

Moments for YOU

Volume 49, Number 1

Theme: Choices



EDITOR'S NOTES

Being creatures to whom God has given the power of choice, we all have the opportunity every day to make good and bad choices in matters large and small.

BIG & SMALL CHOICES

What is a big choice? What is a small choice? Does God care which route we take to a certain place or the time and place in which we do certain things? I'm reminded of the incident recorded in John chapter 4 where the Lord Jesus was traveling from Judea to Galilee. Verse 4 says that He *had* to go through Samaria. Was that the only route from the one place to the other? No—there was more than one way to make that trip, and the route He took on that day was not the preferred route for many.

So how did He decide which way to go? As the story unfolds, we find Him taking a rest from His journey at Jacob's well in Sychar. This was not an accidental layover, however, for the woman with whom He had a conversation at that well was just one of many people from that town who came to know the Saviour as a result of His stopping for lunch that day. His "*small*" choice of routes, and His decision to rest at a certain place and at a certain time, put Him in the right place at the right time to be a *big* blessing to the people there.

DIFFERENT PATHS

Does this mean that God wants us all to go to Sychar for lunch? Of course not. We each have our own spheres of influence and the Lord has different paths for each of us to follow. Consider Peter and John. Jesus gave Peter a glimpse into his own future,

and when Peter asked what was in store for John, the Lord said: "If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? follow thou Me" (John 21:22). Maybe the Lord has a different path for you than He does for your friend. There is a lot that we can learn from witnessing how the Lord is working in someone else's life, and we can gain great wisdom by marking the consequences that other's choices have brought. However, when it comes to the Lord's path for you, His word is: "follow thou Me."

THE DECIDING FACTORS

So if the Lord has different paths for each of us to follow, how can we discern what His will for our life is? Paul's prayer for the Colossians was that they "might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding" (Colossians 1:9). The last part of the verse unlocks the first: How can we be wise apart from the Scriptures? How can we have spiritual understanding apart from the Spirit of God?

To know what His will is, we must be familiar with His Word. If we are thinking about a certain thing that is contrary to the mind of God revealed in Scripture, we need not go any further—His will does not contradict His Word. For other matters, our ability to know God's will is absolutely dependant upon the closeness of our walk with Him. As J.N. Darby has said: "There exists no means of ascertaining [God's will] without reference to the state of our own soul."

May we each examine the path that we are on in the light of God's will, and seek to be walking that path each day in such a way that He can use us for His glory. —T. Don Johnson

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THE POWER TO CHOOSE

The success or failure of everyday living depends upon your power of choice. Every day you are making decisions and your decisions form and build the network of your life and the structure of your personality and character. Not only do the choices that you make affect the direction of your life, but the decision that you make in this life about Jesus Christ will forever set your eternal destiny.

The question asked by Pilate, the Roman ruler who delivered Jesus into the hands of sinners to be crucified, is the question that every person must answer for himself: "What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?" (Matthew 27:22). Perhaps you are asking, "What do you mean? What can I do with Jesus? Why should I have anything to do with Him? How can He affect my eternal destiny?"

It all comes down to the question of sin. You may not have thought of it in this way before, but the presence of death in the world is positive proof of the fact of sin. The Bible says, "The wages of [or payment for] sin is death" (Romans 6:23). Physical death (separation of the spirit from the body) and spiritual death (separation from God in the Lake of Fire) are both the result of sin. All of mankind is subject to death because "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). The Bible declares "It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

Because sin must be judged, your sin has created a debt that you owe to God. If you were to spend more money than you had, you would go into debt. Even after you stopped overspending, your debt would remain until it was repaid. In the same

way, even if you could stop sinning, your debt to God will remain until it is paid in full. Do you not see the precariousness of your position—your powerlessness? But listen to God's Word. "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.... God commendeth His love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:6,8).

This, then, is the reason why the greatest question that you will ever have to answer, or the greatest choice you will ever have to make, is "What shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?" You are a lost, helpless sinner. You are in desperate need of reconciliation with God, and God in His grace and love has provided it in His Son whom He has sent into the world to live the only sinless life that has ever been lived, and to sacrificially die for you—to pay your penalty for sin. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

The only way to be delivered from the power and guilt of sin, and its eternal penalty, is to believe in Jesus. *The power of your choice will either become the power that destroys you, or the power that will give you eternal life and security.* God promises, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised Him from the dead, thou shalt be saved.... For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Romans 10:9,13).

