

Making A Choice

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Matt. 6:24

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Man possesses a will.

- In deciding physical matters of this life.
- Whether to go to college, or not?
- What type of work one should strive for to make a living?
- Who one should choose as their mate for life?
- Whether to rent or to buy?

These are some of the larger decisions we have to make, but we make smaller decisions every day.

- Do I get up from bed now, or lie here for a few more minutes?
- What clothes am I going to wear?
- What to eat for breakfast? Etc.

In deciding spiritual matters, a man possessing a will, must exercise that will in making choices in spiritual matters.

People must choose between two basic spiritual options: one can choose to live a divinely approved life, or one can choose to live a divinely condemned life.

The choice can be made in one of two manners.

- One can choose by considering, deciding, and exercising personal will studying out the options laid out before you.
- Or, one can choose by refusing to consider, refusing to decide, and allowing surrounding circumstances and pressures to determine the choice for him.

The refusal to choose is a form of choice.

Quote from William Jennings Bryan: “Destiny is not a matter of choice; it is not a thing to be waited for, it is a thing to be achieved.”

Jesus Christ emphasized that people must make a choice. Matt. 6:24, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”

Because there is a fundamental conflict of interest between the two.

That which is mammon is materialistic, anti-godly, and sinful. It refers to such things as cause man to place a false sense of security in them, or cause man to give his heart to them rather than God, or create an enslavement for man which removes him from God's control.

The necessity of this choice

Is emphasized by Jesus in His encounter with the rich young man of: Mark 10:17-22, *“And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions.”*

The young man came to Jesus honestly desiring eternal life.

He acknowledged Jesus as the proper authority to answer the question.

He had been serious in his religious life, for when Jesus responded, *“Keep the commandments,”* he replied he had from his youth.

But, there was a greater price he was asked to make, and he went away sorrowful, for he was not willing to make that choice.

He was not willing to give up the temporal things that he loved.

People today go to church, and think of themselves as righteous, but they don't make that commitment that separates them from the world.

The choice for Jesus cannot be a passive choice; it has to be an active, involving choice. Matt. 12:30, *“He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.”*

One does not have to oppose Jesus to be against Him.

A difficult choice

It was for the rich young man (above). Jesus was fully aware of the difficulty of the choice. It was a difficult choice for a Jew to become a Christian.

This was a factor in the young man's decision, as well. For this would mean rejection by traditional Judaism.

The Jewish religion was not just a religion, but also the foundation of a nation, the basis of a culture.

Jesus knew that for a Jew to accept Christianity, he would be persecuted by his neighbors, and would be cast out of his family, and considered dead by his own people.

In the early church many of those Jewish Christians were hauled off to prison and killed. They had a hard choice to make.

The cross was the most feared and shameful sign of Jesus' day. To be crucified was the height of disgrace; and one carried a cross only on the way to crucifixion.

The choice of following Jesus was, and is, the choice to bear a personal cross, the difficult choice of ignoring shame and disgrace imposed by others. If one cannot consciously make such a choice, he cannot be Jesus' disciple.

The choice between the two fundamental, spiritual options is stressed in the word of God in a variety of terms:

- Choice between light and darkness.
- Choice between the spirit and the flesh.
- Choice between the mind of the spirit and the mind of the flesh.
- Choice between righteousness and unrighteousness.
- Choice between good and evil.
- Choice between God and the world.
- Choice between the fruits of the Spirit and the works of the flesh.

Consider the importance of this choice

Rom. 6:1-23, *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore*

we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin. Now if we be dead with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with him: Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over him. For in that he died, he died unto sin once: but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God. Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God. For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness. What fruit had ye then in those things whereof ye are now ashamed? for the end of those things is death. But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Paul reminds them of the significance of their baptism by stating baptism signified a death of sin and an entrance into Christ. By choosing to enter Christ through baptism, they died to sin, making continued life in sin out of the question if they were to remain in Christ.

They made the choice to cease to exist in sin in order that they might exist in Christ.

