

Invitation To Be "The Elect"

Introduction. Deep down, everyone wants to be a part of something special. When a big event occurs, people desperately want to be a part of it. In fact, we loathe the ordinary.

In Christ, we can be a part of a special group of people. Peter addresses his letter to "the elect," and because so many people misunderstand the call of God today, it will benefit us to learn what it means to be elect, how to become elect, and how to make our election sure through a brief study of the epistles of Peter.

I. **What It Means To Be "Elect"**

- A. "Elect," which occurs 22 times in the New Testament, means "to pick out, to select." The word was used in the papyri in our sense of the word "select" or "choice."
- B. Although the Israelites were at one time God's elect (Romans 11:1-2), Christians now are God's elect (Colossians 3:2; 1 Peter 2:9).
 1. We are not elect in the sense of specifically or individually chosen. Calvinists believe in what they call "unconditional election."
 - a) They believe that election is based solely on God's choice, with only a few being saved. Steele and Thomas, in *The Five Points Of Calvinism*, write, "The doctrine of election declares that God, before the foundation of the world, chose certain individuals from among the fallen members of Adam's race to be the objects of His undeserved favor. These, and these only, He purposed to save. God could have chosen to save all men (for He had the power and authority to do so) or He could have chosen to save none (for He was under no obligation to show mercy to any) -- but He did neither. Instead He chose to save some and to exclude others."
 - b) This doctrine means that all others will not be saved. Again, Steel and Thomas state, "Those who were not chosen to salvation were passed by and left to their own evil desires and choices ... It should, however, be kept in mind that if God had not graciously chosen a people for Himself and sovereignly determined to provide salvation for them and apply it to them, none would be saved. The fact that He did this for some, to the exclusion of others, is in no way unfair to the latter group, unless of course one maintains that God was under obligation to provide salvation for sinners -- a position which the Bible utterly rejects."
 2. Just like Jesus was delivered up by the determinate counsel and divine foreknowledge (Acts 2:23), God had a plan to redeem man

from before the foundation of the world (Romans 8:29-30; Ephesians 1:4; 3:10).

- a) This redemption produced the blessing of the forgiveness of our sins in Christ (Acts 3:21-26; 2 Timothy 1:9).
- b) God's true calling and election is done through the gospel (Acts 2:39; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 2:14; 1 Peter 5:10).

II. ***How We Become "Elect"***

- A. We become the "elect" by purifying our hearts and obeying the truth (1 Peter 1:22-25). We learn the plan of salvation by seeing what people in the first century did to be saved.
 1. The people at Pentecost (Acts 2:38, 41).
 2. The Samaritans (Acts 8:12).
 3. The eunuch (Acts 8:36-38).
 4. Saul (Acts 9:17-18).
 5. Cornelius (Acts 10:44-48).
 6. Lydia (Acts 16:14-15).
 7. The jailer (Acts 16:31-33).
 8. The Corinthians (Acts 18:8).
 9. The Ephesians (Acts 19:4-5).
- B. We can see the essentiality of baptism by observing what you cannot do without baptism.
 1. Obey Christ's commands (Matthew 28:19).
 2. Be saved (Mark 16:16; 1 Peter 3:21).
 3. Enter the kingdom (John 3:3, 5).
 4. Have remission of sins (Acts 2:38).
 5. Wash away sins (Acts 22:16).
 6. Walk in newness of life (Romans 6:4).
 7. Be in the one body (1 Corinthians 12:13).
 8. Put on Christ (Galatians 3:27).

III. ***How We Can Make Our Election Sure***

- A. Everyone wants to be a success, and spiritual success is found in making our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:5-11). Man is a free moral agent. It is our choice to initially obey, and our choice to shore up that calling.
- B. Peter said that we should "give all diligence" or "act with great zeal or effort; to earnestly work" to add or supply these virtues. They are intended to be developed in conjunction with each other to produce an overall effect; we cannot be selective and pick the ones we like and leave others behind.

C. Growing in the virtues.

1. Faith is the foundation that we build upon (Hebrews 11:6; Romans 5:1). This is a loyalty not only to faithful doctrine, but also faithfulness (Jude 3, 5; Luke 7:9). This is the inducement that leads us to do the works of God (2 Corinthians 5:7; James 2:22). Unless our faith moves us to obey, it is useless.
2. Virtue, also translated as "moral excellence," means a "virtuous course of thought, feeling, and action." Why do you think we spend so much time dealing with divorce and remarriage, immodest dress, smoking, social drinking, mixed swimming, cursing, gambling, and all kinds of ungodly sins? Because we must climb above these to be godly (Philippians 4:8; 1 Peter 2:9).
3. Many Christians fail because they lack knowledge of God's will (Hosea 4:6; 1 Peter 2:2). This, in turn, causes them to not be strong. How can we know right from wrong, truth from error without knowledge of the Bible? When we lack knowledge of the scriptures, we open ourselves up to being led astray (2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Peter 3:18).
4. Temperance, or self-control, is self-discipline. We need to be constantly in control of our thoughts, tongue, temper, and actions. Without self-control, one slips dangerously close to sin (James 1:14). If Paul, the great apostle who wrote half of our New Testament, felt as if he needed self-control, I would do well to heed the warning also (1 Corinthians 9:25-27; 10:13).
5. Patience, or perseverance, is a "bearing up under trials." Patience involves more than just temper. It involves endurance and perseverance (Hebrews 10:35-39). Patience is needed to endure the problems one will face in life (James 1:3-4; 5:11; Luke 8:15).
6. Godliness is piety, respect, and reverence for God. It is a disposition that does what is pleasing toward God. Elements in our society are godless and immoral, but godliness is always profitable (1 Timothy 4:8; 6:6-7). Right and wrong are determined by absolute rules given by God (John 8:32; 2 Peter 3:11).
7. Brotherly kindness denotes the warm affection that should characterize Christians (1 John 4:7-20). We should feel nearness, like that of a family, for others in Christ (Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 2:19). Love expresses itself in acts of kindness (Romans 12:10; Ephesians 4:32).
8. Love is the queen of the virtues (cf. 1 Corinthians 13:1-13), denoting self-sacrificing action in behalf of another. This love flows from God who is Himself love (1 John 4:8) and who reaches out to the world (John 3:16; 1 John 3:16). Godly people who are

