

Choices...

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Life is all about choices. From the earliest age that we are able to start to reason, we begin making choices and decisions. When we first start out in life, the choices we are faced with are fairly easy and simple. As we grow and mature, the choices that are put before us become more complex and the effects of those choices more far reaching and lasting. Some of the choices we make affect us for our entire lives. As we grow up from childhood, we receive discipline and guidance from our parents and we begin to learn that there are consequences for our decisions and choices. There are many different choices for us to make in this life. We choose our clothes, our food, the vehicles we drive, our friends, how we wear our hair, how we present ourselves, how we react and even the words that we speak.

As we become adults, there is no longer anyone around to watch over us all the time and to guide us to make correct choices. We can be just as bad as we want to be. There is no one to answer to. We can make all the poor choices that we want to, but that does not mean that there is not a price to pay for those choices. There are consequences and a person may get away with some things in this life and avoid the penalty they justly deserve, but there will still be a price to pay in the resurrection and Jesus Christ will be the judge!

Choices...it is a big responsibility! Having freedom, being free to make our own choices is a very big responsibility. Yet, without freedom of choice there is no true freedom. Being free means having the ability to make your own choices. You do not have to get too far into God's word, to discover that choices began early on in the history of man. God puts choices before us and we are responsible for our actions. Someone else may influence us, trick us, or persuade us to do something, but the bottom line is that we are responsible and will answer for the choices we make. We will each stand before God and give account for what we have, or have not done. No one else will be standing there with us, the responsibility is ours alone.

God created man to be free. Man is a free thinking individual. God gave man a mind with the power to reason and to consider. Man has awareness, he knows that he exists. God gave man dominion and rule over His creation. Man was put in charge and given freedom for a very specific reason and purpose. God intended it to be this way and it all plays a part in His plan. God is very deliberate in the things that He does and nothing that He does is without purpose.

The Bible starts with choice and ends with choice. From the very beginning of the Bible we are introduced to choices. As the Bible story begins, God is choosing how He is going to shape the earth and how the physical aspects of it will operate.

He is making decisions and then from those decisions He is taking action. He is making choices. God did not just haphazardly put things into motion on this earth. He did not just randomly select how things would operate. It was carefully thought out and then deliberately created with great purpose.

Genesis 1:1

¹In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ²The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

³ Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. ⁴ And God saw the light, that *it was good*; and God divided the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.

So we see God was pleased with His choices and that they were good. God was happy with His decisions and what He had put into place. God has the freedom to choose, to make choices and decisions. God is holy, because He chooses to be holy. God is love, because He chooses to be love. God wanted man to have the same freedom. We are created in His image. God gave us intelligence and an awareness of our being and our existence. God placed a spirit in man, that allows us to think and to reason and to make choices. God gave man a choice right from the beginning.

Genesis 2:16

¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷ but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die."

Man is presented with his first test, his first choice. God wanted to know whether Adam and Eve were going to obey Him, or not. God created man free and with the freedom of mind to think for himself, but it was all for a reason. God had a purpose in mind...everything God does is deliberate and for a reason. We all know how this situation ended, Adam and Eve failed to make the correct choice and all of mankind has suffered because of that choice. There are always consequences for poor choices.

Genesis 3:22

²² Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever"

Now God could not allow them a chance to take from the tree of life, since they now understood good and evil. Because, they now understood good and evil, a whole new range of choices were open to them. They could choose to do evil and God could not allow anything evil to have eternal life.

Genesis 3:23

– ²³ therefore the LORD God sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. ²⁴ So He drove out the man; and He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.

God chose to bar man, at this point, from eternal life. God would provide a different choice and another chance at another time. God does the calling, He presents us with an opportunity and it is up to each individual as to whether they will respond, or whether they will not.

Christ makes this point clear. After He had fed the multitude, Jesus and the disciples had departed for Capernaum. The people who had been there went looking for Him and found Him on the other side of the sea and they asked Him why He had come there. Christ knew that they had come seeking Him, because of the miracle that He had performed with the loaves and the fish.

John 6:26

²⁶ Jesus answered them and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. ²⁷ Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him."

These people were not being called and Christ knew that the Father had not sent them to Him. He was pointing out to them that they were only interested in the physical things that He had provided, when they should be working towards the spiritual things that lead to eternal life, instead of a temporal physical life. They were only looking for Him to have their physical needs satisfied. They did not understand the spiritual implications of what Christ was telling them.

