



## What To Do?

*Proverbs 21:3 To do what is right and just is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.*

- My friends, every day we have endless choices to make, and of course every time we say, “Yes,” to one thing, we are inevitably saying, “No,” to all the alternatives. In his love and respect for humanity God has graciously given us freedom in many earthly matters. We can use our own wisdom and preferences to decide if we want shredded wheat or apple cinnamon oatmeal for breakfast, or if we should take the freeway or the side-roads to the store, and even as we make these everyday decisions, when we do so with faith and thankfulness to the Lord in our hearts these are beautiful, God-pleasing actions (cf. 1 Cor. 10:31; Col. 3:17).
- God does not tell us in his Word what to eat for breakfast or what route to take to work, but he does tell us what is right and wrong. He has given us his Ten Commandments to direct us on how we are to use our hearts and hands and mouths to his glory and for the good of our neighbor (cf. Exodus 20:10-17). Jesus sums up God’s law by instructing us to love and trust in the Lord above all things and to love our neighbor as ourselves (Mark 12:30-31). All this is to say that when the choices we make have a spiritual or moral element to them, we are no longer free, but are expected by God to do what is right. For example: your workplace policy might be, “no surfing the internet except during your lunch break”. So when that lunch hour comes you are free to browse CNN or catch up on sports scores or check your email, but outside that timeframe those very same activities would be sinful because you would be “robbing” your boss or company of your time and productivity.
- If we were perfect beings living in a perfect world the question of what to do would be so clear, so simple, so cut and dry, but once we throw our sinful nature into the mix, the good that we want to do suddenly gets more complicated and difficult to carry out on account of sin’s deceitfulness (cf. Paul’s struggle with sin in Romans 7:7ff). With every moral choice that we make sin in us and in our world is ever-tempting us to make selfish evil bargains: to take the bigger piece of pie for ourselves, to launch that incognito browser that no one can trace or see, to lie or spread rumors, all with the assumption that we can “make up for it” by doing good or going to church or giving some special offering to God. My friends, that may be how Hindu karma works, that may be how our natural minds think, but Solomon says that is NOT how our God operates. He wants nothing but real holiness from the start and allows no excuses and makes no bargains with sin—“to do what is right and just is more acceptable to the LORD than sacrifice.”
- We need the Lord to strengthen us in our inner being through his Word and Sacraments so that with his help we can continually fight against the craftiness our sinful nature to “cut a bargain” with sin, and when we fall for its deceptions, we need God’s Spirit to lead us to repent and find forgiveness and the power to change at the cross of Jesus. There God made no bargains with our sins; instead he destroyed them and broke their power to condemn us with the sacrifice of his perfect Son in our place. Empowered by his sacrifice for us we can then go through each day seeking to do his righteous and holy will, doing battle against our sinful flesh, and giving ourselves as living sacrifices to God (Rom. 12:1).

Prayer: Heavenly Father, because of all your love and boundless grace for me, lead me to dedicate each day and every choice I make to your pleasure and to your glory. Amen.