It’s a great feeling to be chosen. Whether it’s for a new job, a spot on the team, a role in the annual school play or orchestra, to receive a scholarship, or a promotion on a job, we feel validated, encouraged, and appreciated because someone takes notice of our talent and abilities. It does make us feel good about ourselves and what we are capable of doing, doesn’t it?

 As unworthy as it may seem, how much more of an honor that we have been chosen to be on God’s team and as one of “God’s people”! How blessed are we to play our part and be able to share with others of what God has done in our lives![[1]](#footnote-1)

 When I was young, I used to play softball every Saturday morning over at the park on Bedford Avenue between Ave. X and Y. I was part of this pickup softball group that plays every Saturday from April until October. Even though it was just a pickup game. We played competitively and seriously. But most importantly we played for fun and we built up our friendship with one another.

 The way it works was basically whoever shows up by 8:00am, you will guarantee yourself to be in the game someway and somehow. Usually two of the guys would serve as the captains and they would choose sides as to who they want to be on their team. The captain who won the coin toss, would get to select the first pick. Usually he would select the best available player out there (usually a pitcher or a power slugging homerun hitter) and then the other captain would choose the next two best available players, and so on and so forth.

 As for me I could care much less about which team I play on, or where I may bat, usually at the bottom of the lineup. I could care less if I’m the first or the last one to get selected. I just want to play, that’s all.

Well, that was my motivation and passion, week after week….I would I would never be the best player on the team, but I knew that I can play my best every week.

 Certainly it feels good to be chosen first….it makes you feel wanted and appreciated. But there’s no shame to be chosen last either. Once we’re on the field, we’re all on the same team playing the same game but just in different positions. It takes the effort of all 9 players in order to win a ballgame.

 Come to think of it, church is kind of like a pickup softball team. All of its members must play together as a team in order to succeed. Everyone contributes to the overall success of the team whether you’re the first player picked or the last.

 In the passage that we read earlier from Peter’s letter to the early Christians, those early Christians were wrestling with the issue of **self-identity –** a sense of who we are and whose we are. Did they see themselves as a team of individuals or as individual teams? Many of them were experiencing trials and persecution under the Roman Emperor. It was a testament of the faith, but they were willing to stand up for what they believed in. Both their faith integrity and their allegiance in Christ were being challenged…for many of them, this was a matter of “life and death.”

 If we were presented with the same choices as some of those early Christian today, what would we choose? Our faith or our life? Are we already making too many consensuses with our faith in Christ, in a world that seems too foreign and too distant from God?

 Just whose team do we ultimately play for anyway? When God choose us to be on God’s side, are we willing to risk it all to the point of death, like many of the early Christians did in the 1st century?

 **Many of us today are still wrestling in search of the meaning and purpose in life. Who we are and whose we are?** Do we see ourselves as individual members of the Body of Christ and as a chosen people of God who gives us new life and new hope in the midst of trails and challenges.

 Feeling abandoned and rejected, at times many of us might have felt like we were among the last players to be selected on the team. We were chosen because there were no other choices. **We became more of a liability doomed for failure rather than an asset destined for succeess.**

 Those early Christians were chosen to be on God’s team not because of their abilities, but because of their potential. God saw more in them than they saw themselves. **Despite their different levels of talents and abilities, they were chosen by God to be on the God’s team working together towards a common vision of mission and purpose in Christ.**

 Unfortunately in our individualistic society today, it is very easy for us to focus our attentions upon ourselves while neglecting our interdependence and our roles with others. When God calls us to share our gifts and talents, God assures us that we will never be alone. God is willing to call others into our lives to partner with us and to support us. God promised that we will never go solo! The Holy Spirit will go before us, in the company of fellow believers. The Holy Spirit will continue to lead us and intercede for us.

 Peter the Apostle reminded us that Christ, as ***“a chosen and precious cornerstone”,*** was rejected by many, causing many who are disobedient to stumble and fall. Not everyone will choose to accept Christ and to follow Him. But as the church, God has chosen us to be God’s people. *We are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that we may proclaim the mighty acts of him, who called us out of darkness and into his marvelous light.[[2]](#footnote-2)* Christ gave us the abilities and the strength to do all things through His power.[[3]](#footnote-3)

 This week, I had the opportunity to attend a leadership training program with over 120 Asian-American pastors and lay leaders (elders and deacons) from all over the US in Princeton Seminary. Even though we might speak with different native tongues with various accents or languages, we might have been brought up in a totally different culture and setting, we all gathered together in one place as one body in Christ, united by our common faith and purpose.

