

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 9 June 2019. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

God's Chosen Ones

1 Peter 1:1-2

This morning we will begin a series of messages from the book of **1 Peter**. As we study this book, my prayer is twofold. First, I pray that anyone who has not truly been born again will come to understand the Gospel, and receive God's wonderful gift of salvation. Secondly, I pray that those who *are* saved will grow in the Lord, and that they will be strengthened to deal with the suffering that often arises in our Christian lives. Suffering is, in fact, the main theme of this letter. As we shall see, strength to deal with suffering comes from an understanding our *position* in Christ, and from understanding God's *will* for us.

As with any book of the Bible, it is important to know to whom the letter was written, and why it was written. First of all, this letter was written by the **Apostle Peter**, from the city of **Babylon**. This was, apparently, the *actual* city of Babylon in the modern-day land of Iraq, and not some figurative "Babylon," such as Rome. Babylon was still a large and important city in the first century; and it had a large Jewish population.

Now, *to whom* was this letter written? Well, in the first verse of this letter, Peter states that he wrote this letter to "***the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia.***" In other words, Peter was writing to *Jewish* believers in Jesus Christ. Gentile believers would not have been considered "***strangers***" in their own lands; but the Jews (who lived all over the Roman world), *were* considered "***strangers***," and they *were* "***scattered***" in these lands. Why did Peter write to Jewish believers in particular? Because God had ordained for Peter to take the Gospel primarily to the Jews. In **Galatians 2**, we are told about a conference in Jerusalem between **Peter, James, John, Paul, and Barnabas**; and in this meeting, **Peter, James, and John** affirmed that their ministry was primarily toward the Jews, while **Paul and Barnabas** affirmed that their ministry was to be mostly to the Gentiles. Of course, Peter, James, and John did often preach to Gentiles, and Paul and Barnabas did often preach to Jews; but for the most part, Peter's ministry was toward *Jewish* people who were scattered all around the Roman world.

The next question is, "***Why*** did Peter write this letter?" Well, there are several reasons why Peter wrote this letter. The biggest reason that Peter wrote this letter was to explain *the purpose of suffering* in the Christian life, and the way in which Christians should deal with suffering. Secondly, Peter talks about the full and complete salvation that believers have in Christ. (He especially focuses on the *atonement*.) Peter talks much about the holy manner in which Christians should conduct themselves. He talks much about *Christ's* suffering on our behalf, and about how Christ is our Example to follow in *our* times of suffering. Finally, Peter urges pastors to feed the flock of God with a pure heart; and he urges *all* Christians to resist the devil and stand steadfast in the faith, because Christ is coming back.

With this in mind, we will now delve into **1 Peter chapter 1**. In these opening verses, we shall see that Christians have been chosen by God for a wonderful purpose. I've entitled this message ***God's Chosen Ones***.

Read 1 Peter 1:1-2.

I. The author of the letter (v. 1)

In **verse 1**, Peter identifies himself as the author of this letter; and he also identifies himself as “*an apostle of Jesus Christ.*” Now, there is much that we can learn from Peter’s introduction. By calling himself “*an apostle of Jesus Christ,*” Peter was asserting the *authority* that God had given him. The word “Apostle” comes from the Greek word *apostolos*; and *apostolos* means “sent one.” Peter was one of the twelve special men whom Jesus sent out into the world to preach the Gospel, and to lay the spiritual foundation of His churches.

Read John 20:19-21.

Now, there is a sense in which *every* believer is a “sent one.” God has commissioned every believer to go into the world and proclaim the Gospel message. However, the Apostles were sent out by Christ in a *unique* way. God chose the original 12 Apostles, and about 8 other later Apostles, to lay the foundation of His churches. The original 12 Apostles preached mainly to the Jewish people; and the other 8 Apostles (whom Christ chose after His resurrection) preached mainly to the Gentiles. He gave these men the unique ability to heal diseases, and to cast out devils from people, in order to show that they had authority from God, and that their message was from God. Some of the Apostles were given the additional privilege of writing the books of the New Testament, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit. These 20-some men had a very special job to do. In fact, their task was so special, that God has placed the names of the original 12 Apostles on the foundations of the city of New Jerusalem! For the rest of eternity, the twelve Apostles will represent *all believers of the church age* (just as the twelve sons of Jacob will represent all Old Testament believers)!

