

Choose Whom You Will Serve

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from the King James Version. Italics for emphasis are ours.

GRACE PUBLICATIONS

P.O. BOX 18715

BALTIMORE, MD 21206

Printed in Baltimore, Maryland, U.S.A.

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INTRODUCTION

Every one of us has been given a free volition—the right to choose how we will behave when faced with a decision. Adam and Eve chose to eat from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. Their choice was plainly in violation of God’s command (Genesis 2:16-17), and it has had far reaching effects. Today we walk in bodies of death as a result of their decision.

This right to choose extends to the plan of salvation. No one is forced to receive Jesus Christ as his or her Savior; whosoever will may come unto Him (John 3:16). Yet, failure to make a choice to receive His free gift of salvation has a consequence. By not choosing forgiveness, a person chooses to spend eternity in hell, “where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:48).

Every moment, Christians make choices for or against the purpose of God. By God’s Word and the Holy Spirit we learn to choose life in

every situation. Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. The more we hear and receive truth, the better equipped we will be to make right choices. In these pages, we look at the importance of choosing life and blessing, and what this means for our eternal destiny.

Chapter One

“CHOOSE YOU THIS DAY”

“See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;

“In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes, and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

“But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them;

“I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it.

“I call heaven and earth to record *this day* against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: *therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live*” (Deuteron-

omy 30:15-19).

In these last days, man must live by every word of God (Matthew 4:4). The Word is what will judge Christians at the Bema Seat. It will judge the unbelievers at the Great White Throne (John 12:48).

Moses said to Israel, "Behold, I set before you *this day* a blessing and a curse" (Deuteronomy 11:26). Joshua told Israel, "...Choose you *this day* whom ye will serve....but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD" (Joshua 24:15). The psalmist said, "*This* is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it" (Psalm 118:24). The apostle said, "...*Now* is the accepted time; behold, *now* is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

With God, it is always, "this day," and "now." In an age that is so near to its end, I pray that we would begin to take in solemnly, fervently, and seriously what the Word of God is teaching. Ecclesiastes 5:1a says, "Keep thy foot when [you enter into] the house of God, and be more ready to hear." In Mark 4:24 we read, "Take heed what ye hear." Luke 8:18a declares, "Take heed therefore how ye hear." James 1:19 encourages us to be swift to hear. No one needs to make "uninformed" decisions. God is always speaking. The

question is, how are we listening?

Every one makes serious choices each day. Every choice affects our eternal standing. Un-saved people are choosing death and hell. Saved people are choosing their degrees of happiness in heaven. There will be no unhappiness in heaven, but there will be degrees of happiness. Some will receive the reward of the Morning Star Order, the highest rank given to believers, and they will have access to the Tree of Life.

During the one-thousand-year reign of Christ, everyone who is saved will have perfect, glorified bodies. Yet many will only observe certain activities, having suffered the loss of rewards; while mature believers, who received an abundance of grace and were willing to go all the way in obedience to God, enjoy opportunities to reign with Christ. That is why every time the Word of God is preached, we have some crucial decisions to make.

Imputed Sin, Imputed Righteousness

Before we ever committed sin, God imputed sin to each of us. Adam sinned, and because of God's foreknowledge, all-knowledge, and His brilliant plan, God graciously charged us with that sin. That imputation was an act of love sup-

ported by a godly reason.

“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me,” David wrote in Psalm 51:5. And “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death was passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Romans 5:12). Understanding that, you can see why it was so important that we were charged with sin before it happened.

Because He knew that each of us would sin personally, God imputed sin to us. In His plan, Jesus died on the Cross for *all* people (2 Corinthians 5:15; Hebrews 9:28). Therefore, because of His justice, He could account our faith as righteousness when we believed—even while we were ungodly (Romans 4:5)! God said, “I imputed sin to them before they actually performed any sinful works. So now when they believe, I will impute My righteousness to their account, apart from works (see Romans 4:6). Though they don’t yet know how to live godly, I will instruct them with My life” (Romans 5:10).

This is the brilliance of God’s plan. If He had waited until we sinned to charge us with the offense, His own perfect justice would not allow Him to impute His righteousness. No matter how much we believed in His goodness, we

would all be in hell forever.

There is a difference between imputed sin and personal sins. In addition to being born with Adam's old sin nature, the Bible also says that as soon as we were born, we began to personally sin through conscious decisions (Psalm 58:3b). All have sinned, and there is none righteous (Romans 3:10, 23). But we are saved by believing that Jesus died, shed His blood, was buried, and rose again to pay for personal sins—past, present, and future. Our personal sins have all been wiped away; they were placed on Jesus at Calvary, and there is no record of them. Still we have bodies of death because of imputed sin. So now, because Christ also died for our imputed sin, the Father is free to impute His perfect righteousness apart from our works and the Law.

