



CHOOSING OR CHOSEN

THE CONFLICT BETWEEN THE
WILL OF MAN

AND THE SOVEREIGNTY OF
GOD;

THE CHOOSING OF A RELIGION,
OR GOD CALLING HIS CHOSEN
PEOPLE
FOR HIS POSSESSION



Choosing or Chosen

The Problem of widespread ineffective Christianity

The big battle of the church today is between the sovereignty of God according to the Bible, and the free will of man according to the weakness of the flesh. John Piper, "The argument is a distinction between divine willpower and human willpower." If all we have is human power we are sunk before we even begin. Our only hope is God working in us to lead us to Christ. For this we have the gospel of God.

The gospel of God involves the cost of self denial and taking up a cross following the example of Christ. *'And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself?"* Luke 9:23-25

God's call and choosing His children is irresistible and effective because it is from the powerful God who is not only creative but sovereign over all that is. *'And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.'* Rom 8:28-30

The gospel according to men has not considered the cost of following Christ, so there remains in the lives of many who call themselves Christian a desire for the world and comfort, which amounts to a denial of the sovereignty of God who has decreed those in Christ will follow His example.

For many decades the gospel of Jesus Christ and the life of His cross for all who would follow Him, has been watered down to make it more acceptable to the weakness of the flesh, as a way of getting people saved. However there is no salvation without a cross, so we have done countless thousands a great injustice and harm, instead of life in the

light of God they remain in the darkness thinking they have something that is not theirs.

In his book "The Cost" Steven Lawson says: "What Jesus had to say about following Him has been largely diluted. I believe that He does not even recognize most of what is presented as the gospel today." The cost of Jesus' call is recorded in Luke 14:26-35. Steven Lawson goes on to make clear that Jesus clearly states the requirements necessary to follow Him. They are self denial, cross bearing, counting the cost, surrendering to Christ, and authentic discipleship. *"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions."* Luke 14:26-27, 33

Those who don't count the cost of following Christ and willing give all they have to carry their cross will never received the ability to endure it's weight under extreme pressure. Those who want to follow without the cost of discipleship are still in the world and will be drawn repeatedly away by pressure to conform to the world's way of thinking and the desire for things and the pleasure the world offers.

Jesus requires genuine commitment to gain entry into the kingdom of God that many feel is asking too much. His call is to love Him more than anything in the world, even family, His having first place in all things is the minimum required to enter into a relationship with Him. *"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it."* Matt 10:37-39

The gospel of Jesus Christ is all about God's will and His purpose to transform us into the image of Christ. (Rom 8:29) Transformation can only take place if we begin with the life of the Spirit. This means we give up our self esteem so we can have His esteem. It's about worshipping Him in spirit and truth, His truth. It's all about living for Christ, having laid down the life of the flesh to live for God. We are called on to believe in Jesus, but believing is not just accepting He died

on a cross; it's not just having some knowledge about Him. Believing is seeing Him for who He really is, seeing Him as extremely valuable as the only Son of God to be obeyed as God. This sort of believing is life changing.

The gospel of Christ is received as the call of God in those who He has chosen to be transformed into the image of Christ so that they can live in the presence of God and enjoy His fellowship forever. The gospel of Christ results in Christ living in the believer so that their love for the Father and the Son compels them to want to obey all He has commanded His disciples to obey. The gospel of Christ first believed produces a passion to grow in the knowledge of God, a lasting thirst for understanding the word of God, a hunger to live in the presence of God, a desire to please God in all things, and an unbridled enthusiasm to worship God in all we do. The gospel of God is for the glory of God.

The call of Jesus Christ for disciples requires that those who want to have life with God must be born again by the Spirit of God. The gospel of men doesn't achieve spiritual rebirth, it remains bound by the darkness of the world and the flesh. The gospel of men is a religion without the power to please God.

The radical transformation of heart and mind of the true believer is evidence of the life of Christ taking possession of the disciple, so that obedience to all that Jesus commanded is possible. For the unrepentant who wants to follow on their own terms, heartfelt obedience cannot take place, for the mind fixed in the flesh cannot please God. There may be external obedience, but the heart remains far from God.

The Gospel of God is the exclusive work of God in the heart of sinful men. *'I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your impurities and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.'*

Ezek 36:25-27

The Cause of spiritual inability is choosing God for self interest

The man of flesh has no desire to live for God on God's terms, and besides, even if he prays God does not hear him. *'We know that God*

does not hear sinners; but if anyone is God-fearing and does His will, He hears him.’

