

To Choose or Not to Choose

Fred R. Coulter—January 26, 2013

The first question we will tackle will be Zechariah 14:5: “‘And you shall flee to the valley of My mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal. And you shall flee as you fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah.’....”

Who is doing the fleeing? I first thought it said *fleeing*—fleeing! What you need to understand, sometimes in the Old Testament God talks about things which actually occurred before the event though it states the event in the verse before.

Here they were fleeing; this ties in with Matthew 24:15: “Therefore, when you see the abomination of desolation, which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the Holy Place... [v 16]: Then let those who are in Judea flee into the mountains.” That’s specific for those in Judea.

Of course, when you flee to the mountains you go east. So, this has to be in reference to that. Otherwise, who would be doing the fleeing, because here the earthquake is already taking place and the Mount of Olives is splitting. You would have a very difficult time fleeing in that event. It would have to be refer to that.

What choices do we have in our lives? As things come along in our lives, how can we keep from sinning? *Because Jesus said, ‘Go and sin no more!’*

Here is what God told the children of Israel. It also ties in with Gen. 3 and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Deuteronomy 30:15: “Behold, I have set before you this day life and good and death and evil.” Wherever there is God and God’s Law and people there are always choices and it’s always set before us. Those who went out to look for manna on the Sabbath had a choice. God said, ‘Don’t do it.’ They said, those who went out, ‘I’m going to find out.’ Sometimes it doesn’t work too well.

If you want to know how sharp a saw is, don’t put your finger on the saw while it’s working. You will find out in a very bad way.

Here is what God says, and this is a choice for everyone. Every one of us have choices; everything we do is a choice. What is the basis of our choices? If we start that way, then we will be able to see how then we cannot sin.

Verse 16: “In that I command you this day... [here is what God wants and we’ll see this a little later, too] ...to love the LORD your God...” That’s what God wants. Doesn’t that follow with the first

commandment? What is the greatest commandment? We’ll see what that is’. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and mind and soul and being.’

“...to walk in His ways...” (v 16). If you walk in His ways, are those your ways? *NO!*

Many religionists say that if you try and keep the commandments, you’re trying to earn salvation. Nothing could be further from the Truth. And you find that many times the very verse that is used by those in objection to what God says is the very verse that says exactly the opposite of what they proclaim it to be. Only thing is, it doesn’t have an immediate effect.

It would be like walking up to a man who is blind, you don’t know he’s blind, and you say, ‘Can you see any cars coming?’ No, so you walk across the street and get hit by a car. That’s a little graphic, but it proves the point. The way of the Lord is God’s way. That includes:

- Commandment-keeping
- loving God
- loving your neighbor

All of those things; *that’s God’s way!* If you keep God’s Sabbath and it’s God’s day, who are you obeying? You choose to obey God, which then is God’s way—correct?

If you choose Sunday and you know that Saturday the Sabbath is the Sabbath and you choose Sunday, whose work is that? *That’s a work of man!* What are men trying to do with Sunday-keeping? *Seek salvation!* But whose work are they doing? God’s work? *or* Man’s work? *Man’s work!*

“...to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgment so that...” (v 16). ‘I will be mean and harsh and angry against you and kill you and crush you’. *No, doesn’t say that*, but that’s how it’s preached—isn’t it? *Yes!* Those harsh laws of the Old Testament.

“...so that you may live... [everyone wants to live] ...and multiply. And the LORD your God shall bless you... [On what condition? *That you love Him.*] ...in the land where you go to possess it. But if your heart turn away so that you will not hear, but shall be drawn away and worship other gods and serve them” (vs 16-17). Other gods are anything besides the true God. Today there are a lot of people who are worshiping the false gods of sports, entertainment. They’re not bowing down to an idol, necessarily, but don’t they have a program called *American Idol*? Then what happens, especially in this generation that is taught nothing? This is the

most narcissistic uneducated, unthinking generation in the world because they have not been taught any truth.

Because they have a cell phone in their hand or a SmartPhone they have the world in their hand, but if you take it away from them there is nothing. – isn't that true? *Yes!* Someone lost their SmartPhone and said, 'I lost my life and everything I had in life.'

