

You Have Not Chosen Me But I Have Chosen You

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 27 August 2010

Preacher: Rev Iain Thomson

[0 : 00] Let us turn back again to John chapter 15. John chapter 15 and we can read the words that we have in verse 16.

You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you. Now at the beginning of this chapter we have the metaphor of the vine. Jesus explains what it means for the branch to remain in the vine and he uses that to illustrate what it means for a disciple to remain in Jesus.

Now there were many disciples in first century Palestine. A disciple was a follower of any recognized leader.

Now that applied to a leader of philosophy, a leader of religion, a leader of politics and so forth.

[1 : 24] And when a scholar began to gain for himself a reputation, he would attract people who wanted to learn from him.

And men who wanted to learn from him would go and ask the person if they could become their disciple.

Now that process was usually initiated by the student. He would select the teacher.

And obviously he selected a teacher who appealed to him. Somebody from whom he expected to learn a great deal.

And if it was okay for the leader or the teacher, then that person would be accepted as a follower of that whatever it was that they were teaching.

[2 : 31] So the disciple chose his rabbi. But the relationship between the Lord Jesus Christ and his disciples was different.

He chose them. You did not choose me, but I chose you. And appointed you that you should go and bear fruit.

And so on. Now Christ is here making it very clear to his disciples that it's him that is in charge. He takes the first step. He's the one who does the choosing. He's not waiting for disciples to come to him because he knows that if he's going to wait for disciples to come to him that he will never have any disciples.

Because no natural man would choose Jesus. No natural man sees any beauty in Jesus that he would desire him.

[3 : 45] The natural heart is at enmity to the teaching that Jesus gives. And if Jesus was to wait for disciples to come to him and ask that they might become his disciples, then there would never have been any disciples.

And that's the first thing that we want to consider this evening. That discipleship begins with God and not with men. To every believer, Jesus says, You did not choose me, but I chose you.

We did not initiate the relationship. It is Christ who initiates this relationship. And the Lord's purposes for us is the foundation on which our Christian discipleship rests.

That's the solid rock on which to build a response of faith and obedience. And in doing so, we must remember that we would never have faith or obedience if it wasn't that Jesus had first chosen us and given us the ability and the desire to become his disciples.

Now that must, at times, seem discouraging for those who are beginning in their Christian lives.

[5 : 44] But the more we ponder this doctrine, the more comfort and the more assurance that we're going to have concerning our salvation.

to start considering what Jesus is teaching in this verse and in other verses that we have in the Bible, that God has chosen us before the universe was brought into being. that God set his love upon us long before anything was ever created.

It's unfathomable grace to begin contemplating that the triune God had this plan for the redemption of mankind long before mankind was ever brought into being.

and an insight that we have in Proverbs in chapter 8 where we see wisdom personified and we believe the Lord Jesus Christ speaking because he is the wisdom of God and he's been made the wisdom of God for his people.

[7 : 13] where he speaks there that his delight was always with the sons of men before the world was. The Father gave us to the Son and he has enlisted us in the Son's service for ends and reasons of his own and we're only very dimly aware and partially aware of what these reasons are.

But as we are brought into this relationship with God through his Son Jesus Christ he begins to reveal to us that he has a purpose for our lives that the course of our lives has been planned in advance and everything that we do and experience is part of this vast cloth that God is weaving. We begin to realize that we're caught up in something far bigger than we can understand or ever imagine. God has purpose that we're going to be like his own beloved son.

That's the hope that the disciple of Jesus can entertain. And even the apostle John said concerning that we don't know yet what we're going to be.

But we know this that when he shall appear we're going to be like him. He knows the end but he doesn't know how he's going to do it.

[9 : 17] But he believes that he's able to do it. He believes that because he has become a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ and he knows that he would never have been a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ unless God himself had drawn him.

All that the Father has given to me shall come unto me. All, no one that God has purposed to save will be lost.

All that the Father has given to the Son before the foundations of the world will come to the Son. And whosoever comes to him, he will in no way cast out.

And if we've come to the Lord Jesus Christ, if we're drawn to the Lord Jesus Christ, if we're desiring to exercise faith and obedience in the Lord Jesus Christ, that's the evidence that we have been elected before the foundations of the world.

And this is the great comfort that those who are the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ can have. That it was Christ who chose them.

[10 : 42] That this was not something that arose from the imagination of their own hearts. That this is the work of God that has been evidenced in their lives.