Point of Decision: The Cross

The Father meets us through the Blood of His Son shed for us on the Cross of Calvary. He became “sin for us who knew no sin that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:21). He bore our sins in His body upon a tree (1 Peter 2:24). The Lord Jesus, the God-man, took care of our sins and in-

iquities on Calvary, and paid for them. The Just died for the unjust (1 Peter 3:18).

If I call upon the name of the Lord (Romans 10:13), if I hear and receive the Word of God in meekness, and if I believe it, then I pass from death unto life (John 5:24), and I am saved.

Now, however, I have an option: Do I want to become a serious, meaningful disciple of Jesus Christ, or just be saved and go to heaven? Jesus said, "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:31-32). Anyone who would follow Christ must take up the Cross daily and follow Him (see Luke 9:23).

As Christians, we have a choice. God will not force His will upon us. We can be candidates for His Crown of Righteousness (2 Timothy 4:8), His Crown of Life (James 1:12), His Crown of Rejoicing (1 Thessalonians 2:19), His Incorruptible Crown (1 Corinthians 9:25), and the Crown of Glory (1 Peter 5:4). We can choose to become candidates for His Morning Star Order (see Revelation 2:26-28) and to partake of the marvelous Tree of Life (Revelation 2:7). Or, we can simply go to heaven and be happy, but without rank and without rewards. It is entirely up to us.

Chapter Two

OUR BODIES BELONG TO HIM

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).

“But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God” (Romans 14:10-12).

These verses make it clear that Christians will be judged at the Bema Seat.* Each of us will stand alone before God Almighty in the Supreme Court of Heaven and receive rewards (or suffer loss of rewards) for the things done in our bodies.

The Word of God says, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. 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” (Romans 12:1-2).

We have to present our *bodies* before God. This is why: “What? know ye not that *your body is the temple of the Holy [Spirit] which is in you*, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

The condition of my soul and spirit determines what I do in my body. I present my body through the mercies of God so that He will renew my mind. I will not be conformed to this world in my body, but instead I will be transformed by the renewing of my mind, with my measure of faith.

Some people should be somewhat troubled by the phrase “we will be judged by what is done in our bodies.” Christians who smoke and drink are doing harmful things to their bodies—

even secular scientists would say this. Others are sensual and lascivious with bodies that are not their own, destroying their souls and risking many diseases. We have been bought with a price, therefore we are to glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits. We are to present our bodies to God (Romans 12:1). He will evaluate everything on the basis of what we have done in our bodies.

Unsatisfied Desires

Job prayed, "That which I see not, teach thou me: if I have done iniquity, I will do no more" (Job 34:32). The problem we have is that "the eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor the ear filled with hearing" (Ecclesiastes 1:8). Proverbs 27:20 says, "Hell and destruction are never full: so the eyes of a man are never satisfied." I watch Christians who are confused. Many have good jobs, good marriages, but they are not satisfied.

"Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but the just shall live by his faith. Yea also, because he transgresseth by wine, he is a proud man, neither keepeth at home, who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied, but gathereth unto him all nations, and heapeth unto him all people"

(Habakkuk 2:4-5).

Speaking of the unredeemed, Isaiah 5:14 says, "Therefore hell hath enlarged herself, and opened her mouth without measure: and their glory, and their multitude, and their pomp, and he that rejoiceth, shall descend into it." People drink alcohol because they are not satisfied without it. They start enlarging themselves, becoming ensnared by more things, because their souls are not fulfilled. People get involved in wrong relationships because their souls are not satisfied. They enlarge themselves just as hell enlarges itself. Just as hell is never full and death goes on forever, their desire is never satisfied.

"Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones from the earth; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations" (Isaiah 14:9).

**We suggest reading these other booklets by Pastor Carl H. Stevens from Grace Publications, The Morning Star Order, 1998, The Bema Seat: Presented in Joy or Grief?, 1996.*

Chapter Three

THE JUDGMENTS OF ETERNITY

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.

“Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble;

“Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man’s work of what sort it is.

“If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire” (1 Corinthians 3:11-15).

The judgment at the Bema Seat is for the Christian. There, we will hear from the Master. He will either say, “Well done thou good and faithful servant” or He will pronounce us as losers, even though we are saved forever. For ex-

ample, if He must declare me a loser because of the wrong choices I made after I was saved, for that brief time I will be ashamed (1 John 2:28).

