary characteristic of an apostle was his authority to bear authentic testimony to the life and

significance of Jesus Christ. An apostle was recognized to have an authority distinct from (others...and) equal in authority to the prophets of the Old Testament.” (Karen Jobes, *1 Peter*, 58)

“strangers”

“The sociological effect of being a foreigner is in view: Christians distance themselves as nonconformists from handed-down lifestyles...” (Goppelt in Jobes, 62)

“chosen”

“The importance of establishing our identity on the basis of who we are in God’s family rather than who we are in social perceptions.” (Scott McKnight, *1 Peter*, 57)

“The order – Father; Spirit, Christ – perhaps reflects the logical *ordo salutis* of conversion that finds its ultimate origin in the heart of the Father, is made operative in human lives by the Holy Spirit, and is evidenced through personal expressions of faith in Jesus Christ.” (Jobes, *1 Peter*, 68) AND based on the death of God the Son for us.

“The NT understanding of God’s foreknowledge of his people indicates that God did not simply observe them or have information about them at some prior time in history. Instead, God chose them according to or consistent with his plan and purpose long before God formed a people to be his own.” (Jobes, 68)

If choice/election is based on faith then “To choose men because they believe is an obligation to which God is bound; it is a debt he must pay.” Storms, *Chosen for Life*,

“Peter here instructs his readers that God’s divine initiative has operated in their lives even before they were aware of it. It is this purposeful plan of God, larger than an individual’s life, that forms the ultimate foundation for the hope and encouragement that Peter is about to offer.” (Jobes, 68)

“The Spirit is a power from beyond this world; through him God takes hold of a person from the inside by addressing that one in a convincing way.



Whoever is taken hold of by the Spirit is thus taken from the realm of the profane and placed into the sphere of the holy.” (Goppelt in Jobes, 70)

“Grace does not contemplate sinners as merely undeserving but as ill-deserving.” C. Samuel Storms, *Chosen for Life*, 56

“The grace of God is love freely shown towards guilty sinners, contrary to their merit and indeed in defiance of their demerit. It is God showing goodness to persons who deserve only severity, and had no reason to expect anything but severity.” (J.I. Packer, *Knowing God*, 120)

The Spirit uses the Word of God and supernaturally opens the eyes of our hearts to understand and trust.

1 Peter 1:23 “For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 “Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were **sanctified**, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and **by the Spirit of our God.**

2 Thessalonians 2:13 “But we ought always to thank God for you, brothers loved by the Lord, because from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

The action of God produces a response in the person – the response is obedience (in this case the obedience is repentant-faith).

Exodus 24:6-8 “Moses took half of the blood and put it in bowls, and the other half he sprinkled on the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, “We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey.” Moses then took the blood, sprinkled it on the people and said, “This is the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words.”

In the Bible the phrase “obey the gospel” is used in reference to the response of faith upon hearing the good news. It is the obedient response of repentant-faith. (negatively said in 2 Thess 1:8; 1 Peter 4:17; Romans 10:16)

Many NT writers tell us that blood is essential to forgiveness:

Paul:

Ephesians 2:13 “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

Romans 5:9 “Since we have now been justified by his blood,

Luke:

Acts 20:28 “the church of God, which he bought with his own blood.

John:

1 John 1:7 “the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin

#### **HORATIO BONAR’S LETTER ON ELECTION**

Bonar began with two texts and then continued his explanation. “Many are called, but few are chosen” (Mt. 22:14). “As many as were ordained to eternal life believed.” Acts 13:48.

You know what a very prominent place in Scripture the doctrine of election holds. It meets us everywhere, both in the Old and new Testament. Whatever may be the meaning of the word, one cannot help feeling that the truth which it expresses must, in God’s sight, be a vitally important one.

But, how can this be the case, if it means no more than God’s choosing those that choose Him? If it means no more than God’s choosing those whom he foresaw would believe of their own accord and by their own power, it is not worthy of the prominent place it holds in Scripture; nay, it is not worthy of a separate name, least of all of such a name as election. If there be any election at all in such a case, it is plainly not God’s election of man, but man’s election of God. So that the question comes to be simply this, Does election mean God’s choosing man, or man’s choosing God? It cannot mean both; it must be either the one or the other. Which of the two can any reasonable being suppose it to mean?

