

Slaves and Friends of Jesus, Part 2

Scripture: John 15:12–17

Code: 43-84

I want you to open your Bible to the 15th chapter of the gospel of John. We are in some marvelous truth in this section of John's gospel, as you know, starting in chapter 13 and running all the way through chapter 16. All four of those chapters just loaded with promises – promises, pledges to those who belong to Christ. First, of course, you know this is a recorded time between our Lord and the apostles the night of the last Passover during Passion Week, that Thursday night. The next day is Friday, He'll be crucified. And here we have sort of a last will and testament of Jesus given to His men before He goes to the cross. It's just a paragraph, after paragraph, after paragraph of the most stunning and staggering, wondrous benedictions of grace that are given to His unworthy disciples, and extent to us as well, to all who believe.

So we have loved every portion of this text. We've arrived at chapter 15, verses 12 through 17, and that is a high point. If you can have a high point when everything is a high point, this might be it. I think I just briefly would remind that when you come to the Bible, you are hearing the very words of God. You are hearing the very words of God. In this case, because we're in the gospels, and Jesus is the speaker, you're hearing the words of God from the very lips of the Son of God. And, because they have been written down by the apostle John, you are hearing the very words of God on the very lips of Jesus Christ through the very pen of a Spirit-inspired writer.

So every member of the Trinity is involved. God's word on the lips of the Son inspired into the writing by the Holy Spirit. All Scripture is God-breathed. All Scripture comes from God. It is not a human book, it is the Word of God. We understand that, we know that, so that everything we look at here is for us, a revelation of God, who is disclosing Himself, and His truth, and His will to us. So let me read verses 12 through 17 just to set the text, and then make a few comments before we come to the Lord's Table together.

"This is My commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. You are My friends if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave doesn't know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father, I have made known to you. You did not choose Me, but I chose you, and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, and that your fruit would remain, so that whatever you ask of the Father in My name He may give to you. This I command you, that you love one another." Powerful truth here; and we're going to look at it again as we did last time.

But just to remind you, we are slaves and friends. We are slaves who become friends. We're slaves in that the fact that we are under the lordship of God, under the lordship of Jesus Christ, that He is our Master, and we obey Him. We have yielded up our own will, our own ambition, our own desires, our own plans – denying ourselves, rejecting everything that impinges upon us, and we do solely the will of the one who is our Lord and Master. We are slaves, but we are slaves who have become friends. In other words, we have been elevated as slaves, still required to be obedient, but all the way

to intimacy with our Lord so that, as verse 15 says, we're friends because everything that the Father has revealed to the Son, the Son has made known to us.

There are no secrets. We are slaves in the truest sense of the word, under the most marvelous, incomparable, perfect Master; and at the same time, we have been elevated to friendship because we aren't just slaves told to do things, we are slaves intimately involved with all revelation. Everything that God has revealed to Christ, He has disclosed to us. That's what friendship is; it's knowing everything there is to know about someone. So we are slaves who are friends.

How did we get to be this? How did this ever happen to us? The answer comes in the passage you just read; you probably saw it and maybe didn't note it. It's pretty simply stated. Go to verse 16: "You did not choose Me, but I chose you."

That makes sense, doesn't it? I don't think you could volunteer to be the slave of Caesar. I don't think you could volunteer to be the intimate, personal friend of any monarch in the ancient world, or for that matter, the modern world. And there were great rulers and kings and authorities and masters and lords all over the Roman world and all over the Middle Eastern world on the east side. That was not a volunteer position. That was not open to just anyone. That was a position that you were chosen for.

You were chosen to be a slave, as all slaves were. They were chosen and they were bought. You were then chosen to be elevated as a slave to intimate, personal friendship and acquaintance; and we talked about that, that the people who probably knew the most about the ruler were the most intimate slaves: the ones who were there at his bedside when he went to sleep at night and were there in the morning when he woke, the ones who heard him weep and saw him laugh, the ones who saw all the inside imaginations of his disappointments and successes, the ones who knew what he loved and what he hated, what he feared and what he sought – those most intimate to him.