So, there are more things that are worshiped, which you wouldn't say is a god, but it could be an idol. Could be your car, could be another person, could be your thoughts, whatever it may be. As we'll see a little later, I'll ask you the question, which I will answer this afternoon: What was Job's main sin that he could not see? I'll just let that hang out there and we'll see how we come across on that.

Verse 18: "I denounce to you this day that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong *your* days on the land where you pass over Jordan to go to possess it."

This is true everywhere in the world. Remember how I made a suggestion, why don't you one time go ahead and watch the cartoons and see how many commandments are broken with it. Randy did that and he has some clips of some cartoons. We're going to do this for a Church at Home. I don't know what we're going to title it, but it's going to be something like, *Who is Teaching Your Children? What are You Learning? Where are Your Children?* 'Oh, they're good children. They're sitting right down watching cartoons.'

Verse 19: "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you..." Stop and think about it, heaven and earth are still here. It is a witness. So then, this comes down to a situation:

- Why do you think what you think, accept what you believe and reject God, reject the Bible and reject His way?
- How is your life?
- What's going to happen when you're in trouble?

"...I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore, choose life... [He's given us choices. Everything that we do is a choice.] ...so that both you and your seed may live, that you may love the LORD your God, *and* may obey His voice, and may cleave to Him; for He is your life and the length of your days, so that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers—to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob—to give it to them" (vs 19-20).

In those recordings that Randy has for those clips every violent act and sexual promiscuity you can find in those cartoons. How many kids watch *The Simpsons*? I never have, but it dumbs them

down and it desensitizes them to the truth. You want to know a real truth concerning Satan the devil? *He comes to you smooth, seductive, has a great sense of humor!* It's always a joke somewhere about some sex—isn't that true? Look at the late night comedies. Have you ever stayed up and watched them? Don't they always have jokes about sex? *Yes, they do!* What do you think they have on cartoons to program the mind? You're going to be surprised when you see that segment of Church at Home.

How many have a favorite soap opera that you watch? They started out with housewives. Then *Real Housewives of New York*. Later they had *Housewives of New Jersey*. Now they have a program coming up, why not have women be more seducing toward men? *New movie coming out!* What's going to happen? How much are people affected by these things?

What they did, they took a certain soap opera program that they have been running in Nigeria. One of the problems that they had with people in Nigeria was too much sex, too many kids too early, not enough education. So, in this soap opera they had it so that the main characters involved pushed these ideas: wait, don't have sex until marriage. This is pretty good. It's one of the better things. Most of them are: have sex as soon as you can. Get an education before you marry and all of those good things.

Over a period of four years they ran a survey and guess what? *More and more Nigerians who watched that soap opera decided to wait and get married later*, decided to not have sex before marriage—from the soap opera.

Now think about it what happens with the cartoons. What does it teach the children? I just might suggest people need to really deeply consider—between inoculations and the fast-moving things that they have on cartoons—how much does that contribute to autism, split personality, nervousness, things like that.

I'm going to ask you a question before we go to this next part in James 1. How many things do you watch stick in your mind? I can guarantee you, you all know all the Christmas carols, though you haven't sung them. Every year you're reminded when you go shopping. I'm about ready to throw away my J.C. Penney card. That's where I got this tie and shirt, the exclusive department store at Baldwin Park Mall. I went in there at ten in the morning and they had rock music going that absolutely drove me crazy. I was going to shop for a couple of other things, but I had to get out of there. Couldn't stand it!

Why did it affect me that way? But all the workers are there, didn't affect them! *They have*

been desensitized! So ask yourself: To what have you been desensitized to? That's how they eventually do it to increase the number of abortions. *They are desensitized!* They don't realize that they forget the father and the mother and the dead baby until afterwards.

- How do you stop sin?
- How does sin begin?