John 9:31

Sinners everywhere go on praying for God to restore or increase their comfort in the world, but God is using discomfort to convict them of sin so that they will know they are powerless before Him, and come in humility and heartfelt repentance before Him. Jesus said: *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”*

Matt 4:17

Repentance is self denial, in means turning from self determination to trust and obey God in all things. The heart that really trusts God, surrenders completely to His governance in this world and the next. Repentance means *“he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”*

Luke 9:23

Many people have decided to become Christian because it seemed like a good idea at the time. But what they signed up for was the visible church devoid of the Spirit of God. What they joined was the creation of religious people who have no relationship with Jesus Christ. Some think they are chosen because their family have always gone to church. Some think that being baptised as a child and doing confirmation classes qualifies them for heaven.

The gospel according to men still loves the world and the things of the world. The gospel of men delights in superficial religious practice that often includes idols, things of the world which are objects or personal preferences that take up the place reserved for God. The gospel of men is attracted to the myths of the world, and often harmonises itself with the beliefs of false religion. The gospel of men is concerned with keeping one’s life for personal enjoyment, so talk of self denial is taken as foolishness and unnecessary.

The will of the unsaved man is in bondage to sin with a heart that is far from God. So any idea of using the will for religious purposes will mean finding a way to avoid the cost of discipleship by substituting another gospel that maintains or enhances the enjoyment of the flesh.

The gospel of men is man centred, it's about my will, my experience, my desires, my understanding, my aspirations, my dreams, my self esteem, my worship. The prevailing gospel in many places today is for the glory of man.

Sometimes an effort is made to convert without conviction, wanting to avoid the painful feelings of guilt, but those who have not honoured God are guilty, and the appropriate feeling of guilt reveals the need for repentance, without which they cannot enter the kingdom of God. The gospel of men may give the outward appearance of being spiritual, but it lacks the heart of God and the power of God to walk with God as His chosen children made alive according to the divine nature of God. The way to life in God through Christ is by death to self so His Spirit can take up residence in the soul. Those who are chosen by God are to walk as Jesus walked.

There is an unhealthy trend in seeking to save people by speaking only of the love of God while failing to mention that the same God is also the judge who will condemn the unbelieving world to everlasting torment. If people need to be saved, I ask, saved from what, the judgment of God.

The person who chooses God according to their natural instincts doesn't believe in the sovereignty of God. Those who are chosen by God have believed God is in control of all things and can be trusted as the one who has life and truth. This is the first witness of the Holy Spirit, God has dominion over everything. The one who is choosing for themselves hasn't realised they can't be trusted, so they will not trust in God.

You would think it a good thing that someone would choose the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. But the choice of sinful man is under man's control and influenced by the evil one, and might as well choose for Buddhism, Hinduism or Islam. The chosen religion may be conservative, liberal, Catholic or Pentecostal, but when the heart isn't changed, it is only window dressing, a coat of paint, and the downward spiritual destination hasn't changed.

The heart of the problem is the heart of the wicked. *"The plans of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, But the Lord weighs the motives. Commit your works to the Lord And your plans will be established. The Lord has made everything for its own purpose, Even the wicked for the day of evil."*

Prov 16:1-4

When the Spirit brings conviction He also brings the assurance that God can be trusted. *'So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.'* Rom 9:16

The cure for inability to please God is to be chosen by God

Jesus taught that discipleship requires repentance and obedience. At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, He preached a message of repentance. *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* (Matt 4:17) The message of the apostles was also one of repentance. (Acts 2:38) Those who have not repented will hear the Lord say: *"Why do you call me 'Lord, Lord,' and not do what I tell you?"* Luke 6:46

Repentance is the work of the Spirit on the inside as He leads us in the way of God's call to belong to Him. It brings a change of heart and mind, without which any religious practice on the outside is worth nothing. Real spiritual life cannot begin to transform us until we humble ourselves in repentance by dying to self and the world as a result of the Spirit's conviction of our sin. Repentance comes to those who hear Christ call to follow Him and respond with a new heart from God.

*"For consider **your calling**, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but **God has chosen** the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and **God has chosen** the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised **God has chosen**, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, "**LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD.**"* 1 Cor 1:26-31

We didn't call on God on our own initiative; we can only call on Christ as Lord because we have been called by God. Consider your calling v26. We have Christ because God chose us v27, v28, because of His calling and choosing we are in Christ Jesus v30, so that no one can boast in anything but the Lord. v31.

This calling by God is absolutely necessary in order to overcome our hardness of heart. God is faithful to His promise; He calls us into

fellowship with Christ by giving us a new heart. In choosing us to join the family of God, God knows us intimately and we will know Him who is the only Son of God. To enjoy this relationship we must be called by God, for we were lost in darkness. *'For the word of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.'*

1 Cor 1:18

This wonderful calling by God is no afterthought. *'He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.'*

Eph 1:4-6

God called those He chose to be in Christ from eternity past so that we can be in Christ for eternity future. God has eternally chosen us to be His personal possession before the world was created. By God's doing we are in Christ. God has chosen us out of the world of darkness and delivered us into the kingdom of the light of Christ. The cross of Christ is the wisdom of God, *'by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.'*

