

1 Peter Bible Study Notes

Lesson 2

1 Peter 1:1-2 & 5:12-13

As we look at our passage today, although very short, it should carry such an impact on our understanding of Salvation. If we don't understand how we arrived at this place, we could be going in the wrong direction. In VBS in Mexico we told the children a story about two friends who met at a train station and visited, each getting on a train. The first man saw a train he thought was the right one, and got on it without checking into it. The other man knew which train he needed, and he watched for it, and got on the right train. The first found out after a while that he was headed in the wrong direction, he had gotten on the wrong train, he wasted a lot of time. He had to get off, wait for the right train to take him back to the station so he could get the right train to his destination. We can be like that when we don't understand God's plan for salvation. We can be going in the wrong direction.

Let's read the first text 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, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: May grace and peace be yours in fullest measure."

As we start here we are going to take a quick study of Apostles and Disciples. Who were they, did their rolls differ, if so how?

Apostle in the Greek means:

a messenger, envoy, delegate, one commissioned by another to represent him in some way, especially a man sent out by Jesus Christ Himself to preach the Gospel;

Those same twelve apostles are also frequently called the "disciples." Disciple comes from an educational context and is similar to "student." So the word apostle defines a person in terms of their purpose or mission, while disciple emphasizes the person's relationship to the teacher. In the case of the 12 apostles, all of them were disciples. But it doesn't follow that all disciples are apostles.

We see that the Apostles of the first century were also given power to cast out demons, heal the sick and even raise the dead. They were given that power, so

that the power of Christ might be visible in them as His representatives. We hear very little about those powers beyond the first century. I am not saying that God does not heal, He can do anything He wills for His creation.

Just a small bit of historical information to note here, Peter is writing to Christians, Jews and Gentiles, scattered throughout what is most likely modern Turkey now. Christians were facing a very hard time and had come under severe punishment for their beliefs. After Rome burned, and the finger was pointed at Christians, they were hunted down, and faced horrible persecution and death. Today we will not get into the gory details of what they faced, suffice it to say they would be considered martyrs. God used Peter to encourage them as they battled fear, discouragement, separation from all that they held dear, suffering health problems and facing death at every turn. God wanted them to know He loved them and knew what was going on in their lives every day and every moment, and He was a part of that. He wanted them to understand that this life is temporary, but Heaven is eternal, He wanted them to know that He had chosen them for His good purposes. "Chosen" He had chosen them, those words tend to strike different emotions in Christians. What does that mean? Today, we hope to shed some light on those passages that they might encourage us as we continue to carry the message of Christ until the day He returns. May our hearts be encouraged to stand firm on His Word.

A gifted Bible teacher, scholar, A.W. Pink who, 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 - "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."

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.

John MacArthur says this about the doctrine of election:

“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.

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.”

What we must look at is God’s justice. Is God not justified in sending those who do not believe to Hell? Is He not as justified in choosing some to eternity in Heaven based on His choosing to do so as the creator? Do we as the creation have the right to determine that God is not good because He has chosen some and not all? Do the choices God makes, make us uncomfortable? Do we determine it’s wrong because we can’t understand it, and therefore it can’t be right? It always comes down to our basic pride and our opinions based on what we think is right.

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 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?. 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 Ussher, 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.

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.

Peter’s intent as he addresses his readers, in these first two verses is 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 to obey Jesus Christ having been sprinkled with His blood”. So, he identifies their earthly identification and their heavenly, as well.

So, when Peter says, “I am writing to the elect of God,” or the chosen, he means believers. 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.

Peter is saying to those persecuted Christians, “Hey, you may not be the choice of the world, but you are the choice of God.” That’s comforting. That’s a rich reality. It was intended to be an encouragement to persecuted believers.

So much of this is hard to understand from the infinite mind of God, by those of us with finite minds, but He asks us to seek to understand, seek Him, He will give us the faith and understanding to believe that this is His way, His choosing. Our roll is not to question who is or is not chosen, but our role is to share the gospel, knowing that it is God who draws, God who convicts, God who forgives sin and God who ultimately saves who He will save. He is God!!

Chosen – John MacArthur
A W Pink – Election
James Ussher