



# Chosen

## CHOSEN

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Last Sunday, I began this brief series of messages, based on 2 Peter 1:3-11. We discussed being called by God, and how that came about for each of us.

*<sup>2</sup> Peter 1:3 By His divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know Him, the One who called us to Himself by means of His marvelous glory and excellence. <sup>4</sup> And because of His glory and excellence, He has given us great and precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share His divine nature and escape the world's corruption caused by human desires.*

*<sup>5</sup> In view of all this, make every effort to respond to God's promises. Supplement your faith with a generous provision of moral excellence, and moral excellence with knowledge, <sup>6</sup> and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with patient endurance, and patient endurance with godliness, <sup>7</sup> and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love for everyone.*

*<sup>8</sup> The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> But those who fail to develop in this way are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.*

*<sup>10</sup> So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away. <sup>11</sup> Then God will give you a grand entrance into the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.*

We acknowledged that God's call goes out to "many" (among every tribe and language, all over the world). Yet His calling is also intensely personal and individual (He knew us by name and called us before we were born).

God calls us *away* from certain things that displease Him, and *into* other things that fulfill His plan for us. And above all this, Christ calls us to be *with Him* (a divine fellowship, in which He is not ashamed to call us His own).

Peter concluded his thoughts with these words:

*2 Peter 1:10* So, dear brothers and sisters, work hard to prove that you really are among those God has called and chosen. Do these things, and you will never fall away.

I want to give emphasis to the phrase “work hard to prove that you really are.” This instruction implies the strong possibility of uncertainty about God’s calling and choosing, and therefore urges us to be diligent—all the more diligent—to make certain of it. Indeed, Peter presented this danger to our spiritual journey in these plain terms:

*2 Peter 1:8* The more you grow like this, the more productive and useful you will be in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>9</sup> But **those who fail to develop in this way** are shortsighted or blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their old sins.

I’ll address at length this challenge, and how to make certain of your calling and choosing, next Sunday, when I conclude this series.

## Called, Then Chosen

For today, I want to focus on the word “chosen”—“those God has called and chosen.” You might think that “called” and “chosen” are almost synonyms, perhaps merely repeated for emphasis, but that would be incorrect.

In this context, “called” refers to an initial invitation to “whosoever will.”

And here, “chosen” refers to a further selection from among the called.

Imagine that you’re having a pickup game of basketball—where anyone who shows up is eligible to play. “Hey, want to shoot some hoops?” That’s “called.”

Then, when a group of players have assembled, you begin to choose players for each team from among them. “I pick you, the guy that’s as tall as my house!” That’s “chosen.”

Jesus welcomed *crowds* of people (whoever was interested) to be taught and healed, but He chose twelve to be with Him—His disciples (whom He later called apostles). To the crowds, Jesus explained, “*Many are called, but few are chosen*” (Matthew 22:14).

Many questions could be asked about the criteria for choosing, and I hope to speak to some of them in a little bit, but for now, let’s focus on the *fact* that some are chosen, and who they might be.

*Luke 8:5* “A farmer went out to plant his seed. As he scattered it across his field, some seed fell on a footpath, where it was stepped on, and the birds ate it. <sup>6</sup> Other seed fell among rocks. It began to grow, but the plant soon wilted and died for lack of moisture. <sup>7</sup> Other seed fell among thorns that grew up with it and choked out the tender plants. <sup>8</sup> Still other seed fell on fertile

*soil. This seed grew and produced a crop that was a hundred times as much as had been planted!” When He had said this, He called out, “Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand.”*

This was like asking His hearers, “If you’re listening, tell Me, which kind of soil are you?” Hardened by use? With impenetrable rock just beneath the surface? Covered with weeds? Or fertile soil?

When His disciples asked of the meaning (or application) of the story, Jesus replied:

*Luke 8:11 “This is the meaning of the parable: The seed is God’s word. <sup>12</sup> The seeds that fell on the footpath represent those who hear the message, only to have the devil come and take it away from their hearts and prevent them from believing and being saved. <sup>13</sup> The seeds on the rocky soil represent those who hear the message and receive it with joy. But since they don’t have deep roots, they believe for a while, then they fall away when they face temptation. <sup>14</sup> The seeds that fell among the thorns represent those who hear the message, but all too quickly the message is crowded out by the cares and riches and pleasures of this life. And so they never grow into maturity. <sup>15</sup> And the seeds that fell on the good soil represent honest, good-hearted people who hear God’s word, cling to it, and patiently produce a huge harvest.”*

## **Conditioning**

God’s calling is unconditional.

