

Church of God

The Biblical Grandview

Choose Life

CHOOSE LIFE

Message Transcript

Cleaned and edited from software-based
speech-recognition output

I. The Daily Choice

The title of my message today is "Choose Life." It's a phrase that's been on my mind a lot the last month or two. It's also one that is central to the gospel. It is what God has been asking his people — and all of mankind — since creation.

Instead of choosing the tree of life, we decided to take upon ourselves the knowledge of good and evil, and we have become gods in our own lives. That is the central conflict between us and God. God has let us build an entire world of societies, political systems, families, based on what we think is right rather than him. But his plan for us — the called-out ones — is different. His plan for us is to undo the wrong choices.

We have a unique opportunity in this life to be working against the grain of the way the world is going. But God does not build character by force. That's sort of a contradiction in terms: if it has to be done by force, it's not character.

When we are baptized — I heard someone say one time — when we're baptized, there's a war inside of us. God's spirit, the down payment, God's nature, is in us, but we still have our carnal nature, and those two cannot

coexist in the same being. One must surrender to the other. There is no going through life with equal parts in the world and in God's way.

The world is not in that war. The world is going through life — regardless of how moral, or the extent to which there is good in the world — they are not daily called to battle the core of who they are. But that is our battle in the church: to battle ourselves, to battle society, to battle the influence of Satan, because we are called to change fundamentally. We are called to be different people tomorrow than we are today, and ten years from now than we are today. And that happens by every day choosing life.

It's a daily process. It's a daily grind and hard work. And it's more than just rote obedience. Sometimes we can default to: these are the things God said to do, this is what he said not to do — obey God. And of course that's the ultimate goal.

But there are three things that choosing life requires. The first one: it requires sacrifice. It requires bearing fruit. And it requires having a truly repentant attitude. And I leave that last for a reason. We recognize it starts with repentance, but it's a cycle.

Romans 12 — Sacrifice

But first, let's go to Romans 12. Romans 12, starting in verse one.

Again, the theme of the last year for me might also be sacrifice. I think I've

internalized, maybe for the first time in my life, the importance of a willingly sacrificial attitude — in conversion, in family, in interpersonal relationships.

Paul writes in verse one:

"I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect."

And what occurred to me was — the same way in First John, it says if you do not love your neighbor who you can see, you do not love God who you cannot see. I think the same thing applies here: if you will not sacrifice for people, if you'll not sacrifice for brethren, for your spouse, for your children, you're not willing to sacrifice the core of who you are before God. And that's a painful lesson.

I think sometimes we are called to not only sacrifice for other humans, but sacrifice everything for God. When it says that Christ came and gave us an example, it's not just about — he treated people well, he was kind, he visited with the sinners. It was that he gave up everything he was to fulfill God's plan.

II. Bearing Fruit

But again, it's not just about not doing things. It's about growing in a positive sense. Bearing fruit is central to the change we're called to make.

Let's go to Galatians 5. Galatians 5 — we're going to read a good chunk of it, but starting in verse thirteen. It says:

"For you were called to freedom, brothers. Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' But if you bite and devour one another, watch out that you are not consumed by one another. But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for they are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do."

That's the war that was mentioned before. The two spirits are fundamentally opposed. They cannot coexist.

Surrender, Not Submission

And we often speak in terms of submitting — submitting one to another, or submitting to God and what

God wants. But in reality, I think the more appropriate phrase is surrender. Unconditional surrender.

And just like in warfare, it's putting down your weapons of war. It's not saying, "I'm stopping this fight contingent on some conditions I have." It's: I have no idea how to govern myself in this life. I have no idea how to treat people or to live my own life. I depend on your guidance for the right thing to do. I no longer want to choose good or evil myself — I want to know what you understand as being good, and follow you.

The Works of the Flesh and the Fruit of the Spirit

Continuing in verse eighteen:

"But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have

crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another."

It's not just about avoidance of bad things, avoidance of the negative. It's about fundamentally changing who we are into the nature of Christ — showing the positives.

