

## 1 Peter 1 – Part B

As seen previously, [1 Peter 1:2](#) is a virtual seminary course on Systematic Theology. It says,

1Pe 1:2 (NKJV) **elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied.**

Without overstating what this introductory verse actually says, it appears that it is a kind of foundational verse for everything else that Peter is going to address. All of the terms that he uses in v2 are so vital and so critical to what he is going to write about, as well as that in which our personal faith is grounded. So, over the next several studies we want to look at all six terms or phrases that Peter uses here – “**elect, foreknowledge, sanctification, obedience, sprinkling of the blood and grace**”. Every one of these words and phrases is pregnant with deep theological meaning and substance, and it would be unwise on our part to not have a good grasp of what each term is addressing. Up to this point, what we have determined is that Peter is speaking to believers who either have or will be suffering significantly in their life because of their personal faith in Christ. It is not easy to just simply endure suffering. There has to be a basis and a foundation for someone to biblically be able to handle those kinds of events in their life. If that foundation is not there, then the suffering that they experience will in many cases be what the enemy uses to actually drive them away from Christ. We will begin by looking at the first word - “**elect**” or “**election**”. Before we get started on this subject, it is important to appreciate that the idea of “**election**” is one of the most hated and contested doctrines in the Bible, but it is very much a Bible word. “**Election**” and “**predestination**” are foundational biblical words and biblical concepts, and if someone wants to develop a theology that is biblical, then they cannot avoid addressing and understanding these terms.

Often times when discussing the doctrine of election with someone who is very skeptical, I encourage them that if they are not willing to accept the doctrine that they just need to go their Bible and take a black marker and cross through every use of the word that that has a reference to it - “**elect, election, chosen, called**”, and “**predestined**”. The difficult part when teaching the doctrine of election is how to reconcile how God holds someone responsible for not having accepted Christ if in reality they were never actually chosen or elected by God. The term that the skeptic would use to describe that dilemma is the word “unfair”. Obviously, we cannot resolve that issue with a couple of statements, but it would be a denial of Scripture to somehow teach that “**election**” was not a biblical doctrine. Just look at several of verses that uses these words. For instance, [Romans 8:29-30](#) says,

Ro 8:29 (NKJV) **For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. <sup>30</sup> Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.**

[Romans 8:33](#) says,

Ro 8:33 (NKJV) **Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies.**

[Ephesians 1:4-5](#) says,

Eph 1:4 **just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love, <sup>5</sup> having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,**

**Ephesians 1:11** says,

Eph 1:11 **In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will,**

**Colossians 3:12** says,

Col 3:12 (NKJV) **Therefore, as *the elect of God*, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering;**

**1 Thessalonians 1:4** says,

1Th 1:4 (NKJV) **knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God.**

**2 Thessalonians 2:13** says,

2Th 2:13 **But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth,**

**2 Peter 1:10** says,

2Pe 1:10 (NKJV) **Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble;**

These are just a few of the many verses that speak about election, or God's specifically choosing someone for Himself. We were chosen by God for God, and what Scripture clearly teaches us is that ultimately we have been chosen by God to be a pure and chaste bride for His Son.

Now, in **1 Peter 1:2**, Peter is not giving an exposition of the doctrine of election or the doctrine of foreknowledge, but he is simply reminding his audience that they are God's very special gift to His amazing Son Jesus Christ. Notice what Jesus said in **John 6:37**,

Jn 6:37 **All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.**

When we are able to truly put our salvation into perspective, it should be a source of great encouragement to us that we have been chosen, rather than trying to find ways to deny it.

Now, one issue that is important to embrace as we proceed in our brief overview of both election and predestination is the tension that will naturally follow. In the study of various doctrines, it is important to appreciate that what may often be considered difficult doctrines have a way of creating tension among Christians. That is why there are so many denominations. Denominations are primarily divided on issues of crucial doctrines. All difficult doctrines contain difficulties within our understanding. **We can never exhaust what we learn about God and about God's doctrines.** We can never know everything there is to know about any doctrine. Why? It is because God is inexhaustible. In every doctrine that we study, we will find that there are areas where God's truth is never quite what we may have expected.