#### **ELECTION GOD’S PROVINCE**

As the right understanding of this word is of great importance, I think it well to note down a few passages, which will help to shed light upon the meaning of the word. “The man’s rod, whom *I shall choose*, shall blossom” (Num. 17:5). “Thou shalt set him king over thee, whom the Lord thy God *shall choose*” (Deut. 17:15). “Did *I choose him* out of all the tribes of Israel?” (1 Sa. 2:28). “The place which the Lord *hath chosen*, to put his name there” (Deut. 12:21). “Them the Lord thy God *hath chosen* to minister unto him.” (Deut. 21:5). “Jerusalem the city which *I have chosen out* of all the tribes of Israel” (1 Ki. 9:32).

“The Lord *chose me*, before all the house of my father, to be king over Israel” (1 Chron. 28:4). “For his elect’s sake whom he *hath chosen*” (Mk. 13:20). “He is a *chosen* vessel unto me” (Acts 9:15). “I know whom I have *chosen*” (John 15:15). “According as he *hath chosen us* in him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). “God hath from the beginning *chosen* you unto salvation” (2 Thes. 2:13).

These are but a few out of the many passages that might have been selected. But they are quite enough to show the meaning of the word. No one who wishes to take words plainly as he finds them, can find any difficulty in understanding what choosing or election means, after reading such passages as these.

I would just ask, what does the word in common speech mean? When we speak of the election of a member of Parliament, does that mean that the member first had chosen himself? No such theory of election would be listened to for a moment in such matters. Election has but one meaning there. It means the people’s choosing their representatives by a distinct act of their own will. And shall man have his will, and shall not God have his? Shall man have his choice, and shall God not have his?

But let us take an instance from the Bible. What does God’s choosing Abraham mean? He is a specimen of a sinner saved by grace; a sinner called out of the world by God. Well, how did this choosing take place? Did not God choose him long before he ever thought of choosing God? Were there not thousands more in Chaldea that God might have chosen, and called, and saved, had he pleased? Yet, he chose Abraham alone. And what does the Bible call this procedure on the part of God? It calls it *election*. “Thou art the Lord, the God who didst *choose* Abraham and broughtest him forth out of Ur of the Chaldees” (Neh. 2:7). Does any one say, “O, but God chose Abraham because he foresaw that Abraham would choose him?” I answer the case is precisely the reverse of this. He chose Abraham just because he saw that otherwise Abraham would not choose Him. It was God’s foreseeing that Abraham would not choose him, that made election necessary. And so it is with us. God chooses us, not because he foresees that we would choose him, or that we would believe, but for the very opposite reason. He chooses us just because he foresees that we would neither choose him nor believe of ourselves at all. Election proceeds not upon foreseen faith in us, but upon foreseen unbelief.”

### THE EXPRESSION OF GOD’S WILL

The truth is, that election has no meaning, if it be not the expression of God’s will in reference to particular persons and things — saying to each, thus and thus shalt thou be, not because thou chooseth to be so, but because I, the infinite Jehovah, see fit that thou shouldst be so. To one creature he says, thou shalt be an angel, to another thou shalt be a man. To one order of beings, thou shalt dwell in Heaven, to another, thou shalt dwell on earth. To one man, thou shalt be born in Judea, where my name is named and my temple stands; to another, thou shalt be born in Egypt, or Babylon where utter darkness reigns. To one he says, thou shalt be born in Britain, and hear the glad tidings; to another, thou shalt be born in Africa, where no gospel has ever come. Thus he expresses his will, and who can resist it? What can find fault, or say to him, what doest Thou? Men may object to being placed thus entirely at the disposal of God, but the apostle’s answer to such is, “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God?” Election, then, is the distinct putting

forth of God's sovereign will, for the purpose of bringing a thing to pass which, but for the explicit going forth of that will, would not have come to pass.