And that's the kind of friends we are with Christ. We are His slaves; we do all His bidding. But He is literally given us access into the secrets of His own heart. The things that are hidden from the wise and the prudent, the Bible says, are revealed unto us because we are slaves who are intimate friends. We didn't get this position by volunteering. It didn't start with us. And that's what our Lord is saying in verse 16, and I just want you to look at that. It's kind of the main thrust this morning: "You did not choose Me, but I chose you."

Now, I know there are things in the Bible that people don't understand, a lot of them. There are some things that we don't understand because we can't, because there's an infinite reality to them and we have finite minds; we're confined. There are eternal realities we can't grasp; there are a lot of them. Just try to think of eternity and see how that works. So there are things that we can't understand because we're finite. There are things that we can't understand because we just don't have enough background in terms of history to sort of reconstruct the whole scene.

So we see something in the Bible and we can't quite understand it. There are things that we don't understand because we're ignorant. There are things that we don't understand because we tend to be bias toward our own fallenness. So when we go to the Word of God, we have to say, "Look, there are things we don't understand, and there are those secret things that belong to the Lord, Scripture says."

Old Testament writers were actually writing as the Spirit of God spoke to them, and they wrote down, and then Peter says they read what they wrote to try to figure out what they were talking about, because they were talking about the future and they wanted to know what time, what person, who was it they were writing about. The Messiah hadn't come, lived, and gone through His life and death and resurrection ministry and all of that. So they weren't sure exactly what it was that they were writing or who they were writing about. So Old Testament writers didn't quite understand the full meaning of even the things they wrote. And the same thing would be true with New Testament writers, although they did understand Christ and they did understand the realities of all the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ related to His first coming, there were lots of things about His second coming they didn't understand.

And then there were things that one apostle says were just hard to understand; they're just hard – maybe hard because we don't know the future, maybe hard because we don't have infinite minds, maybe hard because we don't have all the background information. But I will admit to you, as somebody who has studied the Bible for a long, long time, there are things that are challenging to understand for the reasons of not being able to reconstruct the setting to get it exactly right; for the fact that I have a finite mind, a very limited mind. I can't grasp what is infinite, what is beyond me.

By the way, I love the things that I can't grasp because it proves to me the Bible wasn't written by men; it is one of the marks of its divinity. Paradoxically, however, there are some things that people think are hard to understand that are not. One of those things is the doctrine of divine election, or divine choosing. There are people who think that's a very difficult thing to handle, that's a very confusing notion that God elects people, chooses people, predestines people to salvation; wrote their names down in a book before the foundation of the world, and calls His own to Himself and fulfills His own will in the gathering of the people He's already ordained and named and chosen. There are people who have trouble with that, who want to argue against that, debate that. That's not one of the things that is unclear; that's not one. That is crystal clear. That's in HD, okay.

Look at verse 16 – I don't know how else you can say it: "You did not choose Me." Anybody confused? "You did not choose Me," that's the negative. I mean we can extend that to say, "This is not a voluntary organization. You didn't decide to become a part of it. You did not choose Me," that's the negative with no ambiguity. There is no ambiguity there. The positive is, "I chose you." That is not ambiguous either. And so you have a simple unambiguous negative statement, followed by a simple unambiguous positive statement that doesn't leave you with any confusion at all. If you are a slave of the Lord Jesus Christ who has been elevated to an intimate friend, it's not because you chose, it's because He chose.

Now, to whom does the Lord say this? Well, we know that directly in that context, He's talking to His disciples, His apostles. Judas is gone there; there are eleven of them left, the true believers, and so He is talking to them. He is saying to them, "Yes, you did not choose Me, but I chose you." So somebody might say, "Well, yeah, that's true of the apostles," and it is true of the apostles. We don't really know that these apostles were seeking to connect to the Messiah. They were interested, they were fascinated. Some of them were following the ministry of John the Baptist. But He chose them. And you can go back to the gospel record and you can follow the history of how He found them and chose them. But they were first with regard to what He says here, but not last.

