

FREE WILL AND PERSONAL CHOICE : PART 1

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God Created Us For His Own Pleasure, And God Saw That It Was Good, God Works In Us To Do His Will, God's Foreknowledge, Jesus Understood His Purpose On Earth At A Young Age, Jesus' Death and Resurrection Were Accomplished According To The Foreknowledge And Will Of God, Believers Are Chosen And Predestinated To Become Adopted Children According To God's Foreknowledge Good Pleasure And Will, Are We Merely Puppets In God's Hands?, God Knows Those Who Belong To Him, Do We Have A Choice In The Matter?, Foreknowledge Predestination And Free Will Work Hand In Hand, Salvation: We Must Choose For Ourselves, We Are Not Mindless Robots, Our Obedience To God Should Be Motivated By Love Faith And Trust, Children Trust Their Parents, Negative Influence Of The Public School System, Rooted And Grounded In Love, Faith That's Motivated By Fear, Godly Fear And Reverence, A Balanced Relationship With God, Proper Relationship Between Parents And Children

Someone once asked me, "If God already knows what we will do, why did He even create us?" I believe that we are really dealing with several different issues in this question. That is, the issue of why God created us to begin with; the issue of God's foreknowledge; and the issue of free will. As I point out in other articles, the reason why God created us is quite simple. As with other things that God does, He created us simply because He wanted to. In other words, He created us because it pleased Him to do so. This is made clear in the following verse that is found in the Book of Revelation:

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created."

Revelation 4:11, KJV

In the first chapter of Genesis, we repeatedly find the phrase, ". . . and God saw that it was good". In other words, His Creation pleased Him. These are not the only examples where we find the Lord doing things simply because it pleases Him. In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus tells us that it is His Father's good pleasure to give us the Kingdom. In other words, He wants to give it to us because it makes Him happy to do so. Consider this verse:

"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

Luke 12:32, KJV

In his Epistles to the Ephesians and the Philippians, the Apostle Paul tells us that God has not only made His will known to us, but that He has also put it in our hearts to want to do it, because it is pleasing to Him:

"Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:"

Ephesians 1:9, KJV

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

Philippians 2:13, KJV

Concerning the foreknowledge of God, this is also something I have discussed in a number of other articles. Two verses which immediately come to mind are the following ones:

"Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure:"

Isaiah 46:9-10, KJV

Notice again in the previous two verses that God does all of these things for His own pleasure. Throughout the four Gospels, we find ample evidence of the fact that Jesus was fully aware of the reason His Father had sent Him to Earth. In other words, He had foreknowledge of it. At the early age of twelve, we find Him saying the following to his parents:

". . . How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

Luke 2:49, KJV

Jesus made quite a few prophecies concerning the need for His upcoming Death and subsequent Resurrection. You will find this topic discussed more in detail in the article "The Blood Atonement: In Jesus' Own Words". In the Book of Acts, Peter likewise informed the crowd that all of these things, -- the Death and Resurrection of Christ -- were accomplished according to the foreknowledge and will of God:

"Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:"

Acts 2:23, KJV

Not only that, but in addressing the Churches in his first Epistle, Peter informs his readers -- who were Believers -- that they were actually chosen for Salvation according to the foreknowledge of God, as we see by these three verses:

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied."

1 Peter 1:1-2, KJV

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light:"

1 Peter 2:9, KJV

The Apostle Paul also dealt with the theme of predestination in a few of his Epistles, and likewise informed his readers that they were predestinated to become the adopted children of God according to God's good pleasure, as we can determine by the following example verses:

"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren."

Romans 8:29, KJV

"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love . . . Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will . . . In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:"

Ephesians 1:4-5, 11, KJV

"But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth:"

2 Thessalonians 2:13, KJV

"No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier."

2 Timothy 2:4, KJV

These are not the only verses which are found in the New Testament where we are told that God's children are chosen for both Salvation, as well as for lifelong service to the Lord. Consider the following additional examples which also reveal how Believers are chosen, and drawn to Christ, as well as given to Christ, by the Father:

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day."

John 6:44, KJV

"And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand."

