

7. The choice we make makes us

April 18, 2010

From the moment we open our eyes in the morning until our heads hit the pillows, we constantly have to make choices – ranging from minor choices to major choices, or some really serious spiritual choices. To the majority of ladies, it is a monumental task to decide which clothes to wear each day. But for the sake of my own safety, I will not go there. I might have a mob of ladies waiting to lynch me after the service.

Why is it that some Christians succeed, while others miserably fail? Why is it that some seem to run the race of life and cross the finish line with flying colors, while others just collapse in a heap time after time? It is because of choices – choices that we make each and every day. And life is filled with choices.

We either will go forward as Christians, or we will go backward. We either will progress, or we will regress. We either will gain ground, or we will lose ground. And if we choose to stand still, we will lose ground. So this is the kind of commitment where we should be seeking, on a daily basis, to grow spiritually, to progress, and to learn – and not just hold our own.

It is not the luck of the draw or something that only happens randomly. It is making the right choice to do the right thing. Whether we'd like to admit it or not, the choices we make, not circumstances, can bring blessings or curses to our lives. In other words, the choice we make makes us or breaks us.

This morning we are going to learn from apostle Paul who reminds Timothy to make right choices to serve the Lord and His people. We need to heed his advice deep into our hearts as well.

A. THE SOLID FOUNDATION OF GOD

2 Timothy 2:19 Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

Though Hymenaeus and Philetus were going around and spreading cancerous messages to destroy the Gospel of Jesus Christ as we've learned last Sunday, the Word of God stood like a solid rock. It still stands and it will continue.

God has a plan, He has a purpose and strategy and it is not going to fail, period. God doesn't hide behind His pearly gate and shaking like a leaf and wringing His hands and saying, "What am I gonna do? These people hate me. They reject My truth and I can not do anything." No, thousand times no. God laughs at them.

Psalm 2:1-4 Why do the nations rage, And the people plot a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth set themselves, And the rulers take counsel together, Against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, 3 "Let us break Their bonds in pieces And cast away Their cords from us." 4 He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; The Lord shall hold them in derision.

God is not one bit concerned because the majority of the human race has rejected Him and His truth. Their rejection does not diminish His truth, rather it only proves that it is true.

According to v19, God's solid foundation has a seal that has two inscriptions:

1) The Lord knows those who are His.

Paul was quoting this from Numbers 16:5. If you are a born-again Christian, the Lord wrote your name down in the Lamb's Book of Life permanently. He didn't pencil you in.

John 10:28 And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.

What an assurance, what a comfort we have in Christ Jesus! We are His through His blood on the cross, amen?

At this point, I'd like to ask some of you who are wondering if you are a born-again Christian. If you think that you are a Christian, but not a born-again Christian, it means one thing. You are not a Christian. Jesus said, "Unless you are born-again, you will not enter into heaven." You need to be saved today. I will show you how at the end of the service.

You might even insist that you believe in God. So does the devil. He even trembles at the name of Jesus. Does it mean that the devil goes to heaven? I think not, I know not. It is not a matter of believing that there is God. Rather it is a matter of being obedient to His Word and receiving Jesus into Your heart as the Savior and Lord.

2) Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.

Here is your marching order, folks: "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity." You cannot continue in ungodly life after you get saved. It is like that you just married your spouse and still going out for a date with someone else. Hello, are you that dense? Do you have a death wish or something?

When we become Christians, our lives should reflect the life of Jesus by departing from the sinful life we had before. Then again, some of you may say, "I was not a bad person. I didn't have a sinful life." If you really think that you were not a sinner, why did you need the Savior to be saved from the first place? If you don't think that you were not a sinner, you most likely are not saved either.

B. ARE YOU A VESSEL OF HONOR OR DISHONOR?

2 Timothy 2:20-21 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. 21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.

By individual's choice, we become vessels of honor or dishonor. To understand these two verses more clearly, we must read another portion of Scripture:

1 Corinthians 3:12-15 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

I want all of you to hear me well and carefully, please. We must never think that some Christians are better or more spiritual than others. The difference is that some of us choose to make ourselves more available to our Lord than others.

Nobody was born as a spiritual gold vessel. It is something we have to work at. Yes, salvation is free for us, but sanctification is our choice to achieve. Sanctification

means "set apart". It is not passive, rather it is very, very active. It is a constant series of choices to make ourselves set apart from carnal people and things that surround us but closer to the godly things that makes us honorable in God's sight.

