

Robert Murray M'Cheyne:

**THIS IS A VERY HUMBLING**, and at the same time, a very blessed word to the true disciple. It was very humbling to the disciples to be told that they had not chosen Christ. Your wants were so many, your hearts were so hard, that ye have not chosen me. And yet it was exceedingly comforting to the disciples to be told that he had chosen them: 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you'. This showed them that his love was first with them — that he had a love for them when they were dead. And then he showed them that it was love that would make them holy: '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.'

Let us take up the truths in this verse as they occur.

Men naturally do not choose Christ, "Ye have not chosen me." This was true of the apostles; this is true of all that will ever believe to the end of the world. 'Ye have not chosen me.' The natural ear is so deaf that it cannot hear; the natural eye is so blind that it cannot see Christ. It is true in one sense that every disciple chooses Christ; but it is when God opens the eye to see him — it is when God gives strength to the withered arm to embrace him. But Christ's meaning is, You would never have chosen me, if I had not chosen you. It is quite true that when God opens a sinner's heart, he chooses Christ and none but Christ. It is quite true that a heart that is quickened by the Spirit, ever chooses Christ and none but Christ, and will forego all the world for Christ. But, brethren, the truth here taught us is this that every awakened sinner is willing to embrace Christ, but not till made willing. Those of you who have been awakened, you did not choose Christ. If a physician were to come into your house, and say he had come to cure you of your disease, if you felt that you were not diseased, you would say, I have no need of you, go to my neighbour. This is the way you do with Christ; he offers to cure you, but you say you are not diseased; he offers to cover your naked soul with his obedience, you say I have no need of that covering.

Another reason why you do not choose Christ is, you see no beauty in him. He is a root out of a dry ground, in which there is no beauty nor comeliness. You see no beauty in his person, no beauty in his obedience, no glory in his cross. You see him not, and, therefore, you do not choose him.

Another reason why you do not choose Christ is, you do not want to be made holy by him: He shall be called Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins (Matthew 1: 21). But you love your sin, you love your pleasure, therefore when the Son of God comes and says, he will save you from your sin, you say, I love my sin, I love my pleasure. So you can never come to terms with Christ: 'ye have not chosen me'; although I died, yet you have not chosen me. I have spoken to you many years, and yet you have not chosen me. I have sent you my Bible to instruct you, and yet you have not chosen me. Brethren, this accusation will meet you in the judgment — I would have covered you with my obedience, but ye would not have me.

Christ chooses his own disciples: 'I have chosen you'. Christ looked upon them with a look of divine benignity, and said, 'I have chosen you.' Every one whom he brings to glory, he chooses.

The time when he chooses them. I observe that it was before they believed — 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you', as much as to say, I began with you, you did not begin with me. You will notice this in Acts 18:9, 10, 'Then spake the Lord to Paul in the night by a vision, Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: for I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee; for I have much people in this city.' Paul was at this time in Corinth, the most lascivious and wicked city in the ancient world; they were given over to banqueting and grievous idolatry, and yet Christ said to Paul, 'I have much people in this city'. They had not chosen Christ, but he had chosen them; they had not repented, yet Christ fixed his eye on them. This plainly shows you that Christ chooses his own before they seek him.

But further, Christ chooses his own from the beginning: 'But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren, beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit, and belief of the truth' (2 Thessalonians 2:13); 'According as he had chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love' (Ephesians 1:4). So, brethren, it was before the foundation of the world that Christ chose his own; when there was neither sun nor moon, when there was neither sea nor land — it was from the beginning. Ah, he might well say, you have not chosen me. It was before man loved man, or angel loved angel, that Christ chose his own. Now, I know the meaning of Paul when he says, That you may be able to know the length and the breadth, the height and the depth of the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge (Ephesians 3:18-19). Now, I am not surprised at the death of Christ! It was a love so great that it broke over the banks that held it in; a love that

broke over a Calvary and a Gethsemane. O brethren! do you know this love?

