

Chosen
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We are beginning a new sermon series today called Chosen: Finding Your Identity in Christ.

Many people today are facing identity crisis. For instance, the Bible teaches that God created male and female. PERIOD. But there is a spirit of confusion about gender these days.

I recently read about a white male who believes he is a Filipino woman. OK. You can choose to think that's your identity all day long, but you will still be a white male all day long!

As believers – we need to overcome this confusion by being grounded in the truth of who Jesus Christ is and who we are in Him! We cannot let our culture or anything else draw us away from that truth.

Fortunately, God's word tells us a lot about our identity. The Apostle Peter wrote a letter for a group of Christians to read. And over and over again throughout the letter, the main thing that Peter does is remind them of their identity and who they are in Christ.

Here are the two specific verses that we're going to focus in on. 1 Peter 2:9–10 says:

You are a chosen people. You are royal priests, a holy nation, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for He called you out of the darkness into His wonderful light. Once you had no identity as a people; now you are God's people.

I love that – we once had no identity – but now we do!

I was really surprised in my study this week. The first part of this passage says *You are a chosen people*. I grew up reading King James – so I had memorized it as "a chosen generation." However, as I started reading word commentaries about this, I read Wuest's Word Studies says that "Generation" is from a Greek word meaning "a race with a common life and descent." It does not mean a group of individuals living within the span of a lifetime.

I was like, "What?" So, I looked it up in other Bible versions and most of them translate this verse You are a chosen race. The Amplified, New American Standard, Youngs Literal Translation, English Standard version and about 15 more translate this as chosen race.

I love Dan Boerger's translation: *God chose you to be a part of the new race of redeemed humanity.*

We're not talking about ethnicity here. As I studied some more I discovered that Peter was mainly addressing Jewish people who had become followers of Christ. Many thought they lost their identity as people of God. But Peter was showing that the titles formerly given to the whole Jewish nation, are here given to Christians in the same way.

The Israelites were a chosen or elected race, they had a royal priesthood, they were a holy nation and God's special people. But Peter wants us to know that in Christ we are a chosen race, we are a kingdom of priests, we are God's special people!

We are a chosen race. For Israel, this is a blood relationship. For the church, this is a relationship based on unity because of the blood of Christ! We have all been redeemed by the blood and saved by the blood of Christ! Ephesians 2:11-18 says:

Don't forget that you Gentiles used to be outsiders... In those days you were living apart from Christ. You were excluded from citizenship among the people of Israel, and you did not know the covenant promises God had made to them.

You lived in this world without God and without hope. But now you have been united with Christ Jesus. Once you were far away from God, but now you have been brought near to Him through the blood of Christ.

For Christ Himself has brought peace to us. He united Jews and Gentiles into one people when, in His own body on the cross, He broke down the wall of hostility that separated us... He made peace between Jews and Gentiles by creating in Himself one new people from the two groups. Together as one body, Christ reconciled both groups to God by means of His death on the cross, and our hostility toward each other was put to death.

He brought this Good News of peace to you Gentiles who were far away from Him, and peace to the Jews who were near. Now all of us can come to the Father through the same Holy Spirit because of what Christ has done for us.

In these days where there is so much racial animosity and division, we must stay united because we are a new race of people united in Christ. Yes, we are black and white and Latino and Asian. We should be proud of our ethnicity and we should fight for racial justice and equality. But we must always remember that we are chosen by God to be a new race of people who live holy, live in unity and live to glorify God!! That is our primary identity!

Since, we are talking about being chosen by God, I feel led to address the doctrine of election today. There are many beliefs concerning this. Two opposite extremes are the belief that God chooses who gets saved and the belief that man chooses if he gets saved or not. In theology – that is called Calvinism vs. Arminianism. There is a modern-day resurgence of the reformed beliefs of John Calvin, who was a

pastor in Geneva, Switzerland in the 1500's. Calvin's teachings have been synthesized down to 5 major tenants. You can remember them by the acrostic TULIP.

