

## INTRODUCTION

Living in a contemporary society, we all like to make our own choices. I came to U.S. more than 20 years ago. I remember while I was still in the car leaving the airport the person who picked me up told me that there are several hundreds of cola products in U.S. It is because people like varieties. I was dumbfounded. I thought there are only 2 cola products – one with red packaging and the other with blue. Later I gradually realize that since U.S. is a huge market it would be impossible for a few brands to dominate the market. For those cost-conscious customers instead of buying name-brand products they can pay less and get the store-brands. Then there are stores like Aldi that sell products of good qualities at lower prices. It is all about choices. This is the world we are facing when it comes to evangelism. People like to compare different belief systems like buying things from stores. Christians can easily be viewed as narrow-minded when we say that Jesus is the only true God and apart from Him there is no salvation. With a consumer mentality, even when it comes to accepting Jesus Christ people may feel that it is their own choice to want Him. That brings us to the question of whether it is our choice or God's choice when it comes to salvation. Is it 100 % our decision to accept Christ or is it 100 % God's decision to save those people He pre-determined? That is the question we will wrestle with in our message today.

## EXPLANATION

### 1. 我们不要神 We Don't Choose God

Based on the Bible the answer to that question is very clear: we do not choose God. We lack the ability and desire to choose God. Paul points that truth out in [Romans 3:11-12](#) when he quotes from Psalm 14 that: **11** There is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. **12** All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one. We are on the plain because no one seeks after God. Many of us may be well-educated, have high IQ and are capable in our expertise but we are spiritually deficient. We would not choose God because we are spiritually dead before we know Christ. [Ephesians 2:1](#) reads: As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins. By our human nature we have no interest in spiritual matter. The Bible uses different descriptions to illustrate our spiritual condition.

#### A. 我们眼瞎 We are Blind

First of all, the Bible says that we are spiritually blind. In John chapter 9 Jesus healed a man who was born blind. The religious leaders later accused Jesus as a sinner because He violated the Law by performing a miracle on the Sabbath. The blind man testifies his understanding of Jesus in [verse 25](#) by saying: “Whether he is a sinner or not, I don't know. One thing I do know. I was blind but now I see!” Though he did not know the true identity of Jesus he could not deny the miraculous change on him. Jesus used this healing of physical blindness to point out the spiritual blindness of the religious leaders. Listen to the dialogue between Jesus and the Pharisees in [verses 39-41](#): **39** Jesus said, “For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see

and those who see will become blind.” **40** Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, “What? Are we blind too?” **41** Jesus said, “If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains. This blind man believed that Jesus was the Son of God. Not only was his physical blindness cured so was his spiritual blindness. As for the religious leaders, though they could see with their physical eyes their spiritual eye-sight was impaired. Before we know Christ we are also spiritually blind. Jesus came to recover our spiritual blindness and to lead us from darkness into light. He proclaims in **John 8:12** that ...“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.”

## B. 我们耳聋 We are Deaf

We do not choose God because we are spiritually blind. The Bible says that we are spiritually deaf too. In Isaiah **42:17-19** God convicts the leaders in Israel who led their people to follow the idols: **17** But those who trust in idols, who say to images, ‘You are our gods,’ will be turned back in utter shame. **18** “Hear, you deaf; look, you blind, and see! **19** Who is blind but my servant, and deaf like the messenger I send? Who is blind like the one in covenant with me, blind like the servant of the LORD? Several hundred years later Jesus quoted the words of Isaiah to condemn the people of his days because they too were spiritually deaf and failed to listen to His teaching. He says in **Matthew 13:14-15** that: **14** In them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah: ‘You will be ever hearing but never understanding; you will be ever seeing but never perceiving. **15** For this people’s heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.’ The people in Jesus’ time saw the miracles He performed and heard the preaching about the Kingdom of God. But they would not believe because their hearts were hardened, their ears were deaf and their eyes were blind. Brothers and sisters: that is the situation we face when we preach the gospel. People just would not listen but make up their mind to reject what they hear. If it is not because of God’s grace no one can be saved.

## C. 我们被骗 We are Fooled

We would not choose to believe in God on our own effort because we are spiritually blind and spiritually deaf. Thirdly, we would not believe because we are being fooled by the devil. He fools people into pursuing after idols. Paul says in **Romans 1:22-23** that **22** Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools **23** and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles. The smarter and more educated people attain the more sophisticated they become in the things they worship. Very often there may not be a deity to which people bow down. Those who study palm reading, believe in fortune-telling or feng shui can write book after book about how scientific their methodologies are. Those who practice meditation, yoga or qi gong may tell you that somehow it helps them stay focused at work, increases their energy or makes them feel good. Little do they know that Satan is manipulating these subtle practices to cause bondage on them. The more they pursue these practices the farther they would be away from God. The apostle John says in **1 John 2:15-16** that **15** Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. **16** For everything in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - comes not from the Father but from the world. The goal of Satan is

simply to lure people away from God. He fools people into believing that they can get smarter, healthier, make more money, more effective, etc. Therefore, they reason: “If I’m doing so well, why do I still need God?”