That it's the power of God that has made us willing to come to the Lord Jesus Christ. Because the natural man doesn't have that desire.

The natural desire is I will not have that man to rule over me. The natural desire is I will do as I please and there's nobody that's going to tell me otherwise.

But the person in whom God is working desires the Lord Jesus Christ because he's been chosen. And he's been chosen from before the foundations of the world. Now that thought should master us and grip us. And we can say that if God is for us then who can be against us?

[11 : 59] Since God has decreed glory for his disciples there is absolutely nothing that's going to stand in its way. What shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus?

And Paul gives a great list of the things that could separate us from other things. But none of these things will ever be able to separate us from God.

No man is able to plug us out of his arms. Yes we are weak in ourselves strong powers are arrayed against us.

We may be feeling dispirited and downcast at times but that doesn't really matter. What matters is that Christ has taken every one of his people to his own heart and that he's written mine upon them. You did not choose me. I have chosen you. The doctrine of election can sometimes be presented in a very cold and in a very abstract way.

[13 : 28] But once we grapple with the doctrine of election there is no doctrine in scripture that gives greater comfort and peace and assurance when we begin to understand that this is God's work and not ours.

As we think of discipleship it fills us with a sense of peace peace but it reminds us that this was not our idea this was God's idea this is God's plan and if this is part of God's plan if this is what God has decreed then it's up to God to carry that work on and we have that promise that where he has begun the good work that he will bring it on and that he will complete it in the day of Jesus Christ.

We are his workmanship. We are created in Christ Jesus to do good works but first and foremost we are his workmanship.

you did not choose me I have chosen you which brings us to the second point that we want to consider the purpose that Christ has for us is that we might bear fruit you did not choose me but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide now just as the vine supports and nourishes the branches and enables them to bear fruit that's what Jesus does for his disciples you did not choose me I emphatic I I chose you there is a strong emphasis on the divine election that it's initiated by him and although

God is absolutely sovereign the scriptures make it very clear to us that God is a sovereign God that he's the one who is holy the scriptures make it absolutely clear to us also that under the role of the sovereign God that our status is not as a robot or as a puppet man's choices are significant man and particularly man who has been called to become his disciples are responsible before God for all the choices that they make and they have to examine all of these choices to see whether it's within the will of

[17 : 12] God that they might abide in Christ and give obedience to Christ so that they might bear fruit the followers of Jesus are introduced to spiritual fruitfulness and they're told that they are the objects of Jesus' special love I chose you and the reason that I've chosen you is that you might bear fruit and that your fruit will remain now every one of us has choices every one of us is bringing on their own works but not all of these works are going to abide it is only what we do by faith that's the abiding in

Christ the work that we do by faith through him that's the only work that's going to abide every work that we produce of our own hands are fuel for the fire it's going to be burnt up Jesus doesn't want that his disciples will have a worthless life at the end of it for all that they've done from the time that they have come to be his disciples to be burnt up he wants that his disciples will have a profitable life and that the vast majority of all that they've done since they've come to know him will abide and that it will give glory to God he knows that if we don't abide in him that we can do absolutely nothing that's going to glorify

God without faith it is absolutely impossible to glorify God Jesus is not blessed as a result of us choosing him we did not choose him he chose us and he didn't choose us because we were better than anybody else we weren't not one of us will ever be able to make that claim it's not because we were religious or pious and diligent in our devotions that we were chosen we were chosen long before we ever actually sinned or were even born into this world that's a humbling thought and that's exactly how it should affect us it ought to make us realize that we're not

God's people as a result of being better than anybody else we are God's people as a result of God choosing us to be his people and that should bring us to the place where it's possible for God to bless us when we realize that we couldn't before our salvation do anything to earn our salvation and from the point of coming into our relationship with God that we can't do anything that's going to earn God's blessing outside of putting our trust in Christ outside of abiding in him so that we might bear fruit how are we going to bear fruit well the text makes it clear that the fruit that we're going to bear is as a result of prayer and that it's a result of prayer under

Christ's lordship whatever you ask the father in my name that he may give it to you now he gives this promise in chapter 14 at verse 13 whatever you ask in my name this will I do that the father may be glorified in the son if you ask me for anything in my name I will do it again at the end of the vine imagery here in chapter 15 at verse 7 if you abide in me and my words abide in you ask whatever you wish and it will be done for you by this my father is glorified that you bear much fruit and so prove to be my disciples this is the evidence that we are his disciples that we bear fruit the evidence is not to say that we believe the evidence is not to come to the

