

The Christian's Choice: Freedom or Bondage

Introduction

One of the greatest truths taught in the Bible is that God designed and created us to live in fellowship with Himself and with one another. In that day, before sin entered into the human race, we were, by our very nature, spiritual. How different it is with us today. Even though, in the new birth, we have been “recreated” according to the original design in Eden and are described as “holy” in the Bible, we are aware of many non-spiritual pressures from within as well as from without.

In order to be successful Christians it is imperative that we understand how profoundly and in what way the Fall of Man and our own sinfulness has affected us. If we do not, our repentance, renunciation, restitution, resistance of the enemy and the world, fruitfulness, growth, joy, and our appropriation of the grace of God through faith and love will be greatly limited.

Where do we begin in our struggle to live in fellowship with God and to be the spiritual person that we know from the Bible we can be? One important area we must understand is that of indwelling sin—our depravity—and the provision the Lord Jesus has made for our freedom from such sin. We speak of our depravity as our “old nature.” While this term is not in the Hebrew or Greek text of the Bible and should never be defined as we do “human nature” (that which we cannot escape or overcome), we can use the term if we are careful to define it Biblically.

Our old nature, better called “flesh” (Romans 7:18 KJV), is the source of a great deal of our spiritual trouble. In this article I wish to list a number of important points that will clarify the seriousness of our indwelling sin as well as the provision God has made for our freedom.

I. Our Warning Concerning the Seriousness of the Old Nature.

A. The Old Nature May Defile the Believer.

"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within and defile the man." Mark 7:21-23.

Comment: These sins, with perhaps the exception of blasphemy, should serve as a reminder to every believer of our inner potential for depraved thinking and action. Note, however, that the sin “defiles” a person only when the evil suggestion is accepted and put into action. The believer is one who does not have to make that choice.

B. The Old Nature May Weaken and Enslave the Believer.

“For that which I do I allow not, for what I would that do I not but what I hate, that do I... For the good that I would I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do... But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” Romans 7:15, 19, 23, 24.

Comment: Paul’s account of his struggle with his old nature (the flesh), is a story familiar to every earnest Christian. Once we are willing, with the Apostle, to acknowledge our need, confess our dependence on God, abandon our sin, and learn to appropriate the provision made for us by Jesus Christ — we can be successful in this struggle.

C. The Old Nature May Sinfully Motivate the Believer.

“Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these, adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like...” Galatians. 5:19-21.

Comment: What believer has not been tempted or pressured in at least some of these areas of sin? No matter how strong the motivation may be, the true believer will recognize the sin to be foreign to his true self. If this is not so, and our life is characterized by such attitudes and actions, then we must accept the Biblical teaching that we are not truly born again. (I John 2:3-5 ; 3:8-9).

II. Our Provision Regarding the Old Nature.

A. In the Crucifixion Jesus Christ Provided Freedom for Us.

“Knowing this, that our old man (all we were as unsaved) is crucified with him, that the body of sin (how sin manifests itself in the believer) might be destroyed (paralyzed), that henceforth we should not serve sin.” Romans 6:6.

Comment: This truth is indeed “good news” to the believer. The way the old nature (flesh) manifests itself in our life can be “paralyzed” or “rendered inoperative.” The question now has to do with whether we are willing to surrender to God on the terms of the crucifixion and say “No” to ourselves, the world, and the devil. Too often we want only a “bandaid” solution instead of a cure.

B. In the Resurrection Jesus Christ Provided an Enablement for Us.

“Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Romans 6:4.

Comment: Every believer has the resurrection life of Jesus Christ within as a potential for godly living. However, His life can only be manifested as we are willing to abandon our sin, make the necessary decisions of faith to do the will of God no matter the cost, and then practice His will in dependence on Him for enablement. When we make such a response - we will know freedom from sin.

III. Our Responsibility Regarding the Old Nature.

A. We Must Daily Claim the Provision of God.

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 6:11.

Comment: The term “reckon” means to accept the truth that we died to sin in the crucifixion and were made alive to God through resurrection. We must live—and act—according to this truth. We must treat every form of sin as foreign to us and every facet of spirituality as compatible with us in spite of how we feel.

B. We Must Daily Say “No” to Sin.

“Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof.” Romans 6:12.

Comment: The responsibility defined here has to do with making the necessary decisions to abandon our sin. When we fail to do so, the sin will “reign” over us.

C. We Must Daily Choose to Obey God by Faith.

“... Yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead...” Romans 6:13.

Comment: As we choose to live in freedom from sin, and do so in dependence on God, we will have the enablement we need to be spiritual people. God will honor our trust.

Conclusion:

The above verses remind us that the believer need not serve under the dominion of his old nature. He can live as a spiritual person.

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