

Chosen

1 Peter 2:9

October 18, 2020 at The First Congregational Church of Marshalltown, Iowa

Introduction

Last Sunday I spent a few minutes speaking on the parable of Jesus that ended with the phrase, "many are called, but few are chosen." In common use, it referred to a selection process in which many were invited to compete, but few would be selected in the end. In the Kingdom of God it is different, in that many are invited but few bother to respond to the invitation. The idea that, as followers of Jesus Christ, we are chosen by God the Father warrants special attention, so I'd like to take a few minutes to do that today.

Chosen-Exodus 19:6

The phrase echoes Exodus 19:5-6, in which God states to the newly liberated people of Israel, "Now therefore, If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel." The language Peter uses clearly refers to the deliverance of Israel from 400 years of bondage in Egypt.

A Liberation Greater than 400 Years of Slavery

We know that God told Abraham in advance that his people would spend 400 years in slavery. I've often wondered what it was like for someone who was there 250 years into this. What would it have felt like to realize that there was another 150 years to go, and that he was never getting free. What was it like for that generation that was finally liberated. According to the Bible, Christ liberates us from sin, a far worse form of slavery, in which our moral failures lead us to more moral failure which leads to decay of every sort. In Christ we are selected to have the favor of God; that the blessing of God on our lives seeks us out. That heaven awaits and that as a church we form a sort of "colony of heaven" here on earth. This truth heavily influences how we view this life.

Privilege in Prayer

I once had a conversation, some years ago, with a couple about Judaism. I said then, and still believe, that the Jews are the chosen people, and that God is not done with them. My understanding of "chosen" involves favor, special attention to the prayers thereof, and purpose. Being "chosen" doesn't mean so much that God chose this small nation with no interest in the rest of the world, but that the chosen nation would be a special agent of blessing to the rest of the world. In 1 Peter we see this

honor extended to the followers of Jesus, Jewish and non-Jewish alike. We are part of a chosen generation, and the next phrase helps clarify and define "chosen generation." That phrase is "a royal priesthood"-people who represent the Lord to the people and represent people to the Lord. Part of representing the Lord to the people is our very attendance in church on Sunday. It sends a message to the people of this town that worship goes to the very core of why we are on this earth, and that it is worth the time involved. The chosen generation is granted great favor to pray for people, which still remains the most popular of religious activities. Facebook is full of prayer requests. When I worked as a hospital chaplain, I would often ask people if they would like me to pray for them. People, most of whom had not set foot in a church in some time, would often say "yes". Not everyone, but most. People who were involved in gang violence, were members of street gangs that had been shot. I would ask them if they would like me to pray with them. The gang members never turned me down. One actually asked the doctor to leave his room in the emergency room and have the chaplain come in and pray. People, including many people who would say they are not religious, want people who are chosen and believe in prayer to pray for them.

Application

When considering the various applications of this passage, aside from worship and prayer, I noticed that the word "submit" shows up frequently in 1 Peter. It's a word with a bad reputation that I think is undeserved. "Submit" does not mean "blind obedience", it means "respect and cooperation". We are to respect government, employers, people in authority and family. We are to respect each other. We are to live in such a fashion that when people speak against us they will look foolish. Be the sort of people others seek out for prayer because, as chosen people, who have special favor in prayer.

Conclusion

Jesus ended that great parable last week with the phrase, "many are called but few are chosen". Today we've considered just a small part of what it means to be "chosen" in Christ. Of the many privileges offered, one is special access to God in prayer, for ourselves and for others. Many in this world seem little interested in Christ, but will still welcome people who pray. That's part of the purpose of the chosen people.