



The Voice of Truth

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Failing To Obey The Gospel By Jimmy Pettigrew

The gospel is the good news, glad tidings about man's salvation (**Rom. 1:16; Jas. 1:21**). The gospel has fundamental facts men must believe (**1 Cor. 15:1-4**). This gospel must be obeyed to have salvation. *"Since you have purified your souls in obeying the truth ..." "Who hindered you that ye should not obey the truth?"* Christ *"became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation."* (**1 Pet. 1:22; Gal. 5:7; Heb. 5:9**). *"And to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with the angels of his power in flaming fire, rendering vengeance to them that know not God, and to them that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus: who shall suffer punishment, (even) eternal destruction from the face of the Lord and from the glory of his might"* (**2 Thess. 1:7-9**). Some fail to obey the gospel. Why?

1. They are fearful! Some are afraid of what others will say to and/or about them if they obey the gospel.
2. They are faithless. Unless one believes both the facts and the commands of the gospel he cannot be saved.
3. They don't want to change. One does not want to break with the religion of his/her parents.
4. They are foolish. Some are so foolish as to imagine they have plenty of time to obey the gospel. God says now is the day of salvation (**2 Cor. 6:2**). Life on earth is both brief and uncertain (**Jas. 4:13-14**). You are foolish to imagine that there will be a *"convenient season"* to obey the gospel (**Acts 24:25**).

Can I afford not to obey the gospel?

Sin is All About Choices By Jonathan L. Perz

Throughout history, men have used just about every conceivable excuse to justify sin in their lives. Consider the time at the foot of Mount Sinai—in the midst of Israel's wicked idolatry—when Aaron tried to justify his poor choice. When questioned about the calf he fashioned for the Israelites to worship at their request, he told Moses, "And I said to them, 'whoever has any gold, let them break it off.' So they gave it to me, and I cast it into the fire, and this calf came out" (**Exodus 32:24**). Whether it is a one-time act, or a continually repeated sin that besets one, statements such as, "The Devil made me do it," "I had no choice," or "I could not help myself," have often been heard. Nevertheless, such thinking is foreign and contrary to the word of God.

The Bible teaches that sin is a matter of individual choice (cf. **Ezekiel 18**). It begins with discerning good from evil (**Hebrews 5:14**) and then refusing the evil and choosing the good (**Isaiah 7:15**). A sure and consistent pattern for such thinking can be clearly established from the beginning of time.

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In the garden, Adam and Eve were given free will, as well as some very specific instructions. They could eat of the fruit of every tree except one, which God declared off-limits. When tempted by Satan, Eve made the wrong choice—she partook of the forbidden fruit, as did Adam (**Genesis 3:1 ff**). Though Eve blamed Satan, and Adam blamed Eve, they each bore the consequences of their individual sins, as each had made the choice to commit that sin. Pointing the finger elsewhere never justifies sin, nor does it remove the consequences.

In like fashion, Moses committed a sin when—instead of glorifying God and obeying His instructions—he glorified Aaron and himself, choosing not to follow God’s command. This incident is found in **Numbers 20:7-13**. The Israelites needed water and God specifically instructed Moses on how to provide that water (**v. 8**). Moses did not head the instructions exactly (**vs. 10-11**), thus he suffered the consequences of his wrong choice. Even when the choice to sin is made in the heat of the moment, the consequences remain.

King David is another testimony to the fact that sin is a matter of individual choice, and God will hold man accountable. David, walking on his roof one evening, came upon an awkward situation. A woman (not his wife) was bathing where she could be seen. David, now faced with a choice, subjected himself to the temptation—instead of turning away from the compromising situation. In so doing, one sin led to another—before long a great evil was done for which David suffered grave consequences (**2 Samuel 11-12**). Even if we are faced with a tempting situation, the choice to turn away and avoid its consequences is still available—thus, rendering our actions inexcusable.

In truth, the examples are boundless. Sin is all about choices. James wrote, “Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted of God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then, when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death” (**James 1:12-15**). From this passage, we can acknowledge some simple facts about sin, temptation and choices.

1. God does not tempt man. God might allow man to be tempted (cf. Job’s temptation by Satan), but He does not directly tempt man. As a matter of fact, with each temptation man suffers, God is faithful, in that He, “will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (**1 Corinthians 10:13**). This verse is bona fide proof that we, as individuals, must bear the burden of choice with each and every sin!

2. We are tempted by our own desires. Often, we place ourselves in bad situations. We considered the example of King David, who made the choice to be enticed, and in turn, was enticed. In like fashion, people today do the same thing. For example, men and women often allow themselves to be in compromising situations with those of the opposite sex, who are not their spouses. Too often, the outcome is fornication, infidelity, and broken homes. Likewise, when recovering alcoholics frequent establishments that serve alcohol, they set themselves up to sin. Consider the folly of recovering drug addicts choosing to befriend people who abuse drugs (**cf. 1 Corinthians 15:33**). The list is unlimited. The fact is that we choose our circumstances, be they our workplace, our companions, or our environment. Why do we burden ourselves with situations that we are certain to stumble in and commit sin?