John 10:28-29, KJV

"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth [meaning crucified], will draw all men unto me."

John 12:32, KJV

"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained

you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you . . . If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

John 15:16, 19, KJV

"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine . . . And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are . . . Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world."

John 17:9, 11, 24, KJV

"So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen."

Matthew 20:16, KJV

"For many are called, but few are chosen."

Matthew 22:14, KJV

"And except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved: but for the elect's sake, whom he hath chosen, he hath shortened the days."

Mark 13:20, KJV

"And when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed."

Acts 13:48, KJV

"Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?"

James 2:5, KJV

"These shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful."

Revelation 17:14, KJV

Of course, it should be noted that Scriptures such as the previous ones apply to modern day Believers as well. That is to say, we were likewise preordained, predestinated and chosen to become the adopted children of God through faith in Jesus Christ, according to God's foreknowledge, good pleasure and will.

Sadly, as you may know, there are some people who have taken such verses as the previous ones regarding predestination, and have made the false accusation that we are all merely puppets in God's hands. These misguided people claim that it doesn't matter what we do in this life, because the Lord has already decided who belongs to Him, and who doesn't belong to Him. This claim is partially true. After all, the Scriptures do tell us the following:

"Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, THE LORD KNOWETH THEM THAT ARE HIS. And, Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity."

2 Timothy 2:19, KJV

Now, while it is true that God knows who belongs to Him, at the same time, such misguided people say that if God wants us to be a part of His Heavenly Kingdom, then we will be; and if He wants to cast us into the Lake of Fire, then there is absolutely nothing that we can do about it. In short, we simply have no choice in the matter, according to the people who embrace this position. They use this kind of erroneous reasoning to justify their unbridled lifestyles. Tragically, in my opinion, this whole idea concerning the futility of our existence is wrong, and can be attributed to a skewed interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.

So, based upon my study and personal understanding of the Scriptures, I believe that foreknowledge, predestination, and free will work hand in hand. In other words, because of the foreknowledge which He possesses, God has predestined us to be a part of His Kingdom. Why do I embrace this position? Because when the moment of our decision arrives, God already knows what choice we will make regarding Jesus Christ, and it will be according to our own free will. We must choose for ourselves. God will not choose for us. Additionally, I

also believe that God has purposely limited Himself in this manner for reasons which I will explain shortly. The idea of free will is expressed in quite a few verses which are found throughout the pages of the Bible. Here are a few of them for your personal consideration. In each case, a clear cut decision must be made:

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:"

Deuteronomy 30:19, KJV

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Joshua 24:15, KJV

"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Matthew 6:24, KJV

These verses lead us to an important question. If our free will plays no role in such matters as Salvation, then why does the Bible contain such verses as the previous ones, which clearly reveal that free will and personal choice do matter to God? In my article "Is the Message of Salvation Meant for All Men?", I expound upon this same concept. As I have said many times before, God did not create us to be mindless robots. He wants us to obey Him and to choose the way of Salvation because we truly love Him. He wants us to demonstrate our faith in Him, by believing that He wouldn't tell us or command us to do anything, if He didn't know it was for our own good. He wants us to trust Him, plain and simple. As we read in the Book of Proverbs:

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Proverbs 3:5-6, KJV

This is the same kind of faith and trust that young children

have in their biological parents. Most toddlers would never think to question their parents. They trust that what their parents are telling them is true, right and for their own good. It is not until our children start getting older, and acquire more self-confidence, and reach that age where they think they know everything, that they begin to doubt and question their parents' judgment on different matters. While part of this attitude just has to do with the normal growing up process, tragically, it likewise has a lot to do with the rebellious attitudes and negative influence our children are exposed to in the public school system, which, as many of you will already know, is the Devil's breeding ground for ungodly thoughts, attitudes and behavior. I discuss this issue more at length in articles such as "The Public School System and School Prayer".