But does this not lead to the conclusion that *sin* is the direct result of God's decree? Does it not teach us that it is God and not man that produces sin? No, God does not foreordain sin, but he decrees to allow man to sin. God is holy, and hates sin. He does not lead men into it; neither does he decree to lead men into it. But he decrees that, for infinitely wise ends, the creature should be permitted to fall, and sin to be perpetuated.

1. God forces no man to sin, either by what he decrees or what he does, either by commanding or constraining or alluring.
2. It is absurd to say that if we hold that God is the author of evil; that if he, from eternity, purposed to create what is good in man, he must therefore have purposed to create that which is evil. It is absurd to say, that if I hold that it is God who sets my will *right* I must hold that it was God who set it *wrong*.
3. God frequently gave predictions of evil long before the time. Of course, then, if evil be predicted regarding either nations or individuals, it must be fixed and sure. He predicted the curse on Canaan and his descendants. But does that prove that he delighted in the curse, or that he was the author of it, or that those who were the instruments of inflicting it, and so fulfilling the prophecy, were guiltless?
4. Even our opponents admit that there are some events decreed beforehand, such as the birth and death of Christ, the judgment day, etc. If, then, they admit that he has decreed a single event, they are in precisely the same difficulty in which they seek to fix us. If one event is decreed, what not all? Who is to draw the line and say these are decreed, but those are not? God's will has already fixed one or two, and is man's will, or chance, to settle the rest?

### THE SINNER MUST WILL

I know that the sinner must have a *will* in the matter too. It is absurdity to speak of a sinner loving, believing, etc., against his will, or by compulsion. The sinner must doubtless *will*. He must will to refuse, and he must will to receive Christ. He must will to take the broad way, and he must will to take the narrow way. His will is essential to all these movements of his soul. But in what state do we find his will at present? We find it is wholly set against the truth. Every will since the fall is wholly opposed to God and his Word. Man needs no foreign influence, no external power to make him reject the truth. That he does by nature. He hates it with his whole heart. When a sinner then comes to receive the truth, how is this accomplished? Does he renew himself? Does he change the enmity of his will by the unaided act of his will? Does he of himself bend back his own will into the opposite direction? Does he by a word of his own power cause the current that had been flowing down hill to change its course and flow upward? Does his own will originate the change in itself, and carry the change into effect? Impossible. The current would have flowed forever downward had it not been arrested in its course by something stronger than itself. The sinner's will would have remained forever in depravity and bondage, had not another will, mightier far than itself, come into contact with it, and altered both its nature and course, working in the sinner "both to will and to do." Was the sinner willing before this other will met his? No! Was he willing after? Yes. Then, is it not plain that it was God's

will, meeting and changing his, that made the difference? God's will was first. It was God's will that began the work and made the sinner willing. He never would have willed had not God made him willing. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." (Psa. 110:3). It is the power of Jehovah applied to us that makes us willing. Till that is applied, we are unwilling. It is his hand, operating directly upon the soul, that changes its nature and its bent. Were it not for that, our unwillingness would never be removed. No outward means, or motives would be sufficient to effect the change; for all these means and motives are rejected by the sinner; nor does he become willing even to allow the approach or application of these means and motives till God makes him willing.

To speak of his being changed by that which he rejects is as absurd as to speak of a man's being healed by a medicine which he persists in refusing. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots?"

Are all, then, willing? Does not the depraved will remain in most, while the new will appears in few? What makes the difference? God's choice. "Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in thy sight." "Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honor, and another unto dishonor?" "Except the Lord of Hosts had left unto us a very small remnant, we should have been as Sodom and we should have become like unto Gomorrah."

### **DOES GOD HINDER?**

Does God then hinder sinners from believing and willing? No — by no means. He hinders none. They are their own hindrance. "Ye will not come to me that ye might have life." Not one soul would be saved if left to his own will. But, in his infinite mercy, God does not leave them to their own wills. He puts forth his mighty power on some to make them willing. Were it not for this, all would be lost, for all would reject the Saviour.

