



You Did Not Choose Me, I Chose You
John 15:16-17

16 "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.

17 "These things I command you, that you love one another.

It is human nature to want to hear nice things about ourselves. We all want to be complimented on our abilities, our looks, our accomplishments. Mark Twain once came right out and said *"They say that you cannot live by bread alone, but I can live on compliments."* Unfortunately we tend to believe those compliments we receive, and the more and greater they are the more puffed up we tend to become.

Now Jesus has just said some great things to the Apostles, he has told them of great privileges they have. Perhaps most importantly Jesus, the Messiah Himself, God's Son, has just told them they are not His servants, which would have been an honor in and of itself, but his *friends*. Imagine it! Friends of the Great King. Wow, they must be pretty special people!

No wonder they'd already been arguing about which of them was the greatest, the most special. I mean, even if you have a room full of VIPs all of them want to be the **MIVIP** – Most Important Very Important Person. At this point, there would be a naturally tendency for fallen human hearts to swell with pride. But whenever there is a danger that the disciples will puff themselves up, Jesus nips it in the bud. Here he does so by pointing out that these privileges that He was bestowing and even the title friend were not a reward for what they had done, or a result of their superior wisdom and better choices, but merely the result of their being chosen by Christ.

Now here, the words I chose you, from the Messiah, would probably have brought to mind those words in Deuteronomy that the Lord addressed to Israel **7:6 " For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth."**

Ok, so they didn't choose Him, But why did he choose them? What special qualities merited his choosing and his love, what made them better people than all the others on the earth? He tells them.

7 "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples;

8 "but because the LORD loves you, and because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers, the LORD has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

You didn't choose me, he says, I chose you, and I didn't choose you because of anything in you, I didn't love you because you were more lovable. I chose you because I chose you, I loved you because I love you. There were no qualities or conditions that led to his choice. It was unconditional. Israel was told point blank, their election was unconditional. Now the disciples have been told that they too were chosen by Christ. That was not the norm in Israelite society.

It was normally the case that disciples or perhaps in certain cases their parents, chose the particular Rabbi they followed. It's still the case today, Westminster didn't call me and say, *we've chosen you to become a student*. I chose the seminary that I attended. But Jesus chose **them** to be His friends and His disciples, and the men he chose were not the kind of men that any earthly king, or ruler or even an ordinary Rabbi would have chosen. They would have chosen men of great scholarly ability, or great influence, or great orators - proven men with qualities that would have made them perfect for the position. The kind of men you would have looked at and said, "I see why he chose that man, I see why he's an asset, how he can help him to accomplish his agenda."

But what kind of men did Jesus choose?

Matt. 4:18 And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

Fishermen? They were almost at bottom of the social ladder. They were uneducated, unaccustomed to public speaking, they had no influence, and generally fishermen were not known for their holiness of life.

Well they weren't all fishermen, maybe the others were better candidates:

Matt. 9:9 As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he arose and followed Him.

A *tax collector*? Ok, he's educated, but he's a known sinner, a tool of the oppressive Gentile government, a parasite! A man who would and did rub the Pharisees the wrong way. The man was a walking offense to any patriotic Jew! It would be like you picking IRS auditors to plant a church.

But you see, God did that in the Old Testament as well, he chose the weakest of nations to put to shame the strongest of nations, he chose little armies to confound the great ones. And why? That He, who is alone worthy, might get the glory. Or as Paul put it:

1 Cor. 1:26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

*28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,
29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.*

That is why for instance, God systematically reduced the size of Gideon's army until there was no chance anyone would have thought they won by their own power: Judges 7:2 ***And the LORD said to Gideon, "The people who are with you are too many for Me to give the Midianites into their hands, lest Israel claim glory for itself against Me, saying, 'My own hand has saved me.'***

Now the interesting thing is we generally don't get upset about the idea of Jesus choosing his Apostles do we? That is in spite of the fact that you had an entire nation waiting for the Messiah, and when he shows up, he picks 12 men to be his Apostles who in no way merited that honor for themselves!

But still we are all ok with it generally. God gets to pick which nation will be his people, even though they didn't merit his choosing them, and he gets to pick which men will be his particular disciples, we can go even further, we are ok with the idea that he gets to pick his own prophets, his own kings, we are ok with the idea that he gets to pick which angels fell with Satan and which were preserved. Nobody complains for instance, when Paul uses the phrase Elect Angels in 1 Tim. 5:21. We are ok when Jesus is saying **"You didn't choose me, I chose you"** to anyone, *except us*. As AW Pink put it ***"how shocked would the great majority of church goers be today if they heard the Lord say such words unto His own!"*** So we work overtime to eliminate the doctrine of election. Jesus may have elected and chosen Peter, or Jeremiah, or the Archangel Michael, but HE DIDN'T CHOOSE ME, I CHOSE HIM! That was an act of my own free will. While it wasn't the majority report at the time of the Reformation, that is certainly the majority report in Christianity today.