## 2. 神拣选我们 God Chooses Us

We are spiritually dead and would not choose God on our own. We can only be redeemed because God chooses to save us. **Ephesians 1:4-5** say it clearly that **4** For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love **5** he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will. It is God the Father who exercises His sovereignty to choose those He determines to save. Paul continues to say in **Ephesians 2:4-5** - **4** But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, **5** made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions - it is by grace you have been saved. When we are still spiritually dead and unresponsive to God, God revives us through Christ. Many Christians can testify that at certain point in their life they unexpectedly have an urge in their hearts to look for the real meaning of life. The trigger may be a major setback in life like failure to enter into a dream college, being dumped by a boyfriend or girlfriend, car accident, serious illness, death of a loved one, etc. Perhaps there may be no reason at all. When people invite them to the church they are willing to go. After these people accepted Christ and as they look back they would understand that it was God knocking on their hearts. When God revived their hearts they became receptive to the gospel.

### A. 基於神的恩典 Out of God’s Grace

Why does God choose to save us? It is completely out of His grace. In the Old Testament God chose Israel to be His people. He explains it through Moses in **Deuteronomy 7:7-8** that **7** The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. **8** But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. God’s election of Israel to be His people is a typology of His salvation grace through Jesus Christ in the New Testament. **Ephesians 1:7-8** say **7** In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace **8** that he lavished on us... I really like the use of “lavished” in verse 8. God’s grace is given to us in over-abundant measure. Our God is never stingy, but He pours out His grace on His children generously. It is like when you go to a buffet restaurant you can eat whatever you want in unlimited portions. But here is the wonderful part: while you may get bored and tired about eating in a buffet restaurant day after day, God’s grace is new every morning. Salvation grace is just the beginning. God continues to give us His grace every moment of our life. Our salvation is 100 % God’s grace. There is nothing we can boast about. God saved you not because you are in any way better than others. Therefore, all we can say is: “God, thank You for Your salvation!” I say this often and I will say it again: if the truth of God’s election cannot make us humble, then no other Biblical truth can.

### B. 透過神的方法 Through God’s Means

God chose us out of His grace. He exercises His election through His means. If we say that it is God who predestined those whom He chose to save, then those He decided to save will eventually be saved. Does it mean that we do not need to spend any effort on evangelism? Of course not! God implements His sovereignty through the means He establishes. The Bible clearly tells us that Christians are entrusted with the responsibility of evangelism. In Acts 8 God called Philip to travel a distance to share the gospel to an African palace official. **Verse 26** reads: Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Go south to the road - the desert road - that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." Philip obeyed God's instruction and preached the gospel to an Ethiopian eunuch, led him to Christ and baptized him. Later, when Paul went to a synagogue in Pisidian Antioch and shared the gospel to some Jews he encountered great opposition. Paul thus realized that God called him to be an apostle to the Gentiles. I would like to draw your attention to an interesting verse in **Acts 13:48** - When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. This verse connects God's sovereign will on choosing some people for salvation and Christians' duty to share the gospel with others. We are the means through which God saves people. Paul stresses this important role in **Romans 10:14** - How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? What an utmost honor for us to co-work with God! There will be an evangelistic meeting coming up this Friday. The Mandarin evangelistic training will begin at the end of the month. Besides those special occasions, fellowship meeting, Sunday service and the seekers' class Sunday school go on every week all year-round. Besides all those ministries you can also share the gospel with your classmates or colleagues in-person. There are many opportunities for outreach. Are you willing to be used by God as a means to save others?

### C. 为了神的荣耀 For God's Glory

God chose us out of His grace, and He saves us through His means. The Bible tells us that God saves us not only because of His love and mercy on us, but ultimately it is for the sake of His glory. In the Ephesians 1 passage we read before Paul repeats three times that it is for His own glory that God accomplishes His salvation plan through His election. For example, Paul says in **verse 5-6** that: **5** He predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will - **6** to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. God saves us from sins and gives us a new life in Christ. He hopes that His children will continue to reflect His glory while living on the earth. Paul says in **Ephesians 2:10** that - For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do. We are not saved by our good works but we are saved so that God can enable us to do His good work to glory Him, whether it is in school, at work, at home or in the church. Paul encourages the believers in the Thessalonian church because of the persecution they faced. Paul tells them in **2 Thessalonian 1:11-12** that: **11** With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may bring to fruition your every desire for goodness and your every deed prompted by faith. **12** We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, as we stand firm in our faith God will get His glory even when we are in adverse situation. It is like the relationship between parents and children, teachers and their students or a coach with his players. When the

people under their leadership have distinguished achievement they will get the glory. In God's eyes whether we are in good time or bad time He still gets the glory when we walk in His will.

## CONCLUSION

We do not choose God. It is God who chose us. Everyone deserves to perish eternally because of our sins. But God bestows His grace to those He chose to save. Grace is getting a freebie with no string attached. Let me conclude with a story to illustrate how grace works. A couple in California planned a wedding but at the last minute they decided not to get married. The bride-to-be's family had paid for a \$ 35,000 non-refundable reception. Rather than canceling the banquet altogether the mother of the bride decided to give the homeless people in the city an once-in-a-lifetime treat in one of the finest hotel around town. "Even though my husband and I were feeling very sad for our daughter, it was heartwarming to see so many people be there and enjoy a meal," said the mom. So there they were, about 100 people showed up to enjoy the feast. They could never afford it but they did not have to pay a penny to get in. That is how grace works. Jesus Christ paid the price on the cross that no one can afford. He invites everyone to come and receive salvation. He said He did not come to seek the righteous but to redeem sinners. I do not know whom among the seeker friends sitting here today are chosen by God to receive salvation. My responsibility is to share the good news to you. The fact that you are willing to come today is an opportunity God gives to you. God is extending His hands to you: "Come!"