All the precious words of hope that He gives to them in chapters 13 through 16 on that night, all the amazing promises extend through them to everybody who will ever believe, so that when it says,

“You didn’t choose Me, but I chose you,” it is as relevant to you as it was to Peter. It is as relevant to you as it was to James, or any of the other of the eleven apostles, because this extends to all who are Christ’s slaves, all who are Christ’s slaves who become friends. Every promise, every identification, here is extended to every believer throughout the whole of human history.

Now you say, “Well, how can you be sure of that?” Well, if we had time, we could just go through 13, 14, 15, and 16, and I could show you how statement, after statement, after statement extends all the promises, extends all the pledges, extends all the identifications far beyond the eleven to whom our Lord is talking. You see that all through here. But, specifically, let me just show you in chapter 17.

In chapter 17, the Lord is finished speaking, okay. He’s said everything in chapter 13, 14, 15, and 16 – all the promises, all the pledges. Chapter 17 begins, Jesus spoke these things: “And lifting up His eyes to heaven,” now He’s going to pray, and His prayer is, same night, “Father, please now fulfill all these promises. Fulfill all these promises.” Remember, He is still in the incarnation. He has emptied Himself, He has taken the form of a servant, He is subject to the Father, and so He is asking for the Father to fulfill everything He has pledged, everything He has promised.

Now, look at verse 2. He says, “The hour has come; the Son may glorify – ” then in verse 2, “ – even as You gave Him authority over all flesh, that to all whom you have given Him, He may give eternal life.” All right. Now the prayer is, “Lord, I’m praying this, Father, for all who will be given to Me to receive eternal life.” We’ve now gone way beyond the eleven. We’re sweeping through all of redemptive history. “To all who will be given by the Father to the Son to receive eternal life.”

And then if you go down to verse 6, He says, “I have manifested Your name to the men whom You gave me, these eleven men. You gave them to Me out of the world. They were Yours and You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word. Now they have come to know that everything You have given Me is from You; for the words which you gave Me I have given to them; and they received them and truly understood that I came forth from You, and they believed that You sent Me.” Then this: “I ask on their behalf; but I do not ask on behalf of the world, but of those whom You have given Me; for they are Yours. I’m praying for all that You have given Me, all that You have given Me.” Is it just the eleven? No, no.

Back in chapter 6, we read these very powerful words. Our Lord says, “All that the Father gives Me will come to Me,” John 6:37. Then John 6:44, “No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him.” The Father is drawing, the Father is drawing. They are coming, they are coming through all of redemptive history. “All that the Father gives Me, all that the Father gives Me.”

That is a designation of every true believer. We are all love gifts from the Father to the Son, love gifts from the Father to the Son, as the Father gathers a bride for His Son for a great wedding in heaven, a bride that will honor and glorify, and serve Him and manifest His praise forever and ever and ever. That’s what redemptive history is. It is the Father getting a bride for His Son, and giving them one-by-one to the Son. The imagery is powerful.

So He’s praying, “Yes, I’m praying for these men that You gave Me. But I’m not just praying for these men that You gave Me, I am praying for all who will be given to Me in the future who will be the recipients of eternal life. I’m not praying for the world, but I’m praying for those that You give to Me.” Then down in verse 20, chapter 17, “I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who

believe in Me through their word.”

Now, how does anybody believe? You can't believe unless you hear the gospel. And where do you go to get the gospel? You go to the Scriptures, you go to the New Testament which is authored by the apostles and the associates of the apostles. So our Lord is praying not only that all of this will be fulfilled for these eleven men, but for all who will believe through their testimony, which is essentially recorded in New Testament Scripture. “I'm asking for all who will believe in Me through their word that they all may be one.”

