

## THE POWER OF CHOICE

- I. Have you ever wondered why there is evil in the world? There are two reasons why there is evil in the earth.

### A. Because God has given mankind the power of choice.

1. There are a lot of people who think God is responsible for the evil that is in the world.

***Isaiah 45:7*** - *“The One forming light and creating darkness, Causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the LORD who does all these.”*

*“I am the one who creates the light and makes the darkness. I am the one who sends good times and bad times. I, the LORD, am the one who does these things.”*  
NLT

2. **Evil is the result of the choices that Mankind makes in response to what God does or allows.**

- a. If we choose wisely than the good things remain good.  
**b. If we choose wisely than the bad things can become good.**

- B. God has decided that the power to choose is more valuable than the absence of evil.

1. **If evil is here because of the choices of people, then to remove evil He would have to remove the power to choose.**

2. The quality of relationship that God desires with us can only come through the power of choice.

**a. Abel and Cain, both sons of Adam. Abel chooses God. Cain chooses murder. And God lets him.**

b. Abraham and Lot, both pilgrims in Canaan. Abraham chooses God. Lot chooses Sodom. And God lets him.

**c. David and Saul, both kings of Israel. David chooses God. Saul chooses power. And God lets him.**

d. Peter and Judas, both deny their Lord. Peter seeks mercy. Judas seeks death. And God lets him.

- C. In every age of history, on every page of scripture, the truth is revealed: God allows us to make our own choices.**

1. No one defines this more clearly than Jesus. According to him, we can choose:

- a. a narrow gate or a wide gate - Matthew 7: 13-14
- b. a narrow road or a wide road - Matthew 7: 13-14**
- c. the big crowd or the small crowd - Matthew 7: 13-14

2. We can choose to:

- a. build on rock or sand - Matthew 7: 24-27
- b. serve God or riches - Matthew 6: 24**
- c. be numbered among the sheep or the goats - Matthew 25: 32-33

3. Could it be that the three crosses on the hill symbolize one of God's greatest gifts? The gift of choice.

a. The two criminals have so much in common.

- 1) **Convicted by the same system.**
- 2) **Condemned to the same death.**
- 3) **Surrounded by the same crowd.**
- 4) **Equally close to the same Jesus.**

5) **In fact, they began with the same sarcasm:**

*"the two criminals also said cruel things to Jesus" - Matthew 27:44.*

b. But one changed.

**Luke 23:39-43** - *"One of the criminals who were hanged there was hurling abuse at Him, saying, "Are You not the Christ? Save Yourself and us!" But the other answered, and rebuking him said, "Do you not even fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation? "And we indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong." And he was saying, "Jesus, remember me when You come in Your kingdom!" And He said to him, "Truly I say to you, today you shall be with Me in Paradise."*

3. Much has been said about the prayer of the penitent thief, and it's certainly warrants our admiration.

a. **But while we rejoice at the thief who changed, dare we forget the one who didn't?**

- 1) What about him, Jesus?
- 2) **Wouldn't a personal invitation be appropriate?**
- 3) **Wouldn't a word of persuasion be timely?**

b. **Does not the Shepherd leave the 99 sheep and pursue the one lost? Does not the housewife sweep the house until the loss coin is found?**

c. Yes, the Shepherd does, the housewife does, but the father of the prodigal, does nothing.

1) **The sheep was lost innocently.**

2) The coin was lost irresponsibly.

3) **But the prodigal son left intentionally. The father gave him the choice.**

d. Jesus gave both criminals the same.

#### 4. There are times:

a. When God sends thunder to stir us.

**b. When God sends blessings to lure us.**

c. But then there are times when God sends nothing but silence.

**d. As he honors us with the freedom to choose where we spend eternity.**

5. And what and honor it is. In so many areas of life we have no choice.

**a. Think about it.**

1) You didn't choose your gender.

2) **You didn't choose your siblings.**

3) You didn't choose your race.

4) **You didn't choose your place of birth.**

5) You didn't choose your parents.

6) **You didn't choose you're appearance.**

b. Sometimes our lack of choices angers us.

1) **It's not fair that I was born in poverty**

2) It's not fair that I sing so poorly

3) **It's not fair that I run so slowly.**

c. But the scales of life were forever tipped on the side of fairness when God allowed three crosses to be erected.

1) **All complaints were silenced when Jesus chose to go to the cross.**

2) As a result an injustice in this life is offset by the honor of choosing our destiny in the next.

#### 6. Would you have wanted otherwise?

a. Would you have preferred the opposite?

- 1) **You choose everything in this life, and he chooses where we spend the next?**
- 2) You choose to size of your nose, the color of your hair, and your DNA.
- 3) **And He chooses where you spend eternity?**
- 4) Is that what you would prefer?

**b. It would have been nice if God had let us order life like we order meal.**

- 1) I'll take good health and a high IQ.
- 2) **I'll pass on the music skills, but given me a fast metabolism.**
- 3) When he came to your life on earth, you weren't given a choice or a vote.

**7. But when it comes to life after death, you were.**

a. Not only does this privileged offset any injustice, the gift of free will can offset any mistakes.

**b. Think about the thief who repented. He made some bad mistakes in life.**

- 1) He chose the wrong crowd, the wrong morals, the wrong behavior.
- 2) **Is he spending eternity reaping the fruit of all the bad choices he made?**

c. No, just the opposite. He is enjoying the fruit of the one good choice he made.

**d. In the end all his bad choices were redeemed by one solitary good one.**

e. One good choice for eternity offsets 1000 bad ones on earth.

**8. How can two men see the same Jesus and one choose to mock him in the other choose to pray to him? I don't know, but they did**

a. And when one prayed, Jesus loved him enough to save him.

**b. And when the other mocked, Jesus loved him enough to let him.**

- 1) He allowed him the choice.
- 2) **He does the same for you.**

D. God gives eternal choices, and these choices have eternal consequences.

God is calling all of us to make wise choices:

***Deut 30:19 - "Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, that you and your descendants might live!"***