His choosing is conditional.

But the conditions are not what you might expect.

For instance, if you’re picking a basketball team for a pickup game, you may look for height (to guard the basket), or speed (to move the ball around the court), or teamwork (to share the effort), and above all, the ability to shoot baskets (in order to win the game).

One of these conditions, height, is outside the player’s control; however, he still must learn how to use it in the game. Each of the other three skills are developed by training; however, each requires a certain predisposition, an aptitude, for which no amount of training can substitute.

In the Paris Olympics of 1924, Eric Liddell won a gold medal for Britain in the 400-meter race. Born the son of missionaries, he said, “I believe God made me for a purpose, but He also made me fast. And when I run, I feel His pleasure.”

He expressed that he had been born with an aptitude to run, and through conditioning, he honed it to a winning skill.

God’s calling is unconditional. But His choosing is conditional.

In Mark 8:34, Jesus issued a general call to a mass of people at once, but with His invitation he also described the conditions of His choosing:

*Mk 8:34 Then, calling the crowd to join His disciples, He said, "If any of you wants to be My follower, you must give up your own way, take up your cross, and follow Me."*

His calling was unconditional: *"If any of you wants to be My follower."*

His choosing was conditional: *"You must give up your own way."*

## **In Christ**

The apostles spoke of being "in Christ." Paul used it 16 times in the first four chapters of his letter to the Ephesians.

*Ephesians 1:3 Blessed is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ.*

*Romans 8:1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*

Blessed with every spiritual blessing and no condemnation—in Christ! What does it mean to be "in Christ"?

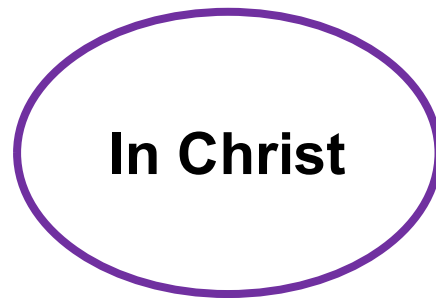
Surprisingly, it does not require a scorecard to be in Christ. It's not a badge of performance, like the gold medal. In fact, the Bible says, *"Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it"* (Ephesians 2:9).

Our Holy Communion service, which is based on the ancient Jewish Passover, reminds us of this grace. When the time came for God to deliver the nation of Israel from their captivity in Egypt, He told them to kill a lamb for a feast in each household on a certain night. They were to smear the blood of that lamb on the sides and top of the doorframe of the home to present their sacrifice before the Lord. And when the Death Angel passed through the land that night to kill the firstborn of every Egyptian home, he would *pass over* each home painted with blood and spare all those who were within the house.

The only condition for deliverance was to be inside the house painted with the blood of the lamb.

This is also what it means to be "in Christ." A variety of words may describe this relationship with Christ—born again, saved, having eternal life, following Jesus.

A picture I have found helpful in explaining the gracious nature of this relationship of God with imperfect and unskilled, but chosen, people is this:



Imagine a large circle in the middle of the floor of the largest room in your home; that circle is Jesus Christ. Are you standing inside the circle, or outside? No skill or performance is required to enter the circle, you may simply step into it. No one can force you to step into it; you must choose to do so on your own. And no one can prevent you from entering the circle; Jesus waits for you to come. His invitation is to “whosoever will.”

If you say within your heart, I want to be in the circle, I want to be with Christ, you may come. That single step makes the difference between death and life, between lost and found, between bondage and freedom, between guilt and acquittal, between shame and peace.

God has chosen Jesus, because of *His perfection*—He was without sin and always did what was pleasing in the Father’s eyes. Now, whoever is inside the circle, without exception and without pre-conditions, is also chosen by God, because he or she is *in Christ*. It’s like being inside the home painted with the blood of the Passover lamb.