The office of Apostle was unique. **Luke 6:13** says that from among Jesus’ many disciples, Jesus “*chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.*” Jesus *personally* chose these men to fill this special office. Yet, were the Apostles *superior* to the rest of us? No. God is no “respector of persons.” The Apostles never referred to themselves as anything *more* than what they were. They were simply lowly servants of Jesus Christ, whom Jesus appointed to a special office. Furthermore, none of the Apostles considered themselves to be more important than any of the other Apostles. Peter considered himself to be *one* of the Apostles; *but he did not consider himself to be over the rest of them!*

Did you notice that Peter did not refer to himself as “*the* Apostle of Jesus Christ”? He simply called himself “*an* apostle of Jesus Christ.” Peter never referred to himself as “the Holy Father,” “the Vicar of Christ,” or “the Rock upon whom Christ’s Church is built,” either. He did not refer to himself as any of these things, because he was nothing of the kind! In **chapter 2** of this epistle, Peter made it very clear that *Jesus* is the Rock upon which the church is built. In **chapter 5**, Peter addressed the “*elders* (or, “pastors”) *which are among you*”: and then, almost as an afterthought, he added that he himself was “*also an elder.*”

Read 1 Peter 2:3-8 and 5:1-4.

The Roman Catholic Church says that Peter, and every other pope to follow, is “lord and sovereign over the kings of the earth”; but Peter says quite differently. Peter commanded pastors *not* to be “*lords over God’s heritage.*” He reminded them that *Christ* was their “*chief Shepherd,*” and that all of elders (including himself) are accountable to *Him*.

Now, make no mistake about it: Peter was a man whom Jesus loved very much. He was one of the original five disciples whom Jesus called. On many occasions, Jesus allowed Peter into a special “inner circle” of disciples (consisting of Peter, James, and John). Peter was permitted, along with John and James, to see Jesus in His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. Also, the very first time that Peter met Jesus, Jesus favoured him by giving him a new name. His birth name was Simon; but Jesus gave him the name “Petros” (“little stone”).

Read John 1:40-42.

Peter’s new name was a sign of Jesus’ favour upon him. Yet, Peter was not the only Apostle whom Jesus gave a new name. For example, Jesus gave Levi the new name of “Matthew.” Not only that, but in **Revelation 2**, we are told that one day in eternity, *every* true believer will be given a new name! **Revelation 2:17** says every “overcomer” (saved person) will be given *“a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”* Peter was greatly beloved; but his new name didn’t make him any more favoured than any other believer.

What, then, *was* the main reason why Jesus give Simon the name “Peter”? **Jesus gave him this name in order to show him the kind of character that He intended to develop in Him.** You see, Peter was a very sincere and zealous man, and at times his faith was great. However, he also tended to be prideful and self-confident; and when he became self-confident, he became as weak and wavering as a little child. Over the next three years, Christ would accomplish a great work in Peter. He would mould his character. He would change him from a boastful man into a humble man. He would change him from a weak, wavering man into a man of strength and firmness.

As we study this letter, you will see that Peter was, indeed, a man of deep humility. It is my prayer that as we study this letter, you, too, will follow in Jesus’ steps (just as Peter did), and that you will allow Christ to mould you into a man (or woman) of humility and strength.

II. The recipients of the letter (vv. 1-2)

(Read verses 1-2 again.) The people to whom Peter wrote this letter were the Jewish believers who lived in the provinces of Asia Minor (in modern-day Turkey). However, the *Jewish* heritage of his audience was not nearly as important as their *spiritual* heritage. In **verse 2**, Peter calls them **“*Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.*”** The word “elect” simply means “chosen.” These Jewish people had been “chosen” by God the Father. In other words, they were saved individuals. They belonged to *God’s* family.