1 Cor 1:30

God's choosing is the only way we can come to Christ. *'A natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM? But we have the mind of Christ.'*

1 Cor 2:14-16

Not only are we prohibited from boasting, but we have never been involved in our regeneration in the first place. *'For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast.'*

Eph 2:8-9

The result of God's choosing and Christ's calling is that we are not only in fellowship with the Father and the Son, but we are now also able to understand the things of God because we have the being born of God's Spirit to have the mind of Christ. We cannot cause ourselves to

be born again; God alone causes a person to be born of the Spirit with the divine nature of a child of God. 2 Pet 1:3-4

Christians are born of God, full stop. The born again life is the life of God implanted in the soul of the sinner so that we no longer live for self but for Him who died in our place on the cursed cross of shame.

It is time to choose between self and God

If the Church is the body of Jesus Christ on earth, it must follow that it is filled with His life. If His life dwells in His body, then everything He stands for will have priority in His people. If He is the King of His dwelling place, then everything to do with His indwelling will be according to His will.

When people come to Jesus Christ in repentance and obedience they are born again into His body by His Spirit. Their old life they lived beforehand goes to the cross of self denial in taking up their cross to follow Him; and at the same time they receive a new life by the power of the Holy Spirit as they are reborn according to His image and likeness so they can live as holy children of God. This new life from God is motivated by the Spirit according to the will of God, to do and to work for His good pleasure.

Jesus is God, and He has commanded all those who follow Him to go and make disciples, baptising and teaching them to obey all He has commanded. This means all who follow Him are supposed to be disciples, who are eagerly learning to be like Him; and the disciple has no other wish other than to please their Master who is King of all. As a result, only those who obediently do what Jesus commanded are actually effective disciples and members of His body the Church. Unfortunately, many in the Church today do not have the appearance of disciples or are motivated to imitate Christ' life.

The worldly idea that we can exercise free will to change our spiritual destiny has been promoted widely in our churches. This idea is not biblical, it goes against the word of God, it is not found in the Bible. Man can exercise free will only in the sense that we can follow the desires of our heart, but before conversion our hearts are far from God and we are unable to please Him in any respect. Before God intervenes in our lives we are slaves of sin, our wills follow the dictates of the

prince of the air, and we make decisions under the influence of darkness. *‘being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their hear.’*

Eph 4:18

Since many who claim to belong to the church still live according to the world, we must ask the question: “Has God lost His power to work His righteousness into the hearts of men?” Or do we have people who are not really called and chosen by Him to be His holy people in the first place? Do we instead have people who have invited themselves to God’s banquet table who have not been given their wedding garments?

“He asked, ‘How did you get in here without wedding clothes, friend?’ The man was speechless. “Then the king told the attendants, ‘Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ “For many are invited, but few are chosen.”

Matt 22:12-14

There are many who think they are saved by choosing God on their own terms. The reality of wheat and tares (weeds) in the church until Christ returns guarantees the presence of unregenerate people in every church gathering.

Matt. 13:24–30

This raises another question, how can someone who is dead in their sins choose to live in heaven? (Eph 2:1; Col 2:13) What many want is a better life on earth without restrictions. But we don’t accept Jesus into our heart because we want a better life, He is in effect saying, if we want to go to heaven He must call us according to His will, and it’s all His doing, not ours. We didn’t choose Him, He chooses us. When He chooses, He does so on the basis that we have denied ourselves so He can be our Lord, as Lord He requires we take up our cross to follow His example. Shamefully many think they have an entitlement to be saved.

If we have not humbled ourselves there will be no crown in heaven. (James 1:12) Easy belief with no personal cost is not true faith, true faith is surrender to His will, and counterfeit faith will be rejected on the last day. Faith requires trusting in God’s decision for us, not in our manipulation of God by thinking we can choose Him on our own terms.

If God is able to do as He says, and those who claim to be Christians are unable to live the Christ life, they are still living in the world, their

personal call to come to Christ is obviously without power. This is an important issue, for if we love those who haven't entered through the narrow gate, we must make it as clear as we can that they need to reconsider, and humble themselves otherwise they will never see God. *"Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."*

Matt 23:12

Jesus calls for disciples who will become like Him in self-denial and cross bearing. (Luke 9:23-24) His call requires humility, and humility requires our self-denial to respond to the summons to submit to the authority of God as Father and of Jesus as Lord, and to declare a lifelong war on our natural way of life. It is a willingness to bow low in the interests of giving all the glory to God.

But without humility and obedience, we will not enter into future life in heaven. For heaven Jesus demands self-denial as a necessary condition of discipleship. We are all born with a desire to make ourselves gods, we are naturally self-willed. Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote. "When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die." True faith results in an immediate commitment to obedience to the commands of Jesus to live a life of holiness, that is, according to His teaching.

