

Only Two Ways 2-10-02

Isaiah 55:7-9, Proverbs 14:12, Romans 7:5,6, John 1:12

In the Colorado sometime in the late Fall, a middle aged man decided to drive his camper-truck over a mountain scenic route. It would take a bit longer than the highway, but he thought it would be much more enjoyable. A few miles down the road the snow began to come down quite hard. He wondered whether to turn around or keep on going. While he was trying to decide he approached the halfway point and decided it didn't really make any difference, he might as well go on. Soon the snow was up to his bumper. Slowing down to find the road, the truck got stuck. "No problem," he thought, "someone will come and plow the road. I'll just wait in the camper." The snow continued to fall for days. The truck and camper were almost completely buried. What he did not realize was this road was closed in winter and did not reopen until spring.

While he slowly starved to death, people searched the possible routes and directions he could have gone. Through a series of coincidences and miscommunications, the road he was on was never thoroughly searched. He kept a daily journal. In it he told of gradually growing weaker, deciding he didn't have the strength to walk out. He wrote until his eyes could no longer see. In the spring when the road was opened they found him and the journal he had written up until his death. This man made a fatal error in choosing the wrong road. It looked like the best choice. It seemed it would be the most enjoyable, but that way proved to be fatal.

This week I've been considering again the clear choice in Scripture of the two ways available for man. It is a repeated theme in the Old and New Covenant. In the Old, Adam was given a clear choice. The way of God was obedience to not eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. But the first couple chose to go their own way, the way the serpent suggested, the way of death.

Moses challenged the nation of Israel to obey God's Laws, which were the ways of God. Deut 26:17 (NIV)¹⁷ *You have declared this day that the LORD is your God and that you will walk in his ways, that you will keep his decrees, commands and laws, and that you will obey him.*

Later Moses declares that choice is a chance to choose Life. Deut 30:19-20 (NIV)¹⁹ *This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live²⁰ and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.*

Just as in the Garden, two roads lay before them. One led to life. The other was death. One was filled with blessing, the other with curses. Moses encourages them to choose life and tells them why: "...that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life..." It doesn't matter how

pleasant that road may appear – it is cursed and ends in death. Nor does it matter how tough the road of life looks, it is blessed!

Joshua, Moses successor, asked the people to make a choice as to which way they would go, and he declared his personal choice.

Josh 24:14-15 (NIV)¹⁴ *"Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD."*¹⁵ *But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD."*

The history of the kings of Israel are either the story of walking in God's ways or their own. It is a history of choices between life and death. The prophets made it even clearer. Listen to Isaiah as he declares the very words of God. Isaiah 55:7-9 (NIV)⁷ *Let the wicked forsake his way and the evil man his thoughts. Let him turn to the LORD, and he will have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will freely pardon.*⁸ *"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the LORD.*⁹ *"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*

God is telling Israel that the problem is their way is not His way. His way is holy, pure, righteous, loving, and just. Our ways are wicked and evil. They are not His. The same is true for our thoughts. His are always pure. His motivations are always right. Ours come from our sinful nature. Should we compare ourselves to man we might have a chance, but comparing ourselves to God we see that the gap is insurmountable to us. There is a highway of holiness where God marches throughout eternity, and there is road to destruction that man seems to think is the road to self-fulfillment.

Proverbs 14:12(NIV) *There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to death.* Romans 6:23 *The wages of sin is death...* and death is not a cessation of existence, it is all the misery and vanity that exists when one is separated from God. The misery and torment begin in this physical life but climax in the eternal torment of the wrath of God. Wrath is an expression of the heart of God toward the evil of sin. Let us be very honest and say that the wrath of God is the justice deserved by every man and woman that chooses his or her own way. That is so offensive to our culture that few can hear it expressed like that without becoming angry. I expect that from the world, but what we in the body of Christ must realize is the application for us. If we choose to go our own way we walk around in life with an air of self-righteousness and religion, when in fact, we are doing just as we please in our old nature – the flesh. It has disguised itself, put on makeup of good works and religious language, but it is still flesh. I know I have been harping on the fact that Jesus said without the Father he could do nothing, but I think we need to hear it. We are easy prey for the devouring lion when we listen to his "good" ideas. How we need to listen to the Father to hear His thoughts and walk in His ways! How we need to let His love and mercy flow through our lives.