Can we keep ourselves from carnal things all the time and never make a mistake? I wish that would be the case. But we cannot, because we are still sinful humans. Then, what do we do when we sin?

1 John 1:9 If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

That is why Jesus died for us so that we become cleansed and become holy and righteous at His account.

If we choose to make ourselves to be cleansed from dishonorable things through the blood of Jesus, God will regard us as vessels of honor, sanctified and useful for the Master.

C. HOW TO BE SANCTIFIED

2 Timothy 2:22-23 Flee also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart. 23 But avoid foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.

The Bible is so practical. It doesn't give us some abstract philosophical mumbo-jumbos which mean nothing, but clear and concise applications we can utilize right away.

1) Flee also youthful lusts

What would be this youthful lusts? Sexual temptation, illicit pleasure of the flesh and a longing for fame and glory often mark one's immaturity, not necessarily limited in physical age.

If you are into pornography of any kinds; if you are having sex before marriage; if you are flirting with someone who is not your spouse, God is speaking to you right now. The person next to you may not know about what you do behind the closed door, but the Lord knows. Stop, flee from your lust as of now. If not, it will be exposed at the most inconvenient time.

Sometimes we must take radical, drastic steps to remove ourselves from whatever it is that is hurting us spiritually. That may mean immediate change. It may mean physically getting up and saying, "I'm out of here." Or it might be breaking that relationship you have.

If you are not willing to flee from youthful lusts, there is a real limit to how much God can use you. You cannot really say, "Yes" to God until you can say, "No" to your carnal nature and temptations.

2) Pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.

Cleansing can never be a matter of just avoiding bad things. It must also be the pursuit of righteous and good things as a replacement.

Luke 11:24-26 "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' 25 And when he comes, he finds it swept and put in order. 26 Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked

than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first."

Jesus is telling us that when we take out bad things from our lives, we must fill our hearts with godly things from the Lord. Otherwise, when there is a vacuum in our hearts, it is natural to attract something our carnal flesh desires again.

To be cleansed, we must do everything we can to be right in our personal relationships with others. Cleansing needs to extend to how we treat others.

Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.

But when the other person chooses not to make peace with you when you tried everything you could, then the ball is no longer in your court. Let the Lord handle it.

3) Endless debate and argument accomplish one thing – Strife.

Walking away without any further comment from endless argument should not be considered as a defeat. It is a wise and godly thing to do. Silence might be misinterpreted, but never misquoted.

D. THE GENTLE SERVANT

2 Timothy 2:24-26 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, 26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will.

The world's idea of great man is not being a servant, nor being gentle. Some would call it, "sissy," or "wuss." But in the kingdom of God, greatness is marked by being a servant of the Lord and by being gentle to all.

Matthew 23:11 But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant.

One of the biggest requirements of the servant of God is 'patience.' Don't ask for this from the Lord. He will give it to you whether you like it or not. To have humility, we need patience; to have gentleness, we need patience; to be a servant of God, we need patience; to be able to teach, we need patience. Because God's work often takes time and a lot of patience. God is never in a hurry, but we are. While we wait upon the Lord, we gain wisdom and strength.

From the time I was called to be a pastor by the Lord to the time I actually started our first church service, it took 5 years. During that time, the Lord shaped me, tested me and taught me. I am not saying that I have arrived. You can tell I have not. Nobody has. But I am learning and making myself available to the Lord so that He can continue to use me in His plan.

The gentleness and patience Timothy must have does not mean he is to never confront those who need to be confronted. But he must do it in humility.

Anyone who fights against God's truth, the Word of God, is deceived. They must come to their senses like the Prodigal Son in Luke 15.

Luke 15:13-19 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. 14 But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. 15 Then he went and joined himself to a citizen

of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. 16 And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. 17 But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, 19 and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."'

This prodigal son didn't realize that he was wrong and had sinned against God and his father until he came to his senses until he was ankle deep in a pig sty. Many people never come to their senses even to their last breath. They just plainly refuse to accept Jesus as their Savior because they are wrapped in the snare of the devil and have become his captives so long that they don't even realize it.

A God's servant's purpose is not to win arguments but to win souls. The ministry is no place for a lazy believer because it demands discipline and work. It is no place for a cowardly believer because there are enemies to fight and tasks to be completed.

E. APPLICATIONS

- 1) When we become Christians, our lives should reflect the life of Jesus by departing from the sinful life we had before.
- 2) Cleansing can never be a matter of just avoiding bad things. It must also be the pursuit of righteous and good things as a replacement.
- 3) A God's servant's purpose is not to win arguments but to win souls.