

BLESSED TRINITY

“[E]lect 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.” (1 Peter 1:2 NKJV)

In this short verse we are given some remarkable insight into the distinct operations of the Persons of the Trinity in our salvation. First, Peter speaks of God the Father’s electing grace by referring to his readers as “elect.” The word means “chosen” and is an adjective describing the “pilgrims” in verse one. The Church is God’s chosen pilgrims. We are in this world as strangers in a foreign land. We were chosen (or elected) “*according to the foreknowledge of God the Father.*” Foreknowledge means to know before. However, the idea here is more than just to know about something before it’s time. The knowledge spoken of here is to know in an intimate way, implying a personal and loving relationship. This is the sense in which Mary used the word “know” in Luke 1:34 questioning Gabriel about Jesus’ miraculous conception, “Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not *know* a man?””. Similarly, in Matthew 7:23, Jesus said His words at the judgment to those who practice lawlessness will be “I never *knew* you”. Since Jesus is omniscient, He is certainly not saying that He never knew about them or that He didn’t know who they were; He knows everything! His words indicate that He never had a personal or intimate relationship with them.

So here Peter speaks of God the Father having loved us before we existed, graciously choosing us to be heirs of salvation. This understanding is consistent with the teaching of Paul in Romans 8:29 and Ephesians 1:4 (as well as many other passages).

Secondly, the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit is mentioned. To be sanctified means to be “set apart”. As God’s chosen pilgrim’s we are set apart *from* the world and *unto* God. This is not something we accomplish by dressing a certain way or changing some of our habits; it is a work that the Holy Spirit does within us by making the word of God effective in our lives. From the initial act of bringing our will into subjection by changing our very nature, all the way through the continual process of conforming us to the image of Christ, as we move along our pilgrimage in this world, the Holy Spirit is present and active not only *among* us but *in* us doing His sanctifying work at all times and in all circumstances, good and bad (see Romans 8:28-29).

Finally, Peter mentions the work of our Lord Jesus Christ in securing our salvation by the shedding of His own blood. Old Testament imagery is employed here in the phrase “sprinkling of the blood”. When a leper was pronounced clean by the priests, as part of the ceremony, the person who had been healed was then sprinkled with the blood of the sacrifice that had been offered (see Lev. 14:6-7). Likewise, in Christ, we are cleansed from all sin having His blood applied to us. We are redeemed “with the precious blood of Christ” (1Peter 1:19).

Herein is the working of “so great a salvation”; God the Father chose us, setting His love on us before the foundation of the world; the Holy Spirit, in time, sets us apart from the world and molds us into Christ-likeness, and Jesus, the Lamb of God, God in human flesh, goes to the cross for us to make atonement for our sins. In response, may we offer praise to the Triune God, now and forever!

Holy, holy, holy! Merciful and mighty!
God in three persons, blessed Trinity!

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