

Dear Friends in Christ,

There's that incident recorded in Scripture in which we're told: "... a centurion came forward to (Jesus), appealing to him, 'Lord, my servant is lying paralyzed at home, suffering terribly.'" (Matt. 8:5-6) Jesus said "'I will come and heal him.'" (v. 7) Following that are words that most, today, would find offensive to confess: "But the centurion replied, 'Lord I am not worthy to have you come under my roof, but only say the word, and my servant will be healed.'" (v. 8) ***I am not worthy.*** Jesus' response to the centurion's words must seize and hold our understanding: "'Truly, I tell you, with no one in Israel have I found such faith.'" (v. 10b) There are a lot of people sitting in a lot of churches who would never make that confession today! ***I am not worthy.***

Recall with me Jesus' Parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector. We're told, "(Jesus told) this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous..." (Lk. 18:9) The Pharisee was the "righteous"; that is, self-righteous and reminded God of how good he was and deserving of God's love. The tax collector could do nothing but cry out, "'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'" (v. 13b) And Jesus said, "'I tell you, this man (the tax collector; the sinner) went down to his house justified, rather than the other.'" (v. 14)

In both cases we are confronted with what humans are before God - unworthy and sinners - PERIOD. In both cases we are confronted with the faith that enables us to see what God sees. Therefore, we are confronted with . . .

## THE WAY IT WAS IS THE WAY IT IS AND THE WAY IT WILL BE TO THE VERY END!

### I. Chosen by God.

The first part of our theme, ***The Way It Was***, takes us back to our text for this morning - way back to the time of Moses. It begins with these words God gave Moses to give to the Old Testament Church:

"For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth." (v. 6)

What a miracle! What a blessing! The Lord chose Israel to be His visible church on earth "out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth." Don't you find that phenomenal? God did not choose the great world empire of the Egyptians or any other people of noteworthy standing. That's the way it was.

Then, there's us. The Holy Spirit says, "(God) chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him." (Eph. 1:4) God chose us - knew us - made us His before the creation of the world! He chose us "out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth" to be His. So, the way it was is the way it is and will be to the end. We didn't choose God. He chose us. We didn't make a decision about Jesus. He made a decision about us!

### II. Few in Number.

Friends, I must tell you that the Word God spoke to Samuel should be etched in every heart and mind here: "...the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (I Sam. 16:7b) That's the way we operate, don't we? We judge things by their looks, the numbers, things that mean something according to the way humans judge things. It's got to become key to our understanding: ***the Lord sees not as man sees.***

Our text says of Israel, "The Lord your God has chosen you...not because you were more in number than any other people...for you were the fewest of all peoples..." (v. 7) And now? What about now? What about you and me? Scriptures teach:

But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are (that is, things that humans consider something), so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. (1 Cor. 1:27-29)

It checks human wisdom. ***The Lord sees not as man sees.*** It cancels human reasoning: ***“For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord.”*** (Is. 55:8)

### III. Nothing to Earn It.

And then comes the big question: “Why would God choose us? Why any of us?” And, maybe, some have that not so secret thought: “He must have chosen me because I was doing something right?” God’s answer is simple and clear: He chose you (as our text states) “because the Lord loves you...”. (v. 8a) That’s it! Go no further! ***Because the Lord loves you.***

The Word of God demonstrates God’s decision to choose according to His will. The fact is, the Hebrews were in a constant state of complaining and groaning about the way God directed them. If you know the Old Testament, you know that! They didn’t choose God!

We did not choose God. The Scriptures speak to you and me in these clear and sharp tones: “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the prince of the power of the air (Satan!)...and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.” (Eph. 2:1-2 & 3b) And this: “God, being rich in mercy...even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ - by grace you have been saved.” (Eph. 2:4-5) Not one word in the verses just quoted even remotely suggest that God favored us because we were favorable, lovable, deserving! The Scriptures teach:

“For (God) says to Moses, ‘I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.’ So then it depends not on human will or exertion, but on God, who has mercy.” (Rom. 9:15-16)

Dear Brothers and Sisters, as we have said here so many, many times, it is of no surprise that much of the church today is selective in what it teaches, or teaches little to none of Scripture. It is of no surprise that the world is in a state of constant restlessness and upheaval. Humanity is not deserving of divine compliments or accolades! And that is the offense of the Cross! Christ died for a sinful, violent, vulgar, undeserving world!

Recall Jesus’ words from St. Luke’s Gospel:

“Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and recline at table’? Will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink’? Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, (are you ready for this??) ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty’.” (Lk. 17:7-10)

How significant that in the 9<sup>th</sup> chapter of Deuteronomy God states, “Know, therefore, that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people.” (Deut. 9:6) How significant, therefore, that in the 5<sup>th</sup> chapter of Romans, Paul says of us, “For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly.... God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom. 5:6,8)

And I've got one more text for you. It's a tough one! I've had people openly argue against it and try to - even demand - to change its meaning. Here it is, from Scripture, the third chapter of Romans:

For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks (that is, Gentiles; that is, us!), are under sin, as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God (well, the god people seek is the one they create in their minds and hearts!). All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." (Rom 3:9-12) **Worthless**. That's the word of great offense. The translation is correct.

Then, from this same chapter of Romans:

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift (love that is not deserved - love that declares us forgiven!), through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (the purchase of our forgiveness and eternal life with His blood). (Rom. 3:23-24)

That's the way it was. That's the way it is. That's the way it will be to the very end. There's a lot more to life and what we do with it than what we can grab from this world...isn't there?

Amen.

Pastor Bill Abbott

*July 30, 2017*

*Deuteronomy 7:6-9: **“The Way It Was Is the Way It Is  
And the Way It Will Be to the Very End!”***

*I. Chosen by God.*

*II. Few in Number.*

*III. Nothing to Earn It.*

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