

CHOSEN BY GOD IN CHRIST
Ephesians 1: 3-14

Although our nation no longer has an active draft for military service, few of us above a certain age can forget the posters of Uncle Sam, in that tall hat, pointing a long, bony finger and mouthing the words: “I want You!” A young man could make his own choice to enlist, or go through Office Candidate’s School, but if he chose neither, his draft card would tell him his Selective Service number and when he would need to report for duty.

In this message I want to convince you that God has not drafted you into a Christian army, but God has *chosen* you and claimed you! As Isaiah 44:5 said: write this where you’ll not forget it: “I am the Lord’s,” or you can write: “I belong to God.” The Apostle Paul wanted his readers to feel adopted into the faith; baptized into it; engrafted into it. In Ephesians chapter one—our text today—Paul wrote: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessingand God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will.” [1: 3-5] Do you wish you could tell yourself that with confidence: that God has predestined you, has chosen you, has blessed YOU? That’s where we’re going today. When I have met with members who were called by this congregation to be trained as Elders, we often had to get over the first hurdle: their question- “Why me? Why would I be chosen when there may be some who seem better qualified?” If we were choosing leaders for a major company, we might choose differently. In the book of Jeremiah chapter 31: 7-9, we learned that God chose the Hebrews, not the Egyptians. As someone once quipped “How odd of God to choose the Jews.” The Egyptians

were much more advanced as a civilization. But God can choose who God wants to choose! God's name is translated "I am who I am" or "I will be who I will be." So God chose the Jews; and he chose a man from Ur named Abram; and he chose the shrewd *second* son of Isaac- Jacob! Imagine: God even chose a second son when the custom was always to bless the first son! And then God chose to bless a young woman with the highest honor: of bearing the one to be called Son of God. In the book of Acts we learn that God even chose a Jew named Saul-a persecutor of Christians, and God had Saul meet Christ; and in that mystical meeting he became Paul-the missionary who brought Gentiles to Christ.

Yet people protest: "Those were special people God chose! I am an ordinary person!" From Moses, to Jeremiah, to Isaiah to others we have named, God chose ordinary persons, and claimed them. Through Christ, others have been claimed too: a blind person; a handicapped person; a pregnant woman, children, and a widow, all chosen from a sea of others! In the hymn "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name" we sing: "Ye chosen seed of Israel's race, ye ransomed from the fall. Hail him who saves you by his grace, and crown him Lord of all!" Indeed. *Chosen*. Or in the hymn we will sing at the end of this service: "Christ is Made the Sure Foundation," Christ himself is described as being "Chosen of the Lord and precious, binding all the church in one." We are chosen; sometimes through the ages God's children have also been called "the elect." Theologian John Calvin was concerned about getting that point across, one he gleaned from Paul's own writings! The elect of God were *God's* choices, not human choices. The popular Presbyterian minister Ben Lacy Rose once wrote these words in his sermon titled: "Election."

So friends, as believers in Jesus Christ you are God's elect people. He chose you. And by his Holy Spirit he worked faith in your heart. You made a decision for him ONLY after he had chosen you. In your life, God has done some choosing. God decided if you would be a boy or girl. God decided which

genes you would inherit from your parents or grandparents. On the day you were born, there were approximately 100,000 babies born somewhere in the world... Who chose the womb in which you were formed?... It was God who began the work of faith in your heart before you had made any conscious choices. God chose you first—to work faith in your heart.

Faith is a gift. But you may say: “I don’t feel special or chosen, how do I know that I am?” The two marks of election are found in another of Paul’s letters: 2 Thessalonians 2:13- “God has, from the beginning, chosen you for salvation through sanctification in the Spirit and belief in the truth.” So the first mark is “sanctification.” Sanctification is not perfection; we only attain that in Heaven by the Potter God molding the clay of our lives. Sanctification is the process by which the Holy Spirit is bringing us toward holiness. We do that in this life by working on our discipleship; by working on our spiritual lives; by working on our walk with Christ. How is your thanksgiving, your outreach, your compassion? Working on those is what we do.

The second mark is belief in the truth. The truth is God’s Living Word-Jesus Christ, and God’s written Word- the Bible. If you believe in the truth, then you have faith, not fact. Faith is the title-deed of salvation. The moment you find proof for your belief, faith dissipates. Faith, according to Hebrews 11:1, is the title-deed of what you do not see. You may inherit land that you have never seen, but you have a deed and perhaps a document like a will to say it is yours. You know God through the eyes of faith, not by seeing God with your own eyes.

We’ll close where we began, except with a twist: if we take Paul’s word, and count ourselves as being the motley crew of the redeemed: tall, short, fat, thin, weak-voiced, strong-voiced, old, young, then we are in God’s family. Here is your blessed assurance from Ephesians 1: 3-6:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

When the saints go marching in, I want you to be in that number.

Let us pray: Lord Jesus: speak to our hearts; inspire us; guide us; prompt us to not just sit on the premises, to go into the world standing on the promises of God. Thank you, dear Savior. Amen.

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July 11, 2021