3. Temptation is the birthplace of sin. We need to realize that we have not sinned until we give in to our temptations. This does not mean we should push the threshold of temptation to the maximum. Rather, we should know that even if we are tempted, we do not have to give in! We can still turn it around! We can still avoid sin! We need to simply say NO! This

is why the Spirit teaches us to "abstain from every form of evil" (**1 Thessalonians 5:22**). We are instructed to "resist the devil and he will flee from us" (**James 4:7**). We are told to "flee sexual immorality" (**1 Corinthians 6:18**). We are commanded to "abhor what is evil, cleave to what is good" (**Romans 12:9**). We must acknowledge that even in the heat of temptation, as Satan is turning up the thermostat, we choose to avoid sin by not giving place to the devil (**Ephesians 4:27**)!

Indeed, sin is all about choices. We make choices between right and wrong, good and evil, acceptable and unacceptable, pleasing and not pleasing, truth and error every day of our lives. These choices will determine our eternity. Ultimately, the choice is between life and death! It is important to understand: it is one thing to know right from wrong and another thing altogether to choose right over wrong. Ask yourself, "What kind of choices am I making?"

SIX WAYS TO STOP DIVISION

By David J. Riggs

1. Don't side with the cliques. When it is evident that there are warring cliques in the church, the Christian should be careful not to take sides. He should rather oppose sects, parties, and factions in the church (**Gal. 5:20; 1 Cor. 3:3**), and should teach against gossip, backbiting, and evil speaking (**2 Cor. 12:20; Eph. 4:31**). Such teaching believed and obeyed will dissolve the cliques.

2. Don't judge another's heart. Christians should be careful not to attribute evil motives to the words and actions of others. "Judge not, that you be not judged." (**Matt. 7:1**). If we hear or witness some unseemly thing done by a brother, instead of being quick and harsh in our judgment, we should give him the benefit of the doubt. "...Love thinks no evil." (**1 Cor. 13:5**). Some things are to be labeled as "unwise," but not as "sin."

3. Don't bind your convictions on others. What may be a matter of doctrine to one might be a matter of opinion to another. The weak brother in **Rom. 14** believed that he should eat only herbs; it was a "matter of faith" to him (**Rom. 14:2**). Paul showed in **Rom. 14** (also in **1 Cor. 8 and 10**) that in such matters, one is not to bind his personal convictions on others. Furthermore, one brother may be convinced that another brother sinned in a particular action and needs to repent. However, that brother might be equally convinced that he has not sinned. One should not bind his own conscience on another.

4. Don't build up a faction. On any given controversy or issue in the local church, as you have opportunity state your conviction, but don't be trying to build up your side by going from house to house or by calling on the phone. Working in secrecy is the tactic of the evil man (**Psalms 101:5; 2 Pet. 2:1**). It puts those who differ at an unfair disadvantage because it does not give equal time and opportunity. It is not practicing the golden rule (**Matt. 7:12**). Likewise, one has no right to take the problems of one church to another. This destroys God's plan for independence and autonomy. It is foolish for outsiders to meddle in strife that doesn't belong to them (**Prov. 26:17**).

5. Try to hold it together. All Christians should try to keep the church together and not pull it apart. Instead of leaving and pulling off a group, members of the church should stay together and reconcile their differences. "Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another." (**Rom. 14:19**). There is no such thing as a perfect church and the Lord expects Christians to stay together and work out their problems.

6. Withdraw from the factious. "Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned." (**Titus 3:10**-

11). "A factious man after a first and second admonition refuse..." (Titus 3:10 ASV). "Cast out the scoffer, and contention will leave; yes, strife and reproach will cease." (Prov. 22:10). Within time, the righteous will know who the real troublemakers are. They must be withdrawn from; otherwise, they will eventually divide the church, taking many souls with them.

Sunday Morning With The Seven Dwarfs

Sleepy – "Oh, I 'm too tired! That party last night was late, too long. I didn't get much rest. What if I nod off in Bible class? I think I'll stay home"

Dopey – "I don't know whether I'll go or not. I want to go, but I just don't know."

Sneezy – "I don't feel too good and besides, I may give my hay fever to someone; worse still, I may catch something from someone. I'll stay in today, but go to work tomorrow.

Bashful – "I might not know everybody in class. I hate to meet so many people. It's just too much to expect of anyone."

Grumpy – "I don't like the teacher and besides, we're studying and uninteresting subject and some of those people in the class, well ..."

Doc – "What a gorgeous day! It's a shame to waste such a great day for golf! I could miss just this one Sunday."

Happy – "Smile, brethren, and be happy and thankful for the opportunity to go to Bible class and to learn more about God and His will for us. Smile, and make someone else happier as you go to Bible class with a smile on your face."

What Must I Do To Be Saved?

Hear and Learn - Rom. 10:17 m. 10:9-10 ; 1 Pet. 3:21 ; John 6:45; 17:3

Believe - Heb. 11:6; John 6:29; 8:24

Repent - Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19; 17:30

Confess the Lord - Matt. 10:32-33; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Pet. 3:21

Be Baptized - Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Gal. 3:26-27

Continue in the Apostles' Teaching - Acts 2:42; 2 Tim. 3:14-17