However, as far as the Lord's own children are concerned; whether we are young or old biologically-speaking, God still expects us to have that same respect for, and faith in His Word, as well as obedience to His divine Will. While it may be blind faith while we are young, as we become older, more mature, and sometimes more wiser in our own eyes, our faith and obedience get tested. It is then that we discover if our faith in the Lord is really motivated by love, or if it is just due to a fear of retribution. As the Apostle Paul wrote to the brethren at Galatia, it must be faith which works, or which is motivated by, love, as we see by the following set of verses. Clearly, we must be rooted and grounded in love:

"For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love."
Galatians 5:6, KJV

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."
Ephesians 3:17-19, KJV

"Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."
Ephesians 6:23, KJV

"Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father;"

1 Thessalonians 1:3, KJV

"And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus."

1 Timothy 1:14, KJV

The bottom line is that we must have the faith to believe that God loves us so much, that He would never require anything of us that is not for our own good. We must also believe that no matter what transpires in our lives, God remains in control, and that in the end, all things will work out to our favor, according to God's Will. Again, the Apostle Paul offered some excellent advice regarding this topic when he wrote the following:

"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose."

Romans 8:28, KJV

On the other hand, if we only believe in and obey the Lord because we are afraid of what He might do to us if we don't, then this is not truly faith motivated by love. It's really faith motivated by fear. This is not the kind of obedience that God desires from us. Now it is obvious that godly fear and reverence certainly have their place in the lives of we Christians. After all, there are quite a few verses in the Bible which teach us this very thing. Consider the following:

"And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation."

Luke 1:50, KJV

"But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him."

Luke 12:5, KJV

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

2 Corinthians 7:1, KJV

"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

Philippians 2:12, KJV

"Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear."

Hebrews 12:28, KJV

"Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king."

1 Peter 2:17, KJV

"And unto man he said, Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding."

Job 28:28, KJV

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever."

Psalms 111:10, KJV

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge: but fools despise wisdom and instruction."

Proverbs 1:7, KJV

"The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate."

Proverbs 8:13, KJV

"The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding."

Proverbs 9:10, KJV

"The fear of the LORD prolongeth days: but the years of the wicked shall be shortened."

Proverbs 10:27, KJV

"The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death."

Proverbs 14:27, KJV

"The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and

before honour is humility."

Proverbs 15:33, KJV

"By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil."

Proverbs 16:6, KJV

"The fear of the LORD tendeth to life: and he that hath it shall abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil."

Proverbs 19:23, KJV

"By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life."

Proverbs 22:4, KJV

However, as I explain in other articles, fearing the Lord does not mean that we should walk around in dreadful fear all day long just wondering if God is going to strike us dead with a lightning bolt, because we did something which displeased Him. Again, this is another totally unfounded accusation which is made by the enemies of God. If you feel like you are walking around on egg shells all of the time, then something is seriously wrong with your relationship with the Lord. Is there possibly some outstanding sin in your life which is hampering your relationship with Him? If so, then you need to correct it. Our relationship with the Lord must be balanced. It should be a combination of godly fear and reverence -- or respect -- faith, trust and love.

This same principle of obedience through fear, reverence and love equally applies to our biological children as well. If our children only choose to obey us because they are afraid of us, and are fearful of what we might do to them, then it would seem that something is terribly wrong somewhere. They should want to please us by obeying in order to show their love and respect for us. Such actions also demonstrate their complete trust in us as well. Again, the Scriptures offer us some sound advice regarding this issue, as we can determine by the following group of verses:

"The proverbs of Solomon. A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish son is the heaviness of his mother."

Proverbs 10:1, KJV

"A wise son heareth his father's instruction: but a scorner

heareth not rebuke . . . He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes."

Proverbs 13:1, 24, KJV

"A wise son maketh a glad father: but a foolish man despiseth his mother."

Proverbs 15:20, KJV

"Chasten thy son while there is hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying."

Proverbs 19:18, KJV

"Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it . . . Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him."

Proverbs 22:6, 15, KJV

"Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die. Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell."

Proverbs 23:13-14, KJV

"A whip for the horse, a bridle for the ass, and a rod for the fool's back."

Proverbs 26:3, KJV

"The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame . . . Correct thy son, and he shall give thee rest; yea, he shall give delight unto thy soul."

Proverbs 29:15, 17, KJV

"Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth. And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Ephesians 6:1-4, KJV

"Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord. Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged."