If we are at the centre of our universe, if our desires to enjoy the world motivate our will, if our worldly understanding is the guiding principle we live by, if we think we can choose God and everything will be right, if we are satisfied we are not as bad as others, we have not realised we live in the same state of darkness as the worst offender of God's glory.

Unless God is God to us, He is our enemy, because we oppose His sovereign rule. The condition of the heart determines the way of the will. In God's Court Room we have nothing to boast about, our only hope is the sacrifice of Christ covering our transgressions.

We don't choose God, He chooses us to be His children

'You are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.'

1 Pet 2:9

We are called by God to salvation. *'Those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, he also glorified.'*

Rom 8:30

God's call is actually a summons that carries the creative power to bring about the response He has decreed for His glory. God's call has the power to draw us out of the kingdom of darkness and bring us into His kingdom of light so we can enjoy intimate fellowship with Him.

'God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.' 1 Cor 1:9

This call of God is made effective by the work of the Holy Spirit in people's hearts. So God's effective call in our hearts initiates a response in us. Unless God is at work in people's hearts there will be no genuine response of repentance from self determination to come under the Lordship of Christ. God is the one who makes salvation possible in us.

God's powerful call is an internal calling understood in the heart, which is different from the call many hear in the ear, but the heart is not moved to obey. When the heart is responsive to His call, a new life in the chosen family begins. *'Many are called but few are chosen'*
Matt 22:14

Jesus was saying that many are called, but only those who have been "chosen" and have received Christ will come. It is not possible to invite ourselves or come by any other way, salvation is by the undeserved grace of God through faith in Christ after repentance; this is the only way God has provided. God has determined who He will save as the inheritance of Christ Jesus.

Those He has given to Jesus, Jesus calls. *"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me; and I give eternal life to them, and they will never perish; and no one will snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand."* John 10:28-29

As a result of God working in us, the repentant believer is taken out of the darkness of the world, and secured in the light of the kingdom of God, to walk by the leading of the Spirit of God. They may still be in the world, but they no longer live according to the world's values, they are a new creation in the image of Christ Jesus who is their Lord and Master, who is leading them by the Holy Spirit into all righteousness and peace. Now they live for the values of the kingdom of God.

Salvation is not a transaction we agree with as if we make it happen; salvation is a transformation. Paul says we are “*new creations*” in Christ.

2 Cor 5:17

The self righteous are not called

If we think we are justified before God because we choose Him, our heart is still in the world of man's independence, so then we need to reconsider our position and make our salvation sure by denying ourselves and taking up our cross to follow Christ in all obedience and truth. If the Lord is not ruling in us now He will not be our peace hereafter.

We cannot gain merit in God's sight by being good according to our human understanding. In itself good works won't work because they are the work of man and not God. Being a good person in our own eyes is not what God requires, He requires a new life, and a new life means death to our good works so a new life in the Spirit can be given in order for us to enter the kingdom of God and do His works for the kingdom of God.

Before we can believe in Jesus Christ, the appeal of the world will deny we should have any desire for God who made the world. The mindset that looks for meaning in the world has no hope of true life, but the mind fixed on Christ as Lord of our lives has life and peace. The mind turned toward God is evidence of the working of the Spirit of God.

"For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God."

Rom 8:5-8

Before we are bought into the family of God as slaves of Christ we are dead in our sins. We were slaves to sin. (Rom 6:17) *"When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness."* (Rom 6:20) That is to say we lived according to a heart of flesh. *'For when we were in the realm of the flesh, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in us, so that we bore fruit for death.'* Rom 7:5

The heart of flesh cannot please God, (Rom 8:8) so any idea we have that we can initiate a life with God by inviting Jesus into our hearts is playing with smoke and mirrors. Because of our inability to reach up to God, our salvation is totally dependent on God's grace, who gives faith to the repentant heart to believe in Him, so we can be delivered into a life of devotion to God in Christ.

Nobody can invite Jesus to come and live in a dead heart; unless the hard heart is led to be crucified with Christ by the Spirit we are not acceptable as a dwelling place of God. The unrepentant soul can attend church, read the Bible daily, attend prayer meetings, pastor a church, do missionary work, and learn to behave in a way that represents a Christian, but still have a heart that is not changed in surrender to Christ.

This life of ineffective faith is seen in the life of John Wesley before his conversion. We are not saved by a profession of faith. We are not saved by praying the Sinner's Prayer. We are not saved by signing a card or walking an aisle. Emotional fervour is no indication of God's favour. We are only saved by a living and active faith, (James 2:14-26) a faith that shows itself in true repentance, obedience and uncompromising love for God and our neighbour.

The man who suddenly thinks he chooses God in spite of his independent DNA, thinks he can invite Christ into his heart and be saved. But all that has happened is he has become religious and still lives for himself and not Christ who died on his behalf. Repentance hasn't happened because the sinner is in bondage to sin and cannot save himself even if he thought he could have a change of mind.

