

Our Daily Choice

Proposition:

I have determined to spend a few weeks reminding us who we are as Christians and consequently the freedom we have not to sin and how to walk by faith. I want to remind you and I of who we are in Christ Jesus so we can live the lives we are called to live.

We know that the moment that we became Christians some dramatic changes took place in us. God gave us a new heart and put His spirit within us so that we no longer long for selfish things but things of the kingdom.

We have a new life, no longer controlled by the old man Adam but by our Lord, Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:17; Eph 5:8)

We have been rescued from the dominion of darkness and put into His kingdom. We now have a new master (Col 1:13).

So you would think with all that going on in us and for us we would never get grumpy again, we would never be selfish again, we would never wrestle with sin again.

To explain the battle we need to recognise what didn't happen when we became Christians.

1. Our body did not change. So our nature did, our spiritual DNA did but we still have the same eyes, the same arms and the same legs etc.
2. Our 'flesh' was not taken away. That is the urge to do what comes naturally to a fallen human being was not taken away. So lust, appetites for food, old patterns of thinking.

As we grew up without God we had certain ways of coping with stress, with anxiety with feeling alone etc. When we became Christians God did not push the delete button in our minds to delete all those unhealthy coping mechanisms. Over time our minds are renewed and those thought processes transformed. There is a battle going on in our minds one that we must choose daily to enter and to win.

Paul put it this way;

Romans 8:5-7 (CEV)

⁵ People who are ruled by their desires think only of themselves. Everyone who is ruled by the Holy Spirit thinks about spiritual things. ⁶ If our minds are ruled by our desires, we will die. But if our minds are ruled by the Spirit, we will have life and peace. ⁷ Our desires fight against God, because they do not and cannot obey God's laws.

As you and I know full well, there is a battle going on in our minds. Our old thought patterns driven by selfishness, urges and desires battles for supremacy against what the Holy Spirit is telling us and His will.

We have to train our minds to think in a way that is in line with truth rather than our old thought patterns.

Romans 12:2 (CEV)

² Don't be like the people of this world, but let God change the way you think. Then you will know how to do everything that is good and pleasing to him.

At the very core of our being we have a new nature, this capacity to desire God and do what is right and yet, because all of our thought patterns haven't been unlearned and relearned biblically we still have this sinful tendency that many old translations call 'the flesh'. It doesn't rule us but it's there, especially in those areas that have not yet been transformed by God's Word, the truth.

In the old days when snail mail was really popular college or university students could get a job delivering the mail pre-Christmas for a month when things were chaotic. I did that one year and as I biked down a hill slowly delivering mail one of those rat like little white dogs came running out of the gate and bit my right leg on the calf muscle. It didn't hurt and I didn't complain or report the incident to someone but it did give me a fright. Do you know what happened the next day, in fact for the next few days? Even though it was a new day, I had a new beginning, the dog was probably locked away and the circumstances had changed, each day as I passed this house I had the expectation that the little brut would bite me again.

I grew up in an extremely good family. Great, great parents. I guess the only real fault that my dad had was that I never saw him sit still and relax all of my childhood years except when he was fishing. As a Christian I learnt that I am already accepted, already successful before I get out of bed and yet because of dad's example and years of very disciplined work I often struggled to convince myself to stop doing things and just relax. I have had to work really hard to retrain my mind to think differently about down time, and it's been a battle.

The day you became a Christian, your core nature changed, each new day is a gift and a new start, and yet those old thought patterns, those natural default settings that you used to go to when stressed or bored or lonely have to be deliberately and daily changed. Your mind has to be renewed.

Before you were a Christian you used to do things to find security, significance and acceptance and now you need to unlearn those patterns and relearn Godly patterns instead.

We have so often read Romans 6 in this church as people are baptised. I love it!

Romans 6:11 says that if we are baptized we died with Christ and have been raised with Christ so that we are now dead to the power of sin. Which is absolutely true. Sin has no legal power over us anymore. We don't have to give in to sinful desires and lusts but unless our mind is renewed, unless we have learnt biblical ways of tackling the temptations sin still tempts us.

Romans 7:21-23 tells us that there is a law of sin that tries to control everything that we do. So how do we overcome this law of sin, this temptation to sin which comes from a mind that has not yet been fully transformed.

The answer is that you overcome this law with a greater law.

That at your baptism God set you free from having to follow your sinful desires.

Let me explain. I love planes. Some of my earliest childhood memories are of being in Cessna 225's as they ducked in and out of mountain ranges and in and out of clouds. I love the smell of aviation exhaust fumes, the sound of jet engines, the whole deal. But when I look at a plane, to me it seems that the wings of jets are way too small to hold a jet in the air. I understand the law of gravity. How many tonnes do the common airbuses weigh? I don't know but it's a lot and I know that the law of gravity should be holding those jets firmly to the ground. And yet the laws of aerodynamics and the laws of turbine engines are greater than the law of gravity and easily overcome the law of gravity.

