

# Choices

John Morse

## Choices

**1 Samuel 9; Isaiah 53**

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### Decisions

Brothers and sisters, we all have to make choices, we make them every day and we make them throughout every day, and you could probably say we make them pretty much 24/7. And we make small decisions like what we wear, what we're going to eat, what we're going to do for the day, and we also make life-changing decisions. What we study as youngsters and what we're going to avoid, where we go to college for instance, where we're going to work, and perhaps sometimes we have to decide to take a job or not take a job. We make decisions about our leisure activities, and I wonder what it is that influences all these decisions, it's quite interesting actually, when you think about it, because people everywhere are making decisions, they have the same choices to make, but they make different decisions. So why do other people do and choose the opposite to what *we* do and choose? It's interesting, isn't it? And whatever our decisions, generally we tend to get on all right, and they seem to get on all right, and yet we all decide different things.

Let's just take a silly example, you might be asking yourself what influenced me to wear this tie today? I don't think it's too garish, and I don't think it's too sombre, it's sort of in the middle *I feel*. But there are people who wouldn't touch it with a barge-pole, so they would make a completely different decision, but *why*? Why do they have a different opinion to me? Well, our influences are varied by our upbringing aren't they brothers and sisters, our home, our college, our work environment, our friends, and even people we don't like influence us, and not always in a bad way. And we're influenced by fashion, by culture, family and especially by our parents. We're influenced by the news and we're also influenced by so-called "specialist's" opinions, and we hear and see new ideas and decide if they're not for us, or if they are for us. And we're bombarded almost hourly brothers and sisters, by the opinions of others, and so long as there is freedom of speech in this country and a platform to promote it, this will continue to happen.

### A Life-Changing Decision

Well now, sitting here this morning, we have all made one big life-saving decision, life-changing choice, and we've all decided to serve God, haven't we? I think we have, and so we've all been baptised, *that* was a big decision, but some of us have been baptised originally because perhaps our parents wanted us to be, and some of us because *we* wanted to be, and some of us perhaps *said* we wanted to be, but didn't *really* want to be. All these things can happen and they are quite legitimate brothers and sisters, because over time the significance of Divine things impresses us, and takes root and changes our lives. Because God directs our steps brothers and sisters, although we have choices to make, He guides us, and if we're sensible and we listen to His word, we will make the right decisions.

You know, God makes it *very* possible for every one of us here to receive His gift, His Nature, Eternal Life, and there's only one thing that can stop us receiving that gift, and that's us, because we can make the *wrong* decision.

Now, as I thought about this subject of "choices" and you'll see in a minute where it came from, I was amazed at the number of times this subject appears in the Scriptures, and I can't mention them all and probably I've got too many here anyway. But the one I thought about initially was Korah's rebellion. We're talking about accepting God and His ways and having been baptised and so forth, and here we have a man and his friends who went against what God said. He wanted to have the same status, if you like, as the priests, 'we can do that job!', and of course we know how God destroyed those men, and He showed Aaron's priesthood to be valid with that "rod that budded". He confirmed the Aaronic priesthood, and this is what Numbers 16 says about that:

"even tomorrow the Lord will show who are His and who is holy, and will cause him to come near unto Him, even him who He has chosen will he cause to come near to Him"

So God chooses people, and we look around the world and we see there's millions upon millions upon millions who have *not* been chosen, and we're sitting here, just a handful of people, in amidst this busy world - people rushing around pleasing themselves - we're sitting here having chosen to forsake all that, and please God.

### God's Decisions

Now there are lots of things in the Scriptures that *God* has chosen, for instance, He chose Israel didn't He:

"Thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God. The Lord has chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself, above all nations that are upon the earth"

and we can apply that to ourselves as well, because He has chosen us to be a "peculiar" people to God, "special", observed by Him, recognised by Him.

Now God also chose a place to be on this earth, didn't He? He chose Jerusalem:

"and the Lord shall inherit Judah His portion in the Holy Land and shall choose Jerusalem again."

God isn't in Jerusalem *now*, brothers and sisters is He, there is no way. But He *will* dwell there. So that's a another choice that God made. He chose Aaron, He chose Israel, He chose Jerusalem, but He also chose the Levites, now why would he do that? Because they *responded* to God, they *stood aside* from the rest of the people and said, "we will seek the Lord", and so they were chosen as a special people to do His work and to teach the people the Truth:

"and the priests, the sons of Levi shall come near"

and there's always this coming *near* to God isn't there? There's those who are *away* from God - the wicked, and there's those who are *near* God - the righteous. They shall come *near*

"for them, the Lord thy God has chosen to minister unto Him and to bless in the name of the Lord"

that is to bless the people, to put them in a position to be blessed, to influence them in the way they walk, that was the priest's job.

