

1 Peter 1:20 - 21 – Part OO

The Eternal Gift

1Pe 1:20 (NKJV) He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you ²¹ who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

For a long time now we have talked about the issue of divine election, or who chose whom, and it should be obvious that this is not some kind of small issue or controversy. There are those who consider it to be a very dangerous doctrine that turns a loving God into a kind of spiritual monster. However, no matter how much human reason and human preference may fight this doctrine, it is inescapably taught in Scripture, and we simply need to bow our knees to this great truth. The premise of Scripture, and one that is seen in [1 Peter 1:20-21](#) is that salvation is all of God. If anyone is ever going to be saved, it is simply because God divinely intervenes in their lostness and spiritual depravity to bring them to a place of faith and repentance – both of which are spiritual gifts given to the unbeliever so that he or she might believe. The profound reality of the doctrine of salvation is that no one would ever choose Christ if God had not first chosen them. [John 1:12-13](#) says,

Jn 1:12 (NKJV) But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: ¹³ who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.

Believing does not come about by the will of man. The Bible is clear that men and women are simply incapable of understanding the truth, repenting, and believing on their own and apart from the work of God in their life. Before anyone can be saved, God has to divinely grant them understanding, faith, and repentance. God has to overpower their state of spiritual death and give them spiritual life so that they can believe – the doctrine of the new birth or regeneration.

So, we need to ask a question? Why did God do all of this? Why did God even make a choice? Why did God make the choice to rescue particular individuals from spiritual death and eternal judgment? The answer is staggering, actually. [Titus 1:1-2](#) says,

Tit 1:1 (NKJV) Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, ² in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began,

The first thing that Paul says is that what he is doing is for “**the faith of God’s elect**” (KJV, NKJV, NASB, NIV). The RSV says “**to further the faith of God’s elect**”. The Amplified Bible reads, “**to stimulate and promote the faith of God’s chosen ones**”. Paul understood his responsibility to help bring God’s elect to a saving faith in Christ. He wrote in [2 Timothy 2:10](#),

2Ti 2:10 (NKJV) Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.

Paul fully understood what his part was – the giving of the Word of God through teaching and preaching. [Romans 10:17](#) reiterates some of this when it says,

Ro 10:17 (NKJV) **So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.**

The simple, yet infinitely powerful truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ and Him crucified will **never** fail to elicit saving faith at the appropriate time in those who have been chosen by God. [Ephesians 1:4-6](#) declares,

Eph 1:4 (NKJV) **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, ⁵ having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, ⁶ to the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the Beloved.**

To the believers in Thessalonica he said in [2 Thessalonians 2:13](#),

2Th 2:13 (NKJV) **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,**

The second thing that Paul indicates in [Titus 1:1-2](#) that he is doing is bringing the truth of God “**which accords with godliness**” to those who believe. I.e., Paul preached the gospel so that the elect could hear it and be saved (“**for the faith, for the saving faith of God’s elect**”), and then he teaches the Word of God so that those who believe can grow in the truth which produces godliness in their lives. Please appreciate that at salvation the believer is given an appetite for the Word of God and for the truth. It is this spiritual appetite that causes him to know more so that he can grow more. The truth of God that the believer is learning in the Word of God is always producing godliness in their heart and life. If there is no godliness in a professing believer’s life, then salvation cannot be considered genuine. A profession of the truth which allows an individual to live in ungodliness is a very counterfeit profession at best.

Then thirdly, Paul speaks of “**the hope of eternal life**”. I.e., he speaks of the great hope and comfort that believers have because of Christ. Now, if you take these three together, in theological terms Paul is speaking about salvation, sanctification, and glorification.

However, we want to look again at v2, and specifically concentrate on the phrase which says “**promised before time began**”. The KJV says “**before the world began**”. The NIV says “**before the beginning of time**”. The Amplified Bible says “**before the world or the ages of time began**”. The ASV says “**promised before times eternal**”. “**Before time began**” God promised that He would save sinners, then sanctify and glorify them. The obvious question that has to be asked then, is to whom did He make this promise? Well, we know that He did not make the promise to humans because they did not even exist, and we know that He did not make it to the angels because angels did not exist and are not redeemable. So, to whom did God make the promise? Well, obviously it had to be what we would call an inter-Trinitarian promise. It has to be God making a promise within the Trinity. It is virtually impossible to understand how the all-knowing omniscient Trinity made a decision or made a promise. In reality, they each have forever known what would need to be accomplished once the worlds were

created. It is not as if they had to actually decide what they were going to do and to make sure that all three were comfortable with the decision.

Look at [2 Timothy 1:8-9](#) again,

2Ti 1:8 (NKJV) Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, ⁹ who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began,

There is that same phrase again – “**before time began**”. Before time ever existed, God promised to save sinners and to sanctify them and finally to glorify them. Paul says that God has “**saved us and called us**” by the power of God. All of this was accomplished “**according to His own purpose and grace**” – and it can be added that nothing can stop this from happening. So, once again, to whom did God the Father make the promise?

