

THE DECISION IS YOURS #6

“The Ultimate Decision”

I. Introduction

I cannot come to the conclusion of this teaching series on the power of our decisions and choices without mentioning the “**theological tension**” between 2 biblical facts that confuse some people: that God is sovereign and yet at the same time we are responsible for the decisions we make.

“Theological Tension”

The intellectual stress resulting from holding two or more facts as true when those facts seem, to some degree, contradictory.

(Best example: the doctrine of the Trinity, that God is one God in three Persons)

The same tension arises when the Bible tells us that God is sovereign; that means that God is in control of all things. And yet the Bible also reveals that within the sovereignty of His Divine counsel He has given mankind the power of choice.

GOD IS SOVEREIGN. MAN IS RESPONSIBLE.

The Bible teaches both statements are true.

But many are confused.

Some Christians believe that since God is sovereign our decisions don't matter because has already predestined what will happen to us. So it's all up to God.

But other Christians make the opposite mistake; they believe that God is passive, that He can or will do nothing until we make a decision. So it's all up to us.

But both these beliefs are wrong. God is sovereign. And man has freedom to choose. These are 2 sides of the same coin; God is sovereign, but at the same time we are responsible for the decisions we make!

But many people struggle with this. The great Preacher and Theologian Charles Spurgeon wrote...

“That God predestines and yet man is responsible are two facts few can see clearly. They (God’s sovereignty and human responsibility) are believed to be inconsistent and contradictory to each other. If, then, I find taught in one part of the Bible that everything is fore-ordained, that is true. If I find in another scripture that man is responsible for all his (choices and) actions, that is true. And it is only my folly that leads me to imagine that these two truths can ever contradict each other.”

Charles Spurgeon

The Bible says God is in control. But we are not victims or puppets because God has set choices before us and He will hold us accountable for the decisions we make.

Here’s a good way to get it right: If I end up in Heaven, God gets all the glory, because He chose me in Christ before the foundation of the world; but if I end up in hell, I chose to go there. I have no one to blame but myself!

Charles Spurgeon

“From the Word of God I gather that damnation is all of man, top to bottom and salvation is all of grace, from first to last. He that perishes chooses to perish; but he that is saved is saved because God has chosen to save him.”

Charles Spurgeon

The fact that God honors our choices is the “ultimate decision” of life and death, which God set before Israel in Deuteronomy 30:

II. The Ultimate Decision

A. Deuteronomy 30

1. This is a powerful passage where the Sovereign God clearly offers Israel a choice:

Deuteronomy 30:15-18 NIV

15 See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. 16 For I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.

17 But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, 18 I declare to you

this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.

2. God sums it up in Verse 30, the “Ultimate Decision”...

Deuteronomy 30:19

Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessing and curses. Now I call heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life so that you and your descendants might live!

3. Notice 3 things in this verse:

1. Our choices are clear.

(Life and Blessing or Death and Cursing)

2. We cannot be neutral.

(There is no place for passivity! Death is the “Default” setting)

And...

3. Our decision affects our descendants

“Choose life so that you and your descendants might live”.

a. Comment: Most people would do anything for their children; make any sacrifice; but many will not do the one thing that matters most!

b. Comment: You would think the choice would be obvious! But when we read the rest of the record, we find that only 2 men among them made the right decision!

4. An even more complete picture of the ultimate choice is found in Deuteronomy 28, one of the most remarkable chapters in the Old Testament.

B. Deuteronomy 28

1. There are 68 verses in this chapter divided into 2 distinct sections:

- Deuteronomy 1:1-14 is a list of the blessings that come as a result of hearing and doing God’s word
- Deuteronomy 1:15-68 is a list of the curses that come as a result of not hearing and doing God’s word

a. 14 verses of blessings; 54 verses of curses; in a sinful world more can go wrong than go right.

2. The 1st section begins with...

Deuteronomy 28:1-2

And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth: And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.

- a. The ultimate decision that will cause God’s blessings to “come upon us and overtake us” is to HEAR and DO the Word of God.
- b. This is followed by 12 verses of blessings:

SUMMARY OF THE BLESSINGS

- Exaltation (or Promotion)
 - Physical Health
 - Fruitfulness
 - Prosperity
 - Victory
 - Favor of God

3. The 2nd section begins with...

Deuteronomy 28:15

But it shall come to pass, if thou wilt not hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command thee this day; that all these curses shall come upon thee, and overtake thee:

- a. If we not decide to hear and do the Word so the blessings will come, we will decide to not hear and do the Word and the curses will come!
- b. The next 53 verses list the curses, which can be summarized this way:

A SUMMARY OF THE CURSES

- Humiliation
- Barrenness
- Physical illness
- Mental illness

- **Family breakdown**
 - **Poverty**
 - **Defeat**
 - **Depression**
- **Disfavor with God**

c. So the whole chapter is in 2 sections; first, the blessings that come upon us and overtake us when we choose life and second, the curses that come upon us and overtake us when we choose death.