James talks a little bit here about faith, James 1:2: "Consider *it* all joy, my brethren, when you are beset by various trials." Note, 'All things work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose' (Rom. 8:28). Even the trials that come, because we will have trials. How does God know you're going to obey without a trial? Even in school they have tests to know what you've learned. *Produces endurance!*

Verse 3: "Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. But let endurance have *its* perfect work, so that you may be perfect and complete, not lacking in anything. However, if anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, Who gives to everyone freely and does not reproach *the one who asks*; and it shall be given to him" (vs 3-5). That is a spiritual thing from God beginning first with the Word of God—*wisdom!* I never thought of that.' He will give it to you.

Verse 6: "But let him ask **in faith...**" meaning that you're going to obey God. What chapter is called the faith chapter? *Heb. 11!* 'By faith...' what happened?

- Abel *obeyed!*
- Noah *obeyed!*
- Abraham *obeyed!*
- Moses *obeyed!*

If you have *belief* you have *faith*, then you do what God wants. If you ask God, 'Oh, God, give me wisdom,' and then you just reject what you know is right and go do what is wrong, *you're unstable*. That's what it says here.

"...not doubting at all because the one who doubts is like a wave of *the sea* that is driven by the wind and tossed *to and fro*. Do not let that man expect that he will receive anything from the Lord. *He is a double-minded man...*" (vs 6-8).

There are a lot of people that way concerning God. They've got one foot in the world and one foot in the church; just enough of God so that if something happens, you can run to Him and have Him rescue you. And just so little of God that the world accepts you—"...**double-minded, unstable in all his ways.**"

Let's come down here to v 12: "Blessed is *the man* who endures trials because, after he has

been proved, he shall receive a crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him." Notice how the love of God is tied in all of it. Jesus did not bring the love of God. He was the God of the Old Testament Who had love in the Old Testament and taught love in the New Testament.

Verse 13 is the key: "**Do not let anyone who is tempted say, 'I am being tempted by God'...**" What was the first thing that Jesus had to do before He began His ministry? He had to be tempted by Satan the devil on every aspect of human behavior. He had to have every choice laid before Him. Misuse His power by causing stones to turn into bread, bow down and worship Satan the devil and he would give Him the world then. All the temptations! But He had *the choice*.

"...because God is not tempted by evil, and He Himself tempts no one *with evil*" (v 13). What happens when you have a temptation? *You have a choice!* Isn't that correct? *Yes, indeed!* God lays before you the choices of right and wrong and good and evil. He does not tempt you to do evil. But evil comes and the evil tempts you, not God.

There's a lot of that out there today; it's out there everywhere. This generation is the most satanically programmed generation and it is going to get worse than has ever been in the history of the world. It's going to be amazing. What was that program, Randy, that was against going to church? *The Simpsons!* They program kids to hate church, not want to go to church, not obey their parents. It ends up with the way of Satan, 'God has to accept me as I am and I'll worship Him any way I desire'—*for kids!*

You add to that evolution in school. You add to that the lack of training concerning the Constitution. You add to that

- government leaders who are narcissistic
- teachers who cannot teach the truth.
- the sex education that is there in school
- the music
- the fun at games and every license to take away the effects of evil that Satan says, 'Go ahead, have a good time, I'll take care of you.'

When it gets down to drugs, that ends up even being worse. So, think about how absolutely stunted that the young people are today. It's called 'the moron generation.' Why? *Because they're not taught any truth!* They are not taught *God's way*. You can bring in Satan's bible to school, but you try bringing in the Holy Bible, you're out of luck. There are choices. Now, here's how sin can be put away:

1. **Recognize the temptation**

You can say *no* and stop it at that point. You do not have to say *yes*. When young people get together with their friends, what's the first thing they all agree to do? *Everything their parents don't want them to do* because their parents are not around. Every one of us growing up did it—did we not? *Yes, we did!* We can be thankful it didn't happen to destroy us immediately. *God is merciful!*

How long did He allow the ten tribes of Israel to have their calf worship, rejecting Him, beginning with Jeroboam? How long was God merciful and patient before He sent them off into captivity? *232 years!* When you reap the consequences of sin, you also have another opportunity that God has given you. That other opportunity that God is giving to everyone is to *repent* of what you did and to *learn* the lesson and to stop doing it.