John 6:28

²⁸ Then they said to Him, "What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?" ²⁹ Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

³⁰ Therefore they said to Him, "What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? ³¹ Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, '*He gave them bread from heaven to eat.*'"

Even though they had already seen what Jesus had done with the loaves and fish, they still did not believe He was the Son of God and they did not understand the meaning of the food which endures, that He was explaining, that He brought to them. They wanted a physical sign, physical bread from heaven.

³² Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, Moses did not give you the bread from heaven, but My Father gives you the true bread from heaven. ³³ For the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world."

So here Christ is explaining to them, that the bread Moses brought to them was not the bread from heaven that He is talking about. It was not the true bread, it was physical bread. So we can see that the manna that Israel did receive in the wilderness, pointed to a future fulfillment when Christ would bring the true bread from heaven...from God the Father through Jesus Christ the Son.

³⁴ Then they said to Him, "Lord, give us this bread always."

³⁵ And Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst. ³⁶ But I said to you that you have seen Me and yet do not believe. ³⁷ All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out.

³⁸ For I have come down from heaven, (notice!) not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. ³⁹ This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.

Did Christ make a decision? Was this a choice...to do the will of the Father?

⁴⁰ And this is the will of Him who sent Me, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in Him may have everlasting life; and I will raise him up at the last day."

Did Christ have a choice in what He did? Yes! If He did not, then all that He did and went through would not have had any meaning at all. He had to face the same choices that we face. He had to make decisions, just as we have to and He had to overcome! He had to lead the way for us!

The spiritual bread that we receive from God the Father, through Christ, feeds us sustains us and leads to everlasting life. When we make the choice to respond to God's calling, it is this bread of Christ's word that we receive, it is this bread that nourishes us and sustains us and causes us to grow spiritually...if we are willing to receive it. It is our spiritual nourishment.

God does choose whom He will call and to whom He will give an opportunity to respond to that calling. God does not just randomly pick people to receive His truth. It is a deliberate effort on His part and He begins to work with each of us on a personal level. It is God who works with our minds and gives us the understanding through His spirit, which guides us into all truth.

John 6:44

⁴⁴ No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up at the last day. ⁴⁵ It is written in the prophets, '*And they shall all be taught by God.*' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me.

God also has choices. It is God who does the calling...it is God who opens the mind...it is God who does the teaching through His word. God chooses whom He will and then draws them close to Christ. God knows who He is going to call and He has foreordained that those whom are called should be conformed to Christ. They are to take on his character and His likeness, to follow the things He taught and the things that He gave as examples, as to how Christians are to live their lives in accordance with God's law.

Romans 8:28

²⁸ And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to *His* purpose. ²⁹ For whom He foreknew, He also predestined *to be* conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. ³⁰ Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.

God has a choice and He chooses when and whom to call as it pleases Him. Does everyone whom God calls, respond to that call? No. There are those who for whatever reason, do not respond to God's call. On the day of Pentecost, when the apostles were filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter preached an inspired sermon right there. When he had finished, some of the people believed and asked what it was that they should do.

Acts 2:38

³⁸ Then Peter said to them, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. ³⁹ For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call."

Out of all the people there that day, about 3,000 responded and were added to the church. We cannot know exactly how many were actually there, but it was a multitude which implies a great number and there were people of different languages. God does the calling, but we are given the choice to respond, or not. God does not force us to live His way. God created us to be free and to have free thinking minds, so that we would be able to make the choice to follow Him, or not.

Matthew 22:11

¹¹ "But when the king came in to see the guests, he saw a man there who did not have on a wedding garment. ¹² So he said to him, 'Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?' And he was speechless. ¹³ Then the king said to the servants, 'Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast *him* into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

¹⁴ "For many are called, but few *are* chosen."

It is our choice, we make the decision. Why would God do that? God is seeking those who want to follow Him freely; He is seeking those who willingly come to Him. What purpose would it serve, if God simply forced a people to do His bidding and to follow Him? God could easily have created a people to do that if it was His intention. God is not a cruel oppressor and He does not want a bunch of slaves to attend Him. God has always given man a choice and He still does.

God wants people who will come to him freely and of their own will. He wants people that have made the decision for themselves that God's way of life is the way that they want to live; people who recognize the benefits of living God's way and who desire to live and dwell with their creator for all eternity. God is looking for those who love Him and want to accept what He freely offers. God wants to add to His family, but He wants those that want to be there, that seek to be there, that want to do whatever it takes to be there.

