



Choosing or Chosen

Have you ever paid much attention to how people today present their testimony of salvation? If you listen carefully, you will hear many people say “I chose the Lord” or “I received the Lord” at such and such a time in my life. Others will say “the Lord saved me” when this or that was going on in my life. So why the difference? Why do some say “I did” and others say “the Lord did”? It is an over simplification to respond that some people are me-centered, seeing the whole world with themselves at the center, and other people are God-centered, seeing all things with God at the center. The former is very natural and easy, the latter most difficult; and yet the same Holy Spirit indwells both.

We have some very clear scripture, in Jesus’ own words, where He says “as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee” (Mt 8:13), “thy faith hath made thee whole” (Mt 9:22), “According to your faith be it unto you” (Mt 9:29), “great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt” (Mt 15:28), “thy faith hath made thee whole” (Lk 17:19), and “Thy faith hath saved thee” (Lk 7:50).

Let me give you a little background for each of these statements by Jesus. In the context of Matthew 8:13, the Roman centurion came to Him believing He could heal his servant, and even do it without coming to his home; and Jesus marveled, saying “I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel” (Mt 8:10). In the context of Matthew 9:22, a woman who has been bleeding for twelve years, believing she would be healed by just touching the hem of Jesus’ garment, came up behind Him and surreptitiously touched it, and was healed. In the context of Matthew 9:29, two blind men came to Jesus believing He could give them sight, so He touched their eyes and they were able to see. In the context of Matthew 15:28, a woman whose daughter was vexed with a devil, daemon-possessed, came to Jesus believing that He could cast out the daemon even though she and her daughter were not of the house of Israel, and her daughter’s daemon was cast out. In the context of Luke 17:19, ten lepers came to Jesus believing He could make them clean, and they were cleansed; but only one, a Samaritan, glorified God with a loud voice, falling at Jesus’ feet to give Him thanks, and He was made whole. In the context of Luke 7:50, Jesus was having dinner at a Pharisee’s house when a woman came in, stood behind Him weeping, wiped His feet with her hair, and then anointed them with a fragrant ointment; and as an example to the Pharisee He said to her “Thy sins are forgiven” (Lk 7:48) and told her that her faith has saved her.

These stories from Matthew and Luke exemplify Jesus’ teachings that it is our faith that saves us, makes us whole, and therefore quickens our spirit. The implication being that we have the ability to choose whether or not we believe; and many people today would agree. One of our greatest evangelical verses, in fact, also seems to say that our faith saves us, and a lot more. “For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift



of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.” (Eph 2:8-9) God is showing the exceeding riches of His grace through His Son, Jesus Christ (Eph 2:7); and therefore the result of His grace, or the gift of His grace, is salvation manifested by our faith. It is the gift of God to us. Many would agree that God’s grace to us is a gift, and many would even agree that salvation, as a result of God’s grace, is also a gift to us by God; but today it seems that many people do not agree that faith is also a gift. Today many people want to say that “this faith I have is mine, and comes only from me, and that is why God saved me”. Do you think your faith is your own and not a gift of God’s grace? If you do, I think you might want to reconsider your position. I would not want to stand before God thinking that.

I know the scripture verses quoted above seem to be implying, or even directly stating, that God saves us because of our faith. But we cannot stop there. We need to ask ourselves the next level of questions. Where does our faith come from? Does it come from within me or is it too a gift from God? If we don’t answer these questions correctly, we can mistakenly think that scripture is telling us it comes from within ourselves, which it does not. Keep in mind, how we view God will determine how we walk before Him all the days of our life.

In 2 Timothy 1:9 Paul says that God has saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given to us in Christ before the world began. There is no mistaking this verse; God saves, God calls, and it is not because of anything we did, but according to His own purpose in Christ. Moreover, the verse tells us that all this was purposed, decided, by God in Christ before the world began. That is, before anything that was made was made; and therefore, even before I could do anything good or evil, God decided to save me and to call me according to His good pleasure and purpose. Now, you can argue with my interpretation, and with this verse, if you want and point out many other verses that appear on the surface to say something different; however, this verse is unmistakably clear even to the casual observer. I encourage you, if you find yourself bringing up other verses that appear on the surface to say something different, to please dig deeper into their meaning.

In Acts 18:27 Apollos, who is going to Achaia, helped those there who had believed through grace. That is, it is because of God’s grace that they believed, not because of anything they did; otherwise, they would be able to boast about what they did, rather than giving God the glory for what He did in and through them.