Colossians 3:20-21, KJV

"Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre;
but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that ruleth
well his own house, having his children in subjection with
all gravity;"

1 Timothy 3:3-4, KJV

Please go to part two for the conclusion of this article.

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FREE WILL AND PERSONAL CHOICE : PART 2

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Godly Peace And Fighting Against Satanic Fear, Good Or Bad
Consequences Will Result From Our Choices And Actions, The
Bible Is Our Driver's Manual Through Life, The Difficulty
Of Making The Right Choice, Martha Mary And The Lord, God
Grants King Solomon Wisdom Riches And Honor, Ask God For
Wisdom And Guidance To Make The Right Choices, This Life Is
A School, Simplicity Of The Gospel, Don't Become Puffed Up
With Knowledge, Please God Through Your Childlike Faith,
Seek God's Will In Your Life, Jesus Came To Save Imperfect
Sinners, We Learn And Grow Through Our Sins Mistakes And
Shortcomings, It Is Wise To Obey God's Laws, A Messed Up
World Resulting From Our Poor Choices, Earthly Devilish
Wisdom, The Royal Law: Thou Shalt Love, Blatant Rebellion
Against God's Laws, Don't Blame God For The Consequences
Of Our Own Poor Choices, We Humans Are Incapable Of Ruling
Ourselves, Ancient Israel Chose An Earthly King Over God,
Incomplete And Imperfect Without God's Love, Men Shall Be
Lovers Of Their Own Selves, Selfish Choices Which May Hurt

Others, Build Upon The Right Foundation Or We Are Doomed,
Selfish Modern-Day Political Systems, God's Forgiveness
Mercy Love And Compassion, Consequences Of Our Actions, We
Must All Appear Before The Judgment Seat Of Christ, Trust
And Acknowledge The Lord, All For The Glory Of God, Most
Important Decision: Accepting Christ, Suggested Reading List

As we discussed in part one, our relationship with our Father in Heaven should be marked by a combination of godly fear and reverence -- or respect -- faith, trust and love. We should not be cowering in fear all of the time, as if the Lord might clobber us at some unexpected moment. At the same time, it should also be noted that there is such a thing as satanic fear. This obviously does not come from the Lord. It comes from the Devil himself, or at least from his demons. If you find yourself being overcome by this kind of fear, then you need to immediately pray, quote Scriptures if you know any, and resist the enemy with all of your might. You need to claim God's peace in your life. Consider the following group of verses:

"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind."

2 Timothy 1:7, KJV

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness."

Isaiah 41:10, KJV

"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love."

1 John 4:18, KJV

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."

John 14:27, KJV

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee."

Isaiah 26:3, KJV

"And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:7, KJV

"Neither give place to the devil."

Ephesians 4:27, KJV

"Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."

James 4:7, KJV

This topic of faith, fear and love is discussed more fully in my series entitled "Dracula, Nosferatu, Twilight: The Vampire Fad".

Whether we are talking about obedience to God, or a child's obedience to his or her parents, it all revolves around the matter of free will and personal choice. Now, if we choose poorly, then obviously, trouble will come our way at some point. God will not be pleased with us, and neither will a child's parents. Furthermore, there may be consequences to pay for our actions as well, if the infraction was serious enough.

If you view the Bible as being a sort of Driver's Manual to assist us in this life, then you will have a good idea of what I am trying to get across. Being the loving Father that He is, in the Bible, God has provided us with everything we need to know in order to make it through this life safely, and on to the next life. Of course, if we are foolish enough to go out driving somewhere without having properly passed a driving test, and without a driver's license; if we haven't even taken the time to carefully read the Driver's Manual, well then, of course we are asking for trouble. In fact, we might even end up in an accident. Not only will we receive a ticket because of our foolishness and our failure to obey the law, but we might even end up getting hurt. Worse yet, God forbid, we might hurt someone else! You would think that this would be enough to wake up anyone. Sadly, this is not the case. As a Christian, we must remember that God's still small voice is always there telling us the following, if we will only listen carefully:

". . . This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the

right hand, and when ye turn to the left."