Here's the temptation that comes along, v 14: "But each one is tempted when he is drawn away..." "Ooh, that looks good." What do they say? "Try it, you'll like it."

I remember when I was trying to straighten out a youth group within the church and they were all wrapped up in rock music. I remember the time came down to the dance they had down here at Ambassador College. This was years ago. This was 1976. They had this big youth dance down there. What did they have? *They had a rock band!* They had dancing that was so close that it was like one body—in the Church! The music was so loud. I gave the nice young elder—'oh, he knows how to work with the youth, he's just the guy we want, he's hep.' I wasn't very hep with him. I went up and I said, 'What on earth is this going on in the Church?' They were drawn away.

"...and is enticed by his own lust" (v 14). It's very attractive. It's right there in front of you. Think about all the temptations and all the lust. Think about all the movies that are based on lying and cheating and stealing, getting the crown jewels, figuring out how you can get this crown that is guarded by all of these laser beams and what is the pattern. You have a whole crew that is high-tech and you can figure this all out. You're wearing the clothes that are undetectable and you slide along the floor and you have this tool and you're nice and thin. You're not round like us.

You get up there and you're able to turn off all laser lights without the alarm going off and you swoop up the crown and you run away. Stop and think. What is the audience doing at that point? *They're cheering for them!* Why? *Because it appeals to their lusts!* The villain is the hero. The thief is the important one. The ones who have conquests sexually are admired. And even Tiger Woods, the headline read, as you go through the checkout stand,

that he's offering his former wife \$200-million to come back. This is one little aspect.

Today, they're not satisfied with 50 channels. 'Let's set you up with 400.' You do the channel surfing through it and you see sin, sin, *sin*. 'Oops, a little National Geographic, that's pretty good; a little History Channel, that's pretty good.' But now they're going to have on television, it's going to come.

It's like a man said years ago. He came down and preached in Santa Monica and he was talking about how bad the society was at that time that the gowns are dropping lower and lower in the front and coming up higher and higher from the ankles. He said, 'Pretty soon they will have gownless-straps.' We're almost there, are we not? *Yes!*

You all laugh because you've all seen those kind of things and those all register in your mind—don't they? *Yes, they do!* This is why I have the series that I've done. You need to go through these series:

- *Who and What Controls Your Mind?*
- *Obsessed With Sex*
- *Addicted Society*
- *How to Overcome the Sin Within*

That's the only defense. God wants it so you trust Him and He trusts you. What does that mean? That means that *when you are by yourself all alone, no one is there to tell you what to do*, especially teenagers. Because you are not the good front that you put up to your parents when you're in front of them. You are what you are with your friends and when you shut the door of your room and you are alone by yourself—right? *Yes!* If you can't be trusted to do what is right, then *you have no character* whatsoever.

It's not what you do when people watch. It's what you do when no one is watching! But you need to understand, *God always knows!* How do you stop this?

1. **Recognize the temptation**
2. **When you get that pulling, drawing away feeling, turn, don't go with it**

"...and is enticed by his own lust" (v 14). Your lust is there saying, 'That's all right. No one will know, no one will see.' Drawn away. Notice, these are the steps:

1. **temptation**
2. **drawn away**
3. **enticed**
4. **gives birth to sin**

Verse 15: "And after lust has conceived... [It's a process. This is how you quit sinning. You

can interrupt it at any point up to] ...it **gives birth to sin...**"

- you can stop it at any point
- you can exercise character
- you can exercise truth
- you can use the Word of God
 - Whose blessing do you really want?
 - The blessing of God?

or

- The blessing of your friends?
- Whose approval do you really want?
- The approval of God?

or

- The approval of your associates?

Once you recognize those things and realize where all of these things involve a *choice*. You can stop at any point along the line. "...and sin, when it is completely finished, brings forth death" (v 15).