In the same way you and I might wake up some mornings knowing that as Christians we are dead to the power of sin and alive to God as it says in Romans 6 and yet we wake up and feel like we are dead to God and live to the power of sin. What do we do then? We recognise that nothing has actually

changed, and we choose daily to believe what is really true than what our feelings are tell us is true.

If I chose to believe that the law of the Spirit and of life is far greater than the Law of sin and death, I can choose to fly above the law of sin and death.

What does all that mean practically?

It means that you and I Christians don't have to sin, don't have to give in to the law of sin and death, we don't have to respond according to our old patterns of behaviour and thought, but we can choose to.

Though sin has no power over us, we can chose give in to its power.

In 1 Corinthians 2:14-3:3 Paul describes three different types of people.

a) There is the Natural Person. That is the person without the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:14 & Ephesians 2:1-3)

This person is alive physically but is spiritually dead.

They are separated from God.

Their actions and choices are directed by their fallen human nature (the flesh see Gal 5:19-21)

They may or may not be happy but they certainly won't find what they need most without a relationship with God and will have no part in God's kingdom or heaven.

b) The Spiritual Person 1 Corinthians 2:15

Has been changed through faith in Jesus.

His/ her spirit has been joined to God's Spirit.

They have received forgiveness, acceptance into God's family, are realised how much they mean to God.

God guides their decisions and not their old nature.

Their old patterns of thinking are being replaced by truth.

Their emotions are essentially joyful and peaceful and not in turmoil.

They daily choose to walk in the Spirit and therefore show the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22,23).

While they still have thoughts that come from their old sinful nature they chose not to follow them and chose to be dead to sin (Romans 6:11-14).

If you are a Christian, they you can choose daily to live as a spiritual person.

2 Peter 1:3 (CEV)

³ We have everything we need to live a life that pleases God. It was all given to us by God's own power, when we learned that he had invited us to share in his wonderful goodness.

You already have everything that you need to live as a Godly, Spirit led person you just need to choose to believe it and agree with God.

The third type of person describes a person who has been made alive in Christ Jesus, they are Christians but they are not choosing to follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit, instead they are choosing to follow the impulses that come from the old nature.

c) The Fleshly Person 1 Corinthians 3:3

This is the person who knows God but chooses to think and act like someone who doesn't know God.

They typically choose to think about the wrong thoughts.

They are normally very negative and negatively emotional.

They are often plagued with feelings of inferiority, insecurity, inadequacy, guilt, worry and doubt.

People like this often end up giving in again and again to comfort eating or gossip or sexual sin, wrongly believing that they are trapped in a cycle they cannot break free from.

The fleshly Christian makes no significant difference for God in the world.

If you look at these three types of people and you recognise that you are a fleshly Christian then don't go for prayer, don't beg God to do something, don't try harder; simply repent of your sin and learn to use what you already have. 2 Peter 1:3 and Ephesians 1:3 says that you already have every spiritual blessing you need to walk free of sin and be fruitful for God.

You can choose daily to be free and to be fruitful!

In some cases we need to get help to deal with unresolved issues of the past which can hold us back, and most mature Christians can help you with that. You need to believe that God loves you and holds nothing of the past against need to know that as a Christian you are not a victim. If you choose to believe truth and not your feelings you can be led by God and be free of sin daily.

EVERY ONE OF US CAN CHOSE TO WALK BY THE SPIRIT DAILY!

God originally gave Adam and Eve free will and you and I today as Christians have exactly the same free will.

We have a daily choice to make. Will we obey the promptings of the old nature, will we listen to those old thought patterns or will we listen to those little whispers, those promptings that come from God?

Every day, your old nature and the enemy will whisper through you, you must have it now, you must do it, you must touch it, click on it, say it; that you are useless and powerless and a waste of space. Every day you are likely to get one or some of those messages. You can listen to them and be a fleshly, powerless, ineffective Christian or you can choose to listen to the voice of the Spirit which will tell you that you are a new person, you can live above the law of sin and death, sin has no power over you, you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you, you are more than a conqueror, God will not withhold any good gift from you.

You can circle round and round in the mud of life or you can believe in who God says you are and soar above the muck and be led by the Holy Spirit.

2 Corinthians 3:17 (CEV)

¹⁷The Lord and the Spirit are one and the same, and the Lord's Spirit sets us free.

Satan cannot make you sin or listen to the old sinful nature, although he will try to tell you he can.

Every day we get to choose whose voice we listen to.

Like the sheep following the shepherd's voice in Israel, you and I can follow his voice daily, when we know who we are in Christ Jesus, when we know we are no longer slaves to sin but free to live as new people. Why would we want to do anything else?