

CHOOSE LIFE

by Tom Wacaster

One of the most amazing statements in the Old Testament was the exhortation that the Lord offered to Israel on the eve of their marching across Jordan into the promised land. After 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, God had Moses pen the following words for the admonition of both Israel and us: "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil...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" (Deut. 30:15, 19). Whether we believe it or not, much of our happiness and success is dependent upon the choices we make in life. Even when life deals us a lesson we still have it within our power to choose what we will do with the obstacle that might confront us at any given moment. Too many have attempted to pass the blame for their lot in life. Little do they realize that in most cases a person has only himself to blame for the situation in which he may find himself at any given moment. One South Africa preacher was fond of saying, "Adam blamed the woman; the woman blamed the snake; and the snake didn't have a leg to stand on." The words of Moses to Israel present an eternal truth that runs through the Bible like a fine thread. Choice! You and I have the power to choose what we will do with the opportunities God sends our way. There are at least three things that emerge from the two verses quoted above.

First, when it comes to things eternal, there are only two choices - life and death; evil and good. Unlike our modern supermarket wherein the choices are abundant, when it comes to your soul, you can choose to serve God, or the Devil. Our Lord spoke of precisely the same two roads in Matthew 7:13-14. God gave Israel the choice as to which way they would choose. He would not coerce; He would not force them to travel the road to life. But He would invite! And His invitation opened the gate that would lead to life, if they would but take the initiative.

Second, the right choice leads to life for he who will follow in the path of wisdom. Some years ago I was asked to provide a passage that might encourage young people to travel in the right path. After a few moments of contemplation I opened my Bible and read from 1 Peter 3:10-11, "For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile. Let him eschew evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and ensue it." There are two promises attached to the command to refrain one's tongue from evil, and speak no guile. The first promise is that such a one will "love life." There are too many in our world today who do not love life. Those seeking escape by suicide is on the rise, and multitudes of others who refuse to take their life find little if any joy in life. The second promise is that those who choose the right path will "see good days." While there may be some exceptions to the rule, God has promised us that godly living will bring "good days" to those who walk according to God's commandments.

Finally, the choices we make in this life affect more than us alone. God admonishes us to choose the way that leads to life for "both thou and thy seed." While it is true that each individual has the power of choice, it is also true that no man is an island unto himself. The choices we make in this life often influence others to follow us in the direction we have chosen to travel, whether it be good or bad.

Someone once pointed out that whatever power of choice man has is determined by his own nature as it has been organized under the influences of heredity, environment, and, last but not least, idealism. Every moral being has the power of self-conscious reflection and choice. So long as this power to choose remains, the spiritual self is alive. God provides the incentive to lure man onward and upward toward that heavenly city, but each man must choose what he will do with heaven's invitation.

To every man there openeth
A Way, and Ways, and a Way;
And the High Soul climbs the High Way
And the Low Soul gropes the Low,
And in between on the misty flats,
The rest drift to and fro.
But to every man there openeth
A High Way and a Low,
And every man decideth
The Way his soul shall go.