He sees collectively all the redeemed of all the ages as one, “even as You Father are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You've given Me, I have given to them that they may be one just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity so that the world may know that You sent Me and loved them, even as You've loved Me. Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am. Bring them all to glory. Bring them all to heaven that they may see my glory which You've given Me, for you loved Me before the foundation of the world.”

He's praying a prayer that literally sweeps forward and embraces all that the Father that will give to Him for salvation as the Father gathers a bride for His Son. The imagery is incredibly powerful imagery. So all of us fall into the category of chapter 15, and verse 16: “You did not choose Me, but I chose you.” You were chosen to be a slave and the price was paid. The price was the precious blood of Christ, who by His death bought you out of the slave market of sin. Now He is your Lord and Master, and you obey Him, you obey Him. You have become not just slaves; however, you have been elevated to friends, and you characteristically love one another.

So this is kind of spreading this a little bit broader. We are slaves who became friends. We are slaves who obey our Master joyfully and gratefully. We are friends who love our Master; and also characteristically in obeying our Master, we love one another. That's verse 12 and 17. We're known by our love. We obey and we love; that really is it. That's how you define who we are. We obey our Master whom we love, and we love others who are our slave friends.

Now, let me stretch it a little bit more. Our slavery is extreme. Our slavery is extreme. This spiritual slavery is as extreme as it gets. We have no freedoms. We have no independent rule. We obey all His commands. He provides everything for us. He bought us; He owns us; He secures us; He provides for us; He protects us; His will is our will. It is an extreme kind of obedience. It is an extreme kind of slavery that we render to our beloved, perfect, glorious, all-loving, holy Master. Our slavery is extreme.

But, secondly, our friendship is extreme. This is an extreme friendship. It is an extreme friendship. You say, “By what definition?” By the definition of verse 13 – look at that: “Greater love has no one than this, than one lay down his life for his friend.” That's extreme. You say, “I'm your friend? Okay, let's see how far you go with that. You're going to die for me? You're going to push me off the tracks and let the train run over you? It's that kind of friendship?”

I'm reading an interesting book. Part of it's about a man that I've known through the years who was a Green Beret in Vietnam, and I wanted to read more of his story; and in reading this book, one of the main characters in the book, it takes us back to the Vietnam War, and the horrors and the slaughters

that were going on there. There's a story of a man named Benavidez who would, by all accounts seemed a very insignificant individual, but who heroism was just absolutely beyond comprehension.

On one occasion when his friends who were part of his unit were trapped in the jungle, trapped by a massive force of Vietcong, and when all rescue attempts had been forwarded and helicopters had crashed and men were dying all over the place, he asked to jump onboard with a final effort to go in. And didn't have a weapon – nothing but a little dagger. And this kind of non-descript little guy from Texas only grabbed one thing. And he heard that his friends – some of them – there were 12 of them to start with: 5 were dead, 7 were left, and they were all wounded. And he had heard that they were wounded because a radio report came out. And he grabbed the nearest thing, which was a medical pack. They couldn't put him down because they were afraid to lower the helicopter down to the gunfire. So he said, "That's okay." And the side of the helicopter with the open door, he threw out the bag and then he jumped out all alone without a weapon, and went searching for his buddies to deliver medical aid to them in the middle of an unbelievable firefight.

The rest of the story you'll have to read for yourself. The heroism is epic obviously. We get that, we honor that, we respect that, and we know that's what our Lord's saying. This is axiomatic, right? "Greater love as no man than this, that he lay down his life for his friends." We get that. That's not a spiritual truth, that's just reality, right? That's axiomatic; that's a self-evident truth. That's the most you can do for somebody is give your life. I mean we get excited when we hear about somebody who wants to give up a vital organ to save the life of somebody else; we get that sacrifice. We read about these kinds of things throughout history.

I'm sorry to say we read about them seemingly less and less in the world in which we live, but we get that. That's an extreme form of friendship. So it's one thing for you to say you're my friend, you know, "I'm your friend, but don't ask me to, you know, change my schedule really." Okay, there's a kind of friendship; I'll buy that, I can accept that, you know. Send me a Christmas card, that's okay. It doesn't go beyond that.

