

WHOM DOES GOD CHOOSE?

Jon Macon

In Acts chapter 7, Stephen preached a sermon to the leaders of the Jews that led to his immediate stoning, but in that sermon we find some key reminders about how God works. For example, God chose Joseph, the eleventh out of Jacob's twelve sons, to become the leader of them all, and governor of Egypt. He also chose Moses to be His spokesman to Pharaoh and to all Israel, a man who described himself as not being eloquent, but "slow of speech, and of a slow tongue" (Exod 4:10). God chose him not for his speaking abilities, but for his meek and humble heart (Num 12:3). Similarly, God used Paul, another man who was "rude in speech" (2 Cor 11:6), to write more books of the New Testament and to preach the gospel of Christ to more nations than any other person by far. The scriptures give us many such examples of God choosing to do great things people that men would never even consider.

Gideon, the least of a poor family

In Judges 6:14, after God's angel told Gideon that He was sending Gideon to save Israel from the hand of the Midianites (Judg 6:14), Gideon replied, "*Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house*" (Judg 6:15). By his own admission, Gideon had a very lowly earthly standing. He was least in the house of a poor family. Man would never choose such a person to lead a nation out of such distress as Israel was in at the time. Yet Gideon was precisely the right person to do that work according to what God saw. God saw Gideon's heart and through His angel told this lowly man, "The Lord is with thee, thou mighty man of valor" (Judg 6:12). Gideon had a great faith in God and the courage to faithfully serve Him, and God used him to deliver Israel from the Midianites (Judg 7-8).

David, the eighth son

In a similar situation, David, the young shepherd who was the last of eight sons of Jesse, was chosen by God to be the next king of Israel (1 Sam 16:1,11-13). When Jesse and his sons were called before Samuel, David was left behind while all the others appeared before Samuel (1 Sam 16:1-11). They didn't even bother to bring him! But God rejected tall, handsome Eliab (1 Sam 16:6-7), and all the other sons of Jesse (1 Sam 16:8-10). Why? "*The Lord said unto Samuel,*

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(continued)

Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the Lord sees not as man sees; for man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart” (1 Sam 16:7). By man’s judgment, David would never have been chosen to be anyone’s king, but God saw David’s heart and the fact that David was a man after His own heart (1 Sam 13:14; Acts 13:22). God used David to become the mightiest king Israel ever had, and it is upon his throne that Jesus Christ now sits, reigning over his spiritual kingdom, the church of Christ (2 Sam 7:16; Psa 89:3-4,29,36; Isa 9:6-7; 16:5; Jer 33:17-21; Zech 6:12-13; Luke 1:31-33; Matt 16:18-19; Acts 2:29-36).

Preparing ourselves to be vessels unto honor

By man’s judgment, a bunch of Galilean fisherman should never have been chosen to be the Lord’s apostles. But God saw their righteous hearts, and used them to turn the world upside down (Acts 5:28; 17:6). The lesson from Gideon, David, the apostles, and others like them is that God looks on the heart and He chooses the lowly to do mighty things. *“For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, has God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence”* (1 Cor 1:26-29). James 2:5 similarly says, *“Hearken, my beloved brethren, Has not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he has promised to them that love him?”* No matter how poor and lowly our background, we need to prepare our hearts to believe in the Lord and love and serve Him with all of our heart and He can use us mightily in His work. *“But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honor, and some to dishonor. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honor, sanctified, and meet for the master’s use, and prepared unto every good work”* (2 Tim 2:20-21). Let us do our part, and trust the Lord to do His!