Deuteronomy 30:15

¹⁵ "See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, ¹⁶ in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. ¹⁷ But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸ I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong *your* days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. ¹⁹ I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, *that* I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; ²⁰ that you may love the LORD your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He *is* your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them."

God chose Israel and called the entire nation at once to be His people. Here God clearly lays out for them what is expected, if they are to have a relationship with Him and He is to be their God. God also clearly lays out the consequences they can expect if they do not do as He asks of them.

It is a choice...it was their choice...they decided for themselves whether they wanted to follow God, or not. God did not force them to do as He asked. We have the same choice before us, life and death, blessing and cursing...we have all chosen to go God's way, the way of eternal life in God's kingdom.

During Paul's second missionary journey he and Silas stopped in Thessalonica and preached the gospel to the people there. Paul reasoned with the Jews for three Sabbaths in the synagogue and many of them were convinced. Scripture tells that a great multitude of devout Greeks joined Paul and Silas. Paul reasoned with them for three Sabbaths from the scriptures. He probably did not preach the whole time, the people there were devout Jews and they probably had plenty of questions for Paul. Yet, it says that they were convinced...they believed and they made a choice.

The conversion of so many people caused an uproar and Paul and Silas were sent away at night, by the brethren there, for their own safety. They came next to Berea and once again they went to the synagogue and preached Christ to the people there.

Acts 17:10

¹⁰ Then the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea. When they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. ¹¹ These were more fair-minded than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness, and searched the Scriptures daily *to find out* whether these things were so. ¹² Therefore many of them believed, and also not a few of the Greeks, prominent women as well as men.

These people here in Berea were more fair-minded, they were more willing to receive the message that Paul and Silas brought. Not only that, they were determined to make an informed decision. They realized what was at stake here. They did not just take Paul's word at face value. They went to the scriptures daily and searched them to find out if what they were being told was the truth, or not. They wanted to be informed, so that they could make the correct choice and then they did and many of them believed as we are told. That is why we are here, we searched the scriptures, we proved the truth and we made a choice...to accept Christ and to follow God.

We willingly submit ourselves to God, we choose to humble ourselves and respond to God's calling. God demonstrates His love for us by helping us to make an informed decision. He opens our minds to understand His word and the plan that is being worked out for all of humanity. God gives us the opportunity to take part in that plan now. We do not have to wait until it is complete, God allows us to participate now if we choose to. We willingly give ourselves to Him; we make our lives a living sacrifice. We put away the old man and walk in newness of life...we make a choice.

There is nothing to stop us from turning our back on God and Christ at anytime, if we choose to do so. We can turn around and go right back the way we came, just as freely as we came to be where we are today in our relationship with God and His Son. But, there will be a price to pay for that decision. God has opened our minds; He has given us a much deeper understanding of His word. We are responsible for what we know and understand and for what we do with what we have been given.

Hebrews 6:4

⁴ For *it is* impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵ and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶ if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put *Him* to an open shame.

⁷ For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; ⁸ but if it bears thorns and briers, *it is* rejected and near to being cursed, whose end *is* to be burned.

You can only accept Christ one time. His sacrifice covers us and saves us from the death penalty. If we reject that...if we turn our backs on Him and what He did for us, we cannot go back and be covered again a second time. Choices can have a devastating impact in our lives. We must choose carefully and wisely. Some people claim that they have no control over their actions, some people claim temporary insanity, or mental duress and stress made them take a certain action, or led them to a particular decision. There is always a decision and a choice to be made at some level, things do not just happen. There are lines that some people simply choose to cross over.

Those who have not responded to God during this life will still have an opportunity in the future. God always offers us a choice. There is a time in the future when all of those who have not had a chance to know and to understand and to go God's way, will be given that opportunity. God wants all who will, to have that chance and to make that decision for themselves. People will be resurrected in the future back to their physical forms and taught about God's way of life and given understanding.

Revelation 20:11

¹¹ Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.

¹³ The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

After they have been taught, after they have been given understanding and an opportunity to live God's way of life, then they will also be judged on what they did with what they were given. It will be up to them; it will be their choice as to how they respond and what they do with what they will have been given.

It will be their choice to enter into the kingdom of God, or not. It is our choice whether we will enter the kingdom of God, or not. God offers and God gives us everything that we need to make it to His kingdom if that is what we want, but He will not drag us kicking and screaming where we do not desire and crave to be. It is up to us to pursue His kingdom and to seek after it with all of our heart and being if that is what we truly want.

