

When you want to build a strong house, you start with a strong foundation. That's what Peter's been doing in our epistle so far. He's been giving us a strong foundation, something that we can rest on, something we can rely on in the face of trouble. But a foundation is only as good as its beginning. It's only as good as the first point, like the cornerstone. Because if a cornerstone is not set well, then the whole thing will crumble. So where is that cornerstone for us? What is that one main point that Peter wants to give us, to strengthen us and to give us courage in the face of suffering? That one main point for us, Christians, is this: God has chosen you from before the foundation of the world to believe in him. God chooses, and whatever God chooses happens. That's the message that Peter wants us to hear tonight. But it's something that we need to kind of unpack a little bit, because God's choosing, or what we sometimes call God's election, is something that's very easy to misunderstand. Because God's choosing has a lot of different parts to it, so we need to start with the first part: that God first chose Jesus to be our Savior.

The Father chose the Son in eternity to deliver us from our sins. Now, what does that mean? We really have to unpack that so that we fully understand. What it means is this. God before he created the whole world, before he had done anything, knew everything that was going to happen. Absolutely everything. From the very beginning of history all the way down to today until all the way into the future when Jesus will come again in glory, God knows all of it perfectly. Every man, every woman, every child ever was, is, or will be, he knows them, and he knows everything that is going to happen to them. That's what it means for God to know everything.

But if God knows everything, that also means he knew before he created the world, that there would be sin, that we would fall into sin, that there would be evil in this world. Now, we don't want to confuse things here. God knowing something that is going to happen is not the same as God choosing something to happen. God knew Adam and Eve would fall into sin, but he did not choose that. He let it happen, because nothing happens without him. But God did not choose evil to come into this world, but he knew that it would. And so even before he created the world, God knew that we needed a Savior. He knew that we needed to be delivered from our sins. And so that's what it means when he chose Jesus. Out of all the ways that God might've saved us--and that's only known to God--God chose Jesus to be our Savior, so that when Jesus came into this world to be born of the Virgin Mary, to suffer under Pontius Pilate, and to be crucified, die, and rise on the third day, all of that happened because God chose it to happen, because God wanted it to happen.

And when God chooses something to happen, Christians, it happens. It's not like he's just sitting around hoping it's gonna happen. He's not sitting up in heaven twiddling his thumbs, saying, "Boy, I really hope Jesus can come." When God says something is going to happen, and God chooses it to happen, it will, even when it seems impossible to do so. God was not going to let anything in heaven, on earth, or under the earth, get in the way of what he chose to do in Christ Jesus. Nothing. When the world was overwhelmed with sin before the flood, it seemed like everything was going to come to an end. When Abraham and Sarah couldn't have children, it seemed impossible that the promise could go on. When the kings of Israel were all godless, how are we going to get the promised Son of David? It all seemed impossible. But what God chooses, happens. Nothing can stop him from carrying out his will.

And so God chose for Jesus to suffer, and he did. God chose for Jesus to go to the cross, and he did. God chose for Jesus to die and to rise on the third day, and he did. And God chose that he would be glorified for us, and he was. Because what God chooses to happen, happens. That's what God's choice does. He will accomplish his will on earth as it is in heaven.

But after he chose Jesus, Christians, God then chose his elect. He chose those who would believe in him. Now, that's a word I think we sometimes misunderstand, God's elect. What does that mean? How does God choose? How do we know if we are part of the elect? When God chooses us, it's because of his own choice. God doesn't choose us because we're good people. God doesn't choose us because he liked our personality or something like that. God doesn't even choose us because we believe! God chooses us because of Jesus, and he chose us to believe in Jesus even before the foundation of the world. And what God chooses to happen, Christians, will happen, because God's will cannot be stopped.

And so when God chose Christ to become our Savior, he gave us the very means by which we would be saved. And God chose Jesus to redeem us, to give us everything that we have. And God even chose the means by which we come to faith. He chose this Word to come to you today to deliver the promise of salvation to you. He chose the Sacraments: Baptism, when your sins are washed away. The Lord's Supper, when the body and blood of Jesus are given to you to strengthen your faith. God even chooses the pastors who bring you the Word, and he chose them from the beginning of the world for this moment. Because God's salvation, Christians, is his. It's his work from the very beginning to the very end, and his alone. And nothing that we do adds or takes away from that, because he is the one who has chosen us to be his own.

And then when God has chosen us, he has also chosen us to be like Christ, to be a holy people. And you'll notice here in our reading that Peter compares us in so many ways to Jesus. He says Jesus is "a living stone," and we are "living stones" too, "being built up into a spiritual house." Jesus has been "rejected by men," and how we have been rejected by men too, because we are Christians. Jesus is "chosen and precious," just as we are "chosen and precious." God unites us with Jesus, because he chose us to be in Jesus. It's his salvation from beginning to end.

And so when we face the troubles of this world, when we have to deal with the attacks, the assaults, the insults of those around us, we might be wondering, "How am I going to deal with it? How am I going to face tomorrow? How am I going to remain a Christian in the face of such pressure?" But this is Peter's point. You have been called as a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, because you who were once not a people, God has chosen to be a people. You who were once under God's wrath, God has chosen to show you mercy. It is his salvation alone that comes to you today. He alone chose you. He alone sent Jesus. He alone has done all of these things for you, so that no matter what happens, God has chosen you to believe in him. And what God chooses will never fail. God loves you, and God has chosen you, Christians, to belong to him. And he will never, ever let you go. Because it's his work and not ours, his choice and not ours that makes us Christians.

To him be the glory, now and forever. Amen.