It is one thing to be a Jew (a child of Abraham, by blood); but it is another thing to be a child of God, by faith. **Romans 9:6** says, **“*For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children.*”** **Romans 11:5** says, **“*Even so at this present time there is a remnant according to the election of grace.*”** In other words, very few Jewish people actually know God. There has always been a small number of Jews who are *true* Jews, because they have followed Abraham’s example, and have placed their faith in their Messiah. They are living up to the purpose for which God raised up the nation of Israel. They are among the **“*election of grace*”** because they have believed on the Lord Jesus

Christ. The good news is that this “*election of grace*” is not made up merely of Jews: it is made up of *all* people, both Jew and Gentile, who place their faith in Jesus Christ.

It is truly amazing that a holy God would *choose* people unto Himself from among our sinful, fallen race. This thought raises many questions, such as: “*When* did God choose His people? *On what basis* did He choose them?” Also, “*Why* did God choose His elect?” These are important questions; and we will examine them one by one.

First of all, let’s talk about **when God chose His people**. When *did* God choose us? Paul answers this question in **Ephesians 1:4**.

Read Ephesians 1:4.

Paul says that God has “*chosen us in him before the foundation of the world.*” Now, what does this mean? Does this mean that God chose who would be saved, and who wouldn’t be saved, before the foundation of the world? Does it mean that we are all predestined either to be saved or to be damned, and that we have no choice in the matter? No, that is *not* what this verse means! The Bible makes it clear that the gift of salvation has been provided for everyone, and that *everyone* is invited to receive the gift. **First John 2:2** says that Christ is “*the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*” Christ died for *all* men; and He sincerely offers His gift to all. Yet, despite these clear statements in God’s Word, the Calvinists say that God chose some people to be saved, and some to be damned. They look at the words “*Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father,*” and say, “See? It says right here that God *foreknew* who was elect. Obviously, then, God *predestined* the elect to be saved before the foundation of the world.” They further conclude that the elect had no *choice* but to be saved, and that the *non-elect* (the unsaved) had no choice but to be damned! They say that in eternity past, God *decreed* everything to happen (both good and evil), and that none of us actually have any free will. According to them, God even willed for Adam to sin, so that He could save some of Adam’s fallen descendants, and thus demonstrate His mercy. According to them, Christ died *only* for the ones whom He elected to save. They say that He did *not* die for the non-elect, because *He never had any intention to save them*. They say that the non-elect *cannot* be saved.

Brethren, **this is a false and devilish doctrine!** **First Peter 1:2** does *not* say that God “decreed” for some people to be elect before He created the world, and that they had no choice in the matter. It merely says that God *knew beforehand* whom He would elect. The fact that God *knew* beforehand whom He would choose does not mean that He *decreed* for them to be chosen *against their will!* It means simply means that God, being God, is all-knowing: and He knew beforehand whom He would choose, because He knew *who would choose Him*.

You see, God has presented *us* with a choice. The choice is, “What will you do with my Son?” Those who choose to believe on the Son are chosen of God. In fact, God chose them before the foundation of the world, because He already *knew* that they would choose Him.

Read Matthew 22:1-14.

In this parable, the king represents God the Father; the king’s son represents the Lord Jesus Christ; and the *first* guests that were invited to the feast represent the people of Israel. For the

most part, the Jewish people rejected the Son of God; and because they rejected Him, they forfeited their chance to partake of the “wedding feast” (the Kingdom of Heaven). In fact, not only did they reject the King’s Son: they also slew God’s “*servants*” (His prophets and Apostles, who tried to preach the Gospel to them). For that reason, God allowed the Romans to come and destroy them, and “burn up” their city (Jerusalem) in A.D. 70.

Now, after the first guests passed up their chance to go to the feast, the king commanded his servants to go out and invite *everyone* to the feast. This represents the fact that *everyone*, whether Jew or Gentile, has been invited into God’s Kingdom. Whosoever will may come. No one is exempted. *Everyone* is called. Yet, even though many are “*called*,” Jesus made it clear that only the “*chosen*” ones are allowed into the feast. Who *are* these “*chosen*” wedding guests? Are they the “good people” in society? No. The king commanded for his guests to go out and call *everyone* to the feast, whether they were considered to be “*good*” or “*bad*.” All that was required was that they “come” and receive the wedding garment.