But we're talking extreme terminology here. This is an extreme slavery where we do everything that our commander tells us to do; we do it joyfully. This is an extreme kind of friendship where we literally are willing to give our lives. Look, that's what Jesus said, right, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his – " what? " – his cross." That's an execution. It might be that.

Paul said, "Look, in my life, I die daily. Every day could be my last day getting the gospel to people. My life is always on the line." So the Lord says this is an extreme relationship that we have with Him. It is an extreme kind of slavery where we obey everything, and extreme kind of friendship where we give up our lives. And He's our model – go back to verse 10: "If you keep My commandments, you'll abide in My love just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love." He's the model of perfect obedience. He did everything the Father willed Him to do. He's the perfect model of obedience.

He's also the perfect model of sacrifice. Go down to verse 13: "Greater love had no one than this, than one lay down his life for his friends." And that is exactly what He does. That's exactly what He does. He gives His life for us. He is our model. He didn't give His life only as an example, He gave His life as an atonement; but it was an example. Peter says He gave us an example as well of sacrificial love.

So listen, if you are a slave and a friend, and you have the privilege of this extreme slavery and extreme friendship, let me tell you something: you didn't choose this. It's against everything in your nature – everything, against everything. It's not a voluntary organization, and that is why in verse 16 you read so unambiguously, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you."

Now anybody who doesn't understand that is not trying. That's not obscure. And it's very extensive. "What do you mean, chose me for what?" "Chose you to be slave and friend. Chose to disclose everything I heard from My Father so that you would be an intimate friend and there would be no secrets." In other words, salvation. "I chose you," that's the Greek verb *ekleg*, from which we get the word "elect." It's the doctrine of election. "I chose you to be My slaves who are friends, and I made known to you all the truth." That is salvation. But it doesn't end there.

Then He says this: "And appointed you that you would go." This is not just salvation, this is a commission, this is a commission. "I appointed you that you would go." It's the Greek verb *tithmi*, to set, to establish, to fix, to ordain. Very strong. In other words, when you were chosen to be a slave who is an intimate friend, when you were chosen to this extreme slavery, extreme friendship, it was with a view to fulfilling a commission; and it is a commission to go.

This is like a preview of the Great Commission, isn't it? It's a preview of the Great Commission: "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature." "I appointed you that you that you would go." And then also, to make sure that you would have everything you need – end of verse 16: "Whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give it to you. So I have chosen you for salvation, I have chosen you for a commission, I have chosen you for a provision; and with that salvation and that commission and that provision, your life will have an eternal impact."

Please go back to verse 16 again. "I chose you and appointed you that you would go and bear fruit, bear fruit; that your life would matter, that your life would be spiritually influential, that it would produce righteousness," all the things that we saw when we talked about fruit, remember, in the opening 11 verses of John 15? Fruit is righteousness in every form. But, particularly, fruit is adding people to the kingdom, winning sinners to Christ, preaching the gospel. "You're appointed to go and bear fruit."

"What do you mean go and bear fruit?" Go and take the gospel. Go and bring people to the knowledge of Christ. And I love this: "And your fruit will remain." The word "remain" is the verb *men*, that's abide again – we're back to the word "abide." "If you abide in Me and My word abides in you, you're going to have a powerful life, and you're going to go and you're going to bear fruit, and the fruit that comes out of your life is also going to remain and abide, and it's going to keep going, and going, and going." Talk about a life that matters; this is incredible.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians, this means "we are a savour of life unto life." our lives matters. Look, your life matters more than any nonbeliever in the world, I don't care what his position or achievements are; because no matter what anybody else does, it's temporal, right? It's over at the grave; it's done; shut it down. Your life matters forever. You are a savour of life unto life – life, upon life, upon life, as if eternally unendingly. You bear fruit that remains.