- Verse 11 declares they **must** understand they are now dead to sin, and alive unto God.
- Verses 12-14 state they must not let sin reign over them, nor can they allow themselves to be used as instruments of unrighteousness.
- A paraphrased summation of this chapter to the Romans might be, “*You made your choice; now live consistently and responsibly in your choice.*”

Rom. 8:1-13, “*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God. But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*”

Notice the contrast in these scriptures between the person who lives his life to the desires of the flesh, and the person who lives his life to the will of the Spirit.

- Verses 4-5. Those who live for the flesh “*mind the things of the flesh,*” while those who live for the spirit mind the things of the Spirit.
- Verse 6. The mind of the flesh produces spiritual death, but the mind of the Spirit brings spiritual life and peace.

- Verses 7-8. The mind of the flesh exists as an enemy of God, incapable of being subject to God, and unable to please God.
- One lives for one or the other, never for both.

As Christians we must be concerned with obedience.

We carry the constant responsibility to examine our lives and our activities to determine if we are living and acting in obedience to Christ.

Few attitudes are more disastrous to a Christian than the attitude, "I don't care what God says, and I don't care what Jesus wants; his is what I want and I like, and I shall do as I please."

This attitude is an open rejection of the responsibility of obedience. Whether we realize it or not, when we live by this attitude, we have revoked our choice to live in Christ.

Rev. 3:14-19, *"And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent."*

The church at Laodicea is an excellent example of the necessity of the choice.

These were people who had chosen life in Christ, but who were not living responsibly in their choice.

They thought that all was well, and there was nothing they needed. This undoubtedly included their spiritual life as well. But, Jesus said they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked.

Verses 15-16. The Lord declared they are neither hot nor cold, but lukewarm. He wished they were one or the other. If they continued in the lukewarm condition, the Lord would spew them out of His mouth.

These people equated spiritual neutrality with spiritual well-being. The truth was their neutrality would result in the Lord vomiting them. The Lord dramatically expresses the necessity of living responsibly in a choice made for Him.

Living for Christ is not part-time work.

Each of us as Christians must realize we live for or against Christ all the time.

We cannot live for Him part-time, and against Him part-time.

We cannot live for Him in matters of worship, and against Him in matters of pleasure.

We cannot live for Him in doctrine, and against Him in personal relationships and attitudes.

There is only one way we can be on the Lord's side, and that is by actively living for Him and doing His will in all matters, under all circumstances. Anything less is opposition to Christ.

What if people could witness the scene of Christ walking among many of the professed Christians today?

He probably would be distressed to find the number of people who restrict spiritual life to limited areas of their lives.

Ask people to describe a "faithful Christian" and note the answers given.

- To many, a faithful Christian is nothing more than one who goes to worship regularly.
- To others, it is one who worships and avoids sins, such as drunkenness, adultery, stealing, murder, and the use of profanity.
- Others might add the responsibility of occasionally reading the Bible and of praying in times of stress.
- Yet, to these same people, Christianity has nothing to do with one's job, little to do with one's recreation, nothing to do with how one spends money earned, and nothing to do with friends one selects.
- In fact, in the minds of too many so-called Christians, Christianity has nothing to do with at least 80% of their daily lives.

Christianity does not control areas of a person's life. It controls the whole being in his total existence.

Rom. 12:2, "*And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*"

Becoming a Christian is not a matter of making a few minor alterations in one's life and accepting a few new responsibilities. So complete is the change, the former life in sin is described as having "passed away."

2 Cor. 5:17, *"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new."*

The old man does not exist any longer, because he has killed those old desires in his body, and they cease to exist.

- Eph. 4:22-24, *"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."*
- Gal. 5:24, *"And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts."*

How far reaching is the change?

Col. 3:17, *"And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him."*

The new existence affects all we say and do. It also affects what we allow our minds to dwell on.

It even affects our decisions about what we eat or drink.

1 Cor. 10:31, *"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."*

The Christian is to be holy

1 Pet. 1:16, *"... it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy."*

"Holy" is that which is "separate", or "set apart."

"Saint" means "holy one." It occurs 62 times in the New Testament.

"Sanctify" means "to make holy, or consecrate."

Christians are the sanctified made possible by the blood of Christ.

"Purity" and "Chaste" come from the same Greek word, "hagnos." It means "clean, pure, or clear," and can signify physical, religious, or moral purity. The New Testament abounds with stress on the necessity of Christian purity.