Just out of interest, ***"How many of you were raised or converted in churches which taught that you choose Christ not that he chooses you?"***

Brothers and sisters at this point it will be objected that we aren't automatons we weren't forced to believe against our will, does not the scripture say, Romans 10:13 ***"For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."*** Jesus called Matthew to follow Him, but Matthew had to will to get up and follow him. True. But who changed Matthews Will? Who made Matthew willing to believe?

Because that wasn't the will Matthew was born with. Paul in Romans 3:11 tells us ***There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.***

Matthew was no more naturally able to get up and follow God when he called, than Lazarus was naturally able to respond to the call of Jesus when he was dead in the tomb. Before that could happen Matthew needed a new heart, a heart willing to believe, willing to follow, because he was as spiritually dead as Lazarus was physically dead:

***Ephesians 2:1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,
2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience,
3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.
4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us,***

5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved),

6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,

7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Now some will say, yes he made us alive but that is because he saw that we would exercise faith ourselves. God looked down the corridors of time and foresaw we would exercise faith. But that assumes that faith is something we can generate of ourselves in our natural fallen state. But what does the bible say about faith?

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

Faith is the gift of God!

The great Augustine, in his book or Retractions, ingeniously acknowledges his error in having once thought that faith foreseen was a condition of election; he owns that that opinion is equally impious and absurd, and proves that faith is one of the fruits of election, and consequently could not be, in any sense, a cause of it. "I could never have asserted," says he, "that God in choosing men to life had any respect to their faith, had I duly considered that faith itself is His own gift." And, in another treatise* of his, he has these words: "Since Christ says, 'Ye have not chosen Me,' etc., I would feign ask whether it be Scriptural to say we must have faith before we are elected, and not, rather, that we are elected in order to our having faith?" – Jerome Zanchi

And that is in fact what the scripture says:

Eph. 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,

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,

5 having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will,

Now let me go on quickly to some applications of that great truth that Christ chooses us, not that we choose him

1) Some will say, well that's the death knell to evangelism, if God calls us, then all we are going to do is sit around waiting for God to call in all His elect. What a ridiculous caricature.

Why did Jesus says He chose them in the first place: I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain,

The fruit that Jesus spoke of, that would remain, would be new disciples, new converts. That is why they must "go" and bear fruit. Sanctification they could work on wherever they were, but to convert others they had to go out into the highways and byways. The purpose of election is not complacency

but soul winning. Yes, God could convert men by the preaching of Angels but he has chosen to use the agency of mere men, whom he chooses and equips. Consider this God could have vanquished the Midianite army with no problem all by himself. But he chose to use Gideon and His little Army. Now if God wasn't sovereign that methodology of wittling down the army would have been inviting disaster, but the wonderful thing is, with God on their side, even that little army of 300 men could vanquish the largest of invaders. Without God electing and choosing men and changing their hearts, none of our evangelism could ever succeed. Choosing fishermen and tax collectors really would have been the wrong choice, but with God on their side, they were able to turn the world upside down. And because God is sovereign, no matter what men do, the gospel will continue to go out and prosper.

2) The power therefore in the fruitfulness Christ speaks of is prayer. They have no power to bear fruit of themselves, and they cannot make true disciples by their own efforts. The only way any of this will happen is with God's blessing. What needs to happen for someone to come to faith? God says in *Ezek. 36:26* ***"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.***

27 "I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

DO you have the power to do that heart changing work? I don't. But God does, and he tells me if I ask Him in Jesus name He will do it.

I'm convinced that the reason so much of evangelism is ultimately fruitless is that we aren't obeying the command of Christ to ask in prayer. And why? Because we assume that men can change their own hearts if we can just talk them into it. We want the glory and the want be able to say. So we go the big army overwhelm 'em with our Chariots and horses, and weapons of our own making. And we wonder why our converts seem so unchanged!

On earth friends generally choose each other, but the friendship of which Jesus speaks is different. It is one-sided in its origin. It was not brought about by gradual approach from both sides, as is often the case among men, but by Jesus alone! The words, "You did not choose me, but I chose you," emphasize the free, independent, and spontaneous character of Christ's love. The ground of God's love for us never lies in us, always in himself, for even apart from his love for us God is love. In his very essence he is love.

3) And finally, let this truth kindle in you, Christians humility, and a desire for holiness: Statements like this from Christ were designed to ***Kill Our Pride:***

"Hence it appears that there is nothing which ought more powerfully to kindle in us the desire of a holy and religious life, than when we acknowledge that we owe every thing to God, and that we have nothing that is our own; that both the commencement of our salvation, and all the parts which follow from it, flow from his undeserved mercy."