You know the story about the prodigal son, which is typical. 'I am a free individual. I'm going to choose what I want. I'm going to do what I want to do and no one is going to tell me that I can't.' Isn't that what they're taught in school today? *Yes, indeed!*

That's what the younger son did, v 12: "And the younger of them said to *his* father, 'Father, give me that portion of the property which falls to me.'...." So, he got it. Then he took a journey to a far country and what happened? He was wise, he was intelligent, he was really using his brain and he invested his money and he made millions and millions of dollars. *No*, he made it in today's language as far as Las Vegas.

What happened? *He spent everything!* Now he's destitute. I thought about that, this poor man right next to the store near Whole Foods. There's this big, tall black man up there just sitting there begging, had nothing. So, I gave him some and he was happy. I thought *how pitiful*, what a waste of life. The only thing he can do is sit there. Who is going to hire him? Who wants to trust him? He doesn't know what's going on. The only thing he knows to do is beg.

That's what happened with the prodigal son. There was famine (v 14); he was in need. So, he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of the country. Here's a wonderful job for a Jewish boy. 'You will work in the swine feeder. It smells lovely.'

In Iowa when we had some brethren in the church and they used to raise hogs and everything like this. Before they were converted, they would come home and you could smell the stench on a hot summer days when you're getting close to the farm.

The husband would always say to the wife and the children when they would say, 'This really stinks,' he would say, 'That's the smell of money.' It's the smell of something else if you're working in it.

Verse 16: "And he was longing to fill his stomach with the husks that the swine were eating, but no one gave *anything* to him.... [Here is the key to life, to overcoming sin, to progressively choose the right thing: ***Don't wait until you are in dire trouble as he did!***] ...And **when he came to himself...**" (vs 16-17).

- He began to see that all the things he was rejecting was wrong.
- He began to see that he was a fool.
- He began to see that he was a spendthrift.
- He began to see that on lust and sin he had wasted everything.

That's where people need to come. A lot of people have decisions to make, but they haven't come to themselves concerning it. A lot of people are wondering, 'What should I do?' That's why we have the book, *Lord, What Should I Do?*

He came to himself! Notice, his attitude changed—didn't it? From wanting to get away from his father and wanted to get on his own and do his own thing, be his own man, 'I'll show everybody how good I am' kind of attitude. 'I'm going to have fun doing it.' What is the motto of Las Vegas? I'll bet you all know it: What happens here, stays here. But the truth is, *you carry it home with you.*

"... 'How many of my father's hired servants have *an* abundance of bread, and I am dying of hunger? I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; And I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me as one of your hired servants'" (vs 17-19).

You know the story. The father forgave him. Too many lives are wasted in this manner. Then when there needs to be mercy and compassion, too many lives are wasted in the other direction by the other son who was self-righteous. When he came home he said, 'Why did you give him all these things. I worked for you and did everything that you said for me to do.' The father said, 'You're always with me. Why don't you rejoice that your brother is alive.'

The Bible is a very honest and practical book. *It is the Word of God!* You cannot go contrary to the Word of God and expect God's blessing. ***No one!*** Whether you squander everything that you have and you're like the one son that left or whether you're like the son who stayed back and now you self-righteously fight everyone else, because that doesn't work either. We have:

- *life and death* set before us every day
- *blessing and cursing* every day
- *obedience or disobedience* every day

We have all of these things. There is no respect of person with God. There is no respect of person concerning age. When you know the Truth, you know the Truth, and you are held responsible for it.

If you take the things that we have just covered today and you apply this in your daily life in everything that you do, there are other things which we can get into at different times which will fortify this.

But this is where everyone starts and this is where everyone continues in their path toward the Kingdom of God!

Scriptural References:

- 1) Zechariah 14:5
- 2) Matthew 24:15-16
- 3) Deuteronomy 30:15-20
- 4) James 1:2-8, 12-15
- 5) Luke 15:12, 16-19

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Genesis 3
- Romans 8:28
- Hebrews 11
- Luke 15:11, 14

Also referenced:

Sermon Series:

- *Who and What controls Your Mind*
- *Obsessed With Sex* (www.churchathome.org)
- *Addicted Society*
- *How to Overcome the Sin Within*

Book: *Lord, What Should I Do?*

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Transcribed: 02-3-13

Formatted: bo—2-4-13

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