In Ephesians 3:7 Paul says he was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to him by the effectual working of His power; and in Ephesians 4:7 Paul says that to everyone who believes is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Both verses unmistakably say that God’s grace is a gift to Paul and to us; again not according to anything we have done or will do, but according to God’s good pleasure.



In Romans 1:5 Paul says that by Christ he has received grace and apostleship for obedience to the faith; and in 1 Corinthians 15:10 Paul says he is what he is by the grace of God, which was not bestowed on him in vain, and by which he labored more abundantly. Both verses say that Paul was given grace so he could be obedient to the faith and so he could labor more abundantly in the faith.

In Romans 3:22-24 Paul says that the righteousness of God is by faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe and that we are justified, made righteous, by grace; and in Romans 5:1 Paul says we are justified by faith and therefore have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Justification is our legal standing before God, in which we are no longer held accountable for our sins and transgressions against God's moral standard, the law, and which comes as a result of faith in Jesus Christ. These verses say that we have the righteousness of God by faith and are justified by grace through faith; adding a little Ephesians 2:8-9 into the mix.

So if we put all these verses together, stir them gently, we can identify the sequence of events as follows. I receive God's gift of grace through which I believe, and because I believe I have faith that saves me, and therefore I am justified, made righteous, according to the work done by Christ on the cross when He died in my place. And all of this has nothing to do with anything I did or didn't do, so I can never boast, and so God gets all the credit and all the glory. I must decrease so that He may increase. All glory, all honor, and all praise belongs to our God, and none of any of it belongs to me.

The question still remains, however, whether I chose God or He first chose me as the recipient of His gift of grace. I can follow the logic from above and say that a gift is given freely, undeserved, unmerited, and unbidden; otherwise it would not be a gift but a payment for something said or done, or not said or not done, and not given freely at the sole discretion of the giver. And so, I contend that God chose me first; I did not choose God first. Of course, if someone said that to me, my first response would be "Can you prove that from scripture?" To which my answer would be "of course". Ephesians 1:3-6 gives us the answer directly. "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved." (Eph 1:3-6)

We see in verse 4 that God the Father has chosen us in love to be holy and blameless before Him; moreover, He chose us before the foundation of the world was laid. There is no mistaking this verse. God chose us before the world, or anything else, was made, before we could do anything good or evil (see Ro 9:11), to be holy and blameless before Him. Of course some would argue that God looked down the corridors of time to see that I would



choose Him, and therefore He decided to choose me. But this is not the God I know from scripture; the God they describe is impotent, needing to first know what I would do before He chooses. Is His plan dependant on my will, or His own? Do we truly know the God we serve? Or do we just want to elevate ourselves?

Let me give you some background scripture in support of my statement that God first chose us. In Isaiah 46:9-10 God says He declares the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying "I will do all my pleasure". In Isaiah 48:3 God says He declares the former things from the beginning and they come to pass. In Isaiah 48:5-6 God says He has declared things from the beginning and they came to pass, and now I have showed you new things that were previously hidden. In Jeremiah 1:5 God says to Jeremiah that He knew him before he came forth out of the womb and sanctified him and ordained him to be a prophet. In Daniel 2:28-29 God says to Nebuchadnezzar, through Daniel, that He has revealed secrets to Nebuchadnezzar that will take place in latter days so he will know what will come to pass; clearly describing events from the Babylonian, Persian, Greco, and Roman eras to come. In Romans 8:29 Paul says for whom God did foreknow he also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son; and in Ephesians 1:5 Paul says that God predestinated us to be adopted as His children in Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of His will.

In all these verses we get a very clear picture of God, who decides what He wants to do and then proceeds to do it, not needing any help or counsel from me or anyone else (Is 40:13-14, Ro 11:34-35). And so, as Ephesians 1:3-6 says, He chose us before the foundation of the world was laid and predestinated us, that is appointed us in advance by divine decree, to adoption according to the good pleasure of His will. He chose us, bestowed His gift of grace upon us, saved us, gave us faith so we could believe, and justified us; all before the foundation of the world was laid; all according to the good pleasure of His will; and we had nothing to do with any of it. The key point in all of this is that God is 100% responsible for doing all of it, all the work, and I am also 100% responsible for believing to the end, which is also a result of God's gift of grace, according to scripture. God gets all the glory, all the honor, and all the praise; and we get none of it. He is the creator and we are His creatures. Let us all give Him the glory due His name. Amen.