So, theologically we have to deal with what is known as an “**antinomy**” in biblical revelation. The technical definition of an antinomy is “a contradiction between conclusions which seem equally logical, reasonable, or necessary”. For our purposes, however, it should read to be “an appearance of a contradiction...” Why? It is because in theology what may appear to be a contradiction is in reality NOT a contradiction. God’s Word does not contain contradictions between doctrines. To the contrary, the relationships between various doctrines are perfect because their Author is perfect. With an antinomy, there are two truths which on the surface may appear to be incompatible with one another, but they are only incompatible in our minds and in our assessment of them. However, how they are related in the mind of God is **inscrutable** or unfathomable to us. In the study of the doctrine of God, He is said to be **incomprehensible**. What may appear to be irreconcilable to us is fully reconciled to Him. So, a theological antinomy exists when two theological truths or principles stand side by side and are seemingly irreconcilable, yet both undeniable. There are unmistakable, undeniable reasons for believing both of them because of the clear and solid evidence that support each. You see that each must be true on its own, but you simply do not see how they can both be true together. We often call it a paradox, or something that appears to be contradictory to something else, but is not.

An antinomy is forced on us by the facts themselves. They are unavoidable and we cannot explain how the two fit. So, what should we do with an antinomy? It is theologically simple – accept it for what it is and learn to live with it. For example, the earth is spinning at a high rate of speed, and based on the laws of nature that we know, it should cause things to spin off of the earth, but they do not spin off, but rather remain. What we call gravity is operating and things stay on the earth. The earth is moving at a very high rate of speed through the universe, but to us it does not appear that we are moving or spinning at all. It is an antinomy or a paradox, and we just accept it and live with it.

In reality, with an antinomy, the two principles are not rival to one another, but in a way that we cannot grasp, they are in fact complementary to each other. So, relative to the word “**elect, election**”, or “**predestination**”, the major theological antinomy which concerns us is the apparent opposition between the sovereignty of God in choosing someone and His holding someone He has not chosen as responsible for their decision not to accept Christ. We know that in His sovereignty that God controls all things. If He were not sovereign over all things, then He would not be God. However, Scripture also teaches that God holds every man responsible for the choices that he makes and the courses of action that he takes. If someone is presented with the gospel, then God holds them fully responsible for their rejection of that gospel message, and they become guilty of unbelief. Side by side with that truth is the doctrine of regeneration and the doctrine of irresistible grace, and we know that unless God works in a person’s life that they cannot come to Him. Outwardly, the two seem completely incompatible, but in the mind of God they are fully reconciled. Both God and His judgments are incomprehensible and inscrutable to us.

The two classic verses in [John 6:44](#) and [John 6:65](#) regarding God’s supernatural drawing of someone to Christ state the following:

**Jn 6:44 (NKJV) No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day.**

**Jn 6:65 (NKJV) And He said, "Therefore I have said to you that no one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father."**

A God who we could understand exhaustively and whose revelation of Himself presented us with no mysteries would be a god made in our image, an imaginary god – but not the God of the Bible. Every perceived theological contradiction is fully reconciled in the mind of God – and we need to know that and then to embrace it as a theological condition of interpretation.

We simply cannot assert man's responsibility in a way that undermines God's sovereignty in salvation. Nor can we affirm God's sovereignty in a way that destroys man's responsibility. In the Bible, divine sovereignty and human responsibility are not enemies, but friends. They work together and are not in opposition to one another. It is our business to believe both of them, and not to water down or modify either to make them more compatible for our understanding. They stand alone and they stand together in perfect divine harmony.

Now, as we talk about the doctrine of election, I want to use the phrase “unconditional election” to help further define what we are embracing here. Unconditional election may be defined as God's sovereign choice made in eternity past regarding those whom He would save by faith through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. This choice was not based on anything that those chosen would do, or any choice that they would make, or on any aspect of their behavior. It was not based on anything true or good about them in contrast to other people, but God's election was based solely on God's own good pleasure and will. The doctrine of unconditional election specifically denies that God elects people based on His advanced knowledge (foreknowledge) in eternity past of the individual's future decision of whether or not to receive Christ when they were presented with the opportunity to do so. I.e., divine election is not based on or conditioned on “foreseen faith” of those who in time will believe in Christ. At its heart, the doctrine of unconditional election ensures that from beginning to end that salvation is all of God. For that reason, all of the glory for salvation rests with God and no one can boast before the Lord of having any contribution to their salvation.