We can also choose to turn our backs on God at anytime. Many have...there is nothing to stop a person from doing that if they choose. We can lay our bibles down; we can quit studying, learning and growing in grace and knowledge whenever we wish. No one is going to flip open our bibles for us and put our noses in them. The way is clear to God's kingdom and His word tells us exactly what we must do if we want to enter in and live there for all eternity. We do have choices and we had better be making the best of those opportunities while we can!

Phillippians 2:12

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³ for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

¹⁴ Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵ that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

It is God who works in us; it is His spirit that leads us into all truth as Christ said in John 16:13. Christ calls God's spirit, the spirit of truth. It is so important that we maintain a close, personal relationship with God, so that His spirit can be a guiding force in our lives. We need to learn to be in tune with God's spirit, to know when He is truly leading us to a decision and not trying to make our will into God's will. Christ said that whatever the spirit hears he will speak and that he will tell us of things to come. God's spirit helps us to choose.

Are you listening to God? Are you letting Him lead? God wants us to make the right choices, He gives us every opportunity and all that we need to make the correct choices and to follow Him.

Is there a price to pay for choosing to go God's way? It all depends on what is important in your life. If making it into God's kingdom is your goal and focus, if it is the driving force in your life, then there can be no price that is too dear to pay. If you are focused on this world, the cares of this life and getting all that you can out of it while you are here, then the price is probably more than you are willing to pay.

In Ephesians 3:1 and elsewhere in scripture, Paul calls himself a prisoner of Christ. The Greek word that is used here is:

NT:1198

[NT:1198](#) δέσμιος *desmios* (des'-mee-os); from [NT:1199](#); a captive (as bound):

KJV - in bonds, prisoner.

(Biblesoft's New Exhaustive Strong's Numbers and Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary. Copyright © 1994, 2003, 2006 Biblesoft, Inc. and International Bible Translators, Inc.)

Was Paul an unwilling captive of Jesus Christ? Was Paul forced to do Christ's bidding against his free will? Did Christ threaten Paul with some sort of penalty if he did not go out to preach the gospel message? Very simply...no. Paul willingly made himself captive to Christ. I think Paul here is using a metaphor, but I also believe that this is the way he personally felt. He had given his life up to Christ, it was no longer his own and it belonged to Christ to do with as it pleased him. Paul was not being forced in any way; he made the decision to give his life to Christ.

Phillipians 3:7

⁷ But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸ Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰ that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, ¹¹ if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Does this sound like a man that is being coerced and forced to do something against his will? Does this sound like a man that detested what he was doing and where he was heading? Does this sound like a man that was unsure about his future? Paul knew very well what he was doing and he was completely committed to it. He made a choice.

This is the biggest decision we will ever face in our lives, the biggest and most incredibly important choice that we will ever make. You have one chance at this opportunity. There is no choice between door number one, number two, or number three...no do-over's, no mulligan's, no taking it back. It is a very serious choice and the consequences are literally life, or death. We have to choose and we have to commit ourselves.

God wants us there...God wants to add to His family. He wants us there, because we want to be there. He wants us there, because we have believed on Him and because we have believed on and accepted His Son. He wants us there, because we desire and seek after all that He has to offer with all of our hearts and minds and we have committed ourselves to attain it and to please Him in all that we do. He wants us there, because He gave us the freedom and we made the choice...the choice to follow Him and live His way of life that leads to eternal life.

Revelation 22:12

¹² "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. ¹³ I am the Alpha and the Omega, *the Beginning and the End*, the First and the Last."^{*}

¹⁴ Blessed *are* those who do His commandments, (a choice) that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ But outside *are* dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie (a choice).

¹⁶ "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things in the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, the Bright and Morning Star."

¹⁷ And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires (whoever chooses), let him take the water of life freely (a choice, freewill).

Where will you be? Where will you end up? Will you be dwelling eternally in that incredibly beautiful and magnificent city that God will bring down to this world? Do you thirst for the water of life? Do you desire it...hunger for it? God has given you freedom and a sound mind to make decisions with. God has given you His spirit to guide you into all truth. God has given up His only Son to provide the way for you. God has provided all of these things and then left it up to you. It is your choice...

(All scriptural references cited from the New King James Edition of the Holy Bible)