

The Choice

(07/28/04)

Greetings to the Church That Began at Betsy's House,

It seems these days that as I read/study God's Word I'm constantly being reminded of the freedom that we all enjoy when we believe in Christ. It is a wonderful reality that our Father provides for us.

Conversely, I observe how often we take that freedom and abuse it to our detriment and the detriment of our witness in this fallen world. Paul, by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, teaches us that "Everything is permissible for me'---but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible for me'-- but I will not be mastered by anything. 'Food for the stomach and the stomach for food'---but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the Body."(I Corinthians 6:12-13)

Paul was apparently quoting a popular saying that some of his Corinthian opponents were using against him as he taught that we are no longer under law but under grace.

Paul was a master at responding to those who opposed him. He didn't take the bait and respond in kind---no, he got outside their box. We can take a lesson from the master here, "reframe" the challenge. Make your response fit the true issue. A common example of this today is presented by those who would argue for a woman's right to abort because it is her body. If you take the bait the central issue is missed. So those who argue for the unborn child reframe the issue to the "right to life". Be a Paul take control and move the discussion into the right "frame", don't go down some rabbit trail to nowhere.

As I look at that excerpt from Paul two of his responses catch my attention. The issue is not what I can do but is what is the outcome. The second is the true purpose of the body.

First, when I allow myself to be controlled by my appetites (fleshly) I will be "mastered" by them. So the issue here is not what I can do but what is the result. We are taught elsewhere about the "deceitfulness of sin" and therefore must be aware of the rationalizing of the flesh. Having been addicted, at one time or another, to just about everything the world set in front of me I can attest to the horrible outcome of that path. The seductive nature of sin will tell some that I was just weak and stupid and that they will be able to control it. It will build upon their pride and convince them that because they are so smart, aware, and in control they will not get caught by it. A lie in the first degree.

A life under the influence of sin and the flesh is a life of emptiness and pain. It is a life characterized by being driven. Remember that once we submit to sin's power we are under it's influence. That influence may not be obvious in the beginning but it will steadily overcome every aspect of life. Just like every addict the afflicted are driven to get their "fix" at any cost. They will rationalize every action so that they can deny the control of their drug of choice.

Conversely, when we respond to God and obey His Word we willingly put ourselves under His influence we will enjoy a radically different life. That life is one of joy and peace. It is a life in which we are led and

protected by our ever present living and loving Father. It is a life in which we have dominion over those sinful appetites and fleshly urgings. It is life where we can truly say no and have the power to make that no real. It is a life that puts us on a pedestal, a trophy of grace, love and admired by God Himself.

Mark these words--we will always be under the influence of something be it God, His Word and the Holy Spirit or sin, satan and the flesh.

Secondly, we come to understand what we are truly made for, what our body is for. It is made for God, it belongs to Him. When we yield our members to Him (Romans 12:1) we experience the Truth of God's Word. By yielding our physical being to Him we know Him spiritually. He and the person who willingly and knowingly submits share an intimacy that can only be known through yielding. When a man and woman share physical intimacy in marriage they "know" each other in a way that is unique, private and precious. It is even more so when we are "intimate" with God, Himself.

The "choice", as always, because we are free, is ours!!!

See you this Friday at IHOP---I have something to share with you I'm positive will lift your spirits.

In His Love,

Tomme