What does this mean? Well, the wedding garment is a picture of Christ’s imputed righteousness. When you stop trusting in your own goodness, and trust instead in *Christ’s* righteousness, and in *Christ’s* sacrifice for your sins, it is as though you have put on a clean, spotless robe of righteousness. This robe is not *your* righteousness, but *Christ’s*. When you place your trust in Christ alone, the Father now looks at you as though you had the perfect righteousness of His Son; and on this basis, He accepts you as His child.

The people in Jesus’ parable were presented with a choice. The choice was simply to receive the king’s invitation, or not. Some of them chose to receive the king’s invitation, and to receive the wedding garment; and on that basis, the king *chose* them as his wedding guests! Others chose *not* to respond to the call, and were cast into outer darkness (which, of course, represents hell). But please notice this: When the people chose to respond to the king’s invitation, and to receive his robe, the king then chose *them* as his wedding guests!

The meaning of this parable is very clear. God sent His Son to die for us, and to pay for our sins. He now offers salvation as a free gift. Some people, upon hearing the invitation, humble themselves, and “elect” (choose) to receive it; and when they elect to receive the Son, the Father receives them as His children. However, the reality is that God “elected” them before the foundation of the world, because He already knew, back then, that *they* would choose to believe on *Him*. Many are “called” to be saved; but the only those who choose to respond to the call will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven.

God’s call to salvation is sincere. God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. Now, man, *on his own*, does not seek after God. **Romans 3:11** says, “***There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God.***” However, God, in His mercy, seeks after *us*. He has sent His Spirit into the world to convict us of our sin, and to show us our need of the Saviour.

Read John 16:7-11.

Can men resist the conviction of the Holy Spirit? They certainly can (and do). *Most* of mankind does. However, the fact that most people resist the call to salvation does not change the fact that God *has* provided a way of salvation, and that He *does* sincerely offer it to all.

Jesus *did* die for the sins of every man! In **2 Peter 2:1**, we are told that even wicked apostates who turn men from the truth were “*bought*” by the Lord. In **1 Timothy 4:10**, we are told that Jesus is the “*Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe.*” In **1 John 2:2**, we are told that Jesus is the “*propitiation* (satisfaction, or payment) *for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world.*” In **John 3:16** Jesus said, “*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.*”

All men were “bought” by Christ’s redeeming blood; yet, all men must *choose* to have Him as Master. All men’s sins were paid for on Calvary; yet, all men must *choose* to receive that free gift that Jesus purchased. Jesus is the Saviour of all men; but all men must personally *choose* to *receive* Him as Saviour. Those who end up in hell cannot blame God for it. Before God created the world, He genuinely desired for all men to have eternal life. He knew that Adam would sin against him, and come under the curse; and in His mercy, He had already devised the plan for man’s redemption. God planned, from eternity past, for His Son to die for our sins. He planned, from eternity past, to give men His perfect, infallible Word, so that they could *know* about His gift of salvation. He also planned to send man His Holy Spirit, so that the Spirit could convict men of their sin, and enlighten them of their need of the Saviour. God has done *everything* that is needed for us to be saved; and He *enables us to respond* to His call of salvation. He does so by enlightening our darkened eyes, and wooing us to Himself! Man’s one and only responsibility is to heed the call, humble himself, and believe on the Son!

We’ve answered the question of *when* the elect were elected. (They were elected from eternity past). We’ve also learned the *basis* upon which we are elected. (We are elected on the basis that we personally *respond* to God’s call.) With all this in mind, the next question is: “How do the elect *become* elect?” In other words, “*How* does God save us?” Peter answers that question in **verse 2**. (**Read 1 Peter 1:2 again.**) Peter says that we are elect “*Through sanctification of the Spirit.*” It is the *Holy Spirit* that sanctifies a person (sets him apart unto God) at the moment he believes on the Son.

Read John 3:1-8. (The Holy Spirit brings a person into God’s Kingdom, through the new birth.)

Read Ephesians 1:13-14. (The Holy Spirit seals a believer at the moment of his salvation.)

Read Titus 3:4-6. [The Holy Spirit washes and “regenerates” the believer (gives him new birth).]

As you read these verses, does it sound as if salvation is a *process*? No, it is not! It may take a process of time for an unsaved person to be convicted by the Holy Spirit, so that he will understand his *need* to be saved; but the moment a person truly believes on the Son, the Holy Spirit births that person into His Kingdom, seals him, and sanctifies him. *That* is how a person becomes one of God’s elect. It is the work of the Holy Spirit of God, from beginning to end.