[22 : 57] Lord's table the evidence is that we actually become followers of the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ and that we want to be followers of the teaching of the Lord Jesus Christ that we are endeavouring to do whatever we do in dependence upon him what does it mean to ask in his name well we know what it doesn't know we know that it's not some kind of magical solution to add to our prayers whatever we desire to pray for and add at the end of it I'm asking this in Christ's name as some kind of abracadabra or

Aladdin's lamp that's not what coming in the name of Christ means what does it mean well we know that it means offering up a prayer that is in accord with everything that the name of Jesus stands for well the first thought that comes to mind for what the name of Jesus stands for is what was said

concerning his name when he was given that name he shall save his people from their sins and if you've got that desire within your heart that you will crucify the sinful desires of your heart and that you will be led by the spirit then you're coming in Jesus name because that's why he came that's what he wants to teach you as his disciple as his follower that he's come to help you to crucify sin in your life and if you've got that desire to be holy if you've got the desire to examine the decisions that you make to ask is this really for

God's glory or is this just to satisfy the lusts of my own heart and if we're deciding to crucify the desires of our own heart so that we might do his will rather than our own will then we're coming in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ because that's what his name stands for that's in accordance with his name it's a desire also to come seeking to glorify the father because that was what Jesus' desire was and that's what God's purpose that's his ultimate purpose for his people that's what the catechism teaches us man's chief end is to glorify God that was why we were created and sin or thought would appear for a time to have thwarted

God's purposes has not because God is going to fulfill his purposes for his own people and the time is coming it has already come when we've begun to glorify God but it's going to come in completeness when Christ comes again and everything that we will do throughout eternity will be to the glory of God and what follows that is that we will enjoy him forever while we don't have to wait for eternity to experience that we experience the first fruits of that blessing here and now in this world as the disciples the followers of the Lord Jesus Christ in John's first letter in chapter 5 he says this is the assurance that we have in approaching

God that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us now according to his will as much the same as asking in Jesus name because Jesus is the revelation of God's will Jesus came to reveal God to us and being in the will of God is abiding in Christ so how are we to pray in a way that we can have confidence that God will hear and answer our prayers while we can only pray confidently if we are under the Lordship of Christ how can we know that we are under the

[28 : 32] Lordship of Christ we know that we are under the Lordship of Christ when we begin to plead for the things that he has taught us when we begin to understand the promises that he has given to us we can come with confidence knowing that that is in accordance with God's will and when we are praying for other people when we are praying for fellow believers we can be confident that God will hear us if we have laid hold of the promises that belong to God's people whatever situation they might be in we can plead that he would draw near to them and make himself known to them because he has promised to do that for his people that he will never leave them nor forsake them we can go through these promises when we are praying for our fellow believers with confidence that we are praying in

Christ's name and when we are praying in his name in accordance with his will because they are one and the same the father is pleased to hear that prayer and these prayers will be answered these prayers will bear fruit now we cannot have the same confidence when we are praying for unbelievers but we can lay hold of promises that God has revealed concerning his own character and we can plead that he has shown himself as a God who is willing that none would perish but that all might come to repentance we can plead his own character because he's revealed his character to us in Jesus as one who loves us as one who is merciful towards sinners and we can ask him to be merciful to the sinners that we're praying for of course we must do so realizing that it's God's prerogative to save whom he will some people think that if they start to pray about whatever they think of whatever comes into their minds and the longer that they can prolong in prayer just bringing whatever comes to mind before God that this is what's going to make them successful for that this is what's going to bear fruit in the presence of God well that's not the case a prayer that might only have a few words that we know and are confident are in accordance with God's will will have success over against a prayer that might have been prolonged for hours but doesn't contain anything that's in accordance with

God's will it will not bear fruit God wants us to come enlightened that's why he has asked us to become his disciples he's our teacher we're the pupils that's what discipleship is we cannot come with an enlightened mind unless we know what God has taught concerning himself and concerning his way of salvation and when we come praying enlightened by what the word of God has taught us through the Holy Spirit then God is glorified and when God is glorified then it will be a thing what's necessary for us is an increased knowledge of scripture so that we might learn how to pray with confidence in

