

It Is All About Choice

By Kent Heaton

“Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known” (Deut. 11:26-28).

W. C. Fields was an American comedian during the 1920's and 30's. An avowed atheist, the story is told when he was lying in a hospital bed shortly before his death; his good friend, actor Thomas Mitchell, visited him. When Mitchell entered Fields' room, he was shocked to find the irreligious Fields paging through a Bible. When asked why he was reading the Bible, Fields replied, "I'm looking for loopholes." From the beginning of time when God placed Adam and Eve in the garden, the will of the Lord has remained the same. Through the centuries as the plan of redemption was unfolded, the nature of the law changed until Christ came and cemented the salvation of man by His blood. One thing has remained constant throughout all the dealings of man and God: a choice to obey the word of God or be punished for disobedience. Adam and Eve could remain in the paradise of Eden as long as they chose to obey the word of the Lord. When they disobeyed His will, they were punished. The early world was destroyed by the flood because only eight souls chose to follow the plan of righteousness. Israel was a nation of holiness and contained in the Law of Moses was the often repeated blessings and cursing of obedience or disobedience. They eventually would choose to follow other gods and were punished for their disobedience.

There are no loopholes in the word of God. When men follow the commands of God they will be blessed beyond measure. If man refuses to follow the will of the Lord there will be consequences. The favorite tool of Satan is to convince man there will be no penalties to his actions. When the serpent came to Eve in the garden, the first thing he said was, "Has God indeed said?" Satan knew if he could get Eve to believe she had a choice to do as she desired he would have success. God's law is simplistic at its core. Follow my commandments, statutes and ordinances and you will be blessed. If you refuse to obey the will of the Lord, judgment awaits. There is no third choice. This did not change when Christ died on the cross. The law of God is a matter of choosing whether a person follows the whole law of God.

Many religious people follow the philosophy of W. C. Fields. They look for loopholes to allow them to call themselves followers of Christ yet mold their lives after their own will. God's law does not allow for manipulation of righteousness to fit the desires of men. He sets before all men a blessing and a curse. If we do the will of the Lord, we will be saved. If we do not obey the commandments of God, we will be lost. Simple. Direct. Eternal. It is all about choice.

“That was a Mighty Fine Meal!”

“Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you” (1Thes. 5:16-18).

A young man shared an apartment with three other graduate students who also had part-time jobs while in college. Each took turns preparing the meals, which usually consisted of canned vegetables, hamburger meat, baked potato, and was barely edible. No matter how poor the meal was, Joe always said, "That was a mighty fine dinner." One evening the meal was worse than usual, and Joe made his regular comment. One said, "Why do you always say that when this was hardly fit for human consumption?" Joe answered, "I come from a family of 11 children. My mother would spend all afternoon in the kitchen preparing dinner. One night when she called us to the table, there was only a plate, and straw on each plate. My father looked at it and asked, what is this straw doing on my plate? Mother said, "Oh! you noticed. This is the first

time you have given any indication that you noticed what was on your plate." Joe then said, "I vowed that I would always express my appreciation to the person who had prepared my meal." Let us take the time to express our gratitude to those who have prepared a meal for us.

Biting One's Self

"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire." (Matt. 5:21-22). "Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him" (1John 3:15).

It is said that a rattlesnake, if cornered, will sometimes become so upset that it will bite itself. That is exactly what the harboring of hate and resentment against others is - a biting of oneself. We think that we are harming others in holding these grudges and hates, but the deeper harm is to ourselves. (From 1500 Illustrations for Biblical Preaching, p. 180)

A Moments Wisdom

--Tradition: the widespread acceptance of something which was at first of questionable merit, and perhaps still is.

--A significant cause of troubles in this world is when the ignorant are overly filled with confidence and the intelligent are too full of doubts.

--The highest reward one can receive for his toil is not what he gets in this life, but rather what he becomes by it.

--We learn while we teach.

--Friendship doubles our joy and divides our sorrow.

--Fear of failing is the father of failure.

--There is no right way to do a wrong thing.

--Wisdom is a comfortable retreat and shelter for us in our advanced years; but, if we do not plant it when we are young, it will give us no shade when we are old.

--Cynicism masquerades as wisdom, but it is the farthest thing from it.

--A certain amount of opposition is a help, not a hindrance. Kites rise against the wind, not with it.

--Ability is of little value without dependability.

--Critics are people who watch a battle from a high, distant place, then come down and shoot the survivors.

--Before you put someone in their place, make certain you are in your place.

--Every time you open your mouth, you let people look into your life.

--Nothing seems to age folks faster than not thinking.

--Too many people cast their bread upon the water hoping it will come back toasted and buttered.

--So, you don't know all of the answers. That's okay; you probably won't be asked all of the questions, either.