

Part 11 – September 5, 2010

“Do People Really Have Choices?”

Intro

The attributes of discipline, dependence, commitments, or convictions will not produce holiness--only the exercise of choices to obey God's revealed will in His Word will produce holiness.

- **Choices after the new birth are not made on a clean slate**
- **Without the Holy Spirit's power we will not overcome indwelling sin**
- **No growth/maturity will occur without obedience to God, one choice at a time**

Romans 6:19

Bridges defining moment: "the Bible was not given just to increase [our] knowledge, but to guide [our] conduct." *Discipline of Grace*, p. 180

"I am concerned about sanctification because it seems to me that today's church is very, very insensitive at this point. I put it to you that holiness is a neglected priority of the modern church. It was a priority for the Lord Jesus; He prayed that the Father would sanctify His disciples by the truth. It was a priority for Paul, as we have seen from these many texts I have quoted. Is it a priority for the people of God today? As I look around, I see a neglect of sanctification." **J.I. Packer**, *The Collected Shorter Writings of J. I. Packer*, Vol. 2, p. 320

"If we do not apply and live out Biblical principles in the specific situations of our lives we are not pursuing holiness."

LIVES LIVED ONE CHOICE AT A TIME

Ephesians 4:25-32

Choices we can make:

1. We can tell the truth	2. We can tell a lie
3. We can deal with our anger	4. We can let anger smolder
5. We can be absolutely honest in our finances	6. We can steal from our boss or from the gov't
7. We can share our resources with others around us	8. We can spend our resources on ourselves
9. We can speak only what is helpful to others	10. We can speak unwholesome words of criticism, gossip, or complaint
11. We can be compassionate, kind and forgiving of others	12. We can harbor bitterness, anger and resentment

Have you ever developed a habit by doing something one time?

"Right actions repeated develop Holy character."

EXERCISE RIGHT TO PERFORM RIGHT-TO WIN THE BATTLE

We need to train on the same roads we walk, or ride, every day

1 Timothy 4:7

2 Peter 2:14

- *How do people, how do we, become expert at something?*
- *Right choices made one at a time meets the resistance of indwelling sin*

"You know about the resistance movement in France, Holland and other countries during the last [Second World] War, in which German-occupying forces were resisted from the inside by loyal people. Well, in the Christian life there must also be a resistance movement, resistance to the allurements of the world, the flesh and the devil, and to the power of bad habits still unbroken. There must be resistance to those seductions into wrong ways which are presented to us every day. 'Live by the Spirit,' says Paul, 'and you will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature [or flesh].'" **J.I. Packer**, *Collected Shorter Writings...Vol. 2*, p. 319

THIS RESISTANCE THING IS TOUGH GOING

"Think right now about the persistent sin patterns in your life--you know, the pretty sins that are much better looking than those of the person next to you." MAKE A LIST!

NOW!

Philippians 2:1-3

MORTIFICATION

Mortification = "to put to death"

Romans 8:13

Colossians 3:5

Who does the killing?

"This is not optional. This is mortal combat: Sin dies or we die. Not that we ever become perfect in this age, but we go on killing sins as they attack us from day to day. We do not settle in with sin. We fight and we kill." **Piper**, *A Godward Life*, p. 187

Ephesians 2:8

Philippians 2:12

Does your pursuit of holiness [not attainment] evidence that you have been saved by grace?

"Sanctification, we now see, is both a gift (that is one side: God working in us to renew and transform us) and a task (the task of obedience, righteousness and pleasing God). And we must never so stress either of the two sides that we lose sight of the other. Think only of the task, and you will become a self-reliant legalist seeking to achieve righteousness in your own strength. You will not make any headway at all. Think only of the work of God in your life, and the chances are that Satan will trick you into not making the necessary effort and not maintaining the discipline of righteousness so that, in fact, even as you rejoice in the work of God in your life, you will be dishonouring it by your slackness. Hold both sides of the matter together in your mind, if you want your living to be right." **Packer**, *Collected Shorter Writings...Vol. 2, p. 320*

TACTICAL/PRACTICAL STEPS TO RIGHT CHOICES

1. Understand Sin

"Sins do not have throats to cut."

Sins must be subdued, overpowered, as the expressions of indwelling "sin".

2 Corinthians 7:1

"We must battle all of the sins that beset us, not just those that make us feel bad or look bad to others."

Recognize that our sins grieve God. Sins are a rebellion against God.

Genesis 6:5-6

How violent should our sin-killing be?