New birth means new life

Jesus says that in order to have eternal life we must have a new heart from God. *"Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit."* John 3:5

As Jesus made it clear to Nicodemus, a new heart is needed to enter the kingdom of God, we must be born again of the Spirit. *"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God."* (John 3:5) Those who are born again have received a new heart. We didn't gain spiritual birth by ourselves; God

gives the repentant a heart that is responsive to the things of God. *'For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit.'* Rom 8:3-4

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:12-13

The new spiritual birth must take place before we can enter the kingdom of God. We are unable to ask Jesus into our hearts and be saved; our salvation is about Jesus' calling and God birthing us with His life. No one can come on their own account. *"No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws them."* John 6:44

Since God's call is effective and powerful in bringing new life into the one who hears Him, there will always be a corresponding change of life in the one who is now a child of God. God's work of regeneration will result in a new life according to the life of His Son, Jesus Christ. (Col 3:4; Rom 8:29) *'No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God's seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.'* (1 John 3:9) *'If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone also who practices righteousness is born of Him.'* 1 John 2:29

Jesus said many times, *"He who has ears to hear, let him hear."* (Matt 11:15; Mark 4:9) Only a "few" will respond because they are the ones who are truly hearing because they are moved by God to hear in the depth of their being. And we know we have heard God's call and have received new life when we have denied ourselves to follow the crucified example of Jesus Christ. Luke 9:23

We know we belong to the Father when we are being led by the Spirit in the way to live for God and because He testifies to us that we are indeed children of God. (Rom 8:16) If we think we are in God's family and we are not being led to live the life of Christ by the power of the Spirit of God, we have deceived ourselves into thinking something of

ourselves that is not supported by God's word. The person who holds to their declaration of independence cannot hear God, for they are unable to understand the things of God.

1 Cor 2:14

"For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him."

Rom 8:14-17

The proof of being in Christ is that our lives will be motivated by His Spirit, so that we begin to live His kind of life under His power and dominion. No Spirit, no life. *"If anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him."* (Rom 8:9) And not only does the nominal Christian not have access to the abiding presence of God by the Spirit, they also show no evidence of His peace when the storms of life blow their house built on sand away. (Matt 7:26) Peace is only possible for the obedient disciple who abides in Him. *"If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love."*

John 15:10

Because we are joined to God in Christ by the Spirit, we reject the thinking of worldly men and received the mind of Christ. (1 Cor 2:16) Because we are joined to God in Christ by the Spirit, we do not set our hopes on worldly ambitions but on the glory to come. Because we are joined to God in Christ by the Spirit, we are able to walk with God every day, even though we are still being transformed into the image of Christ. Because we are joined to God in Christ by the Spirit we can rejoice in all things that happen, because we know God is using them for our greatest good in Christ so we will be glorified with Him. Because we are joined to God in Christ by the Spirit, our desire is to do the will of God, for Christ is our Lord and our life.

By the Spirit we have received the faith to believe. By the Spirit we have received the gift of repentance. By the Spirit we have crucified our flesh to the life we lived in the world. By the Spirit we have been born again. By the Spirit we have received the life of Christ so we can walk in Him. By the Spirit we have received the love of God so we can

love as He loves. By the Spirit we are caused to live in obedience to God to do the will of God. By the leading of the Spirit we know we are a child of God. By the work of the Spirit we will be transformed into the image of Christ. By the Spirit we will be glorified with Christ.

If the Lord is not ruling now He will not be our peace hereafter

Today's understanding of cross bearing is very inadequate. In Jesus' day the cross always symbolised death. When a man carried a cross, he had already been condemned to die. To follow Christ means we die to our own way of doing things. (Gal 2:20) We have crucified the flesh.

Gal 5:24

We consider our human will, our personal rights, our desired passions, and our goals in the world, to be crucified on the cross with Christ. Our right to direct our own lives is dead to us. (Phil 3:7-8) This death involves suffering for Him in this world. The flesh that remains in us does not want to die. Dying to self is painful and goes against our natural inclination to seek our own pleasure.

By choosing to obey the Lord Jesus Christ, we consciously set ourselves at odds with the world. *"If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ."* (Gal 1:10) By closely sticking to the teachings of the Bible, we set ourselves up for rejection, mockery, loneliness, or betrayal. Often the cruellest persecution comes from those who consider themselves to be spiritual in the Church who have denied God to promote to their own ideas.

If we choose to take a stand for righteousness and biblical truth, we accept we will often be misunderstood, mocked, or worse. *'Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.'*

2 Tim 3:12

God is often misrepresented

Sometimes God's word is taken out of context and used as some kind of magic formula, we are told to say these things and you have your ticket to heaven. *"If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved."*

Rom 10:9

The crucial words that are often overlooked here are "Lord" and "heart." If Jesus is Lord, my Lord, your Lord, we will joyfully agree

that He can do with our life what He wills as He works out our salvation in the world. If Jesus is Lord in our heart of hearts He is our sovereign Master and we are His slave, born to serve Him. If Jesus is Lord we are not our own to please ourselves, we belong to Him who died for us to purchase us for Himself.