Will you now answer this question? "**What shall I do with Jesus which is called Christ?**" The choice is yours to make; no one else can make it for you.

—Adapted from a tract

DAVID'S CHOICE

Read 2 Samuel 24:1-14

SUBTLE TEMPTATION

“He moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel” (v. 1). This move evidently came from the Devil, for in another place we read: “Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel” (1 Chronicles 21:1). It was to Israel’s own hurt and defect that their number and strength was depended on. It is ever the cunning device of Satan to get us to trust in our own strength. It is “not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord” (Zechariah 4:6).

FULL CONFESSION

“David’s heart smote him after that he had numbered the people. And David said unto the Lord, I have sinned greatly” (v. 10). Joab’s glowing report that there were in David’s united kingdom thirteen hundred thousand valiant men that drew sword (v. 9) brought no feeling of relief to the sin-smitten heart of the king. What were these if God was not for him? All our natural gifts and powers of intellect however great, all our experiences however rich and varied, will avail us nothing in the work of God if the power of the Holy Spirit is wanting. We number our organizations, our meetings, our people, and our money, but how much do we count on the power of God? Might we not pray with David, “O Lord, take away the iniquity of Thy servant; for I have done very foolishly”?

TERRIBLE OFFER

“Thus saith the Lord, I offer thee three things [punishments]; choose thee one of them” (vv. 12,13). Yielding to the tempter has brought to David a sorrowful alternative. God does not promise to give us our choice as to how He will chastise us for our pride

and unbelief, but let us take heed lest there be in any of us an evil heart, for sin will surely find us out.

GOD-HONORING CHOICE

David said, “Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for His mercies are great” (v. 14). David had sinned against God in choosing to number the people, but now he would honor God in allowing Him to choose for him. God’s mighty hand was uplifted to smite, and the penitent king saw it coming down with terrible force. But he looked beyond the awful sword-girt arm, into Jehovah’s gracious heart, and took refuge in His mercy. Although God’s arm is strong to smite, His love is strong to save. The choice God offers now in grace is between life and death, between retribution and salvation, heaven and hell.

—W.T.P. Wolston, condensed from *Handfuls of Purpose*, published by Bible Truth Publishers, Addison, IL. Available from the publisher.

THE GREAT DIVIDE

Far up on the summit of the Rocky Mountains is a spot marked by a huge signboard as “The Great Divide,” meaning that the spot indicated is the watershed of the North American Continent. All the waters on one side eventually flow into the Atlantic, and all the waters on the other side flow into the Pacific. Here each drop of rain as it descends determines its ultimate destiny! How small the beginning; how enormous the “divide” at the finish! Every individual stands, at some period in their life’s history, at the commencement of the great and eternal divide. “Choose you this day whom ye will serve” (Joshua 24:15). “Choose life” (Deuteronomy 30:19).

—From *Tales Worth Telling*

YOU CHOOSE YOUR FUTURE

Would it come as a shock to you to learn that, in a large measure, you determine your own future? You become in life what you really want to become. If you desire a certain career intensely enough, you will probably get it. You hold the key to your own tomorrow.

You will remember that God appeared to Solomon one night and asked him what he would like. Solomon requested wisdom and knowledge, and his request was granted—together with riches, wealth, honor, victory, and long life.

In a similar way, the question comes to every person, “Ask what I shall give thee.” And what we ask for is basically what we get.

It is said that Lord Roseberry had three passionate ambitions as a youth: 1) He wanted to win the Derby, 2) He wanted to marry the daughter of a millionaire, and 3) He wanted to become Prime Minister. History tells us that he realized all three.

Some years ago, a young man knelt by his bed in a Chicago home and, claiming the promise of Psalm 145:19, he told the Lord that he earnestly desired the following: 1) To be able to memorize generous portions of the Word, 2) To be able to write tracts and to distribute great quantities of them, 3) To be able to furnish tracts freely to Christian workers, 4) To be able to preach the Gospel and minister the Word of God, and 5) To be able to write spiritual articles to the edification of believers. All who know Tom Olson know that he has an unusual talent for Scripture memory, that His Gospel preaching and Bible teaching have been used to the blessing of many, that his magazine articles are widely read, and that his

tracts have had perhaps the widest circulation of any man.

