

“Who Is Making the Choice?”—Acts 1:21-26

The text for this sermon, the theme of which is, “Who Is Making the Choice?”, is Acts 1:21-26 → *“So one of the men who have accompanied us during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when He was taken up from us—one of these men must become with us a witness to His resurrection.” And they put forward two, Joseph called Barsabbas, who was also called Justus, and Matthias. And they prayed and said, “You, Lord, Who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two You have chosen to take the place in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas turned aside to go to his own place.” And they cast lots for them, and the lot fell on Matthias, and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.* This is the text.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ Jesus:

We live in a country that prides itself in freedom of choice. Amidst the choices we make everyday many decisions are “second nature” in the sense that we don’t really have to think too hard about the decision as we go about our routine tasks and jobs. Other decisions will require much thought, consideration and even turmoil. No matter what the decision making process,

along with the freedom of choice comes responsibility and even faith.

How does your relationship with Jesus Christ come to bear on your decisions? How are decisions made as His body of believers in this church where He wants us to function and do ministry together under **His** Lordship? We look to His written Word for guidance. However, for decisions where God's written Word does not give specific direction we use a voting process. So . . . who is really making the choices as we function together as Christ's Church?

Our text talks about the disciples' concern for finding someone to serve as an apostle in Judas Iscariot's place. Judas had betrayed Jesus, led the soldiers to arrest Him and, in his remorse, refused to accept the forgiveness of Jesus, making the choice to kill himself. These 120 disciples gathered for prayer felt compelled by the Holy Spirit through God's written Word to fill the apostolic vacancy in order to complete their apostolic mission.

The "qualification" of this person for which they were looking was a man who *accompanied them during all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them, beginning from the baptism of John until the day when He was taken up from them in His ascension. He would become . . . a witness to Christ's resurrection.* (verses 21-22) Apparently more than just the twelve chosen apostles followed Jesus during His entire earthly ministry. However, this is it for "qualifications?"

These disciples were waiting in Jerusalem on the basis of Jesus' command to be *clothed with power from on high* (cf. Luke 24:48-49) by receiving *power when the Holy Spirit* would come upon them to be His *witnesses . . . to the end of the earth*. (cf. Acts 1:8) Could it be they believed keeping a "system" of twelve apostles based upon being personally taught by Jesus was essential to their ministry? It is possible that Jesus chose the Twelve apostles because the Gospel was supposed to come to the twelve tribes of Israel (i.e. the Jews) first and, through them, to the Gentiles. (cf. Matthew 10:5-6; 15:24; Romans 1:16) However, they were yet to be more "qualified" by the receiving the Holy Spirit!

According to verse 23 of our text *they put forward two* men with the qualification of being with Jesus: *Joseph called Barsabbas, . . . and Matthias*. As these believers choose another apostle notice Who actually made the choice. Even though their method of casting lots may seem unusual to us, God was the One doing the choosing. These believers simply **accepted by faith** the decision **that God made**. It is reflected in their prayer recorded in verses 24-25 of our text: *You, Lord, Who know the hearts of all, show which one of these two **You have chosen** to take the place in this ministry and apostleship*. God had already made the proper choice. They were simply seeking to know His choice by faith!

Notice their "method" of determining God's choice began first and foremost

with prayer! They prayed for God’s guidance and revelation in their “decision making process” and confessed His Lordship over their lives. How many times in the midst of our decision making processes do we intentionally stop and pray for God’s guidance, recognizing that He is Lord? God cares about every area of our lives and desires us to seek Him and His Will in all of it. The challenge with our “freedom of choice” mentality as people filled with the Holy Spirit is to recognize the lordship of Jesus in those choices. These believers were simply asking God to make the choice known to them so that they could do the ministry that God had entrusted to them—to be witnesses of Christ’s resurrection. Their prayer was basically, “Show us, Lord!”

God has also created and chosen us to be witnesses of Christ’s resurrection through our words and deeds. Through His written Word you have received the gift of the Holy Spirit Who gives you faith in the atoning work of Jesus for the forgiveness of your sins. Ephesians 1:4-5 says **God chose us in Jesus** *before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will.* Ephesians 2:10 goes on to say that *we are God’s workmanship . . .* (notice with Whom the “qualifications” rest—not with us but with God!) *We are God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that*

we should walk in them. Why do we walk in good works? To give witness to the Person & Work of the resurrected Jesus Christ!

Thus, looking at your “qualifications” for service to the Lord Jesus begins at the cross, are given in your baptism, are strengthened through the Word and the Lord’s Supper and find their fruition in the power of the Holy Spirit in your daily life lived under God’s grace in Jesus! Paul was an apostle who could put forth human “qualifications” to make any Christian feel inadequate as a servant of Jesus. Yet, he confessed in 1 Corinthians 15:9-10 → *I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle . . . But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.* When **Jesus choose** Paul into His service He didn’t ask him to present certificates proving that he had the “credentials” or “qualifications” for the task. *The grace of God* in Christ was sufficient! The Holy Spirit would do the work!

We notice the believers in our text tried to leave their “fleshly preferences” out of God’s revelation by casting lots. Many people may compare this process to gambling—leaving something to chance. By casting lots they were following an age-old practice used in the Old Testament Church. Throughout this process they recognized the Lordship of Jesus Who is ultimately in control

of all things as expressed in Proverbs 16:33 → *The lot is cast into the lap, but its every decision is from the LORD.* They trusted Him to work through the lot to reveal His choice in this decision making process.

Actually, it's not so much what method they used in their decision making process but rather **that those gathered trusted God's revealing in this manner, accepting it as God's will among themselves!** They could have drew straws, voted or a gamut of other methods. No matter what method is used to make a decision for which God's Word does not give specifics of His Will, we place it before the LORD in prayer and make the decision simply trusting it is God's will for us to move in that direction. While working together in that decision we submit to God's revealed Word from 1 Corinthians 1:10 → *I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment.* It's a matter of giving up our own control and striving to be faithful to Christ in the midst of implementing the decision.

So . . . who is really make the choice? Because God has made His choice of you by grace, forgiving your sins in Christ Jesus and giving you His Holy Spirit, you get to make sanctified choices in service for Christ. The Spirit brings us to prayer every day as His willing servants who ask Him to work through us to His glory! Our understanding of "freedom of choice" becomes

sanctified under God's grace in Christ and His Holy Spirit's power. Thus, as we walk by faith in Christ, He accomplishes His Will by His power as we desire for Him to be glorified! The choice **and** "qualifications" to serve are found **in the empowering of the Holy Spirit!** Amen.

*This salvation was declared at first by the Lord,
and it was attested to us by those who heard,
while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles
and by **gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to His will.***

(Hebrews 2:3-4)

God always gifts those whom He calls!