So there are some things that we know quite well that God has chosen. But it's not all one way, brothers and sisters, because Israel, we're told by Joshua, chose to follow the Lord:

"and Joshua said to the people 'you are witnesses against yourselves that ye have chosen you, the Lord, to serve Him' and they said 'we are witnesses' "

and we have all been baptised brothers and sisters, and somebody said to us, "Do you believe the things concerning the Kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ?" and we all said "I do" and then we were baptised. That was our choice, just like Israel, they *chose* to serve the Lord. But we look at their history, and they *said* they would choose the Lord, but they *didn't*. As a nation, they forsook the Lord, they turned their back on Him, they did *all* the things that God said they should not do, and they served idols and the land was full of terrible things, and you remember in Ezekiel how it talks about the Temple idols, actually in God's Temple, and all sorts of abominable goings-on in His Holy Temple, well it wasn't holy then of course!

So they said, "we choose the Lord", and you know what happened? *We* said "I do", what happened? Only you know.

Now then, in our chapter in Samuel, we read about that young man Saul, and you probably remember that it said that he was a '*choice* young man'. Now that Hebrew word that's translated '*choice* young man', is a word that is translated in all 42 other occasions as simply 'young man' so why did the translators decide that in *this* case, they should put '*choice* young man'? Well, if you start going through the origins of the word and the participles and all that (which I'm not much on) you find that it comes from a word that means 'chosen' and you might think, well why weren't all the other young men called *choice* young men, because they surely were? Or why wasn't Saul just called a 'young man'? Well, I can't explain that because I wasn't a translator, but you can now see where the idea of these thoughts on the word 'chosen' have come from.

Now it's quite interesting in the case of Saul because the people wanted a king. They didn't want God any more, you'll remember God said to Samuel "they've rejected *me*, not you, so

why should you be upset about it?” and we’re told in first of Samuel 10:

“See ye him [Saul] whom the LORD hath chosen, that there is none like him among all the people?”

and you remember how he stood head-and-shoulders above everybody. So he was a good choice as a visible king, somebody they could follow and respect. But two chapters later on, in chapter 12 it says:

“now therefore, behold the king whom ye have chosen”

so in the one verse it says *God* had chosen, and then the other verse it says that the *people* had chosen, well they’d only chosen him in the sense that they wanted a king, they’d chosen to have a king instead of God.

### So Choose God!

So thinking about that brothers and sisters and then thinking about ourselves because all these things have parallels with us. God’s chosen us. We’ve said we’ll choose Him. But... have we rejected Him and chosen something else? Or, there is another option which we’ll come to in a minute. We need to think about these things, and they’re *hard* to think about - I find it very hard to say “what am I doing? Is this right?” - and it’s easy to say, “Well, we’ll just forget about that” and just carry on as we were before because it’s painful. ‘Incisions’ are painful, even such as we’re talking about, but we do need to think about our life in the Truth.

For instance, we can say to ourselves (this is a private conversation with ourselves) ‘Are any of the influences of modern life causing us to reject God in any way?’ Okay, we’re not going down the road and worshipping in an idol’s temple, that would be stupid wouldn’t it? But there are other sorts of idols, apart from idols made of wood and stone, all sorts of things can be idols, things that we hold very highly, it could be anything, a possession of some kind, it could be a person of some kind, it could be anything, it could be a hobby. Take a hobby, for instance, I could suddenly decide that, well, I want to start playing golf and the only time I can play golf is Sunday morning, so I might make that dreadful decision that I go playing golf. I know it’s happened brothers and sisters and in fact, one brother down Haywards Heath gave up the Truth for cricket! So you can see these things creep up on us when we’re not really paying attention and can lead us right astray, and that is a fact, about that brother.

So let’s take another little example. The influences of the world are so subtle brothers and sisters, they creep in on us *unawares* if you like. If we take the radio and television, for instance, probably some of us have televisions and some of us don’t, but the influence there is *tremendous* if we allow that into our houses, and it’s subtle and imperceptible. When the radio first came out, brothers used to call it the “devil’s mouth-piece” because it actually promoted human thought, and people who spent time listening to it, had less time to think about the thoughts of the Almighty, and so sometimes you might have a radio by your bedside, you might use it as an alarm clock, and it wakes you up and you’re sitting there listening to ‘The Today Programme’ or something, and you’re not actually thinking about

the Truth, which is perhaps what you ought to be doing when you wake up. But we will have our different ways. So these outside influences can creep in on us, so we need to be very alive to our position as servants of God.

I won't talk about David and Solomon because we know they were chosen people for specific objectives and they had varying degrees of success in their service to the Almighty as well.

### Choose the Way of Truth!

But you know, *we* have choices as well. The Psalmist said this:

“I have chosen the way of truth”

and we all have haven't we?

