

6 - The Choice is Ours

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 Tree

It all started with that tree and man's choice to eat its fruit. Man's free will collided with God's mandate and the world changed because Sovereign God had the last word. He *always* does.

And so it is today – the struggle of our will to obey Him. We too, are forbidden to try to satisfy our soul-hunger by eating the world's fruit, but we'll keep trying as long as we believe Satan's lie.

Good News

Because of Adam's sin, all humans are predestined to inherit a sinful nature. However, Jesus is the "new Adam" ([I Cor. 15:45-49](#)) and all who hear and believe the Gospel ([Rom. 10:9-13](#)) are released from the spiritual-death curse of Adam's sin.

As Jesus said in [John 3:16](#), whoever believes in Him will not perish but will have eternal life. [John 1:12](#) says that He gave the right to become children of God, to all who received Him and who believed in His name. And I revel in [Rev. 22:17](#).

In [I Tim. 2:4](#), Paul writes that God "wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth." And [II Peter 3:9](#) says that God "is patient toward you, not willing for any to perish, but for all to come to repentance" (nasb). All. ALL!

God is love ([I John 4:7-10](#)), and considering the wonder of what Jesus won for us at such great cost, I would fear insulting His glory and even blaspheming Him, by saying that He proves His sovereignty and glorifies Himself by predestinating some, even infants, to an eternal hell. That violates everything about love.

Are the "every knee" of [Romans 4:11](#) and [Phil. 2:9-11](#), and the "Christ" of [Col. 1:15-20](#), [Heb. 1:2-4](#) and [2:7-8](#), not enough?

Enough for Everyone But - -

We quote [John 3:16](#) but forget that those who do not believe in Him will perish; that if they had not heard the Gospel, they had no choice ([Rom. 10:14-15](#)); and that we are commanded to tell them ([Mt. 28:18-20](#), [John 17:18](#), [Acts 1:8](#)).

God provided the way of salvation, established the Church, gave us the scriptures, mandated us to "go and tell," gave us His Holy Spirit to empower us, and promised to be with us always - but we have loved the world too much to obey Him.

Those who have Zoe-Life will be eager to pass it on. They will be excited about it and will spread it to the ends of the earth in the ways that are natural to them. It's too good to keep to ourselves!

However, many aren't more zealous about sharing the Gospel because institutional religion isn't exciting enough to share in the way that the true and costly Life of the Kingdom is. We are then given witnessing formulas and acronyms, and guilt trips about not telling others about Abundant Life that we don't even experience ourselves.

When we choose to obey Him and we experience Zoe-Life, we will freely share the Good News; others will want Him too; God is glorified; and His highest purpose for humanity is met!

Responsible?

Many have no choice because we have not lived the authentic lives that would reveal Him to them. Or we have refused to give, to go, to pray, to tell, and/or to love them with the attractive love of Jesus.

Are we responsible in some way for those who are lost because they didn't know? We are commanded to show and to tell, and the penalty for willful disobedience is serious.

To Obey or Not to Obey?

As we saw in Chapter 1, the source we draw from to satisfy our soul-hunger reveals our choice of a god.

That shapes our moment-by-moment decisions, which determine the degree of the richness of God's Kingdom we experience and how effective we are in our witness. Our choices literally open and close doors to Life for ourselves and others.

We can obey or ignore Jesus' mandates to share the Gospel, to forgive, or be generous. We alone decide if we will love others as He has loved us ([John 13:34-35](#)), and take up our cross daily and follow Him ([Luke 9:23-26](#)).

However, to "believe in the Name of Jesus" demands that we receive Him as Savior AND surrender control of our life to Him as Lord. That is not optional.

As we mature in Christ then, He will call us to go deeper and deeper in humble surrender to His mission and His lifestyle in ways that separate us from the world, and even from many who also profess to follow Christ. Yes it will. Painful, but true.

I have never known the intimacy with Jesus that I do now, nor have I ever been so strongly called to go deeper. To obey or not to obey, sometimes in excruciating, soul-piercing ways, is the burning question.

Pushed Away

Many who are "lost" have been pushed away from God by the very ones who now judge them. They have rejected our hypocrisy and superficiality more than they have rejected God Himself.

Some on the fringes of the institutional church don't get more serious because what they see inside is too fake for them.

When we choose moment-by-moment in ways that demonstrate our commitment to Lord Jesus, many who are presently outside of the Kingdom will see our transformed life and will want in too. Some are looking for that even now, to confirm God's tugging in their heart.

A Key Word

"Repentance" means to change ones' mind, resulting in decisively turning from one direction or course of action to another.

It speaks of the decision to confess our sins and our sinfulness, receiving Christ as Savior and Lord and being born again - but that is just the starting point.

We must have a lifelong disposition of turning more and more toward Christ as the Spirit calls us to obedience in one area of life after another. James, in writing to the Church, said "Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts" ([James 4:8](#) niv). That speaks to us!

Additionally, in [Matt. 18:3](#) Jesus said, "Unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven." We must repent of trying to be our own god, and come to Him in the weakness and humility of a child.

I Wonder - -

Are we serious about choosing who we will serve? Moses challenged Israel to decide ([Deut. 30:15-20](#)), and we must take his words seriously for ourselves.

Do we sometimes act as though we can just motor along with the cruise set on "go to church, pay your tithe, be good, and avoid obvious evil," and all is well?

How many "good Christians" would follow the crowds who turned away from Jesus after His words in [John 6:52-66](#)?

[Matt. 7:21-23](#) is sobering. I fear that many who look good in church but whose lives reveal a different choice than they had professed, will hear Jesus say, "I never knew you! Get away from me, you evildoers!" Yes, God has given us free will but He alone determines the outcome of our choices.

Just as Joshua said to the Israelites, "Choose you this day whom you will serve - - but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" ([Josh. 24:15](#)) - so we, too, must choose.