*Known By God*

1 Peter 1:1-2

10/2/22

Last week, we tried to familiarize ourselves with 1 Peter. I also tried to show how it speaks to our cultural moment. Today we begin our verse-by-verse odyssey through the book. Some of the material in these verses we have already consider; other portions are new.

The letter begins in a standard, 1st century way as Peter identifies himself as the human author. I say human author because 2 Peter 1:20-21 says no portion of the bible was written as an act of human will; rather, the human authors were borne along by the Holy Spirit so that they spoke from God. Peter is an instrument to communicate God’s message. We noted last week how the title apostle spoke to both his authority and humility. It reveals his authority as a unique figure in the church that gave him the right to speak into the lives of his readers. But it also revealed humility, for Peter’s apostolic ministry was to point people to Christ. He existed for Christ’s glory and the advance of Christ’s kingdom, not to build a personal kingdom or agenda.

We also noted last week how Peter sent this letter to five Roman providences that are all located in modern-day Turkey. What we want to focus on today is how Peter defines his readers. He began by calling them aliens who are scattered throughout this region. We spent substantial time last week considering what it means to be aliens and sojourners in the world. This is a key concept in the letter. This world is not our home. We are strangers and aliens in it. This alienation was the reason for their suffering. People fear what is different and resist anyone who reveals their own shortcomings. When Christians shine the light of the gospel on a world that loves darkness, it creates conflict. The world’s embrace of sin flies in the face of the Christian’s pursuit of holiness. These things place us on a collision course with the world. Awkwardness, opposition, and suffering are certain to follow.

Yet Peter’s primary description is not that they are aliens in the world, but that they are chosen by God. Later in the book Peter will say *you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession.* Peter believes that God’s work of election should be a comfort to His people.

By placing our alienation in the world next to God’s choice of us, Peter is building an irony. He describes us as *elect exiles*. Think of kids picking teams for a game on the playground. No one wants to be the last child picked; when they are, they feel rejected and unwanted; they are only on a team because there was no one else to pick. This describes our relationship to the world… rejected, unwanted, cast off; yet consider when you are the first one picked. There gives a sense of significance. Of all the kids standing there, the captain chose you over everyone else. This is how it is when God looks on us with favor. Out of the whole mass of humanity, He set His affections on you. He did not have to; He chose to because He wanted you in His family.

This is why the Bible talks about election. It is a comfort to God’s people. In the world, we are despised and rejected; just as our Savior was. Yet this world is a moment. We are like the flower in it that is here one day and gone the next. Then comes the eternal state, where we either reap the reward of our rebellion against God, or we enjoy eternal bliss in God’s presence. God’s choice of us far outweighs the rejection of the world, comforting us when we suffer.

In verse 2, Peter defines what it means to be a chosen through three phrases. Here we learn that the Father, Spirit, and Son are all active in the process. Each member of the triune Godhead actively pursued us even when we were His enemies and slaves to sin.

First, God’s choice of us is *according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.* The Bible teaches that God chose a people for Himself before creation. Ephesians 1:4 says that God chose us to be in Christ *before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him.* In John 6, Jesus taught that the Father had given Him a people who would come to Him for salvation, for the Father Himself would draw them to the Son. Ro. 8 says that God’s foreknowledge preceded His predestination of us to salvation. There are many more passages that say God set His love on us in eternity past. No wonder Peter calls us a royal priesthood and chosen race.

This choice is according to the foreknowledge of God. This concept is a stumbling block for many. Some view election as the act of a detached and unloving God who randomly picks individuals for salvation while leaving the rest to perish. They wrongly focus on the idea that God is rejecting men, rather than focusing on God’s decision to extend grace. But this is not the picture the Bible paints. Rather, the bible teaches that no one deserves salvation. Everyone deserves wrath; that God saves any is a mark of His grace!

Others view foreknowledge as God looking into the future, seeing who will choose Him of their own free will, and then responding by choosing them. This makes election God’s reaction to mankind’s willful choices. In this view, man is the first mover in the process of salvation. Again, such a view does not stand up to the witness of Scripture.

So what does it mean for God to *foreknow us?* In the bible, knowing a person has less to do with facts and actions, and more to do with relationship and affection. When Peter says the Father *foreknew us*, it means God *foreloved us,* causing Him to cast His relational eye on us. Think of a young man who notices a young woman, so he purposefully pursues relationship with her. He is active in his pursuit of her. This is how God acts towards His people. He sets His affections on us and therefore pursues a relationship with us.

The preposition *according to* also needs consideration. In this context is best understand as *in conformity with*. The Father chose us *in conformity with His foreknown love.* Peter wants these hurting and weary saints to know that God’s love for them stretches from eternity past to eternity future. God made them objects of His love long before they were born. Because He chose them, He also established a plan to redeem them. God is the initiator of salvation. That does not mean we are passive in the process. It simply means He moved first. He set in motion the entire course of history so that He could display the glories of His grace in saving you from your sin.