“Thy judgements have I laid before me”

that's an interesting phrase, isn't it?

“I have chosen the way of truth and Thy judgements I have laid before me”

Now, here's a choice that God made, relating to us, and if you think about it brothers and sisters before I read this, would you be quite pleased, proud perhaps, excited to receive a letter from the Queen. A lot of old people like them when they get to 100 [years old], I think they've stopped that now or something, anyway, would that be pleasing do you think? Now this is about receiving something from the One who *made* the Queen, the One who *gave* her her position, the One who rules the *world* and *created* it and created *us* and called us. And this is in Colossians that we have something to *do*, but as special people, it says:

“put on therefore, as *the elect of God*”

oh yes, not a letter from the Queen, an instruction or an invitation should I say, from the Almighty Creator who has limitless power, great majesty, perfection of character, and a God of love, mercy and compassion, we can go on... He's called us, and what has He called us to? This:

“put on [he says] bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering”

that's patience isn't it, patience with other people.

There's quite a lot there brothers and sisters, they perhaps aren't things we think about too much, unless we're listening to a talk. How often do we say “well, have I got humbleness of mind?” How do you know? Do you have great aspirations? They make us think, these things don't they? Humbleness of mind, are you, or am I meek? What does meek mean? Do we know what it means? Could you give me a definition of 'meek' right now? Because if you couldn't, this instruction is absolutely no good is it, because you don't know what it means. You can't explain it, and yet we're being told to put it on! And it's the same with long-suffering, am I patient with people? Do I get raggy [rough] with people, if things aren't quite the way I want them? We need to think about it.

### Be Whole-hearted In Your Choice!

Now, similarly to having that suggestion from the Almighty that we ‘put these things on’, Israel were warned desperately, we’ve spoken about their bad ways. He’s talking about the fact that they burned incense and blessed idols, which we can do in a more figurative sense, it says:

“Yea, they have chosen their own ways and their soul delighteth in their abominations”

So brothers and sisters, it was obvious in the days of Israel that they were somehow able to have a sort of schizophrenia about their religion because it says in one place, and I have actually been searching for it and couldn’t find it, but it says in one place [2 Kings 17.41] that they served God and the idols, they covered both angles, and if you remember that James had that similar idea in James 4 he said:

“draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you”

so we’ve got to take a step towards God and He will take perhaps two steps toward us. You remember how it says how

“there’s rejoicing in heaven over one sinner that repenteth”

that’s what drawing towards God is, it’s giving up what isn’t godly and seeking for Him, and He will come and help us if you like.

“cleanse your hands ye sinners, and purify your hearts...”

and that’s to brothers and sisters directly, he says:

“...purify your hearts, ye double-minded”

So now we’ve got this weird idea that we can serve God but spend our time doing something else! We need to think about it. And it’s rather like Elijah on Mount Carmel saying “how long halt ye between two opinions”, couldn’t make their minds up!

So we hope that this is food for thought, brothers and sisters, because our choices must be carefully made based on what this [bible] tells us.

I’m going to sit down in a minute. I was rather interested in this reference, it was talking about the resurrection of Christ, and of course, we’ve come to remember him haven’t we, as our Leader, Master, Saviour. In Acts 10 it says:

“Jesus, God raised up the third day and showed him openly, *not to all* the people, but unto witnesses *chosen* before of God”

I hadn’t realised that all those people who saw Jesus had been specially chosen to see him, and you remember how the Apostle Paul says that he was seen of above 500 brethren at once? All those brethren were chosen, because no doubt it would have that effect on them, that they would go and tell everybody, they were chosen to see that wonderful thing, a living Christ.

And now we need to think about our relationship with Divine things, because we're going to break bread and drink wine, in memory of the One who had perfect *understanding* of Godliness, and *executed* godliness perfectly.

This is what Peter says about him:

“to whom coming as unto a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious”

So Christ was chosen for the work he did, in fact he was created for that work. He bore our nature and he died on the cross for the remission of our sins. And we will perhaps just finish up with a few thoughts from Isaiah 53:

“Yes, he hath born our griefs and carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions. He was bruised for our iniquities. The chastisement of our peace was upon him, and with his stripes...”

think of those whips that cut into his flesh

“...with his stripes we are healed...”

and here we have a sort of summary of what we've been talking about. All we like sheep, have gone astray. We have turned every one to his own way. That's what we need to think about brothers and sisters. Is that what we've done? Is that what we are doing?

“...and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all, oppressed, afflicted, silent like a lamb before his shearers is dumb, he opened not his mouth.”

not a complaint, as he carried the burden of our sinfulness.

We must think about these things brothers and sisters as we feast together.

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*John Morse*