Two weeks ago (Adoption as Sons) I shared with you about a child becoming a son. The father of the home watched to see when the child had really learned and accepted the very heart of his father. Then the father would adopt him as a son and present him to the public as his partner. There was still a semblance of this in the last generation. Remember all the company names that had "So and so and sons"? What happened to all those? I hope I am making this clear. God wants our hearts so yielded that we think His thoughts and walk in His ways. He wants us to be so united with His heart that we are truly sons. That is the way of Life. Now look at John 1:12 (KJV) in a whole new light. ¹² *But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:*

The word power as defined in Strong's is: **(Strong's Greek Number 1849)**

1) power of choice, liberty of doing as one pleases 2) physical and mental power There is another definition, the third – authority, which is how the NIV translates it. Now think of it like this: You were stuck in your own desires and thoughts and going your own way. God says you have to forsake that and think His thoughts and walk in His ways. That is clear from the verses that we have read so far. But we are like Paul in Romans 7. I want to, but I keep doing what I don't want to do. I need the power to choose God's thoughts and ways. That is exactly what this verse is declaring. To everyone who receives Christ is given the power to be a son. Everyone who receives Christ has the power to choose, the physical ability to act in God's ways, the mental power to think His thoughts, and the authority to say, "no" to Satan. That is becoming a son, one who thinks and acts like his Father.

I know most of you already know this concept but many of us have not seen it so clearly before like the Hebrew/Greek minds would have seen it. The very Life of the Father has come into us to enable us to think and act as we see the Father act, to be pleasing unto Him, to truly be sons and daughters of God. So you look around in the Christian world and ask, "So why don't we act differently?" Did you notice the word "choose" in the passages we read? Redeemed children of God can act like children and not sons. They can choose to let their thoughts and ways prevail or yield to those of their new Master. Though they are not condemned to hell – death is still the result. There is no sense of the presence of God. Their work is fruitless and lacking in any real power. Death is the opposite of life. Choosing to yield to Life reaps incredible fruits that even have seeds within themselves as God's creation does. The good fruit produces more good fruit. But the bad reproduces itself also.

Romans 7:4-6 (NIV) ⁴ *So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God.* ⁵ *For when we were controlled by the sinful nature, the sinful passions aroused by the law were at work in our bodies, so that we bore fruit for death.* ⁶ *But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code.*

In this little passage the Apostle Paul is telling us about the two ways and the two fruits. The old way is the law. It is trying to please God by working hard at keeping his rules. The problem is, God isn't pleased with keeping the rules if your thoughts

and ways are not His. The fruit is death – no life, no substance and in fact, it is detrimental. All that labor trying to please God and you end up making a mess. I've been there. You probably have too. It is so disheartening when we come face to face with the fact that our efforts for God have been displeasing. It reminds of Cain with his hard-earned grain offering.

What the Apostle is saying in this passage is that you are dead to that way through the body of Christ. You died so that you might belong to Him who is raised, to the resurrected Lord, so you can bear fruit to God. The control of the sinful nature is broken! You can say "NO!" to your thoughts and ways and live in His. The old way was trying to please God by the rules or by doing what we thought would be pleasing to Him. The new way is the way of the Spirit. That is the way Jesus demonstrated to us. You can listen to God's heart and obey! We have the power to do that. We just need to make the choice to listen!

This is not just for the Pastor or someone with a special call. It is for every child of God who desires what God desires, to become a son. As you yield your thoughts and ways to His and let His life dominate all you do, the anointing of God will come upon your gifts and calling. Your feelings for His children grow deeper. Your role in the body will have a more intense passion. As you act in His ways – fruit results. People will take hold of that teaching, be affected by that song, be uplifted by your encouragement and the body builds itself up in love.

Will you go on in your thoughts and ways or turn them over to Him? I believe we all want to bear fruit unto God, but to do so we must allow this work of the Holy Spirit deep within us. We must allow it again and again for the Subtle One would creep back through some deceit and convince us we can do a better job than God. When you put it like that you know it is a lie! God has invested in you His only Son. Will you let the Life of the Son be your thoughts and ways? Yielding to the Holy Spirit and seeking the heart of the Father is not a difficult thing, for we have been given the power. We just have to be willing. Invest in eternity. Recognize how drastically different the fruit is, life or death. Be filled with the Spirit. In surrendered harmony with the Father you will be in complete unity with all others who have the mind of Christ. I met Norma at the bottom of the stairs before the potluck last week. We had a very brief conversation about the pleasure of meeting the Lord in each other. That is what we really love. It is instant unity. That is what thrills us about one another, the Lord's thoughts and ways expressed through our bodies. His life should be as visible to us in each other as it was to Jesus' 12 disciples.

What a high calling and yet He has given us the power to become a son! What a pity if we do not apply it. Two roads lay before each of us. There is a scenic route and there is the way of the cross. One looks like life but leads to death. The other looks like death but leads to life. "If any man would come after me, let Him deny himself, take up his cross and follow me." Jesus