But I come now to the reason of his love: 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you.' Now, it is a very natural question, Why did he choose me? I answer, that the reason why he chose you was the good pleasure of his will. You will see this illustrated in Mark 3:13: 'And he goeth up into a mountain, and calleth unto him whom he would: and they came unto him.' There was a great crowd round about him; he called some, he did not call all. The reason here given why he did it is, 'He called whom he would.' There is no reason in the creature; the reason is in him who chooses. You will see this in Malachi 1:2, 3: 'I have loved you, saith the LORD; yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau'. Were they not of the same mother? Yet I loved Jacob and I hated Esau. The only reason given, you see, is, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy'. You will see this also in Romans 9:15, 16.

The only reason given in the Bible why Christ loved us — and if you study till you die you will not find another — is, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.' This is evident from all those that Christ chooses. We read of two great apostasies: one on earth, the other in heaven. First of all, one in heaven: Lucifer, the son of the morning, through pride, sinned, and God cast him, and those that sinned with him, into hell. The second was on earth: Adam sinned, and was driven out of paradise. They were both deserving of punishment. God had a purpose of love; which is it for? Perhaps angels pleaded for their fellow-angels; yet Christ passed them by, and died for man. Why did he die for man? The answer is, 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.'

The same thing is evident in the individuals Christ chooses. You would think Christ would choose the rich, and yet what says James? 'Hath not God chosen the poor of this world, rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom, which he hath promised to them that love him?' (James 2:5).

Again, you would think Christ would choose the noble; they have not the prejudices that the poor have; but what says the Scripture, 'Not many mighty, not many noble are called' (I Corinthians 1:26).

Again, you would think he would choose those that are learned. The Bible is written in difficult language; its doctrines are hard to be understood; yet what says Christ? 'I thank thee, O Father, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes' (Matthew 11:25).

Again, you would think he would have chosen the virtuous. Though there are none righteous, yet there are some more virtuous than others; yet what says Christ? The publicans and harlots enter the kingdom of heaven while the Pharisee is shut out. 'O the depth both of the riches and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!' (Romans 11:33). Why did he take the most vile? Here is the only reason I have been able to find ever since I read my Bible - 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have compassion.'

Christ chooses some that seek him, and not others. There was a young ruler came to Christ, and said, 'Good Master, what good thing shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?' (Matthew 19:16). He was in earnest, yet something came in the way, and he went back. A woman that was a sinner came behind Christ weeping, she also was in earnest. Christ said regarding her, 'Her sins which are many are forgiven her' (Luke 7:47, 48). What made the difference? — 'I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy.' He called unto him whom he would.' O my brethren, be humbled under the sovereignty of God! If he will have compassion, then he will have compassion.

But I hasten to the third and last point: I have ordained you that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain. Christ not only chooses who are to be saved, but he chooses the way; and he not only chooses the beginning and the end, he chooses the middle also. 'God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth' (2 Thessalonians 2:13). 'According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love' (Ephesians 1:4). And in Romans 8:30 it is said, 'Whom he did predestinate, them he also called; and whom he called them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he glorified.' Salvation is like a golden chain let down from heaven to earth; two links are the hands of God — election and final salvation; but some of the links are on earth — conversion, adoption, etc. Brethren, Christ never chooses a man to believe, and then leap into glory. Ah, my brethren, how this takes away the feet from all objections raised against this holy doctrine of election. Some here perhaps say, If I am elected, I will be saved, live as I like. No; if you live an unholy life, you will not be saved. Some may say, If I am not elected, I will not be saved, do as I like. Whether you are elected or not, I know not, but this I know - if you believe on Christ you will be saved.

Let me ask you, have you believed on Christ? Let me ask you another question, do you bear his whole image? Then you are elected, and will be saved. But if there are any here who have not believed on Christ, and who do

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not live a holy life, then, whatever you think now, you will find it true that you were among those who were passed by.

Ah! my brethren, those who deny election, deny that God can have mercy. O it is a sweet truth that God can have mercy! There is nothing in the hardness of your hearts that will keep God from having mercy on you. Go away home with this truth, that God can have mercy. 'Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you ...'Amen.