If Jesus is Lord we now live for Him who is our Lord and Saviour. Jesus is Lord and He reigns over everything in our life.

How many people say this verse from Romans 10:9 as some sort of happy formula for a life of comfort and bliss, and never intend to crucify themselves to live for Him but themselves, thinking they have some sort of spiritual insurance, while Jesus never reigns in their lives. They will hear Him say: *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.’* Matt 7:21-23

Jesus Christ didn't die to make us happy in the world; He died to make us holy, separated from the world for Himself, to follow His example of obedience to God. Even to suffer with Him in the world. Rom 8:17

God never promised us a party, we are to follow Christ' example; He didn't seek happiness in the world, but only to die to self in obedience to God so others can live with God. So He calls us to deny ourselves and take up our cross to follow Him. Only when we live for Him can we be truly happy as we serve Him in the fallen world.

The chosen of God lay down their will for comfort and ease to do the will of God in overcoming the darkness. We don't choose God by ourselves; we don't stop being enemies of God to be devoted to God by an act of our will as if we turned over a new leaf.

A serious change of mind needs to begin first by being set apart from a life of independence to receive a new spiritual birth, and man cannot give himself a new self in conformity to the image of Christ.

When Jesus calls for repentance, only His chosen sheep hear His voice and are enabled by God to come to Him. He saves them from their sin and gives them eternal life, they don't save themselves.

For this reason the church is full of unrepentant believers who have used their corrupted wills to once again please themselves by choosing for themselves. They cannot use their free will to gain life, because it is not free, but they have been deceived into thinking they can choose what only God can do.

When Arminius (1560–1609) insisted on the free will of men in his conversion to Christianity, he opened a can of worms that has given birth to every form of spiritual deception known to God that prevents devotion to God as the only way of life. Following on from Arminius we have Charles Finney (1792-1875) who many claim is the primary evangelist of the nineteenth century. But like Arminius, Finney insisted conversion comes about by the exercise of free will. This message of man's initiative is attractive to many, but only because it overlooks the need for radical repentance in denying self and taking up our cross.

Therefore for many generations, being a Christian is often about me and how I feel, and not about obeying the Sovereign will of God by following Jesus Christ the only saviour and Lord, and being committed to imitating His example of a life made in the image of God.

The free will God gave to Adam before his fall from grace can no longer be called on as a way of serving God, for the whole man has been corrupted so that man now lives according to the flesh, for the Spirit of God has left sinful man to dwell in the world as an instrument of Satan.

The free will from the beginning is no longer free but entangled with the god of this world. Therefore the church is full of people who think they have joined the family of God, but have not experienced a new birth by dying to the self of sin and the removal of their heart of stone. Even the free will of believers is not entirely free because they are committed to doing the will of God who leads them into all righteousness. We are free only in the sense that we are willing to believe and obey. If we hold to the doctrine of justification by faith alone as promoted by the Reformers we are on solid ground.

Free will advocates and those who agree with them who promote the idea that man is not enslaved to sin so he doesn't need to repent and can be saved by so choosing, are at odds with Biblical teaching about the supreme majestic weight of the glory of God alone needed to save mankind from the power of sin.

To suggest that man who is enslaved to corruption caused by his independent spirit can extract himself from spiritual deadness, is to propose that man doesn't need a saviour, and God is not sovereign but dependant on the lesser to create the greater. A rotten apple can't produce sweet juice no matter how hard you pray. If what free will people claim were true, God isn't God, but only a tool, a rubber stamp for the use of mere sinful men.

No wonder so many supposed Christians live in fear and are subject to depression and anxiety. They have nothing to hold onto under the pressure and suffering of the world that can provide them with eternal security.

Oh, but it sounds so enticing to be told of the love of God and that you can choose to ask Him to come into your heart. But this is not what Jesus taught. A rotten heart cannot be the dwelling place of God, a new heart is needed.

The so called free will decision to ask Jesus to come into the heart is not humble repentance, for the asker, by taking this path is indicating they see themselves very much in control. If the sinner is dead spiritually in sin, and a slave to sin, under the power of the evil one, they can only follow the dictates of their heart, and that is estranged from God, unable to please God.

Unless God intervenes by conviction and conversion to a humble heart that knows it is unable to be anything other than dead, the will to act is still following the dictates of evil; so in the so called free will decision, the person has bought themselves a ticket to nowhere, instead of gaining heaven they are still destined for hell.

If God is in control and we are without any ability to save ourselves, our only hope is that God would act graciously towards us and save us from our sin because He is the only one who can act righteously.