Second, we are chosen *by the sanctifying work of the Spirit*. The Bible describes salvation as an activity of the Triune God. The Father planned it. The Son accomplished it. And the Spirit applies it to individuals. The Spirit makes God’s choice of us effective in our lives.

We tend to think of sanctification as the process of spiritual growth , but the Bible uses the term in more ways than that. First, it describes what happens when God saves us. He sanctifies or sets us apart from the world to Himself by placing us in Christ and sealing us with the Spirit. Second, it is used to describe the process of spiritual growth, which is the use we are most familiar with. Finally, it is used to describe God’s work at the end of time when our salvation is realized fully and finally, and our struggle with sin is over.

Here, Peter is using it to describe the initial act of the Spirit by which we are set apart for the Father’s purposes. The Spirit does this by applying the saving work of Christ to us. The Father choses us; the Spirit pursues us, working effectually in us to bring about the Father’s will. He changes our wills from hating God to loving God, giving us the ability to believe in Christ.

Jesus is the focus of the third aspect of our having been chosen by God. This aspect addresses the purpose of election. We were chosen *to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood.* This is major emphasis in 1 Peter. We have been chosen by the Father and sanctified by His Spirit for a life of obedience. The greater focus of our salvation is not that we are saved from the enslavement of sin and its eternal consequences. That is a glorious reality of the gospel; but it is not the primary point. The main emphasis of the gospel is that we are saved for an abiding relationship with God. What we lost when Adam and Eve plunged the world into sin has been recovered by Christ. We are not saved to merely escape sin’s penalty. Salvation restores all that was lost in the fall…our relationship with God, ability to enjoy Him, and capacity to reflect His glory through a life of obedience.

Now, while we sojourn on earth, we remain flawed reflectors of God’s glory, which is why we are also chosen to be sprinkled with Jesus’ blood. Every deficiency has been covered by the blood of Jesus Christ. We are cleansed through His blood. Salvation must precede obedience, yet obedience is the outworking of salvation. This is why Jesus told the disciples to teach those who have been baptized into Him to obey all that He commands.

Peter is drawing on an OT principle to make this point. When God delivered Israel from Egyptian slavery, He led them to Mount Sinai, where He began to teach what it meant to be His covenant people. Moses went up the mountain to talk with God and receive His commandments. When he returned, he wrote God’s word in a book. Then they built an altar and sacrificed to God. In Ex. 24:7 we read that Moses *took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!” So Moses took the blood of the covenant and sprinkled it on the people, and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words.”* Israel was God’s covenant people; the covenant was ratified in blood. All covenants place demands on the covenant participants. After saving His people from slavery, God outlined His standards for them. They committed to obey, and they were sprinkled with the blood of the covenant, marking them off as God’s people.

This foreshadowed the ministry of Christ. Jesus initiated a new covenant in His blood. Through the shedding of His blood, He ransomed a people for God from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. All who believe in Him are made beneficiaries of this covenant. Yet, just as was the case under the old covenant, God expects obedience from the covenant members. We were chosen to be released from the death of sin into a life of obedience. As sinners in the world, we were alienated from God. As member of God’s kingdom, we have become aliens in the world. What a beautiful contrast. And it is only possible because Christ was willing to shed His blood so that, having been sprinkled with it, our consciences could be cleansed from dead works to serve the Living God (Heb. 9:13-14).

The call to obey Christ reminds us that, although God initiates salvation, we are not passive in the process. We must respond to the gospel in belief. Obedience to Jesus’ commands is the ongoing practice of belief. Election does not mean that, since God is working, I can be passive. On the contrary, because God is working, we respond to His grace with appropriate actions.

Peter opens his letter by recognizing the challenge his readers faced: they were strangers in the world and suffering because of it. Yet the reason they were outcasts in the world was that they had been chosen by God. The Father, Son, and Spirit had cast the eye of their love upon them, setting them apart to receive the full blessing of being in a right relationship with God. Fellow Christian, God chose you in conformity with His foreknown love for you, to be set apart for Him, sprinkling you with the blood of Christ so that you might live a life of obedience. God wants you to experience His grace and peace in fullest measure as you rest in Christ alone for salvation. What greater comfort is there as we face a world drowning in sin? If God for us, who can stand against us? No matter how dark your path is, God’s favor rests on you if you are His.

If you have not yet placed your faith in Christ, realize that you too can experience the love of God extended to you through His Son. Turn from your sin to trust in Jesus alone for salvation. If you feel a tugging at your heart, that is the Spirit drawing you to salvation. Do not flee from it. Jesus’ invitation is to come, find freedom and peace for your soul. There is grace for you, and a life of abundance far beyond anything this world has to offer. Come, and welcome is the invitation of the Savior.