If we look at the fruits of the flesh and we see elements of those in the church, in ourselves, in our families, and there are elements — it's fruits of the Spirit that are lacking. Those are the pain points. Those are the areas of concern.

And it's about, more so even than rooting out a sin or rooting out a fleshly characteristic — it is about our orientation. Are we working in the direction of God? Are we continually seeking him? Because we are never in a place where we understand his will, or what he would have us do, perfectly. We are slowly coming to those understandings, those realizations. But we must consistently be willing to give up anything — any part of ourselves — for what God deems as right and in line with his purpose.

III. A Truly Repentant Attitude

Why Repentance Comes Last

The reason I left repentance for last is that — at least in my life, and I was baptized at eighteen, fairly young — you have, especially growing up in the church, kind of a decision of, "Well, this makes sense. I'm going to do this." There is no compelling case the world is making for me to go down that route.

And then adult life hits you, and you make mistakes, and you see your own wretchedness — honestly, the way Paul talks about it in Romans 7, or David in Psalm 51. And you realize that repentance is different than maybe what you thought when you first got baptized. It's more than "I'm sorry for doing this wrong thing." It's "I am fundamentally opposed to you, and I need to yearn for you daily." It's about acknowledging wrongdoing, but it's about turning and going the other direction, demonstrably.

I think we could fall into the ditch of reading Romans 7 and hearing the struggle that Paul's going through — about the things that he knows he should do, he doesn't; and what he doesn't want to do, that is what he does — and we can fall prey to this, "Well, I'm powerless." Which technically is true: without God, we are. But God has given us his spirit, to have the strength to work against those parts of who we are. Both as we struggle daily in our lives,

but also as we relate to each other as brethren. It's an individual calling, but we're fundamentally called into a body of people who we are to interact with.

2 Corinthians 7 — Godly Grief

For the last scripture, let's go to Second Corinthians 7. Second Corinthians 7, starting in verse eight:

"For even if I made you grieve with my letter, I do not regret it — though I did regret it, for I see that the letter grieved you, though only for a while. As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death."

All right — so you have two choices. You can struggle through life with God, or struggle through life without God. There's no third option. And so godly grief, godly sorrow, is supposed to push us toward moving in the opposite direction.

Sin Through the Lens of Addiction

Now, obviously it's not that simple. We all have the sins we struggle with, and it's not as simple as, "Okay, well, God says I shouldn't do this," or "I shouldn't

treat someone a certain way, so I'm just not going to do that anymore." Some things might be that simple in our lives. But we all have a couple that are at best bad habits and at worst addictions.

And I think seeing sin in all its forms through the lens of addiction is probably the most helpful and powerful lens to view it. That's how Paul talks about it.

If we think about how someone who is an addict of a substance — like alcohol, or some narcotic — goes about things: they know that they are always that way. There is no getting past it. There is no "I'm no longer an alcoholic." They see themselves fundamentally as going through that struggle, and that they will go through that struggle every day of their lives.

They also practice hypervigilance. They also know there is no "I'll go get one beer with the guys at the bar," because they know one beer turns into fifteen.

And so it's the same. Do we do the same thing in our life? Do we say, "I can dabble in that"? Or, "I could react to this person negatively because they did X to me," or "they deserved it," or "I don't continually operate that way"? Which are the things we do that we make excuses for, as opposed to being hypervigilant and hyper-abstinent?

Closing

So, conversion isn't just about understanding what God's word says. That's the core of it — we have to be in

his word to understand what he wants from us. But it's about transformational change.

Are we seeing transformational change in ourselves, in our community, and are we working towards that? Are we choosing life daily, or our own way?

And we were called, and we are able to choose life, because God gave us not a spirit of fear, but of power and love and self-control.

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Editorial Notes

This transcript was cleaned from raw Vosk speech-recognition output. Edits were limited to punctuation, capitalization, sentence boundaries, paragraph breaks, and correction of clear recognition errors. The speaker's wording and voice have been preserved throughout.

Note on Scripture Quotations

The scripture readings in the original audio track the English Standard Version closely, with words dropped by the recognizer. Missing words have been restored to the ESV text; the speaker's own commentary between quotations is untouched.