### **Few Are Chosen**

In Matthew 22, Jesus told a parable to describe the Kingdom of Heaven. He said,

*Matthew 22: 2 “The Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a king who prepared a great wedding feast for his son.*

*<sup>8</sup> “And he said to his servants, ‘The wedding feast is ready, and the guests I invited aren’t worthy of the honor. <sup>9</sup> Now go out to the street corners and invite everyone you see.’ <sup>10</sup> So the servants brought in everyone they could find, good and bad alike, and the banquet hall was filled with guests.*

*<sup>11</sup> “But when the king came in to meet the guests, he noticed a man who wasn’t wearing the proper clothes for a wedding. <sup>12</sup> ‘Friend,’ he asked, ‘how is it that you are here without wedding clothes?’ But the man had no reply. <sup>13</sup> Then the king said to his aides, ‘Bind his hands and feet and throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’*

*<sup>14</sup> “For many are called, but few are chosen.”*

The call goes out to “good and bad alike,” but then comes the choosing, which in this story, is based on the clothing one wears—Is it appropriate for the wedding?

This story is symbolic of the Kingdom of Heaven. The “proper clothes for a wedding” represent the righteousness of Christ which is ascribed to those who give up their own way to follow His.

God’s choosing *depends* on only one thing—our relationship to Jesus Christ. Do you trust Him? Do you depend on His care? Do you trust in His loyal love?

## Chosen For What?

But God’s choosing *leads to* wonderful things!

*Isa 43:10* “But you are my witnesses, O Israel!” says the Lord. “You are my servant. You have been chosen to know Me, believe in Me, and understand that I alone am God. There is no other God—there never has been, and there never will be. <sup>11</sup> I, yes I, am the Lord, and there is no other Savior.”

Chosen to *know* the Lord. Chosen to *believe* in the Lord. Chosen to *understand* that He alone deserves the title, God.

Quoting the prophet Isaiah, Jesus expressed His own calling from the Father who chose Him: *Mat 12:18* “Look at My Servant, whom I have chosen. He is My Beloved, who pleases Me. I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He will proclaim justice to the nations. <sup>19</sup> He will not fight or shout or raise His voice in public. <sup>20</sup> He will not crush the weakest reed or put out a flickering candle. Finally He will cause justice to be victorious. <sup>21</sup> And His name will be the hope of all the world.”

This description was most certainly true of Jesus, but if you are “in Him” today, it is also extends to you! Now, see what else the Scriptures say about those whom God has chosen:

*Psalm 33:12* What joy for the nation whose God is the Lord, whose people He has **chosen** as His inheritance.

*1 Thess 1:4* We know, dear brothers and sisters, that God loves you and has **chosen** you to be His own people.

*1 Peter 2:9* But... you are a **chosen** people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession.

*Rom 8:31* What shall we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? <sup>32</sup> Since He did not spare even His own Son but gave Him up for us all, won’t He also give us everything else? <sup>33</sup> Who dares accuse us whom God has **chosen** for His own? No one—for God Himself has given us right standing with Himself. <sup>34</sup> Who then will condemn us?

*No one—for Christ Jesus died for us and was raised to life for us, and He is sitting in the place of honor at God’s right hand, pleading for us.*

And at the end of time (where eternity “begins”), see what the Coming King of kings will do for His chosen ones:

*Mat 24:30 And then at last, the sign that the Son of Man is coming will appear in the heavens, and there will be deep mourning among all the peoples of the earth. And they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. <sup>31</sup> And He will send out His angels with the mighty blast of a trumpet, and they will gather His **chosen** ones from all over the world—from the farthest ends of the earth and heaven.*

## **Where Are You?**

Are you “in Christ” today—among the called and chosen by God?

It is an unnumbered and innumerable host of people! From every tribe and language group! And from every manner of human brokenness and corruption, abuse and scorn.

These are those who have “given up their own way” to follow Jesus. They have stepped into the circle of His grace, they live under the canopy of His shed blood.

They are the called and chosen by God.

Are you among them today? You can be. God wants you to be.

The only thing you have to give up is your right to your own way.

The only thing you have to take up is His story of the cross.

Christ will guide you from there into any necessary changes.

Then, as Peter put it, here’s what comes next:

*<sup>1 Peter 2:9</sup> But... you are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God’s very own possession. **As a result**, you can show others the goodness of God, for He called you out of the darkness into His wonderful light.*