Isaiah 30:21, KJV

As many of us can testify, sometimes it can be difficult for Christians to know which is the right choice to make. There are times that we choose what we think is right, or what we believe at the time is God's highest will for our lives, but in the Lord's eyes it really isn't the best option. Such was the case in the story of Martha and Mary, the two sisters of Lazarus of Bethany. Mary had made the right choice by sitting at Jesus' feet to listen to Him, while Martha did what she thought was best in her own eyes, which was only second best in God's eyes, as we see by the following verses taken from the Gospel of Luke:

"Now it came to pass, as they went, that he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, which also sat at Jesus' feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving, and came to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. And Jesus answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."

Luke 10:38-42, KJV

We can find comfort in the fact that if we are having a hard time making the right choices in our lives, God is more than willing to help us out. In the Old Testament, after King Solomon had ascended to the throne of his father, David, he felt quite incapable of leading the Children of Israel. One night the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and this is what happened:

"In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not

how to go out or come in. And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days. And Solomon awoke; and, behold, it was a dream. And he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and offered up burnt offerings, and offered peace offerings, and made a feast to all his servants."

1 Kings 3:5-15, KJV

Just as King Solomon asked the Lord for understanding in his day, we can likewise ask the Lord for His Divine Wisdom and Guidance to help us make the right choices in our daily walk with Him. In the Epistle of James we find the following verse:

"If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him."

James 1:5, KJV

Notice what James is saying there. God will liberally, or freely, give us the wisdom and understanding that we need. He is not going to upbraid us for asking for it. In other words, He is not going to rebuke us or get mad at us for asking. Quite to the contrary. Consider what Jesus and the Apostles tell us in the following set of verses:

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that

asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened."

Matthew 7:7-8, KJV

"He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

Romans 8:32, KJV

"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4:19, KJV

"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him."

1 John 5:14-15, KJV

In his discussion regarding the various gifts and ministries of the Spirit, the Apostle Paul likewise mentions the gifts of Wisdom and Knowledge, as we see by the following verse:

"For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit;"

1 Corinthians 12:8, KJV

Certainly, God is not going to deny giving us His Wisdom and Guidance if we humbly ask for it. We also need to remember that this life is really meant to serve as a kind of school for us. If we were mindless robots which obediently did everything right, we wouldn't learn anything, would we? Our spiritual growth would be stunted, and we wouldn't make any progress in the things that the Lord is trying to teach us. At the same time, while we are to grow in Spirit and Truth, neither must we ever forget the simplicity of the Gospel of Salvation. We must remain in touch with the roots of our faith. Additionally, we must not become so bogged down in knowledge, that we lose our simple childlike faith. Consider the following group of Scriptures:

"But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

Matthew 19:14, KJV

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ."

2 Corinthians 11:3, KJV

"Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth."

1 Corinthians 8:1, KJV

"And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing."

1 Corinthians 13:2, KJV

"And if any man think that he knoweth any thing, he knoweth nothing yet as he ought to know."

1 Corinthians 8:2, KJV

Here again, we see the interrelationship between faith and love, or charity. Without these, our knowledge means very little. I have written several articles regarding this topic including "The Only Credentials You Need", "The Wisdom of God vs. the Philosophy of Men", and a few others which you will find listed at the end of this same article. Contrary to modern man who takes great pride in his knowledge and scientific achievements, the Apostle Paul tells us in his Epistle to the Hebrews, that it is our childlike faith which pleases God most of all. Even though our mind and the world around us might be telling us otherwise, we must have the faith to believe, simply because God says so. Consider this verse:

"But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Hebrews 11:6, KJV

If we have faith in our Creator, and if we diligently seek Him and His Will when making our decisions, hopefully, we will encounter few obstacles of our own design. Of course, this does not mean that we won't ever have problems in our lives. It simply means that if they do come along, hopefully they will be because of some outside cause, and not because

of sin in our own lives. Another thing to bear in mind is the fact that if we didn't have the freedom to make our own choices, and if we automatically did everything right, then we wouldn't even have a need for a Savior, would we? After all, we would be perfect, and Jesus certainly did not come to save the "perfect", as we see by the following two verses:

"When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Mark 2:17, KJV

"For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

Romans 5:6, KJV

It is in fact through our sins, mistakes and shortcomings, that we will hopefully learn and grow into the wise, mature Christians the Lord desires for us to be. If there is one major lesson which the Lord is trying to teach all of us, it is that without an acceptance of His rules in our lives, we will not only end up messing up our own lives, but we will negatively affect the lives of others as well. So it is wise to obey God's Laws. In short, we are supposed to be learning obedience to God's Laws through the things which we suffer, which are sometimes a result of our own poor choices in this life. Surprising as it may seem, in his letter to the Hebrew brethren, the Apostle Paul tells us that even Jesus learned obedience through the things which He suffered, as we see by this verse:

"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered;"

Hebrews 5:8, KJV

If we stop to consider the exponential effect of worldwide disobedience to the Laws of God, it is easy to understand why the world today is in such sad shape. It also explains why the world will only continue to worsen as man continues to stubbornly depend upon his own wisdom and strength in his decision-making process, instead of looking to God for the answers. Unless we acknowledge God and His Word in our major choices, sad to say, we are indeed doomed. What some people don't realize is that as far as God is concerned, there are

only two kinds of wisdom: the one which descends from above, and the other one which is of the Earth and devilish; as we see by the following set of verses:

"This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy."

James 3:15-17, KJV

The truth of the matter is that the Laws of God really aren't as complicated as one might be led to believe. Yes, while it is true that there are over six hundred of them in the pages of the Old Testament, the fact is that in the Gospels, Jesus neatly summed them up for us in the following two verses:

". . . Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."

Matthew 22:37-40, KJV

It is really just that simple: THOU SHALT LOVE! But you see, modern, rebellious man has in large part rejected the Wisdom and Laws of God which have come down from above. Similar to the Scribes and the Pharisees of old, they have embraced the wisdom of Satan instead. That is, the wisdom of the god of this world, the wisdom of the Earth. It is for these reasons that humankind has made so many wrong decisions which have resulted in the chaotic, unbalanced world we live in today, As I mentioned earlier, it is clearly getting worse with each passing year. The outright, blatant rebellion against God's Laws which we see in the world today is nothing short of mind-boggling. I am reminded of the following two verses which certainly describe our current times:

"The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts."

Psalms 10:4, KJV

"But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived."

2 Timothy 3:13, KJV

Contrary to what some God-hating people like to claim, it isn't God's fault that the world is the way it is today. He isn't the one who is causing the wars, or the violence and hatred, or the famines, or the economic embargoes, or the withholding of relief from those who need it, or any of the other evils we see in the world today. These are sinful, selfish man's doings; so we have absolutely no right to blame God for the things which have resulted from our own poor choices. In fact, that is precisely the point here. While God had foreknowledge that all of these things would happen, I believe that the reason why He didn't stop any of them from occurring, is because He's trying to teach us all something very important. Exactly what is that? It is that we can't do it on our own. We need the Lord's help. We are incapable of ruling ourselves in a fair and just manner.

This is the very same lesson He was trying to teach ancient Israel when they chose to have an earthly king rule over them -- that is, King Saul -- instead of the Lord Himself. The Israelites complained that they wanted to be just like all of the other heathen nations around them, and so God granted them their request. Their decision to reject the Lord, and to be ruled by a human king, resulted in problem after problem for centuries to come after that. I discuss this topic more fully in other articles such as "The Children of God and Politics" and "The Fruits of Disobedience".

Returning to our previous topic, without God's supernatural love burning in our hearts -- which results from spiritual rebirth through faith in Jesus Christ -- we are incomplete beings. Not only are we incomplete, but we are imperfect; which is what the word "perfect" means in some places in the New Testament. We are not complete. We are lacking the main ingredient: love. That is, love for God, and love for our fellow man. After all, the Scriptures inform us that God is love. Instead, and sadly, true, unselfish love is one thing which Jesus and the Apostle Paul specifically said would be lacking in the world, as we see by these verses:

"And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold."