But is not this unjust? Is God dealing fairly with his creatures in making some willing, and leaving the rest to their unwillingness? What! Are we to prohibit God from saving any, unless he saves all? Are we to accuse him of injustice because he leaves some to reap the fruits of their labors of unbelief, and delivers others from them? Is God unjust in saving whom he will, when all were lost?

Some are given to accusing us of making God guilty of partiality. As if they were singular in their zeal for God's honor, they exclaim, "We cannot bear a partial God!" Partiality means, of course, injustice; it means also that the sinner has a right to favor from God. They must show then that for God to save some when all were lost is unjust. They must show that all sinners had a right to his favor, for if none had any right, there can be no partiality. But if this theory be true, then God was partial in not providing a Saviour for fallen angels. He was partial in choosing Israel, and not choosing Babylon or Egypt, as the nation to whom he made himself known. He was partial in sending prophets to Israel, and not to Tyre and Sidon. He was partial in doing his mighty works in the land of Judea. And Jesus was partial in commanding his disciples not to go to other Gentiles or Samaritans. In short, if sovereignty be partiality, then the Bible is full of it. And it would be just as well for these men to say at once what their theory implies — that God is not at liberty to act as he pleases, but only as man may dictate!

But why does God save some and not all? Because such is the “good pleasure of his will.” He has infinitely wise reasons for this, though we understand them not. Might we not with equal propriety ask: Why did he keep some angels from falling? And why did he allow others to fall? Or, may we not ask: Why did he not think of saving angels, why think of saving men alone? Is he not at liberty to create as many worlds and as many beings as he pleases? And when these are ruined is he not at liberty to redeem as many or as few as he pleases?

## **MAN IS TOTALLY DEPRAVED**

The real question in all this, is just: Are all men so depraved that they will not be saved unless God puts forth his mighty power? If so, then, it is plain that God must put forth his mighty power to save everyone that is saved; and surely he is at liberty to choose whom he is to save. If indeed men are not totally depraved, then there is no need for the interposition of God's hand either in choosing or in saving. But admit man's total ruin and depravity, and you must admit the direct putting forth of the arm of Jehovah. And hence it is that many, in our day are beginning to deny man's total depravity by nature. They are smoothing down the expressions referring to it in Scripture, and claiming for man as much remaining power and goodness as will enable him in part to save himself, and do it without the interposition God.

The following remarks of Calvin will show that in his day none but “Papist theologians” held the doctrine that God elects men because he foresaw that they will believe.

“The Papist theologians have a distinction current among themselves, that God does not elect men according to the works which are in them but that he chooses those who he foresees will be believers. And therein they contradict what we have already alleged from St. Paul, for he saw that we are chosen and elected in him, ‘that we might be holy and without blame.’ Paul must needs have spoken otherwise if God elected us having foreseen that we should be holy, but he has not used such language. He says, he hath elected us that we might be holy. He infers therefore that faith depends upon election. Those who think otherwise, know not what man and human nature is.”

Such is the testimony of Calvin against the Papist theologians of his day. Since that time many have joined the ranks of those theologians, and glory in their heresies.

Oh, but it is said, we do not deny election. We merely maintain that God elected those whom he foresaw would believe. I answer, this is a total denial of election; and it is either dishonesty or ignorance to call this by such a name. God elected those whom he foresaw would believe! And who were they? None — absolutely none. He foresaw that none would believe, not one. And because he foresaw this, he elected some to believe. Otherwise not one would ever have believed at all.

With regard to the foreseeing of who would believe, I have some difficulties to state. According to the Arminian theory, I may believe today and disbelieve tomorrow, according to my own will. I may thus go on believing and disbelieving alternately till the day of my death. God then one day foresees that I will believe, and he decrees to save me. But the next day he foresees me not believing, and he decrees that I should perish. How in such a case is the matter to be finally settled? Is it according to the state in which God foresees

the sinner will be just at the last moment of his life? Or when? Let our opponents solve this difficulty, if they are able.