The last question that Peter answers concerning the “elect” is this: “*Why* were God’s people elected?” What was God’s purpose in electing those who believe on the Son? We find the answer to this question in **verse 2**. (**Read 1 Peter 1:2 again.**) Peter says that we are elected “*unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.*” The reason that God saves people is

that He might enable them to *obey* Him, and *serve* Him. This is the same as what Paul said in **Ephesians 1:4**. He said, “*According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love.*” Did you catch that? The purpose of our election is that we might now live *holy lives*. Being “elected” has to do with our *service* to God *after* we are saved. God did not elect us *to be saved*; He elected us to *serve* Him *after* we are saved.

Think of it this way. In **John 6:70**, Jesus said to His disciples, “*Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?*” The “devil” that Jesus was talking about was Judas Iscariot. Jesus knew that Judas had never truly believed on Him. Jesus knew all along that Judas was a lost man, and that he would one day die in his sins, and go to hell. Yet, Jesus “chose” Judas to be an Apostle! Why? Obviously, Jesus’ “choosing” of Judas had nothing to do with his *actually being saved*, because Judas *wasn’t* saved. The choosing had to do with the life of *service* that Jesus had planned for Judas *after* his salvation. Jesus genuinely desired for Judas to be saved; and He was so sincere in his offer of salvation, that He had a privileged position of service all mapped out for Judas. Jesus had sincerely “chosen” Judas to serve Him in the office of Apostle, *if* he would first respond to His call of salvation. Sadly, Judas never did respond; and in time, he turned his back on Jesus, and betrayed Him.

Many are called to salvation; yet few are chosen. Why? Because few choose to repent and believe on Jesus. Even among those who are “chosen” to a life of service to Jesus Christ, some are not willing to *fulfil* that life of service. Instead, they eventually turn their back on Jesus, and reject both the calling and the election of God. My friend, Christ has *called* you to come to Him for salvation: but have *you* responded to the call? Or are you ignoring it? God has also *chosen* to use you in His service, *if* you will *submit* to His yoke of service. However, you must choose. Have you submitted to His yoke? If not, I urge you to do so!

Before I close this morning, I would point out one other purpose for which we are saved. Peter says that we are saved “*unto...sprinkling of the blood of Jesus.*” (Read verse 2 again.) God knew that those who would be saved would still have a sin nature to contend with. That is where the blood comes in. When we sin, we do not lose our salvation; but we do lose our close fellowship with God. At such times comes, we can go immediately to God, through His Son, and ask for cleansing through His blood.

Read 1 John 1:7.

This is the purpose for which God elected you, Christian. He wants you to serve Him. That is why Peter blessed his Christian readers with these words: “***Grace unto you, and peace be multiplied.***” Any service that is truly pleasing to God, we do by God’s *grace* (unmerited favour). We are saved by God’s grace alone; and we *serve* Him by His grace alone. And as we serve Him, what do we have? Peace. The peace that God sheds abroad in our hearts is “*multiplied.*” There is *positional* peace with God, which every believer possesses. (This means that we are no longer God’s enemy.) However, there is also a *practical* peace, which comes only when we are yielding ourselves to Him, and obeying Him. Do *you* have this kind of peace in your daily life, Christian? Are you “walking in the light, as He is in the light”?

Conclusion: In two short verses, we have seen the humility of the Apostle Peter. We have also seen the position of God’s people. We are elect—“chosen of God.” Before the foundation of the world, we were

chosen to a life of service to God—not because of anything good that we have done, but because we, by faith, have received His Son. We have been saved by the sanctifying power of the Holy Spirit; and we have been saved so that we may live lives of obedience and cleansing through His blood. Are you fulfilling the purpose for which God saved you, Christian? Now, perhaps you are not sure that you are saved. If so, you don't *have* to be uncertain. Christ died for *you*. He has already paid for all your sins. However, you must receive this gift of salvation; and the way you receive it is by believing on His name. **John 1:12** says, “*But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.*” Won't you receive **Him** today?