"Holy," "Saint," "Sanctify," and "Purity" are all terms used to describe the nature that God desires in a Christian.

Purity serves many roles in the life of a Christian.

It will be a criteria in determining what he allows himself to think about. Prov. 15:26, *“The thoughts of the wicked are an abomination to the LORD: but the words of the pure are pleasant words.”*

It will be a part of that spiritual wisdom we receive when we study God’s word. James 3:17, *“But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy.”*

It is a quality older Christian women should teach younger Christian women to help them develop spiritual stability. Titus 2:3-5, *“The aged women likewise, that they be in behaviour as becometh holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.”*

And for the young adults is stressed the necessity of purity. 2 Tim. 2:22, *“Flee also youthful lusts: but follow righteousness, faith, charity, peace, with them that call on the Lord out of a pure heart.”*

The principle of purity is a force constantly on guard in the Christian’s life. It is only effective when we make sure that it is rooted in our hearts. Temptations will arise which are certain to challenge our commitment to Christ.

Conclusion

Choose you this day whom you will serve. If you choose God, you must become a Christian. The following are the steps necessary to make that happen:

- **Faith.** Heb. 11:6, *“But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.”* When I was in high school (I was about 17 years old), a neighbor boy my same age told me he was an atheist. Since I had been baptized, I took the opportunity to talk to him about the scriptures. He told me that he could see that living the life of a Christian was good, but he wasn’t sure if he believed there was a God. But to be on the safe side, maybe he should go to church, and when he dies and stands before God (if there is a God) on the day of Judgment (if there is a Judgment), maybe if God sees that he has gone to church and lived a good life that God would send him to heaven (if there is a heaven), and not to hell (if there is a hell). I told him, “It doesn’t work that

way. You have to believe in Him with all your heart or you cannot please Him.”

- **Repentance.** Acts 2:38, *“Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”* Acts 11:18, *“... Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.”* If while you were sleeping, you heard a noise in the other room, and you think to yourself, “There’s a burglar in my house!” So you reach for your cell phone, and as quietly as you can, you call the police, tell them there is a burglar in your house, and you give them your address. Soon, you heard them arrive and capture the thief. He yells, “I’m sorry; I’m sorry!” What is he sorry for? He is sorry that he got caught; not that he stole. In true repentance the thief would be sorry that he ever stole and wants to change his life so that he would never steal again. That is true repentance. It is a change of mind that brings about a change of action. That is what we have to do before we can become a Christian.
- **Confession.** Rom. 10:9-10, *“That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.”* What do we confess? That we believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.

Note that in the above scriptures that faith (believing), repentance, and confession are “**UNTO**” righteousness, life, or salvation. “Unto” means toward something; not that one has already attained.

- **Baptism.** It is baptism where righteousness, life, and salvation are attained. Jesus, himself, was baptized to fulfill all righteousness, *“But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* (Matt. 3:14-17). Jesus was baptized because God said it was the right thing to do. Did you see how pleased God was about Jesus being baptized?

Jesus also said “*it becometh **us** to fulfil all righteousness.*” We are baptized because it fulfills His righteousness, not because it is of our righteousness.

In fact, if we are not baptized, we are still in our sins. “*Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.*” (Acts 2:38). Peter, what did you say the reason of baptism is? “for the remission of sins”. Why would anyone want to leave out the step that removes our sins?

Jesus commanded that to reach salvation we must be baptized. “*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth **and** is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.*” (Mark 16:15-16).

Ananias told Saul (before he was rename Paul) the very same thing, “*And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord.*” (Acts 22:16). Baptism is a requirement given by God.

Baptism is called a burial. “*Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*” (Rom. 6:4). Our old man is to be dead to us. “*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.*” (Rom. 6:3-6). Baptism is God’s blueprint for applying the blood of Christ in our lives by baptism. We are free from our old sins only when we are baptized.

This doesn’t mean “sprinkling. The scripture above says baptism is a burial. We don’t take a dead body to the cemetery and sprinkle a little dirt over it; we bury the body.

If you have not yet become a Christian, won't you consider it today?