There are a lot of people who do things and, obviously, if they don't know the Lord and they aren't

done for the sake of the kingdom, they all burn: they all die out, they all end. This is an astonishing thing. This is a privilege beyond calculation, beyond comprehension. Unworthy sinners that we are, we have been chosen for such eternal influence. Literally, our lives matter forever. We are the ones, remember, purchasing friends for eternity who'll welcome us into heaven when we arrive.

It's a strange paradox, isn't it, that the King chooses slaves to be friends, to have this kind of eternal influence; but He chooses them from among the unqualified and the undeserving. Why? Because that's all there are. There aren't any other kind of people. But he chose us and placed us in such high privilege and such dignity, with such impact for eternity. "You didn't choose this. You didn't do this. This is way beyond your capability, way beyond your will, way beyond your plan and your design, and far outside of your natural capacities as a dead, blind, fallen, sinner."

He chose us; it's that simple. That's the truth; He chose us, He chose us. You say, "But I was willing." You were willing because He made you willing. You believe because He opened your eyes. You were made alive because He gave you life. This is not difficult to understand.

The Old Testament is clear on this in Deuteronomy 10:14 and 15, "Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. Yet on your fathers did the Lord set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, even you above all peoples." That's Israel. He chose you. Israel didn't choose God. Israel didn't choose God. Abraham didn't choose God; God chose Abraham, plucked him up out of Ur of the Chaldees. He chose Israel. That's why Psalm 105:43 says the Jews are "His chosen ones." Psalm 135:4, "The Lord has chosen Jacob." He chose the patriarchs, he chose the nation. Deuteronomy 7 and 14, "The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the people on the face of the earth." He chose you; that's the whole story of the Old Testament.

I don't think anybody – I've never met anybody who would say, "Well, you know, all the nations of the world had choices to make, and Israel just chose God." Really? You can't find that in the Old Testament. That's not how God operates. And where were they poking around to find Him anyway? No, "Israel, My elect," says the Bible. "Israel, My elect. Israel, My chosen." This is consistent with God. God calls Christ "My elect, My chosen one."

You come into the New Testament and the same pattern, "Many are called but few are chosen." Mark 13 says that God is going to do some things in the future "for the sake of the chosen, for the sake of the chosen, the elect." John 3 says that "the Holy Spirit saves whom He will, when He will." And this is a divine work.

I read you in Ephesians 1: "Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, predestined to be redeemed." All divine choice. "For by grace are you saved –" Ephesians 2:8 and 9. "For by grace are you saved through faith, and that is not even of yourself, it's a gift of God."

Second Timothy 2:10 says this – Paul's testimony: "I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen. I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen, so that they may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory." Everything He did in ministry was for the sake of reaching the chosen.

Titus 1 same thing, "to preach to the chosen so that they could hear and believe." James 1:18, "In

the exercise of His will He brought us forth, He regenerated us by the word of truth.” We are born from above. We are born again.

James 2:5, “Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom?” Of course, He chose – just like He chose Israel, just like He chose Christ, just like He chose the patriarchs, just like He chose the apostles. He continues to choose His people.

First Peter 1, Peter writes “to those who are chosen.” Revelation 13, “Those whose names are written from the foundation of the earth in the book of the life of the Lamb.” Clearly, those who are God’s and Christ’s, slaves who are friends, are chosen. We are chosen to this astonishing reality of salvation, commission, provision, and eternal impact.

Why does God do the choosing? Well, because no man on his own seeks after God. We couldn’t do that. And more importantly, He does it because He is God, and it is for His glory.

Listen to Romans 11:33, “Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His way!” Remember that, you won’t be able to figure it all out. “Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again?”

Do you think you did something that made God obligated to do something for you? Who has ever done that? Who has ever earned this? Who has ever chosen this and God had to respond to it? Who is first given to Him that it might be paid back to Him again? No: “From Him, through Him, to Him are all things to Whom be the glory forever. Amen.”

Now, you’re a believer. You don’t say to yourself, “Congratulations, self, on your repentance and your faith. Congratulations on your wisdom. Congratulations on your moral character, fortitude.” Really? If you’re a true believer, you thank God, don’t you, from the bottom of your heart because you understand that it’s a miracle that you are what you are.