### THE SCOFFER'S ARGUMENT

Oh, but some profane objector says, "Does God make men to be damned?" Let me in a few words answer the miserable atheism of such an objection; and I do it not out of regard for the pride of the objector, but for the sake of those who may be perplexed by this poor catch of an argument which is so freely and flippantly about — an argument which befits the scoffer only — an argument whose father is the father of lies. It is somewhat remarkable that this is precisely the argument of Universalists and Deists against the existence of such a place as Hell. If you speak of Hell or everlasting punishment to such, the answer is "Did God make men to damn them?" And however abominable and unscriptural their notion is, it is at least consistent with their own theory. Making God to be all love and nothing else, they think it inconsistent with his love that he should allow such a place as Hell in the universe.

But let me answer the question, no matter how profane it may be. God did not make men to damn them. He did not make the angels who kept not their first estate to damn them. He did not make Lucifer for the purpose of casting him out of Heaven. He did not make Adam for the sake of casting him out of Paradise. He did not make Judas for the purpose of sending him to his own place. God made man, every man and everything, to *glorify* Himself. And this, every creature, man and angel, must do, either actively or passively, either willingly or unwillingly, actively and willingly in Heaven or passively and unwillingly in Hell. This is God's purpose; and it shall stand. God may have many other ends in creation; but this is the chief one, the ultimate one, the one which is above all the rest, and to which all the rest are subordinate.

In this sense, then, plainly, God did not make men either to destroy them or to save them. He made them for his own glory. If the question is asked, "Did God make the devil and his angels only to damn them?" I answer, "He made them for his own glory. They are lost forever; but does that prove he made them only to destroy them?" He kept their companions from falling, and hence they are called the "elect angels," while he did not keep

the ones who fell. He could have kept them all by his power, yet he did not.. But does this prove he made them to destroy them? They fell, and in a moment were consigned to everlasting chains; he made no effort to save them — he sent no redemption to them. But does this prove that he made them only to destroy them? If ever such an accusation could be preferred against God, it must be in the case of angels, to whom no salvation was sent. It cannot be said of man, to whom a salvation has come.

Whatever is right for God to do, it is right for him to decree. If God's casting sinners into Hell be not wrong or unjust, then his purposing to do so from all eternity cannot be wrong or unjust. So that you must either deny that there is a Hell, or admit God's right to predetermine who are to dwell there forever. There is no middle way between election and universalism.

### CONCLUSION

The texts that teach election are not to be explained away or overlooked. They are part of God's holy Word, just as much as "God is love." And if one class of texts is to be twisted or turned away from, shall not another? Let us fearlessly look both in the face; and let us believe them both, whatever difficulty we may find in reconciling them. Our first duty is to believe, not to reconcile. There are many things which in this life we shall be able to reconcile; but there is nothing in the Bible which we need to shrink from believing.

#### **Spurgeon on Election:**

"One week-night, when I was sitting in the house of God...The thought struck me, How did you come to be a Christian? 'I sought the Lord.' But how did you come to seek the Lord?' The truth flashed across my mind in a moment—I should not have sought Him unless there had been some previous influence in my mind to make me seek Him. I prayed, thought I, but then I asked myself, How came I to pray? I was induced to pray by reading the Scriptures. How came I to read the Scriptures? I did read them, but what led me to do so? Then, in a moment, I saw that God was at the bottom of it all, and that He was the Author of my faith, and so the whole doctrine of grace opened up to me, and from that doctrine I have not departed to this day, and I desire to make this my constant confession. 'I ascribe my change wholly to God.'"

"I remember meeting once with a man who said to me, 'Sir, you preach that Christ takes people by the hair of their heads and drags them to Himself.' I asked him whether he could refer to the date of the sermon wherein I preached that extraordinary doctrine, for if he could, I should be very much obliged. However, he could not. But said I, while Christ does not drag people to Himself by the hair of their heads, I believe that He draws them by the heart quite as powerfully as your caricature would suggest. Mark that in the Father's drawing there is no compulsion whatever... How, then, does the Holy Spirit draw him? Why by making him willing... He goes to the secret fountain of the heart ... he is made willing in the day of God's power."



