

Why Would God Choose Me?

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Introduction.

- A. One of the most difficult things about Christianity is learning to see things as God sees them. Where we too often look on sin as an enjoyable, pleasurable pastime, God sees it for the evil and destructive force that it actually is. Where we see human hierarchies and institutions as logical accompaniments to our religion, God recognizes them as opportunities for the devil to distract us from doing the Lord's work.
- B. Perhaps most of all, though, we look at people differently than God does.. This shows up pretty plainly when we look for outsiders to convert. Typically, we focus our evangelistic efforts on people we already think are pretty good. They're clean-cut and friendly. They have nice spouses and nice families. They don't smoke or drink or swear. In fact, they probably already regularly attend some denominational church. We look at them and think, "Wow! They're practically Christians already. All I have to do is persuade them about baptism, get them to services once or twice, and they'll fit in just like they've always been there!"
- C. We go through a similar kind of evaluation when we look at ourselves and ask what we can do for the Lord. Usually, our answer there is, "Not much." More than anybody else, we know our shortcomings and failings. Perhaps our understanding of those failings keeps us from obeying the gospel, because we "know" that God couldn't possibly want somebody as wretched as we are. More likely, they keep us from His service.
- D. In both of these situations, we need to understand that our judgment is not the same as God's judgment. God knows that it's not necessarily the smiling, clean-cut all-American types who make the best candidates for the gospel. God knows that it's not necessarily the wise Bible scholar or the charming extrovert who does the best job of bringing others to Him. Let's consider this this morning as we ask, "Why would God choose me?"

I. Saul, The World's King.

- A. We see an excellent example of God's different ways of thinking in the stories of the first two kings of Israel. The first king, Saul, was the kind of king the world would have chosen. We see him described in 1 Samuel 9:1-2. When it came to kingly appearance, Saul was quite literally head and shoulders above the rest. What an inspiring figure he would have made for the Israelites to follow! In a day when most combat was hand-to-hand, his height and reach would have made him dominant on the battlefield. In the throne room, his stature and good looks would have impressed all who came to see him. Even today, men who are tall are more likely to become CEO's of major companies than men who are short. Saul was a man who was every inch a king.
- B. However, as awe-inspiring as Saul's presence would have been, what he had inside didn't measure up. This shows up first of all in 1 Samuel 13, when Saul is driven by fear to offer a sacrifice to God that no one but a priest had the right to make. An even more serious problem, though, arises in 1 Samuel 15:2-3, 9. Here, God's will for Saul is quite clear. He is to go make war against the Amalekites, and when he wins, he is to exterminate every living thing that belongs to Amalek: all the people, all the nobility, all the livestock, everything. Saul gets the first part of the commandment right. He attacks the Amalekites, sure enough, but when he defeats them, he and the people only kill what they don't want. Everything that they do want, they spare. They spare Agag, because having your very own captive king makes you look like a powerful king. They spare the best of the flocks and herds, because they were money on the hoof. It's hard to say why Saul does this. Perhaps he was greedy. Perhaps he was afraid of what the people would do if he didn't let them have any plunder. Regardless, though, Saul was plainly told what to do and refused to do it.
- C. We see what God thinks of Saul's disobedience in 1 Samuel 15:22-23. It doesn't matter that Saul obeyed God partway. It doesn't matter that Saul made up this story about how he only spared the livestock to sacrifice them to God. It doesn't matter that Saul looked like a king. All that matters is that he disobeyed, and that disobedience was enough to cost him his throne. God cares not about looks, but about results.
- D. Likewise, friends, God isn't impressed like we are with all the "good" people in the world. He doesn't care that they act the part of a Christian. He isn't awed by all those little trappings of personal righteousness that impress us so much. He knows that all of them have sin in their lives, and that they need a Savior just as badly as the unwashed bum sleeping on the heating grate downtown. Likewise, God isn't impressed with the divinity professor who can read the Bible in its original languages, or with the smooth-talking salesman who could sell a freezer to an Eskimo. All the wisdom and all the charisma that they can bring to doing His work is immaterial next to the power that resides in His word. Why should we care where God doesn't?

II. The Search for God's Chosen.

- A. After Saul's disobedience in defeating the Amalekites, the story picks up with Samuel's search for God's chosen. This search begins with God's command in 1 Samuel 16:1. Now that Saul has proven himself unworthy of the kingship, God has chosen a different king for Himself, this time, the kind of king that God

wants to have. God tells Samuel that the king is to be found among the sons of Jesse of Bethlehem, so Samuel obediently goes trotting off to Bethlehem and asks to see the sons of Jesse. We see his first encounter with them in 1 Samuel 16:6-7. This is a passage where we clearly see the difference between God's perspective and man's perspective, even a holy man like Samuel. Samuel has just been through all kinds of misery dealing with a king who looked great on the outside but was rotten on the inside. So what does he do, just as soon as he is told to find a better king? He starts judging on the basis of physical appearance again! Eliab was apparently a fine-looking young man, so Samuel automatically assumes that he gets to be king because he wins the beauty pageant. Apparently, the thought of anything more never crosses Samuel's mind.

