

Making Choices

Ron Roberts

Life is all about making choices. We must decide what classes to take, what job to accept, and which person to marry. Many of these choices come with consequences. *If you did not take the job with Duke Energy you would have never met the girl you eventually married.* Some choices will lead to other choices. *An extremely rambunctious first child may cause you to not have a second child.* Some choices will remove other decisions from your list of options. *When you enlist in the military you will not get to select where to live. Uncle Sam will make that decision for you for the next four years.*

The children of Israel were going to enter the promise land without Moses. God had told him he would not enter the land. Therefore, Moses wanted to encourage obedience from the people that would last after he was gone. He put the option forth to them in Deut 30:19-20. *I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD swear unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.*

They could choose life. It had a consequence of blessing. If they selected one then they got both. The same was true for their other option. If they chose death it would come with cursing. Moses elaborates on the blessing they could receive by choosing to love, obey, and cleave to God. Some might call this positive preaching, but the curse is actually found in the verse preceding our recorded text.

Joshua was near the end of his life, just as Moses was, when he gave them a similar choice. Joshua also wanted them to stay faithful after he was gone. This faithfulness would not be established by a mere memory of a good man. They needed to make the choice for themselves.

Josh 24:15 says, “*And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.*”

The people had three choices. They could serve the gods of old, the idols they were familiar with from Egypt. There are people who will always cling to the old ways. They like the familiar and traditional. They could reject those idols and accept the new idols that the people in Canaan served. Some people are influenced by what is immediately before them. They are captivated by what is new and different.

The third choice was to serve God. This was the choice Joshua made for his family and himself. His example likely influenced the people at that point to choose God also. But as we see in the book of Judges, this choice must be made by every generation. The faithfulness of Moses and Joshua could not be transferred to Israel. They had to make their choice. One generation chose God, but the next one followed idols.

Knowledge brings responsibility. Moses told them what their choice would lead to. They were allowed to make an “informed” decision. Joshua also paraded the various options before the people. They were able to choose from the three.

We have heard of parents who refuse to make their children go to worship. They claim this is brainwashing them. They say they will wait until the child is old enough to make his own decision whether to be religious or not.

What these parents fail to see is that their children will not get the opportunity to make an informed decision. While the parents refuse to expose them to God, His people, and His ways; the world is not being so reserved. They are showing the child immodesty, teaching him profanity, alluring him with materialism, and deceiving him with idols.

Most of us know children who were brought to worship and Bible classes by devote parents. Some of them left the Lord and His church when they reached adulthood. The parents showed them the truth, but the world was actively exposing them to the other side. The child made the wrong choice, but it was an informed decision. Of course, many other children stay faithful and train their children toward the same choice.

Many of our religious neighbors have never been taught from the Bible. They may stay with the denomination of their parents even after being taught. Others do not want the “church” they grew up in. They choose a new, exciting, mega, and unidenominational church even after we teach them. Like Joshua and Moses we want them to see the other side. They might choose to follow Jesus if they hear about Him.

We can teach our neighbors and our children, but ultimately the choice will be theirs. Like Joshua, we can teach them, show them, and reveal our own choice to them. They should see within us the example of one who has chosen to serve the Lord. May the decision we made for ourselves and our family be sufficient for our grown children. May they choose to stay with God and to raise their families to do the same thing.