"partakers of the divine nature" must abound in love. True love demands that we follow God's commandments (2 John 6).

D. The results of our growth.

1. Failure to grow in this knowledge results in spiritual "myopia" and "amnesia."
 - a) In the New Testament "blind" is used metaphorically (cf. John 9:39-41). Spiritual blindness can come from being spiritually "nearsighted."
 - (1) Such a defect of vision leads one to forget the obligation which grows out of the fact that a system has been devised to purify the heart.
 - (2) The ultimate objective of being a Christian is to become like Christ (Romans 8:29; Colossians 3:9-11).
 - b) Failure to grow is an indication that we forgot why we were redeemed by the blood of Christ in the first place (1 Peter 1:18-19).
 - (1) By comparing redemption and forgiveness, Paul teaches that the main feature of redemption is the forgiveness of sins (Ephesians 1:7; Colossians 1:14).
 - (2) When we bear spiritual fruit (cf. Galatians 5:22-23; Colossians 3:12-14), God is glorified (John 15:8).
2. We will never fall.
 - a) Calvinists believe in a doctrine often referred to as "The Security of the Believer," "Perseverance of the Saints," "Eternal Security," or "Once Saved, Always Saved."
 - (1) They teach that God's elect are not only given faith but are kept in faith. Steele and Thomas write, "The elect are not only redeemed by Christ and renewed by the Spirit: they are also kept in faith by the almighty power of God. All those who are spiritually united to Christ through regeneration are eternally secure in Him. Nothing can separate them from the eternal and unchangeable love of God. They have been predestined unto eternal glory and are therefore assured of heaven."
 - (2) Those who profess faith and then fall away were never in grace. Steele and Thomas say, "The doctrine of the perseverance of the saints does not maintain that all who profess the Christian faith are certain of heaven. It is saints -- those who are set apart by the Spirit -- who persevere to the end. It is believers -- those who are given true, living faith in Christ -- who are secure and safe in Him. Many who profess to believe fall away, but they do not fall from grace for they were never in grace. True believers do fall into

temptations, and they do commit grievous sins, but these sins do not cause them to lose their salvation or separate them from Christ."

- b) This does not mean we will never sin (1 John 1:8-10). The doctrine of "once saved, always saved" is false!
 - (1) The possibility of apostasy.
 - (a) If you forsake Him, He will cast you off forever (1 Chronicles 28:9).
 - (b) If you forsake God, He will forsake you (2 Chronicles 15:2).
 - (c) When the righteous turns away (Ezekiel 18:26; 33:18).
 - (2) Faith and unbelief.
 - (a) Have made shipwreck of faith (1 Timothy 1:19).
 - (b) Depart from the faith (1 Timothy 4:1).
 - (c) Cast off faith (1 Timothy 5:12).
 - (d) Faith was overthrown (2 Timothy 2:18).
 - (3) The crown at the end.
 - (a) If you hold fast in memory (1 Corinthians 15:2).
 - (b) If you hold fast unto the end (Hebrews 3:6, 3, 14).
 - (c) If you continue in the faith (Colossians 1:23).
 - (d) Be faithful unto death (Revelation 2:10).
 - (4) Individuals who turned away.
 - (a) Simon (Acts 8:12-24).
 - (b) Demas (2 Timothy 4:10; cf. Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24; 1 John 2:15).
 - (c) Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Timothy 1:19-20).
 - (d) Judas (John 13:2; 17:12).
 - (5) Calvinists explain the possibility of apostasy by saying that people who fall away were never really saved in the first place.
 - (a) But this really forces them to admit that they cannot know if someone is saved until they die.
 - (b) Therefore, the advocate of "once saved, always saved" is left to wonder if his own salvation is real! Does this sound like security to you?
- c) "Fall" means "to fall into misery, become wretched; cf. the loss of salvation." We will not fall short of salvation; that is, we will certainly be saved.
- d) This is not an absolute statement. It is only true if we are "giving all diligence" to grow in Christ and thereby "making our calling and election sure."

3. An entrance into the "everlasting kingdom" will be abundantly supplied.
 - a) This "everlasting kingdom" is His heavenly kingdom (2 Timothy 4:18).
 - b) What is meant by the idea of an "abundant entrance"?
 - (1) Bengel wrote, "You may be able to enter, not as having escaped from a shipwreck, or from fire, but as it were in triumph" (2 Corinthians 2:14).
 - (2) By possessing these eight virtues, we will be able to live victoriously in this life and joyously anticipate what lies ahead (2 Timothy 4:6-8).

Conclusion. God calls us to walk down a path that naturally we would not have taken. My natural impulse is not to go out and climb on top of a 30-foot building. The Lord calls us to the highest attainments possible. We need to make sure that we earnestly strive for that goal.