- B. God, though, brings Samuel up short pretty quick. The young man who won Samuel's beauty pageant has already been rejected by God. Why? Because apparently, just as was true of Saul, Eliab's fine appearance concealed a deficient heart. All through this process, God is looking at what Samuel can't see, and it's those hidden attributes of the heart, not beauty and stature, that determine whether a man is fit to serve.
- C. So, Eliab gets rejected by God. So too does Abinadab, Jesse's second-born, Shammah, Jesse's third-born, and so on down the line, through all seven of the sons that Jesse has brought with him to the sacrifice. They all flunk, there are no more sons yet, and Samuel still hasn't met the son he's supposed to anoint as king. We see what happens next in 1 Samuel 16:11-13. In truth, Jesse doesn't have seven sons. He has eight. However, Son #8 was so unimportant in Jesse's eyes that he didn't even bother bringing him to the sacrifice with the prophet. Instead, poor David got stuck at home, watching the sheep. So Jesse sends somebody after David, and in a little while, he shows up. As the Scripture describes him, David's not a bad-looking boy either, but he is just a kid, certainly not the one Samuel or anybody else would have picked for Israel's new king. However, he has the heart that God wants, so David gets anointed as the king-in-waiting.
- D. God is searching for exactly the same thing today. He's not interested in comparing righteousness of lifestyles. He's interested in hearts. That good heart that will obey the gospel can be found in the denominational believer, but just as often, it isn't. Their clean-cut lifestyles will often conceal a Pharisaical mindset that seeks to establish its own righteousness, rather than leaning on what the word says about the righteousness of God. Likewise, the Bible scholar and the extrovert don't necessarily make the best personal workers. Maybe they do, but maybe they don't, because they're too wrapped up in themselves to let the gospel do the talking for them. Instead, it is the humble heart of service, wherever it appears, that is most useful to the Lord.

III. Our Calling.

- A. Now, all of these illustrations from the Old Testament are all well and good, but we need to finish off this lesson by looking at some Scriptures that apply these things to our calling. The first-century church in Corinth wasn't a good example of many things, but it's a wonderful example of where the Lord can find His people. Look, for instance, at 1 Corinthians 6:9-11. Notice, folks, that Paul isn't speaking rhetorically. Corinth was a notoriously wicked city, and all of these different kinds of sinners were well represented in it. However, all of these different kinds of ex-sinners were also well represented in the church, because a Christian taught them about the gospel and they obeyed it. Anybody from any background can be sanctified by Jesus.
- B. Do we believe that today? Do we even bother telling the wicked people we know about Jesus, or do we just assume they will reject Him? Are we willing to explain our faith to the homosexual at school? Do we have the courage to tell our co-worker in an unscriptural marriage what the Bible says about his condition? Or do we just confine our evangelistic efforts to the people who think they already know Jesus, and so aren't interested in finding Him? Always, we must keep in the forefront of our minds that we can't judge the heart by the life.
- C. Along these lines, let me tell you about a man I knew in Texas. Thirty years ago, he was the kind of man many of us would cross the street to avoid. He was an immoral man—he had three children out of wedlock. He was a hard-living man—he loved nothing more than drinking and gambling and partying. He was a foul-mouthed man—he relished dirty jokes and coarse speech. We look at a man like that, and we assume he's bound for hell on the quickest train, but here's what really happened: a Christian told him about Jesus, and he became a disciple. He cleaned his life up, taught his children the truth, and ten years later, he was serving as an elder in the Lord's church. Today, he is, bar none, the best personal worker I've ever met. I can't help but wonder if part of the reason that he's so effective is that he's willing to talk to people like he used to be. The point is that the gospel can transform any life, as long as we have the faith to plant the seed first.
- D. And brethren, just as the gospel can transform us to have lives that please God, so too it can transform us to be useful in the work of His kingdom. Often, particularly in the realm of evangelism, that's something we question. We don't have strong personalities. We're afraid of approaching others, so afraid, in fact, that we get the shakes when we even think about it. We're not good at coming up with slick one-liners to bring others to Christ. Friends, when we are weak, and afraid, and trembling, and unpersuasive, we are exactly the kind of gospel messengers that God wants, because that's the kind of man that Paul was. Look at his self-description in 1 Corinthians 2:3-5. We think of Paul as some kind of superhero, but he wasn't. He was just like us. What made him great was his trust in the power of God, and if we only trust, we will see the same results.

Conclusion. If you haven't given your life over to God's power, now is the time to do so.