The Choice is Yours

Joshua 24:15; 1Corinthians 10:13

There are those who believe that God controls our every decision in life. They believe that God in His omnipotence compels us to live out His will in all that we do. God has given each of us free will. It is our choice to accept Jesus Christ. God does not wish to compel anyone to serve Him.

The will that God gives each of us is the human capacity to choose. It enables the person to respond to the love they feel in their hearts. The will that is shaped by the Holy Spirit responds very differently than the will that is shaped by society and the world.

The Christian is built upon the free will of people to choose God. We are both responsible for the transgressions we commit, as well as accountable for committing them. It is because we have free will, that we are the author of our actions. When we read the story of the fall, Adam and Eve made a choice. They were not coerced in any way, shape, form or fashion.

Genesis 3: 1-7, "Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" 2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, 3 but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' " 4 But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. 5 For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." 6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. 7 Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths.

Ecclesiastes 7:29 says, "See, this alone I found, that God made man upright, but they have sought many schemes." In other words, man can choose to act under his own power, volition, and will. Therefore, we cannot blame God for the things that happen to each of us. However, those Christians who disagree on the question of free will and God's sovereign omnipotence, agree that people are without excuse for the transgressions we commit. We are responsible.

It is service and sacrifice that is given out of love that God seeks from each of us. Some make that sacrifice; some give that service on a much larger scale than others. However, God counts it all as good and uses that service and that sacrifice to His glory.

The wisdom of God is beyond our understanding. God's wisdom is light years beyond our feeble minds. For us to believe that we know or understand the things of God to the degree that we can answer any one scripture to the satisfaction of our spiritual needs and inquiries is erroneous thinking. Yet within the context of our living God does give the capacity to know His truth to the degree that we can serve Him, we can glorify Him, honor Him in all we say and do.

It is not only the knowledge of God's word that compels and guides us in our actions. It is our love for the Father that compels us to act in His service in ways that we know nothing about. The things that the Holy Spirit encourages us to do is seldom understood by no one but God. Yet it is that single act of obedience, that single moment of surrender that propels the will of God forward into this world.

This story illustrates how a single act propels the will of God into the future. It is an unbelievable story. It is only the love of God and the strength provided by the Holy Spirit that could have enabled this man's choice:

After a few of the usual Sunday evening hymns, the church's pastor slowly stood up, walked over to the pulpit and, before he gave his sermon for the evening, briefly introduced a guest minister who was in the service that evening. In the introduction, the pastor told the congregation that the guest minister was one of his dearest childhood friends and that he wanted him to have a few moments to greet the church and share whatever he felt would be appropriate for the service.
With that, an elderly man stepped up to the pulpit and began to speak. "A father, his son, and a friend of his son were sailing off the Pacific Coast," he began, "when a fast-approaching storm blocked any attempt to get back to shore. The waves were so high that, even though the father was an experienced sailor, he could not keep the boat upright, and the three were swept into the ocean as the boat capsized." The old man hesitated for a moment, making eye contact with two teenagers who were, for the first time since the service began, looking somewhat interested in the story. The aged minister continued with his story. "Grabbing a rescue line, the father had to make the most excruciating decision of his life: to which boy he would throw the other end of the lifeline. He only had seconds to make the decision. The father knew that his son was a Christian, and he also

knew that his son's friend was not. The agony of his decision could not be matched by the torrent of the waves. As the father yelled out, 'I love you, son!', he threw out the lifeline to the son's friend. By the time the father had pulled the friend back to the capsized boat, his son had disappeared beneath the raging swells into the black of night. His body was never recovered.

By this time, the two teenagers were sitting up straight in the pew, anxiously waiting for the next words to come out of the old minister's mouth. "The father," he continued, "knew his son would step into eternity with Jesus, and he could not bear the thought of his son's friend stepping into an eternity without Jesus. Therefore, he sacrificed his son to save the son's friend. How great is the love of God that He could do the same for us. Our heavenly Father sacrificed His only begotten Son that we could be saved. I urge you to accept His offer to rescue you and take hold of the lifeline"
With that, the old man turned and sat back down in his chair as silence filled the room. The pastor again walked slowly to the pulpit and delivered a brief sermon with an invitation at the end. However, no one responded to the appeal. Within minutes after the service, the two teenagers were at the old man's side. "That was a nice story," politely said one of the boys, "but I don't think it was very realistic for a father to give up his only son's life in hopes that the other boy would become a Christian."
"Well, you've got a point there," the old man replied, glancing down at his worn Bible. Sorrow began to overtake the old man's smiling face as he once again looked up at the boys and said, "It sure isn't very realistic, is it? But I'm here today to tell you that I understand more than most the pain God must have felt to give up His only Son. For you see, I'm the man who lost his son to the ocean that day, and my son's friend that I chose to save is your pastor."

God gives us the freedom to love Him, to serve Him and ultimately choose Him. I can only imagine the joy the Father feels when His child chooses Him and chooses Him freely.

Blessings,

Pastor Cool