Matthew 24:12, KJV

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For MEN SHALL BE LOVERS OF THEIR OWN SELVES, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away."

2 Timothy 3:1-5, KJV

Because we become lovers of our own selves, and such extreme narcissists, instead of lovers of God and our fellow man, the end result is that we make choices which are only of benefit to ourselves. Our choices may in fact hurt other people, as I mentioned earlier concerning the example of driving without a driver's license. If you are interested in reading more about this subject, please refer to the article "Selfishness: A Prophesied Sign of the Endtime".

One thing is certain. Unless we have the right foundation in our lives -- faith in God and His Word, and His love in our hearts -- we are building our houses upon the shifting sand. This is something which Jesus specifically warned us against doing in the Gospels. It is for this tragic reason that the modern-day systems of man will all eventually fail. After all, they are not built on God's Word, and they definitely are not ruled by His love. They are in fact selfish systems which primarily benefit the powerful, the rich and the elite, while the poor of the world barely get by.

But concerning our personal situations, allow me to point out that it is through our personal choices, our sins, and the mistakes that we make, that we truly come to understand the forgiveness, mercy, love and compassion of God. As the Scriptures inform us over and over again, while at times He may be forced to afflict us, God's love and mercy remain boundless, as we see by the following example verses:

"It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness . . . For the Lord will not cast off for ever: But though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies. For he doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men."

Lamentations 3:22-23, 31-33, KJV

"For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 8:38-39, KJV

"The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

2 Peter 3:9, KJV

So as you can see, God's love and mercy are indeed truly great. However, as we have already seen, our decision to believe in Him, and to obey Him, has to be by our own free will and personal choice. During this current period of Grace, He won't force Himself upon anyone. Yet at the same time, as I mentioned earlier, should we refuse to accept what the Lord offers us, we need to be conscious of the consequences of our actions, and realize that some day we are all going to have to face our Maker. This fact becomes evident by verses such as the following:

"But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment."

Matthew 12:36, KJV

"So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Romans 14:12, KJV

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad."

2 Corinthians 5:10, KJV

"Who shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead."

1 Peter 4:5, KJV

Realizing then, that someday we will all be held accountable

for our words, actions and choices, how much more should we be willing to acknowledge the Lord in our lives, and seek His answers in our decision-making process? Just think of how much trouble and pain it will help us to avoid. As I shared with you earlier, the Book of Proverbs offers us the following wise counsel:

"Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

Proverbs 3:5-6, KJV

In conclusion, as the Apostle Paul writes in his Epistle to the brethren at Corinth, let's all try to make the right choices in our lives, so that God is glorified in the end:

"Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."

1 Corinthians 10:31, KJV

Please don't forget that the most important choice you will ever have to make, is to accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior. If you have not done so yet, I hope that you will do it today. Your time may be much shorter than you realize!

With these thoughts, I will bring this article to a close. I pray that it has provided you with some valuable counsel, and that it has been a blessing and an inspiration in your life. If you have enjoyed reading it, please consider sharing its URL with your online friends. If you have an account with Facebook, Twitter, Google+, Tumblr, or with any other social network, I would also appreciate if you would take the time to click on the corresponding link that is found on this page. Thanks so much, and may God bless you abundantly!

For additional information and further study, you may want to refer to the list of reading resources below which were also mentioned in this article, or which are related to the topics which were discussed in this article. All of them are also located on the Bill's Bible Basics web server:

Do You Want Love and Light, or Rod and Wrath?
Dracula, Nosferatu, Twilight: The Vampire Fad
Humility in Our Understanding of God's Word
Is the Message of Salvation Meant for All Men?

Many Are Called, But Few Are Chosen
Selfishness: A Prophesied Sign of the Endtime!
So You Really Think You Are So Humble?
The Blood Atonement: In Jesus' Own Words
The Children of God and Politics
The Faith of a Little Child
The Fruits of Disobedience
The Only Credentials You Need
The Public School System and School Prayer
The Royal Law: Thou Shalt Love
The Wisdom of God vs the Philosophy of Men
What About the Poor?
What is God's Will for My Life?
When Sin is No Longer a Sin
Who is Building Your House?

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