The answer is found in the phrase “**given to us in Christ Jesus**”. The NASB says “**granted to us in Christ Jesus**”. I.e., the God the Father made the promise to God the Son. The entire work of salvation originated with the Father and is all according to His own purpose and grace, and it was granted to believers on behalf of Christ Jesus. I.e., the Father says to the Son, “*I am going to save sinners and I am going to do it for you.*” It is God the Father’s way of expressing His love for God the Son. He determines to express that love by giving the Son a gift, and that gift is a bride – the redeemed, or what is called the church. In [John 6:37](#), Jesus says these words,

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

Every believer is a gift from the Father to the Son. In fact, the Father actually wrote down the names of this gift for the bride in the Lamb’s Book of Life. [Revelation 13:8](#) says,

Rev 13:8 (NKJV) All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.

The ESV and RSV translate it as “**from before the foundation of the world**”.

[Revelation 17:8](#) says,

Rev 17:8 (NKJV) The beast that you saw was, and is not, and will ascend out of the bottomless pit and go to perdition. And those who dwell on the earth will marvel, whose names are not written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast that was, and is not, and yet is.

In the ancient world, the father was the one who chose the bride for their sons. It was always the father’s responsibility. However, there was always a price that had to be paid for the bride. The bride was never free. In this case, the price to be paid was that the Father had to give up His own Son, and the Son had to give up His own life as the price of purchase for the bride. We often think about the amazing sacrifice that the Son of God had to make, but the sacrifice that the Father had to make may have been even more

agonizing. The idea of God the Father knowing that He was having to offer His Son as a sacrifice, to watch Him leave heaven as God the Son and then return forever as the God / Man, to watch the incredible suffering to be inflicted on Him, and then to know that He as the Father would have to make His own Son to become sin – it could not have been more painful and excruciating. If somehow you can imagine how much you love your children, it utterly pales in comparison to how much the Father and the Son loved each other. Their love for one another was a perfect love, a love that was willing to be sacrificial to the greatest degree possible. Their love for each other was without any equal, and nothing that we can imagine about love itself can even be compared to the love that existed within the Godhead.

What cannot be lost in understanding the amazing dynamics of how God's love was being demonstrated in this Trinitarian decision is that we as believers were the reason that a sacrifice was having to take place. The question that is always asked at this point is why did God not chose to develop a different plan? Why did He not develop a plan so that no one sinned and so that no one had to die for sin? The reasoning is that if He is God (and He is), then He could certainly have provided another option that would have been much less agonizing. I have no answers to those questions, however, I do not need any. How could I personally ever question the greatest demonstration of love ever provided? What the Godhead determined to do was the greatest demonstration of love ever conceived.

What should be more than evident to us as believers is that the love that the Godhead had for us as sinful men and women could not have been any greater. What baffles me is that if we truly understand the depth of God's love for us personally, then why is it so difficult to live for Him and to love Him with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength? Why are we always finding meaningless excuses as to why we are not personally willing to live for Christ as He desires? Why are we always rationalizing why we can be the exception to full and complete obedience? Why are we so often attracted more to the world and all of its deceptive offerings than we are to Christ? Those are the things that bewilder me personally.

At a personal level, I am convinced that God the Father could have chosen to offer Himself. He was certainly as qualified as was God the Son. In reality, that would have been an easier route to take. Any earthly father who deeply loves his children would be more than willing to give his life so that his children could live. In reality, it would be easier to die himself than to watch his children be unmercifully killed. I have watched footage of Islamic extremists beating, kicking, and killing the innocent babies and children of Christians who refused to deny Christ and were forced to watch their children being maimed, beaten unmercifully, and eventually killed. The agony, the pain, and the torment of a father and mother having to do that is more than words can express. I am sure that the fathers that I watched would gladly have taken the place of their children rather than having to watch their children be ruthlessly murdered before their very eyes. If an earthly father would do that, we can be assured that God the Father would have had no hesitation in doing the same – taking the place of His Son. The love that God the Father had for God the Son was and is without equal.

However, and this is only an opinion on my part, but it appears that God the Son loved God the Father so much that He was more than willing to offer His life as the sacrifice. The Son understood the love that God the Father had for Him, and even though He knew that the sacrifice He would make would be an eternal sacrifice where when He returned that He would be the God / Man forever, His love for the Father was greater than the suffering and the eternal sacrifice He knew He would have to make. Overriding all of this is the amazing love that both the Father and the Son had for those who were going

to become the Bride of Christ. They knew that we were helpless, doomed to eternity without them in a place of indescribable torment. They knew that we had no options to save ourselves, and so in their great love for us as sinners – unworthy, uncaring, undeserving, callous, indifferent, and hard-hearted towards them, they still had such a driving love and compassion for us as sinners that they chose to follow through with the greatest display of sacrificial love ever made. Their decision to offer Christ the Son as a living sacrifice, however that was made, was the greatest demonstration of love that has ever been made. Nothing even compares to what both the Father and the Son were choosing to do. Then the Holy Spirit was the One who was expressly given the responsibility to carry out and successfully orchestrate this unbelievable plan. It would be hard to imagine what the Holy Spirit went through knowing full well what was going to happen to the Son, knowing full well the agony and the pain that the Father would have to endure, and knowing full well the magnitude of the sacrifices that were being made. Eternity is not large enough to provide understanding of this great demonstration of love for us as God's children. There is nothing that you can learn about God or His love that is greater than the picture that is before us. The whole of redemptive history is the story of God the Father pursuing and providing a bride for His Son, and the Father determined before **“the foundation of the world”**, **“before time began”** who that bride would be and wrote their names down in the Lamb's Book of Life. Every believer is an incredibly precious gift that the Father has chosen to give to His Son. This is a staggering truth.