- T - Total depravity of man
- U - Unconditional Election
- L - Limited Atonement
- I - Irresistible Grace
- P - Perseverance of the Saints

The Reformed view of election is that from all eternity – without any prior view of human behavior – God has chosen to save some people and has chosen not to save other people. Those with an extreme form of Calvinism believe that everything that happens is predetermined by God. Everything.

The Fall of Man was predetermined by God.

All sin is predetermined by God.

War and murder are predetermined by God.

Hitler killing Jews was predetermined by God.

Slavery and racism were predetermined by God.

Terrorists flying planes into the World Trade Center was caused by God.

School shootings, church shootings and Botham Jean getting shot in his own home were predetermined by God.

Rape and sexual abuse of children was predetermined by God.

They actually believe God causes all those evils to happen.

But the Bible clearly teaches in 1 Cor 14:33 that: *God is not the author of confusion.*

James 1:13-14 says:

God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed.

Some people will ask, but what about Isaiah 45:7, where God says:

I form the light, and create darkness: I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things.

They say, "See there, God creates evil." But there are two Hebrew words for evil in the Old Testament. One means moral evil, wickedness, sin. The other means calamity, disaster or punishment for wickedness. That is the word used in Isaiah. That's why many translations like the New King James say:

I make peace and create calamity.

I just want you to understand that God is not the cause of sin or evil. There is an enemy who comes to steal, kill and destroy, but Jesus came to give abundant life! Never confuse those two things!

So – back to being chosen by God. Is this something God does without any knowledge of what people will do? No way. That would be impossible. God is eternal. Isaiah 46:10 says:

Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done.

God is omniscient, which means He knows everything that has happened, that is happening or will ever happen. He can't disregard what He knows when it comes to choosing people.

Knowing what will happen before it happens is called foreknowledge. And the Bible plainly teaches that God chooses us based on His foreknowledge.

1 Peter 1:2 says we are:

Chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father...

Romans 11:2 says:

God did not reject His people, whom He foreknew.

Romans 8:29 says:

For those God foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers.

Which came first: election or foreknowledge. Foreknowledge! God loved the whole world and whoever believes in Jesus will be saved. 2 Peter 3:9 says:

God is not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

1 Timothy 2:4 says:

God wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Those verses show that God is not choosing some for heaven and some for hell. Jesus died for all – there is no limited atonement – but only those who choose to believe in Him will be saved. God knows in advance who that will be. And those people are the chosen people, the elect.

So, whenever you read something in the Bible about God choosing one and not another – remember it's all based on foreknowledge.

It's not arbitrary or unfair or unjust. Now – with all that deep and theological background – what does this mean for you? It means that when you repent of your sin and believe in Jesus – you are part of the elect – the chosen people of God. You are chosen by God. No longer rejected, but you're accepted by God.

I like the Message version of 1 Peter 2:9-10

But you are the ones chosen by God, chosen for the high calling of priestly work, chosen to be a holy people, God's instruments to do His work and speak out for Him, to tell others of the night-and-day difference He made for you — from nothing to something, from rejected to accepted.

I love that! We have gone from nothing to something - from rejected to accepted! Everyone experiences rejection at some point in their life.
 It's the kid who gets picked last because no one wants them on their team.
 It's the spouse who left you for someone else.
 It's the business proposal that gets turned down.
 It's the teen who never goes on a date because no one wants to go out with them.
 None of us wants to experience rejection.

I remember the first time I asked Deb out on a date. I first sent another member of our youth group to test the waters for me. I didn't want to experience the personal rejection. Fortunately, she said yes!

It is impossible to escape rejection in life. The word rejection literally means “to throw back.” It means “to discard as worthless, useless or substandard.” That’s how rejected people feel – They feel worthless, use-less, less than or not good enough.

But I want you to understand today that no matter how rejected you feel, no matter who else has rejected you – God has chosen you!

By the way, if you struggle with rejection, chances are the seeds of rejection were planted in childhood. Children are impressionable. They are looking to their major caregivers for value and worth. If they don’t get it a seed of rejection is planted in them.

What are some of the ways children experience rejection?

- Physical, emotional, verbal or sexual abuse.
- Divorce – many children think it’s their fault.
- Unwanted conception – Child grows up hearing they were an accident.
- Abandonment – When a parent leaves the child may feel unwanted.