We are presenting the Scriptures to you accurately and categorically, giving chapter and verse so that you can check it out for yourself. It takes much study to provide detailed truth such as this.

At the Bema Seat, the only foundation we have is Christ. He is a *sure* foundation and that is why our salvation is secure. But how we have built on that foundation will be tested. If any build with gold (representing deity), silver (redemption), or precious stones (our life in the Body of Christ), what he has built will abide and he will receive great rewards. However, if our works were built of wood (human effort serving God), hay (emotionalism), or stubble (not properly hearing the Word of God and having it spiritually aborted because it is not received in faith and meekness, in James 1:21), they will be burned up when tested by fire. Though he is saved from hell, this Christian suffers loss. He won't receive any rewards, and all of his works will be burned up in front of him.

An Interview with Jesus

Imagine standing before Jesus Christ and

having Him ask some very specific things.

“How faithful were you to your church? In Hebrews 10:25, my Word says you are not to forsake the assembly, but to gather much more as you see the day approaching. But according to my records, you said you were too busy.”

“Also,” He will say, “the last words I spoke on earth concerned soulwinning (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). Let’s see how many times you actually went.”

He won’t stop there. “Remember I said that you should love others as I have loved you (John 13:34). Let’s see what the record says.”

Remember, Jesus is the faithful one. He promised never to leave us and never to forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). That includes the times when we may have wished He would leave us alone, or when we were so occupied with ourselves that we forgot He was there.

This day God gives us a choice between life and death. Right now, He gives us a choice between good and evil. Heaven will be called to record this day against us, and heaven *does* record it. God sets before us a choice: life and death, a blessing and a curse. Let us choose life so that we and our families may live.

Every Knee Shall Bow

“And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works...

“...And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

“And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:10-15).

The White Throne Judgment for the unsaved will come one thousand years after the Bema Seat judgment for the saved. Remember, those who are saved are resurrected unto life. The unsaved, however, are resurrected unto damnation in bodies that cannot die, that will spend eter-

nity in hell (John 5:29).

“And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

“Where their worm [(conscience)] dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

“And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched:

“Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.

“And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire:

“Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:43-48).

This is what the Bible says. Do we really grasp the urgency of the message? If your foot offends you, cut it off. Of course it doesn't mean to do that literally, but it means to stop walking in the wrong behavior. We have a responsibility, because of God's provision, to take godly measures and keep ourselves from offensive behavior. It is better to enter into life with one foot

than to go to hell with two feet. It is better to enter into life with one eye than to go to hell with two eyes, where the worm dies not—where the conscience never stops—and the fire is not quenched.

That is what the *Bible* says.

Chapter Four

THE REALITIES OF HEAVEN AND HELL

Multitudes who go to church each week are not saved. At best, many have made pre-salvation confessions, but they have never been changed through the grace of God. They get weary when the truth is spoken; and because they come under so much conviction, they cannot wait to get out the door. If they remain as they are, they will face the White Throne Judgment for unsaved “believers”—those who only made a profession with their mouth but they never had a personal relationship with Jesus Christ nor regeneration through the Cross.

For believers, there is heaven, where there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor pain. The former things are passed away. All things become new (Revelation 21:4-5). In heaven, there will be a grand reunion of all God’s people for ever and ever and ever. Heaven,

where we will see no sin or corruption (Revelation 21:27). Heaven, where there will never be a drugged soul, never a drink taken, never a robbery or any other crime committed. There will be no more immorality and never another sin.

In heaven, our bodies will be pain-free forever. There, we will have continual joy in rejoicing with God. We will enjoy a prepared place as a prepared people (John 14:2-3). Heaven is where we will live and flourish and be in fellowship with God. It is where Jesus the Lamb will fill the city of God with His light (Revelation 21:9-27). Several times light is mentioned in Revelation 21:23-24. Heaven is a place where there is no moon and no sun but perfect light. Yes, we will be in heaven!

Pulling Others from the Fire

When we go soul-winning, we go to help others get to heaven. Christ's forgiveness is by grace through faith and not of themselves. They must receive mercy, not condemnation: That is heaven! Christ died for one as much as He died for all. To go out and win one soul to Christ is worth more than all the world (Mark 8:36).