The repentant heart knows it is helpless to be anything other than lost without God's grace lifting it out of the body of death and giving it a new life in Christ.

Unless God saves us absolutely, through the conviction of our self centred hearts, and the gift of repentance that results in our justification and sanctification, man cannot look forward to seeing the glory of God.

The hardest people to convince they need to be born again are the ones who think they have caused their rebirth themselves by so choosing. But those who are dead to God cannot raise themselves from the dead. Those who have no life cannot breathe life into their dead body by themselves, and if they think God will follow their choice, they make Him their puppet, when in fact He is Lord, the only one who takes the initiative to will and to do for His good pleasure.

But because of the so called free will church, we see all sorts of pagan influences in idolatry, astrology, mythology, and self love according to the ways of the world, and an inability to keep the law of God that only comes to a heart of humility that is led by the Spirit of God to be holy. There is even a free grace movement that insists it is unnecessary for a believer to carry out the good works of God. *'But are you willing to recognize, you foolish fellow, that faith without works is useless?'*

James 2: 20

When God works in us the miracle of a holy life is seen in a believer, we have no other will to follow but the will of God. Those who have been born of God are given the ability to obey Him: *"so that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit."*

Rom 8:4-5

While salvation is by free grace, Jesus teaches us that stepping into that faith will cost us everything. This is illustrated very well in the teaching of Paul in Romans 12. *'Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your*

mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.'

Rom 12:1-2

This means that our Christian life is not passive; we don't just sit down and let God do all things. We present ourselves, we offer ourselves give ourselves as a living sacrifice. When he refers to our bodies he is indicating everything about us that represents all that we are, all that we have, and all that we do. *"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body."*

1 Cor 6:19-20

A holy sacrifice means we are set aside for God to use as He wishes. And holiness also includes living a morally pure life in accordance with God's commandments. We are to sacrifice ourselves to God. The best example of this is the sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Living a holy life is the opposite to living according to the values of the world, according to the understanding of people who walk in darkness. On top of that we are to actively undertake the purification of our minds. Our minds are not our brains where we store information; our minds are our souls, our innermost being and its motivation. The new life in Christ will move towards having the mind of Christ. Having done all this we will know what is good and acceptable and perfect in the sight of God.

Is this true in us, have we really been born again, or are we still in control, has the life of Christ replaced our life, or are we still failing to please God? Are we led by the Spirit to please God in all things by walking as Jesus walked, or are we choosing our own way? Is God's Spirit causing us to keep His commandments, or are we looking the other way?

If God doesn't have first place in all our life, then we may be experiencing the result of a bad choice of our own according to the world. To be saved means Jesus is Lord, not us; our will according to the will of God is to follow Him and obey His commands as a slave obeys His Master.

There is no salvation in being able to say words that are not backed up by the witness of the Spirit in doing all things to the glory of God.

Nobody can become a Christian by choosing, the best we can do is die to self and trust in God for a new birth in the image of Christ so we can walk as He walked in obedience to God.

When God gives life we will have the witness of the Spirit who confirms we are children of God because we delight in being led to please our heavenly Father in all aspects of our lives. When the Spirit is working in us we will undergo transformation from the inside out. His ways will become our ways, His words will become our words, His purpose is now our purpose, His priority is now our priority, His beloved Son is now our life.

Col 3:4

‘Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ will be abundantly supplied to you.’

2 Pet1:10-11

There is a great need today to be able to discern the difference between those who have been chosen by God to be the holy church, and those who have invited themselves according to their supposed free will. The most challenging mission field is within the doors of the local church. If we can't see the difference between the choosing and the chosen of God, we will fail to warn the deceived of their danger.

The only effective call is God's not ours. *‘And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.’*

Rom 8:28-30

Salvation is the work of God who calls His chosen people. *“I WAS FOUND BY THOSE WHO DID NOT SEEK ME, I BECAME MANIFEST TO THOSE WHO DID NOT ASK FOR ME.”*

Rom 10:20

The chosen children must contend for the faith

If you live for the gospel of men, you will think I am an idiot, if you live for the gospel of God you will contend for the faith once delivered

by the Apostles and the Prophets. *'Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints.'*

Jude 3

We have a great responsibility for presenting the gospel the way God intended. We have an enormous debt to Christ to be faithful to Him and not water down His call. We also have to warn people about the danger of making up their own gospel to accommodate the world. If we love our neighbour we wouldn't just let things like this slide because we will be seen as rocking the boat. We wouldn't speak falsely. *'This people honours Me with their lips, But their heart is far away from Me. 'But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.'*

Matt 15:8-9

If our Church has slipped into the habit of easy believing, the requirements Jesus set for His followers will be neglected. Not only will salvation be in question but the life of a disciple will be seriously compromised even if they are saved. To contend for the faith is to struggle to surmount a difficulty, and that difficulty is untruth and compromise. If we contend for the faith we will be called extremists, we might even be cast aside, and we will join some memorable brothers in the Apostles and the Prophets.