Matthew 10:21

Bridges harsh question--one we should answer: "

"you say you cannot overcome it [the persistent sin on your mind right now]. Why not? Is it because you exalt your secret desire above the will of God? ... we must realize that the sin we are dealing with is none other than a continual exalting our desire over God's known will." *The Discipline of Grace*, p. 193

2. Put to Death ("Mortify") Those Desires

We must simply say "No" to wrong desires

Ephesians 4:22; James 1:14; 1 Peter 1:14; 1 Peter 2:11; Genesis 3:6; Galatians 5:17

"In every believer's heart there is a constant struggle between the old nature and the new....The enemy is so securely entrenched within us that he can never be driven out while we are in this body: but although we are besieged on all sides, and often in painful conflict, we have an Almighty helper, even Jesus, the Captain of our salvation, who is always with us, and who assures us that we shall eventually come away from the conflict more than **conquerors through Him....Are you fighting with the adversary today?** Are Satan, the world, and the flesh all against you? Don't be discouraged or dismayed. Fight on! For God Himself is with you; *Jehovah Nissis* your banner, and *Jehovah Rophiis* the healer of your wounds. Don't be afraid; you shall overcome, for who can defeat Omnipotence? Fight on, 'looking to Jesus.' Although the conflict is lengthy and severe, the victory will be sweet, and the promised reward glorious.

*'From strength to strength go on;
Wrestle, and fight, and pray,
Tread all the powers of darkness down,
And win the well-fought day.'*

Spurgeon, Morning and Evening, June 2m

Proverbs 27:20

3. Learn that Two are Better than One

"Can you identify one or two close, believing friends that you can turn to in the struggle?"

Galatians 6:1-2; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 3:13; Hebrews 10:24-25

Christian synergism: Ecclesiastes 4:9-10

"As an encouragement to cheerfully offer intercessory prayer, remember *that such prayer is the sweetest God ever hears, for the prayer of Christ is of this character....while petitions for ourselves will be accepted, our pleadings for others through the precious merits of Jesus -will be the sweetest oblation that we can offer to God, the very fat of our sacrifice, having in them more of the fruits of the Spirit, more love, more faith, more familial kindness....Believer, you have a mighty engine in your hand, use it well, use it constantly, use it with faith, and you shall surely be a benefactor to others. When you have the King's ear, speak to Him for the suffering members of His body. When you are favored to draw very near to His throne, and the King says to you, 'Ask, and I will give you what you will,' let your petitions be, not for yourself alone, but for the many who need His aid. If you -have grace at all, and are not an intercessor, that grace must be small as a grain of mustard seed. You have just enough grace to float your soul clear from the quicksand, but you have no deep floods of grace, or else you would carry in your joyous vessel a weighty cargo of the wants of others, and you will bring back from your Lord, for them, rich blessings which, but for you, they might not have obtained:-*

"Oh, let my hands forget their skin,
My tongue be silent, cold, and still,
This bounding heart forget to beat,
If I forget the mercy seat!"

Spurgeon, *Morning and Evening*, February 6e

4. We must Mortify and Vivify

"Bring to life the traits of the new person in Christ that you are."

Colossians 3:12-14

5. Know that God's Grace Governs in the area of Choices

Galatians 5:16

"Beware of 'works of law,' but let all your warfare be 'the work of faith'... That is, let your fight against sin spring from your confidence in the superior pleasures of all God promises to be for you in Christ."

Piper, *A Godward Life*, p. 189

"We stand before God on the basis of the merit of another Man because of His great grace, not on the basis of our performance."***"But, grace is the remedy--not the excuse--for sin."**

"Here then is where the deceit of sin intervenes. It separates the doctrine of grace from its purpose. It persuades us to dwell upon the notion of grace and diverts our attention from the influence that grace gives to achieve its proper application in holy lives. From the doctrine of assured pardon of sin, it insinuates a carelessness for sin...the soul-needing frequently to return to gospel grace because of guilt allows grace to become commonplace and ordinary. Having found a good medicine for its wound, it then takes it for granted." Bridges, quoting **John Owen**, p. 197

Psalm 32:1-5

6. Go Back To His Gospel!

"To attempt to bring discipline into our own lives without the desire to do God's will is drudgery. Desire will only come from the gratitude and joy of knowing that however miserably you have failed, God's grace is greater. "Grace that is greater than all our sin" should ever be our song."

"Take heart from the truth that the old sinful you is decisively already dead...By faith we are united to Christ so that His death was our death...This means three things: (a) The mortal blow to our 'old man' has been struck; (b) the old self will not succeed in domination now; and, (c) his final obliteration is certain." **Piper**, *A Godward Life*, pp. 187-88