Some of us have experienced these types of rejections as children. Others have felt rejection from friends at school. Some of us had great childhoods yet we experienced rejection as adults.

Paul talks about this rejection in 2 Cor. 12:15.

I am glad to give you myself and all I have for your spiritual good, even though it seems that the more I love you, the less you love me.

All of us have felt this way... We express this feeling with statements like:

- “Why am I always the one doing all the giving.”
- “I’m always the one that has to initiate.”
- “I’m always the one that admits when I’m wrong.”

Without exception everyone has felt the pain of rejection. Many great men and women in the Bible also experienced rejection.

- Noah experienced rejection while building the Ark.
- Joseph’s brothers sold him into slavery.
- Naomi wanted to go with Ruth, but she told her no.
- David’s father overlooked him when Samuel came to choose a King.
- Paul rejected John Mark for a mission’s trip.
- Even Jesus the son of God was rejected.

Isaiah 53:3 says:

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.

The fact that Jesus was rejected illustrates a basic truth – even if you’re perfect people will still reject you.

And there are consequences of rejection. A person with a root of rejection believes they are worthless. They feel deficient and unacceptable. There are plagued with feelings of insecurity. They are over sensitive. They take everything personal and get their feelings hurt all the time.

So how do we overcome this rejection? By realizing we are chosen by God.

Ephesians 1:6 says *God made us accepted in the Beloved*. In Christ.

To overcome rejection, you must accept that you are accepted by God! God will never reject you. In John 6:37, Jesus said:

Those the Father has given Me will come to Me, and I will never reject them.

God accepts us unconditionally even when others don’t. It is true that we all need love and acceptance from others, however, until we receive God’s acceptance no amount of acceptance from others will ever be enough. God loves you and chooses you:

He loves us despite our immaturity

He loves us despite our imperfections
 He loves us despite of our failures
 Even with all our faults, we are permanently and irrevocably loved by God.

God said in Jeremiah 31:3:

I love you people with a love that will last forever.

We are accepted because God said we are accepted. Acceptance isn't based on who you are, it's based on whose you are. You are a child of the most High God. You are God's chosen people.

I want you to realize that God is not stuck with us like we were the last person to be chosen on a team.

We think things like:

I'm not good enough – as if God chooses us because we're good.
 I'm made too many mistakes – as if God chooses perfect people.
 God chooses us because He loves us.
 It's not because we are so great – it's His love that is so great!
 It's not because we are so good – it is God that's good!
 It's not because we are so acceptable – we are accepted in Christ!

Jesus said in John 15:16 *You did not choose Me, but I chose you.*

1 John 4:19 says: *We love Him because He first loved us.*

God is the initiator! It is His prevenient grace that drew us to Him, opened our eyes to the truth, granted us repentance and salvation and eternal life!

Everything we *have* and everything we *are* comes from Him.
 Everything . . . including our identity, our worth, and our purpose here on this earth. It all comes from Him.

And so often, this is where we get it all wrong. We often believe the lie that our identity comes from our job or what we do or who we know or how much we make or how we look. But the truth is, our identity comes only from Him.

The world—and everything around us—is trying to tell us to find our identity and our purpose everywhere *except* from God.

Everything around us is trying to convince us that our identity and who we are comes from “enough” . . . being good enough, pretty enough, smart enough, successful enough, rich enough, whatever enough.

But, instead of trying to be good enough . . . and smart enough . . . and successful enough . . . and have enough money . . . and enough clothes . . . and enough nice things . . . and enough Twitter followers . . .

Instead of constantly striving to find our worth and our identity, what would change if we truly knew that we were chosen by God?

Even when it comes to God, instead of striving to be good enough for Him, what would change if we knew *who* we are . . . and even more specifically . . . if we knew *Whose* we are?

What would change if we realized that only Jesus is enough!
Only Jesus is righteous enough!
Only Jesus is good enough!
Only Jesus is holy enough!
Only Jesus is acceptable enough!

And God is saying today, “Because of Jesus, I choose you!”
I choose you even though you’re not good enough to save yourself.
I choose you – so accept your acceptance!