And this brings us to the point! Be careful what you want. So much depends on your choice. And there is a terrible finality about it. “When the liquid iron flows from the blast furnace, it may be run into any mold; but it soon cools and hardens, and obstinately keeps its shape, in spite of hammers. If young men and women could but see the possibilities of their youth, and the issues that hang on early choices, as clearly as they will see them some day, there would be fewer wasted mornings of life and fewer gloomy sunsets” (Alexander Maclaren).

For every one who deliberately makes a choice, there are probably three who simply drift. They think of themselves as the pawns of chance or luck. They are fatalists. But, still, they have made their choice, and that choice is to drift along and take whatever comes.

Thinking young people should be awake to their solemn position and priceless choice. They should realize that they can become almost anything they like. Then they should be tremendously careful that what they like is really a worthy selection.

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It may be true that there are two sides to every question, but it is also true that there are two sides to a sheet of flypaper, and it makes a big difference to the fly which side he chooses.

—Christian Medical Society Journal

MAKING A CHOICE

In Mark 11:4 we find this phrase—“A place where two ways met.” This is descriptive of so many experiences in life, and involves the making of a choice. For those who accept the Lord Jesus as Saviour, the matter of making a choice is still open regarding how that Christian life shall be lived. Sadly, it is possible to live in such a way that, at times, others may not even realize one is a Christian. Every day of our lives we constantly come, as it were, to a place where two ways meet. It is so easy to stand up in a meeting and sing, “True hearted, whole-hearted, faithful and loyal,” but, alas, so often we lower our standards and give place to the enemy.

The story of Lot is a vivid example of this. He made a wrong choice—a selfish one. He lowered his standard: first of all living near Sodom, then later within. “And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of the Jordan, that it was well watered every where.... Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly” (Genesis 13:10-13).

On the other hand we are given a shining example of one who made a good choice. What a wonderful life Moses lived, and how mightily he was used of God. Surely this is the desire of each one of us. You will recall the record of this man of God: “Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Hebrews 11:25).

Again, a Christian life that is definite, strong and beautiful, is used to influence others to make a right choice. Ruth chose Naomi’s God, and way of life. “And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God” (Ruth 1:16).

The strength, purpose, and effectiveness of our Christian life will depend upon what goes on in secret between ourselves and our God. We need day by day to spend time in His presence. May it be said of us, as it was said of Mary—“Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (Luke 10:42).

The world is always looking on, and how sad it is that there is often so little evidence of the power of God in our lives, that others fail to see the value and worth of the Christian life. When Elijah gathered together that great crowd on Mount Carmel, in a dramatic way the truth was made clear. “And Elijah came unto the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him” (1 Kings 18:21).

*So often in our lives we find
A place where two ways meet,
And much depends on which we choose,
Oh Saviour, guide our feet.*

*The promise in Thy Word is this,
At such times we shall hear
A voice to guide us in the way
Oh Master, make it clear.*

*Then when we know which is the right
But want our own way still,
And seem inclined to choose the wrong,
Oh Jesus, bend our will.*

—Joy Butler, from *Five Minutes Past Three*

QUESTION & ANSWER

QUESTION: As a new year starts, I am faced with many different choices and decisions. Can you give me some help so that I make the right decisions?

ANSWER: It is so good that you want to make right choices. Romans 12:1,2 gives us the starting point for making right decisions. This Scripture is for everyone who has accepted the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Saviour. "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.*" This would cause us to say with the apostle Paul, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" (Acts 9:6).

If that is the prayer of our heart the Lord will lead us on step by step to where and how He would have us to serve Him. Some further steps for making right choices are:

1. Erase and pray. We need to erase from our thoughts anything that reflects our self-will. A good Scripture to memorize and meditate upon is Psalm 139:23,24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me."

2. Read and meditate upon God's Word. In Joshua 1:8 we read: "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.*"

3. Consider and think. Don't rush into anything: "He that hasteth with his feet sinneth" (Proverbs 19:2). "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:5,6).

