

CHOSEN BY GOD AND RESPONDING TO HIS CHOOSING

John 15:16 *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.*

Let these words sink into our souls: God has chosen us. What an amazing statement! If we had chosen the Lord Jesus, there is always the danger we may reject him in favor of other gods. However, the good news is that because he has chosen us, he will cleave to us and cause us to cleave to him. “But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not: and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren” (Luke 22:32). Is there anything in the entire universe more powerful than the prayers of Jesus? Let us say together, “nothing”! Fear not! We have the power of the prayers of Jesus guiding us towards heaven. My intention in this message is to analyze the various reasons that people respond to the call of God, and let this reflection help us to appreciate God’s call on our lives. Let us begin with father Abraham.

Genesis 12:1 *Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee:*

Genesis 12:2 *And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing:*

Genesis 12:3 *And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.*

Consider the different kinds of calls you responded to as a child. Recall the voice of your mother or father calling your name. You responded to this voice because it was the voice of someone you loved dearly; this voice was your earthly source and sustained you in every way with unconditional love. This was the source of its compelling power which moved your entire body towards it. Now, a voice infinitely greater and more compelling than that of his mother or father summoned Abram in Ur of the Chaldees – it was the voice of God. He said, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house”. Let us say together, “A voice infinitely greater than that of my mother or father has called me, the voice of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen!” The voice of mothers and fathers initiates a bodily response that covers a few meters or kilometers at the most (within the house, city etc.) but that of the God of heaven physically moves us to leave houses, cities and even countries, as was the case with Abram.

Mark 10:29 *And Jesus answered and said, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my sake, and the gospel's,*

Mark 10:30 *But he shall receive an hundredfold now in this time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life.*

The nomadic life, the immense heat, the hostile kings and tribes that Abraham faced was overcome because the voice and call of God kept him moving. Do you still hear the voice of God? The voice of Jesus will deafen the noise of all the problems you face put together. In the island of Patmos, the apostle John should have heard the tortuous sounds of cursing, forced labor and discouragement. However, he writes, “After this I looked, and, behold, a door was opened in heaven: and the first voice which I heard was as it were of a trumpet talking with me; which said, Come up hither, and I will shew thee things which must be hereafter” (Revelation 4:1). May the voice of Jesus sound like a trumpet in our lives! May his call drown out every other noise around us! I am not fully impressed with the so-called “noise-cancelling” features of these modern headphones. I still hear some surrounding noise, but, thank God, the trumpet sound of Jesus’ voice will certainly cancel out every other sound. Hallelujah! Next, let us consider the blessings that followed Abraham’s positive response to the voice and call of God.

Deut 7:7 *The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:*

Deut 7:8 *But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*

Deut 7:9 *Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations.*

Why did God choose us? First and foremost because he loved us. Let us say this in unison – God loves us! This declaration makes the Devil mad. “God loves us” means God will fight for us; it means he will sustain us; it means he is watching constantly over us; it means he will comfort and encourage us and it means he will save us. However, notice the second reason God gave for choosing Israel – to keep his oath, which he had sworn to their fathers: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Just consider the son or daughter of a very rich parent. If we are honest, some envy and even jealousy builds up inside us when we realize that they did nothing to deserve their wealth – their only qualification was to be born into the right family. Hear the good news – we are the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob also. The moment we put on Christ through baptism in Jesus name, we are spiritually circumcised; we have

followed our fathers and obeyed the commandment of God. We have removed the cursed flesh of Adam.

Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

Galatians 3:28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.

Galatians 3:29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

All who repent and are baptized in Jesus name and receive the gift of the Holy Ghost, as Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:38) have heard the same voice that called Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We do not need to envy the multimillionaires of this world – as the children of Abraham, we will inherit whatever he has inherited. And what has Abraham inherited? “And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth” (Genesis 14:19). May you obey the voice of God as Abraham did and inherit the blessings of your father Abraham! “Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him” (Isaiah 51:2). If Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are our fathers, then rest assured, we can appeal to God using their names and ask for his mercy, as Moses did: “Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin (Deut 9:27).

Hear some more good news! Just as Abraham’s obedience to the call of God blessed his children and the nation of Israel for generations, our obedience to Jesus’ voice will bless our children and their children. Amen! A woman named Lois was one of the first Greeks who heard the Gospel and believed. She passed on her faith to her daughter named Eunice who married a Jewish man. Finally, this union produced Timothy, one of the most famous Bible characters in the New Testament. “When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in thee, which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois, and thy mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in thee also” (2 Timothy 1:5). Look at your children for a moment! Believe by faith that your faith will be transferred into them in Jesus name! When you and I obey the voice and call of Jesus, this voice is not content with us alone, but it seeks after our children. Please say with me by faith, “My positive response to Jesus will not stop with me! Let my children also hear the voice I heard, Jesus! Then subsequent generations will bless you and mention your name, as did Moses and Isaiah.

Finally, I would like to consider one reason we have responded positively to God's choosing. "But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience" (Luke 8:15). I am aware that you as humble Christians will not be comfortable hearing this, but the truth is that you heard the voice of God because you have a good heart. Amen! Soil or ground that is covered with stones, weeds or baked hard by the Sun, clearly cannot receive good seed until these things are cleared out of the way. When the Lord Jesus met Nathaniel, he declared that he saw a heart or ground that was ready to receive the seed of God. "Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!" (John 1:47). May we always be Israelites in whom is no guile! Why was King Saul unable to hear the words of Samuel? It was because the ground of his heart was filled with jealousy and hatred. Make sure that you keep cleaning out the stones, weeds etc. from your heart or the call of God will slowly diminish with time until, like Saul, one day he could not hear the voice of God.

***1Samuel 28:6** And when Saul enquired of the LORD, the LORD answered him not, neither by dreams, nor by Urim, nor by prophets.*

***Hebrews 3:15** While it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.*

In conclusion, it would be a disaster of untold proportions if God cannot speak to anyone except a child, as was the case with Samuel in the Temple. The hearts of all Israel was so corrupt that none could hear the voice of God, as did Abraham. But, the fact that at least one child in the entire nation could hear the voice of God meant that God still kept his promise to the fathers. Even in the darkest days of the Apostolic church, I am certain a child will hear the voice of Jesus calling him or her to salvation and prophethood and evangelization. Amen! Eli had failed God, but when he no longer could hear the voice of God, he at least taught the next generation what to say so they could hear the voice of God.

***1Samuel 3:9** Therefore Eli said unto Samuel, Go, lie down: and it shall be, if he call thee, that thou shalt say, Speak, LORD; for thy servant heareth. So Samuel went and lay down in his place.*

I trust we will be always be like Abraham who always heard the voice of God for himself. But, may God also give us the humble and sacrificial spirit of Eli who taught the next generation how to hear the voice of and call of God. Glory to the name of the one and only God, Jesus Christ who called us!