When you want somebody to be saved, you go to God and you pray, and you pray, “Lord, grant life, grant faith, grant repentance; save this person. Lord, please be gracious; save this person.” And in the back of your mind, you’re not saying, “I know this is really bad God. Please forgive me because I know I’m violating his personal freedoms.” What?

You’ve never had that thought in your entire life. You’d never try to avoid the sort of slighting the personal freedoms of a condemned sinner. They don’t have any freedoms except to choose sin. I mean I’m saying instinctively, we know this. Instinctively we understand that He saves us, it comes from Him. And we came and we believed, and repented, and received Christ with humble hearts – fearful, broken over our sin, and hungry for righteousness because He made us willing; so we pray.

First Corinthians 1: This is a big subject, but you can see how it has this magnificent simplicity here. “Consider your calling – ” 1 Corinthians 1:26. “Consider your calling, brethren.” Just think about it, your divine calling from God. He chose and He called. “Not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble.” God made choices, He made choices, “and He chose the poor of the world, as I read you earlier, “ – and not many noble, not many mighty,” so forth.

Verse 27: "God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise. God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame things that are strong. And the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are." Here is God choosing all the lowly, lowliest of the low, "so that – " verse 29 " – no man may – " what? " – boast before God. By His doing, you're in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, 'Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord.'"

The whole point is that God did all the choosing so He would get all the glory. Now if you believe that you made the choice, then that text is nonsense. You might as well cut it out of your Bible, it's nonsense. If the choice is yours and not God's, how does that end human boasting? How does that stop human boasting? It makes nonsense out of that. Again, it's so obvious.

One other passage, Romans 9. And in Romans 9, Paul admits that some people think this idea of God choosing is unfair because, listen: our brains, our minds, our thinking are fallen along with all the rest of us, so we have our own fallen sense of what is right. So sometimes people conclude that if God chooses, that does violate human freedom and that's wrong.

So verse 14, "Is there injustice with God? Is there injustice with God? Is God being unjust because He loved Jacob and hated Esau because He chose which of the two before they were even born?" Because, as He said to Moses, verse 15, "He has mercy on whom He has mercy, and compassion on whom He has compassion."

It doesn't depend on the man who wills, or the man who turn or runs, but on God who has mercy. And He decided what He would do with Pharaoh: "He decides whom He'll have mercy on – " verse 18 " – on whomever He desires, and he hardens whom He desires."

And so then you say, "Well, why would you be then held accountable for resisting Him? Who can resist His will?" On the contrary, "Who are you, old man?" who answers back to God. "Shut your mouth."

Bottom line is this: if God doesn't make the choice, then why are these accusations given against it? They prove that it's clear that He does make the choice; and it isn't a front to fallen human independence. That text doesn't make sense either if people choose – if Pharaoh chose, and Jacob chose, and Esau chose, and everybody chooses.

But then where do the accusations come from? If Paul is saying that God chose, then those accusations will arise – and they do. Salvation is His choice in all its fullness. And it's not apart from our faith. It's not apart from our response. But He chooses to make us willing, and then makes us His own. This is the most pride-crushing, God-exalting, joy-producing, honor-granting, holiness-motivating, hope-giving doctrine in the Bible.

Father, we understand that all that we've just been saying is only a reality because of Christ's death on the cross; that it was His sacrifice on the cross, because we could not have been chosen and accepted unless our sins were paid for in full. And so we come with this overwhelming sense of gratitude, this overwhelming, stunning reality of identity as Your slave friends who've been chosen to such lofty realities as salvation, commission, provision, eternal influence.

We give you all the glory, all the praise. But we know it's the cross, and that's why we've been singing all morning about the cross. It was there that our sins were paid for so that we could be chosen. Thank You for that. Father do more than we can ask or think according to that power which raised Christ from the dead. We ask in the name of Christ, amen.

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