 We gathered not only representing our unique Asian ethnic groups, but more importantly we represented the body of Christ and reflected the image of who God is. We caught an early glimpse of Pentecostal moment as we celebrate God’s greatest gift of the Holy Spirit. It was surely a blessing to be part of the global church worshipping the same God as God’s chosen people.

 Many of them shared their struggles and challenges of growing up back home overseas. Some were under persecutions, severely beaten in fear, or were imprisoned simply because of their religious belief. Some struggled to meet end’s need. Nevertheless, they’ve kept their faith and trusted God’s leading and prompting throughout their lives.

 Together we studied the life and the contributions of one of the key founders of Reformed Theology – John Calvin. We studied not only because of his role as a Reformed Theologian but more importantly as a pastor, a social reformer….an activist who was not afraid to speak up and put his thoughts into concrete social changes. Calvin was not afraid to ask his fellow citizens “What’s wrong with us? How can we be more faithful to God’s calling in our lives?”

 One of the key aspects of Calvin’s teaching that we also focused on was one’s personal relationship with God (personal piety and faith). According to Calvin, the foundation of one’s Christian life is the awareness that **we are in a constant relationship with God, at every moment and in every place**. No matter what, we are never “out of sight” from God, because God is everywhere and God is in everyone. **Time and Space is irrelevant to God.**

 In his famous *Institute of Christian Religion*, Calvin beautifully described our relationship with God as follow, *“****We are not our own****: let not our reason nor our will, therefore, sway our plans or deeds.* ***We are not our own****: let us therefore not set it as our goal to seek what is expedient for us according to the flesh.* ***We are not our own****: insofar as we can, let us therefore forget ourselves and all that is ours. Conversely,* ***we are God’s:*** *let us therefore live for him and die for him.* ***We are God’s****: let his wisdom and will therefore rule all our actions.* ***We are God’s****: all the parts of our life accordingly strive toward him as our own lawful goal.[[4]](#footnote-4)*

Indeed, *once we were like newborn infants, yearning for the spiritual milk, but now we’ve tasted that the Lord is good*.[[5]](#footnote-5) *Once we were not a people, but now we are God’s people; once we had not received mercy, but now we have received mercy.[[6]](#footnote-6)*

 Life is but full of choices. Our lives are dependent upon the choices that we make (or fail to make). But the bottom line is that we believe in a God who is sovereign, faithful and just. We come to our humble senses that **we do not ultimately choose God, but rather God has already chosen us.** We respond to God’s choosing and God’s grace through our faith and services.

 God has embraced us for who we are through the work of Christ upon the Cross. The greatest and the only choice that we make was the choice we make when we stood before the cross in saying “Yes” to Christ in the company of witnesses before others. Cleansed by the Spirit of baptism, purified by the Pentecostal fire, we dedicate our lives for God’s use with Christ being our chief cornerstone.

 By the virtue of our baptism and our proclamation of faith, we are chosen by God as God’s adopted sons and daughters. We call our risen Lord as our brother and our friend. Through God’s grace, God assures us that He will never leave us or forsake us. As our passage reminded us earlier that whoever believes in him will never be put to shame.[[7]](#footnote-7)

 This is our joy and our greatest hope. As the chosen people of God, we strive to live faithfully each day and we do so by honoring and fulfilling God’s promises in our lives and planting seeds in the lives of others. Thanks be to God. In the name of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, Amen.

1. Senuta, Chad http://d365.org/devotions/the-way-may-17-2014/ [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. *1 Peter 2:9* [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. *Philippians 4:13* [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Book 3, Chap. 7, Paragraph 1 in 1559 *Institutes of Christian Religion* [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. *I Peter 2:2-3* [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. *1 Peter 2:9-10* [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. *I Peter 2:6* [↑](#footnote-ref-7)