Our ministry has people going out soul winning seven days a week—mornings, afternoons,

evenings. We have made an impact in over 150 countries. This happened because we chose to believe the Bible. We believe what the Bible says about heaven and hell. We believe in judgment for the believers as well as for the unsaved. We believe that through grace we are made complete in time because we are seated above with Christ in God. We believe that when we fail, the principle of rebound restores us back to fellowship with God (1 John 1:9). We have a beautiful place called heaven that is prepared for us, and we are being prepared to live there forever.

In heaven, we will have glorified bodies that are unrestricted by the laws of the material universe. We won't have mansions with someone on the top floor and someone else on the bottom. If we could understand the dimensions of heaven, we would know that even with all the redeemed men and women of all time there, heaven will never be crowded. Jesus walked through walls and we will be as He is.

Heaven is waiting for every Christian. For us to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Philippians 1:21). When we go through physical death, we are absent from the body and present with God (2 Corinthians 5:8). Thank God that in heaven, there will be no death. There will be no hospi-

tals, no graveyards, no funerals. There will be no heartaches and no sorrow (Revelation 21:4) because of God's precious place called heaven—a prepared place for a prepared people who have accepted the grace of God.

The Unquenchable Fire

Then, there is hell. The Beast and the false prophet will be cast into hell at the end of the Great Tribulation (Revelation 19:20), and one thousand years later they will still be alive when Satan is cast in there with them (Revelation 20:10). Hell is a bottomless pit, according to Revelation 9:2—a place where the conscience never dies.

“And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against [God]: for their worm [(conscience)] shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched; and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh” (Isaiah 66:24).

This speaks of one of the saddest things we as believers will ever experience in our lives. After the White Throne Judgment, God will destroy the earth with fire. There are some who say He will do it with the most powerful nuclear weapons, but that is wrong. The words that pro-

ceed from the Lord's mouth will do the burning—not any device of men. It will be the words that come from Jesus' mouth without a shot being fired (Revelation 19:13-16).

Now, in Revelation 21:4-5, every tear will be wiped away from our eyes, and all things will be made new. But before that happens, before God wipes away the tears, God is going to lift the veil and show us what hell is like (Revelation 20:10-15). He wants us to see what grace has saved us from. He wants us to see what His Son did for us. So although we will have glorified bodies, He will pull back the veil, and we will actually see hell.

For a terrible moment we will look into hell, where the fire is not quenched. We will see people who cannot do away with their memories from the earth. "Their worm dieth not"—their conscience will plague them forever. Isaiah 66:24 says we will see the carcasses of those whose consciences won't quit. If they were drinkers, they will constantly desire a drink. Lovers of pleasure who ignored going to church on Sundays and just played around will always want to do that, but they will never be fulfilled. Maybe that statement offends you, but that is what the Bible says. A pastor who fears God

doesn't fear men. As a pastor, I don't want to face God and have Him say to me, "You didn't dare to say it even though you knew it." I do know it, and I dare to say it.

The Destiny of Lovers of Pleasure

Second Timothy 3 tells us that in the last days, perilous times will come. Men will be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God. They will have a form of godliness, but it will just be a form with no substance. They will go to church when they feel like it, but their hearts are just one beat away from the last beat that will send them into eternity, no matter what their age. Because they love pleasure more than they love God, they have made a choice for death and curses rather than life and blessings.

So many waste time on pleasures and take chances on eternity. It is better to obey God than to obey men (Acts 5:29). Don't set out on a "sentimental journey." Put God ahead of man, and take a journey to Calvary through the Cross, through the Word, through the power of the risen Christ, the ascended Lord. I am not on a sentimental journey to please men and women. I have chosen to take a journey where I take up my Cross to please my God.

CONCLUSION

Familiarity toward God, His Word, and His Body is the major temptation people face today. Don't be haphazard with decisions that affect your eternal destiny. To enjoy eternity, you need to have an eternal purpose through an eternal provision: eternal life with grace and love.

Every moment, choose to live with eternity in view. Someone will die today at age 18. Someone else will die today who is only 25 years old. Neither one thought he would die so soon. We would be shocked if we knew how old some people are according to God's timetable.

With this in mind, we realize the importance of making proper choices for God. Our choices reveal our value system. A person with the right value system will always want the truth and will follow that truth in making his decisions. If you have never asked the Lord Jesus to be your Savior, there is no other choice that is more important. To confirm your decision, simply pray

to God the Father:

Dear Lord, I know I am a sinner. I believe that You sent Your Son, Jesus, to die for my sins on the Cross two thousand years ago. Thank You that you washed away all of my sins with Your precious Blood so that I could have eternal life. Please guide me in all Your ways this day and every day. In Jesus' name I ask it, Amen.