4. Decide and check. "Be [anxious] for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6,7).

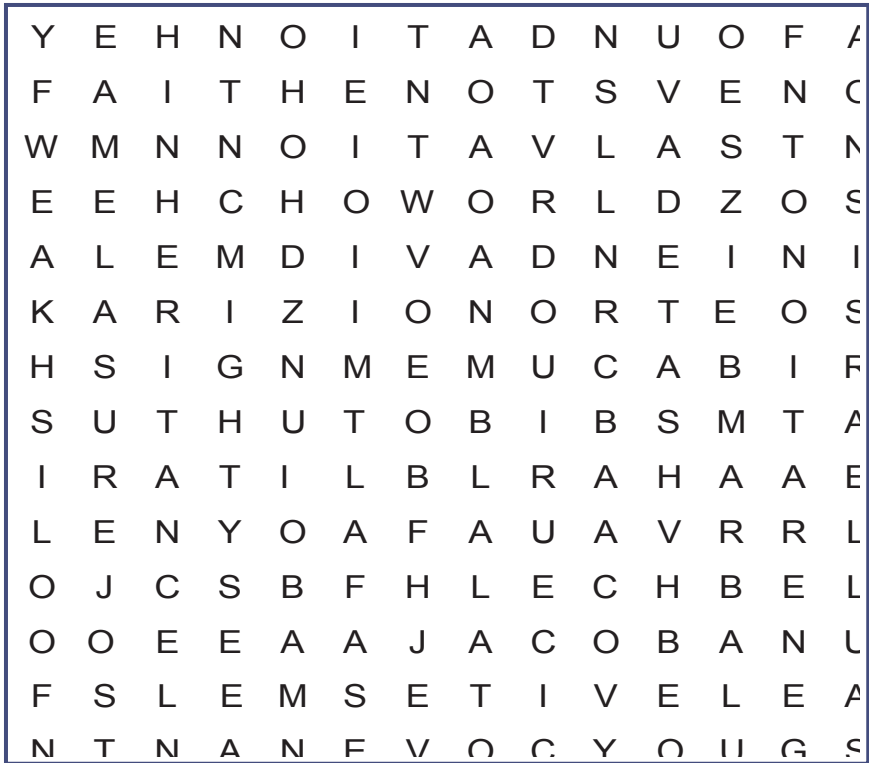
God has said: "I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye" (Psalm 32:8). If we are going to be guided by God's eye we need to walk close to Him. May you, dear reader, experience God's leading and guiding in your life. —John D. McNeil

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- Who did God choose to be "as a signet"? (Haggai 2:23)
- Who was a chosen vessel to bring the gospel to the Gentiles? (Acts 9:15,17)
- "God hath chosen the ___ things of the world to confound the wise; and ... the ___ things of the world to confound the things which are ___" (1 Corinthians 1:27)
- "God hath from the beginning chosen you to ___ through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2 Thessalonians 2:13)
- "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in ___" (James 2:5)
- Christ was chosen of God as a living ___ (1 Peter 2:4)
- "But ye are a chosen ___" (1 Pet. 2:9)
- "He hath chosen us in Him before the ___ of the ___" (Ephesians 1:4)

GOD'S CHOICES WORDFIND

Find the answers to the clues hidden in the puzzle. Once you have circled all of the answers, the leftover letters will spell out a saying of Jesus.



- Who said to Michal, “the Lord, which chose me before thy father”? (2 Samuel 6:21)
- Who did the Lord choose to be Israel’s first king? (1 Samuel 10:21,24)
- What city has God chosen to put His name there? (1 Kings 14:21)
- Who did the Lord choose to carry the ark of the covenant? (1 Chronicles 15:2)
- “For the Lord hath chosen ____; He hath desired it for His habitation” (Psalm 132:13)
- What were the two names of the man the Lord chose to bring out of the land of Ur? (Nehemiah 9:7)
- “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord; and the people whom He hath chosen for his own ____” (Psalm 33:12)
- Who did God choose to build a temple for Him? (1 Chronicles 29:1)
- What did God make with His chosen people? (Psalm 89:3)
- Which of Isaac’s sons did God choose? (Psalm 105:6)
- “For the Lord will have mercy on Jacob, and will yet choose ____” (Isaiah 14:1)
- “I have chosen thee in the furnace of ____” (Isaiah 48:10)

(Continued on page 7)