Jesus name we must abide in him we must learn of him we must be diligent in our studies as we would be in any other study we must be diligent in the word of God pleading the promise that he would teach us because he has promised to teach all of his children pleading the promise that he would send the Holy Spirit who will lead us into all truths that's the comfort that he gives to his disciples in this discourse before he was crucified that he was going to send the comforter and that the comforter would come and that he would continue to teach them that he would lead them into all truths that he would take of the things of Christ and reveal them unto us we must become diligent students in the world of

[34 : 20] God so that we might come with enlightened minds to the throne of grace so that we might bear fruit in our lives now we ought to pray about everything in our lives and the more we are brought into the will of God and the more we walk in obedience to Christ the moral lines will begin to show that fruit many people have made the mistake of thinking that spiritual fruit is the amount of people that we are able to bring to Christ well as I said at the outset we cannot bring anybody to Christ it is God the father that brings them to Christ all that the father has given to me will come to me not one of them will be able to refuse they will come to him and those who come to him he will in no way cast him so spiritual fruit is not how many people were to bring to

Christ yes we're to encourage people to come to Christ yes we're to pray for those that we speak to about Christ but it's only under the power of the Holy Spirit that they will actually come now some might think that they made that decision themselves and that's possibly what you fully believed when you came to Christ that it was as a result of you making a decision yes but the more you understand scripture the more you will become aware that you would never have made that decision if it wasn't that God had made it possible for you to do so and yes you did make the decision but only because God had made the decision for you before he had chosen there other thing people think that the fruit that is here spoken of is the fruit that we have a list of in Galatians chapter 5 that there's more to it than that the fruit that is here spoken of is everything that is done in conformity to the will of Jesus not least loving and praying that we might abide in his love How do we abide in his love?

That we keep his commandments. That we give obedience to his instruction. That we follow him in the way that he has shown us that we are to live our lives.

Now if we're going to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, it means that there's going to be a cross. And without the cross there's going to be no crown. We must crucify the flesh.

[37 : 41] We must have that desire to put to death our own way. And good as our own way might appear and might even be convinced that if we get our own way that it will be to God's glory.

But if it's contrary to what God has revealed to us in his own word, it won't be to his glory. And it won't be to our prophet.

It might appear to be very fruitful, but it's just merely fuel for the fire. It's dead works. Because it wasn't done by faith.

What's done by faith is what is done in accordance to his will. Abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ. Following him. Following his way. The way that he wants it done. Not the way that we want it done. Because he is the way.

[38 : 53] He is the truth. And he is the life. And if we're not living in dependence upon him. Then it is contrary to truth.

And there is no life. It is dead works. It has come forth from our own hearts. The very thing that we're supposed to crucify.

But if we look to him. And if we grow in our understanding. Of what God requires of us.

And if we come pleading. That he would help us to do it his own way. Jesus' way. Then there will be truth.

If we abide in him. It will be to God's glory. And not only will it be to God's glory. But it will be to our own everlasting prophet.

[40 : 01] It will bring us peace. It will bring us joy. And these are the very things that Jesus is speaking of here. In this chapter. That's why he wants us to abide in him.

That's why he wants us to be obedient. To his commandments. So that we might have joy. And have it in abundance. And that we might have confidence.

At the throne of grace. That God is actually hearing. And will answer. These prayers. Because everything.

In our lives. That brings glory to God. Whether it is praying. Or whether it's just merely living our lives.

The way God wants us to live. It is fruit. That is to God's glory. And fruit that shall abide. That's what Jesus wants for us.

[41 : 07] And if you're here tonight. And if you haven't yet. Committed yourself. To the fellowship of God's people.

By openly professing. That you put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. Christ. Then I would encourage you to do so.

Right now. Because that's the beginning. Of tying yourself to him. And acknowledging. That you've come to the point. That you realize.

That without him. You can do nothing. That's you acknowledging. That this desire. Is a desire. That has grown in you. And if that desire.

Has grown in you. It's because he has chosen you. And if he has chosen you. He wants you to bear fruit. And you will only bear fruit. If you give obedience.

[42 : 04] To his commandments. Regardless of how big. Or how small. These commandments. Might appear to us to be. He's not just asking us.

To keep us. The greatest of commandments. He's asking us. To keep all commandments. Though of ourselves. We cannot. But by him helping us.

And his promise to help us. We can. We can do all things. Through Jesus Christ. Who strengthens us.

And when we do it. In his name. Then there will be fruit. And it will be fruit. That will give glory to God. And will bring joy.

And peace. Into our whole souls. May God grant. That he will bless to us. These thoughts. Let us pray. Thank you.