

## Food for Thought

What does it mean to be chosen? In our post-modern American culture, it is very important for us to have choices in almost everything, and we assume that we chose which church to attend based on denomination, location, the gifts of the pastor, the programs offered, or the style of music. We call this "church shopping," and it makes perfect sense to us. We shop for religion the same way that we shop for furniture or ice cream. But from a biblical perspective, we don't choose God. God chooses us. That's what the New Testament reading for Sunday, Romans 11: 1-2, 29-32, is all about. The Apostle Paul is writing to gentile Christians from the great city of Rome, and he is trying to explain how both Jews and gentiles can be "in."

Yes, it would seem that the Jews permanently rejected Jesus by crucifying him on the cross. And yes, This rejection opened the door for Paul's mission to the gentiles, and many of them received Jesus through Paul's ministry, but as the Apostle explains, the Jews are God's oldest friends, and the Almighty refused to close the door on them, regardless of their actions.

Now, why God chose the Jews first among all of the people's of the world is beyond me. It's certainly not because they were wealthy or a great military power. It's not because they were from a strategic place in the world or because they were especially faithful. In fact, there is nothing remarkable about the Jews that God should choose them over any other tribe, and that is just the point. God chose them, and it is the choosing that makes them special.

But God also chose you and me. We did not choose God, despite all of our best efforts at church shopping. The Creator of the Universe plucked us out of a crowd and made us special just because it was God's good pleasure to do so. I like to connect Baptism to the image of adoption. When you have your children the usual way, you get whatever comes out of the womb, and you love them no matter what, but when you adopt, you have a choice. You choose to create your family and what it will look like. And so it is with Baptism. God has options, and God chooses the likes of us. Why, no one knows, but it wasn't our doing. We were passive in the deal and special nonetheless.

So let's get over this idea that you and I have gone to some great effort to find God. You have been chasing God until God finally caught you! The Lord makes room for the Jews and makes room for the gentiles. We are special because God says so. And maybe there are some responsibilities that go along with being chosen. Maybe it means that we are called bear God's name in the world. Maybe we are supposed to do as Jesus would do. Maybe we are supposed to live with gratitude.

- 1) As a child, how often were you chosen to be on someone else's team?
- 2) Describe one good choice that you have made recently.
- 3) What does it mean to you that God chose you?