

WHO IS AT THE controls?

Allen Webster

If life is a flight through time,
who is in the cockpit?
If life is a joyride,
who is behind the steering wheel?
If life is a voyage,
who is at the helm?

Decisions determine direction (Joshua 24:15). Direction determines destiny (Matthew 7:13–14). Will we ascend or descend at the judgment? It all depends on who makes our decisions.

“Me”

“Invictus” is commonly quoted by valedictorians at high school graduations across America and thus sums up the philosophy of many youths as they begin their adult lives. It was written by William Ernest Henley, an early humanist who had been crippled since his childhood in Gloucester, England. His master-of-my-fate-captain-of-my-soul philosophy was only a little ahead of its time.

Invictus

Out of the night that covers me,
Black as the Pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds, and shall find, me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate;
I am the captain of my soul.

Sinatra’s song, “My Way,” is often requested at funerals. So from the beginning of adult life to the end of it, many say, “I make my own choices—nobody tells me what to do.”

Bible examples abound of those who had self on life’s throne. Note the personal pronouns of a certain rich man:

What shall I do, because I have no room where to bestow my fruits? And he said, This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater . . . there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou has much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry (Luke 12:17–19).

God called him a “fool” (Luke 12:20). Another rich man had the “me” philosophy and awoke in torments (Luke 16:23).

Self-will took Nebuchadnezzar from his throne (Daniel 4:30–37) and kept Moses from Canaan (Numbers 20:8–12). Felix trembled at the thought of giving control to Christ (Acts 24:25); Agrippa came close to handing over the reins, but not close enough (Acts 26:28). The prodigal is not the only young man who has let such thinking take him to the far country and into the pignep of sin (cf. Luke 15).

Paul said, “Let no man seek his own, but every man another’s wealth [interest] . . . I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own” (1 Corinthians 10:24–33). He added, “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of

others” (Philippians 2:4). Self-will disqualifies a man from the eldership (Titus 1:7), as it does one from being a true Christian (Philippians 2:3–5). The Jews were guilty of “going about to establish their own righteousness” because they had not “submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God” (Romans 10:3).

We will never be able by our own bootstraps to rise out of the mire into which our sins have sunk us. The man who says he is in control of his life is mistaken. The devil allows him to think so, but serving self is sacrificing at Satan’s altar. There are no free men in sin’s death camp (Romans 6:17, 23).

When we were young, our fathers may have allowed us to “drive” while sitting in their laps. We felt we were in control, but when the car veered from the road, Dad quickly took over. Many are sitting in Satan’s lap, “steering” their lives to a lake of fire. “Me” is not a safe guide for life (Proverbs 14:12; Jeremiah 10:23).

“Men”

Others allow public opinion to make their decisions. How many should make Saul’s confession? “I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice” (1 Samuel 15:24). Adam gave in to Eve and let forbidden fruit get him into a jam (Genesis 3:6); Abraham feared Abimelech enough to tell “a little white lie” (Genesis 20:11); and Aaron made a golden calf at public demand (Exodus 32:21–24).

In the New Testament, Pilate wanted to set Jesus free, but he was too much of a people-pleasing politician to stand by his decision (Matthew 27:2–26). Many rulers believed on Jesus but would not confess Him, “for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (John 12:42–43; cf. 5:44). Even Barnabas once gave in to peer pressure and disassociated himself from Gentiles (Galatians 2:13).

Paul wrote, “For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ” (Galatians 1:10).

Jesus said,

Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but God knoweth your hearts: for that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God (Luke 16:15).

Christians must strongly resist the pressure to conform to the world's mold (Romans 12:1-2)—we are a peculiar people (Titus 2:14). Evil companions are bad for good morals (1 Corinthians 15:33), so we should stay away from them as much as possible (1 Thessalonians 5:22). Pitching tents toward Sodom has left behind the smoking ruins of many families (Genesis 13:12; 14:12; 19:16, 24, 26, 31-36). Any who love the opinions of father, mother, wife, children, brothers, or sisters more than Christ, cannot be His disciple (Luke 14:26 cf. 18:29-30). Men are not a safe guideline for crossing the chasm that divides earth and eternity (Matthew 7:13-14).

“Messiah”

A third choice is to allow Christ to rule our lives. He stands today knocking at the door of every heart (Revelation 3:20), but He will never force His way in (cf. Luke 24:28-29). He has no draft for His army, no subpoenas for His mediatorship (Matthew 22:37;



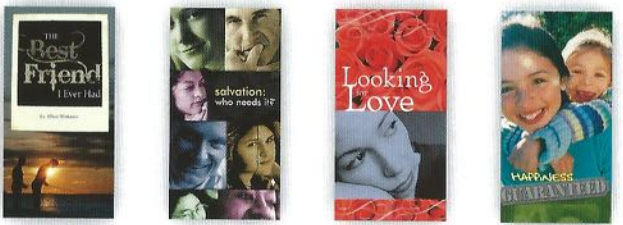
2 Corinthians 5:14). One who comes to Jesus must renounce all (cf. Revelation 12:11), take up his cross, and follow as closely as he can in the Master's steps (Luke 14:26-27; 1 Peter 2:21-22).

The choice is difficult, but it is never regretted (2 Corinthians 7:10). His truth sets us free (John 8:32); His life is abundant (John 10:10); His rule is not grievous (1 John 5:3). Joshua gave God his life (Joshua 24:15) and was never disappointed. Paul gave Christ his heart and never looked back (Acts 9; 2 Timothy 4:6-8; cf. Luke 9:62).

The truth is, “No servant can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other” (Luke 16:13). Who is at your controls?

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