Consequently, if the Church compromises the cost of discipleship, genuine seekers will consider the Christian life to be of no value to them, they will see no appreciable difference between themselves and the nominal Christians they observe; and they will be more likely to listen to Satan's lies.

However the person who has died to self and being reborn by the Spirit of God is to be a dwelling place of God; they are far more valuable than all the Cathedrals in the world.

The confirmation of being born again by God is a life lived as a slave to Christ. (2 Cor 5:15) The slave of Christ does the work of His Master. This life lived according to His image is our witness to the Lordship of Christ. The one we follow is Christ Jesus who is our Lord and God, who rules over every aspect of our lives, for we do all things as unto the Lord in learning to obey all He has commanded. His disciples are slaves who are motivated to follow Christ by the love of God from a

pure heart, and prompted and enabled by the Spirit of God to walk as Jesus walked in obedience, to the glory of God. Once we were slaves of the darkness, now we are children of God who walk in the light of Christ.

The worldly church is relying on the works of the flesh in order to gain a ticket to heaven; but is totally unaware there is no bus coming to take them there. No one deserves to be saved. *"Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'*"

Matt 7:22-23

We hear of people being told to invite Jesus into their heart, however those who are slaves of sin cannot decide to be holy, there must be a death first, Jesus bids us come and die so we can have His life.

In making this clear I am not at war with the church, I love the church called by God that's not of the world but lives for Christ. And I love the church of the world that lives for self, who needs to hear that Jesus Christ died for sins, once for all.

We are privileged to be called to die for Christ in what is called the body of Christ, because the real church is made up of the called out ones who have died to self and the world to live for God. Those who are chosen know the truth. *"Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him."*

1 John 2:15

The Lord requires that His leaders have the discernment necessary to see there may be two churches in the same building, so the teaching He has commanded may be delivered appropriately. *Jesus said: "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."*

John 14:21

When it comes to God's word, we cannot live out what does not live within. We need to have God's word as our daily bread. If Spirit of God lives in us He will be actively prodding us towards greater compliance to what He has written by the hands of the Apostles.

Jesus said the Holy Spirit would teach us all truth, to do that He requires our submission of obedience; but if we are not being changed by His truth working in us so we can teach others, either we are disobedient, or we have never humbled ourselves enough to allow Him to take up residence in us. There has to be a separation from the ways of the world. *"But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Do you not judge those who are within the church?"*

1 Cor 5:11-12

The bottom line

The church of Jesus Christ is made up of the “called out ones”, and this powerful call comes from our Holy God, with the purpose that we will be holy; it comes from outside of ourselves. The calling is to leave the ways of the world and live for the kingdom of God. The choice of men comes from a heart independent of the will of God which looks for enjoyment in the world. If we have chosen according to our human understanding, we are insecure. The trials and tribulations God allows to buffet us will not be the means of our purification, but cause us constant distress and dissatisfaction because we desire the things of the world more than God. If we have been chosen by God, we can know we are eternally secure because nothing can separate us from His love. If we know we are called we also know He lives with us by the Spirit of Christ.

Gal 2:20

Salvation is not a matter of entitlement for everyone, just because Jesus Christ died for the sins of the world. More importantly, Jesus died specifically for God's chosen children, who He has made willing to repent and eager to believe in, and pursue Christ, and love Him who died in their place so they can live with God.

"Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade men,...For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf."

2 Cor 5:11, 14-15

We are required to witness to Christ through His word; this doesn't mean those we speak to will be able to understand what we say, unless the Spirit of God opens their ears they will continue as before. 2 Cor 4:4

The Spirit is not given to make life on earth more enjoyable, the Spirit is given to enable us to put to death what is not acceptable to God so we can be holy as Christ is holy. (Rom 8:29) If we don't have the witness of the Spirit we are not children of God. Rom 8:15-16

All religious behaviour can be learnt and perfected, but the indwelling Spirit cannot be duplicated. *'By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him.'* (1 John 3-5) *"By their fruits you will know them."* Matt 7:16

This is the bottom, bottom line; do you desire to know Jesus Christ more personally as your Lord and saviour because you love Him? If you are reading this and you are angry with me, or dismissive of what the Bible says, good, now you see the need to seek the mercy and grace of God by repenting from the heart so that you are in a state you can hear the call of Jesus Christ to come to Him as a chosen and beloved child of God.

To my brothers and sisters who are the chosen and beloved children of God. *"But you, beloved, ought to remember the words that were spoken beforehand by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, that they were saying to you, "In the last time there will be mockers, following after their own ungodly lusts." These are the ones who cause divisions, worldly-minded, devoid of the Spirit. But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life. And have mercy on some, who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear, hating even the garment polluted by the flesh. Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen."* Jude 1:17-25



Living Water Resources Come to the River

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