4. And this is the “ultimate” choice God sets before us: whether we will or will not choose to hear and do the Word of God!

a. Remember: Decision is a function of the will not the emotions.

5. One of the blessings is Deuteronomy 28:13...

And the Lord will make you the head and not the tail; you shall be above only and not beneath, if you hear the commandments of God and are careful to do them.

a. One of the curses is in v.44; another will be the head and you will be the tail.

b. So which will I choose? Will I be the head that makes the decision that brings my life into blessing? Or will I be the tail, dragged around by other men or by my circumstances, seeing myself as a victim? The decision is mine...

III. Summing Up The Series

A. How Do I Do It?

1. The ultimate decision that leads to life and blessing is the decision I make to hear and do the Word of God.

Deuteronomy 28:1-2

And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day...all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.

2. This great truth is confirmed many places in scripture; verses I committed to memory many, many years ago:

a. The first verses of Psalm 1 are the foundation for all the rest of the Psalms!

Psalm 1:1-3

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

b. The same principle is spoken to Joshua after the death of Moses:

Joshua 1:8

This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein; for then thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and then thou shalt have good success.

KJV

c. God commanded Israel to take His word, speak His word and do His word:

Deuteronomy 30:14

But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.

3. The decision to hear and do the Word of God was commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ:

Luke 11:27-28 NASB

And it came about while He said these things, one of the women in the crowd raised her voice, and said to Him, "Blessed is the womb that bore You, and the breasts at which You nursed." He said, "On the contrary, blessed are those who hear the word of God, and keep it."

Matthew 7:24

24 "Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

Matthew 7:26

26 "But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall."

4. Two men/two houses/2 storms all the same. But one man was wise and the other was foolish. The wise man heard the word kept it; the foolish man heard the word but did not keep it. So one stood the other fell based on the decision they made as to hearing and doing the Word of God!

5. In my experience, based on this teaching, I believe that many who call themselves Christian are in great self-deception.

C. The Great Self-Deception

1. Let us look at a powerful passage of scripture from the Epistle of James:

James 1:21

Therefore get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent, and humbly receive the word planted in you, which is able to save your souls.

a. Humility (last week) means to hear or receive the Word...

But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

James 1:22 NKJV

b. To read the Word or hear the Word and not DO the Word puts us in a deadly self-deception!

c. Self-deception like those Jesus rebuked in Matthew 7: "not everyone who says to Me 'Lord, Lord' will enter the Kingdom of heaven"; and "Many will say to Me 'Lord, Lord' and not get in...but he that does the will of my Father."

2. James then compares hearing the Word of God to looking in a mirror:

James 1:23-25 NKJV

For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.

a. Reading the Bible is like looking at myself in the mirror; it shows me what needs to change!

“When you read your Bible your Bible is also reading you.”

Derek Prince

b. The Word of God is like a mirror that shows me to me. Why would I look into a mirror if I don't intend to take action according to what it tells me?

So indeed the hearing is in order to the doing; if this be wanting, the hearing is of no value.

Rev. Phillip Schaff

c. We approach a mirror intending to act on what we see; so it ought to be with how we approach the Bible!

As a looking-glass shows us the spots and defilements upon our faces, that they may be remedied and washed off, so the word of God shows us our sins, that we may repent of them and get them pardoned;

Matthew Henry

3. But if you read your Bible or hear a sermon and do not do what you heard You are like the man who looked in the mirror and did not do anything with what he saw; he “went his way and “immediately forgot what manner of man he was.”

D. Review and Close

1. God sets many choices before us; He is sovereign, but we have freedom to choose.

2. Our decisions determine our destiny.

3. Decisions are a function of the will, not the emotions.

- To praise

- To forgive
- To repent
- And the ultimate decision: Life and Blessing

4. The greatest decision we make is that we will HEAR and DO the Word of God; the life that brings blessings and breaks curses!

CLOSING PRAYER

Title