“I was preaching, not very long ago, at a place in Derbyshire, to a congregation, nearly all of whom were Methodists, and as I preached, they were crying out, ‘Hallelujah! Glory! Bless the Lord!’ They were full of excitement, until I went on to say in my sermon, ‘This brings me to the doctrine of Election.’ There was no crying out of ‘Glory!’ and ‘Hallelujah!’ then. Instead, there was a great deal of shaking of the head, and a sort of telegraphing round the place, as though something dreadful was coming. Now, I thought, I must have their attention again, so I said, ‘You all believe in the doctrine of Election?’ ‘No, we don’t, lad,’ said one. ‘Yes, you do, and I am going to preach it to you, and make you cry ‘Hallelujah!’ over it.’ I am certain they mistrusted my power to do that; so, turning a moment from the subject, I said, ‘Is there any difference between you and the ungodly world?’ ‘Ay! Ay! Ay!’ ‘Is there any difference between you and the drunkard, the harlot, the blasphemer?’ ‘Ay! Ay! Ay!’ ‘Ay! Ay!’ there was a difference indeed. ‘Well, now,’ I said, ‘there is a great difference; who made it, then?’ for, whoever made the difference, should have the glory of it. ‘Did you make the difference?’ ‘No, lad,’ said one; and the rest all seemed to join in the chorus. ‘Who made the difference, then? Why, the Lord did it; and did you think it wrong for Him to make a difference between you and other men?’ ‘No, no,’ they quickly said. ‘Very well, then; if it was not wrong for God to make the difference, it was not wrong for Him to purpose to make it, and that is the doctrine of Election.’ Then they cried, ‘Hallelujah!’ as I said they would.”

“I believe the doctrine of election, because I am quite sure that if God had not chosen me I should never have chosen Him; and I am sure He chose me before I was born, or else he never would have chosen me afterwards; and he must have elected me for reasons unknown to me, for I never could find any reason in myself why He should have looked upon me with special love.”

The doctrine of Election is God’s purposing in His heart that He would make some men better than other men; that He would give to some men more grace than to other men; that some should come out and receive the mercy; that others, left to their own free will, should reject it; that some should gladly accept the invitations of mercy, while others, of their own accord, stubbornly refuse the mercy to which the whole world of mankind is invited. All men, by nature, refuse the invitations of the gospel. God, in the sovereignty of His grace, makes a difference by secretly inclining the hearts of some men, by the power of His Holy Spirit, to partake of His everlasting mercy in Christ Jesus. I am certain that, whether we are Calvinists or Arminians, if our hearts are right with God, we shall all adoringly testify: “We love Him, because He first loved us.” If that be not Election, I know not what it is.

“The system of truth is not one straight line, but two. No man will ever get a right view of the gospel until he knows how to look at the two lines at once I am taught in one book to believe that what I sow, I shall reap: I am taught in another place, that “it is not of him that willeth nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy.” I see in one place, God presiding over all in providence; and yet I see, and I cannot help seeing, that man acts as he pleases, and that God has left his actions to his own will, in a great measure. Now, if I were to declare that man was so free to act, that there was no presidence of God over his actions, I should be driven very near to Atheism; and if, on the other hand, I declare that God so overrules all things, as that man is not free enough to be responsible, I am driven at once into

Antinomianism or fatalism. That God predestines, and that man is responsible, are two things that few can see. They are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory; but they are not. It is just the fault of our weak judgment. Two truths cannot be contradictory to each other. If, then, I find taught in one place that everything is fore-ordained, that is true; and if I find in another place that man is responsible for all his actions, that is true; and it is my folly that leads me to imagine that two truths can ever contradict each other. These two truths, I do not believe, can ever be welded into one upon any human anvil, but one they shall be in eternity: they are two lines that are so nearly parallel, that the mind that shall pursue them farthest, will never discover that they converge; but they do converge, and they will meet somewhere in eternity, close to the throne of God, whence all truth doth spring.”