

Choose Life – Do It Now!

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days ... (Deuteronomy 30:19-20a)



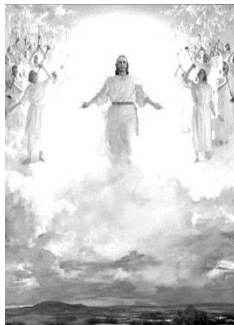
“... choose this day whom you will serve ... as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” (See Joshua 24:15) Thus Joshua challenged the Israelites as they were getting ready to enter the Land that the LORD had promised to give them.

What about you? Before you enter into the “land” God has promised that we will all enter—eternity—you also must make a choice now, in this life—“this day”—between eternal life with God (Heaven) and unending death without God (Hell).

Have you made that choice yet? And your family, your friends—have they made that choice?

Hesitating? Please understand that “sitting on the fence” cannot last forever. When the fence collapses under you, if you have not already stepped down on the right side, you will absolutely land on the wrong side. Failing to choose is choosing to fail.

Those who study Bible prophecy and relate it to current events are saying, “Time is short. Jesus will be coming back any day now.” And of course they may be right—people have been predicting that for almost 2000 years, and sooner or later, when God says that the time is right, it will certainly happen.



Jesus spoke about this in the gospels. I urge you to read the 24th chapter of Matthew. It’s long, so I have included most of it on page 3. I urge you to read it, and then read it again, to get the flavor and the urgency of Jesus’ words.

For here, I’ll summarize it as follows: the disciples wanted to know about the end time. Jesus told them there will be signs—false Christs and false prophets, wars, famines, earthquakes—His followers will be hated and many will fall away, but the Gospel eventually will be proclaimed to the whole world, and then the end will come. He said there will be a time of great tribulation, which will be cut short for the sake of those who are saved; and false Christs will appear. The sun, moon, and stars will disappear, and Jesus will return from Heaven in great glory. Nobody but the Father knows when all this will happen, so Jesus warns them (and us) to be ready.

Life is uncertain, but it is certainly short. Maybe Jesus will return today or tomorrow, or maybe it will be years or decades or even centuries from now. As Jesus said in another place, it’s not for us to know when it will take place. But for you, for me, for all those we love, “the end” may mean the end of this life on earth. That could be hours or days away, or not for many years yet. We generally don’t know, and cannot know. We should just be ready.

I’ve told you when (now, today). I’m about to tell you why, and then I’ll tell you how.

Why choose life? Why choose to live life God’s way, rather than you own way? Let me draw you a picture.

Think of the most delightful thing you can possibly imagine. Then think of enjoying that delight, that joy, forever; never getting tired of it, always experiencing all of its wonderful refreshment of your spirit forever.

Now think of the most awful, excruciatingly painful torture anyone could ever suffer (crucifixion comes to mind). Think of that pain going on and on forever.

That’s the choice we are offered! The joy of being together with God, more wonderfully joyful than anything earth ever offered us; or the awful agony of finally understanding God’s gift of Heaven, but being forever separated from it.

I choose life, not death. I choose Heaven, not Hell. I choose to accept God's glorious gift, rather than to reject it and go my own shabby way.

Which do you choose?

A rich young man asked Jesus, "What do I have to do to inherit eternal life?" Jesus mentioned obeying God's commandments, and the young man said that he already did all that. Then Jesus got to the point and said, "Okay, now sell everything you own, give all the money to the poor, and come and follow me." Then the young man went away sad, because the life he then had was more important to him than the hope of Heaven. (See Luke 18:18-25)

We want to be in control. That's our human nature. That's why we rebel against God. Our selfishness, our pride, our self-indulgence, our anger, our unforgiveness—these are all symptoms of doing things "our way" rather than God's way.

In Matthew, Mark, and Luke it is reported that Jesus said, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

"Deny yourself." That is the key that opens Heaven's door for us. That's God's whole message in the Holy Bible. He is saying to us, "I am the LORD your God. You shall not have any other God's that are more important to you than I am. And that especially means you, yourself. I am God. You are not."

Father,
Thy will be
done...
not mine!
And that, keep telling me!

And He is not saying that to us to be mean. He's saying it with love. It's simply the truth. He is God; He is able to fill that role. We are so inadequate and unequipped for it that it's laughable even to imagine it. The book of Job does a good job of telling how ridiculous we are when we try being our own god.

God is saying to us, "I'm God. Trust me. I love you. I have loved you so much that I became human, I suffered the pain of the cross and died for you. For your own good, you only and eternal good, let me be in charge of your life. Trust me. Obey me. I will lead you in the way that is best for you, and I will be with you all the way. Even if at times it seems hard, I will be there to help you and keep you strong. Just trust me. Love me. Want to be with me. I love you."

Deny yourself. How do you do that? Is there a switch in your mind that you can flip to make it happen?

Well, yes, there is, in a way. Of course it's not that simple—"Yesterday I was my own god, but from now

on I won't do that any more." That's only the first step of the process.

Any number of ministries have developed a "Plan of Salvation." Here is one that I propose for you, not as a "recipe for success," but just as some of the things you can do to focus on allowing God to become Lord of your life:

1. **Make the decision** firmly: "Choose this day" to serve God, and to let Him be Lord of your life.
2. **Ask for help**. Pray a simple prayer, from the heart, asking God to be with you and help you to be and to do whatever it takes to serve Him.
3. **Read about God's promises** in the Bible. Hold on to some that have special meaning for you.
4. **Be accountable**. As you are led by the Holy Spirit, carefully choose a committed, trustworthy Christian with whom you can share your hopes and doubts, your successes and failures. Don't rush this; God will surely help it to happen.
5. **Look for opportunities** to please God by helping and encouraging others, being kind, or demonstrating forgiveness. Whenever you can, be Christ's hand of blessing. You'll be blessed!
6. **Develop a habit of prayer**—not just asking God for things, but thanking and praising Him, telling Him about your day, confessing sins and asking for help, and listening silently and patiently for His encouragement and guidance.
7. **Get together** often with others **to worship** God and share Christian fellowship. We all benefit from the spiritual boost we get from being with other believers.
8. **Tell people about Jesus**, and how God loves them. They need to hear it—they also need to "choose life." Also, the more you speak the truth about God and His love, the more firmly it becomes established in your mind and heart.

The LORD is faithful to all his promises
Psalm 145:13

Jesus said in a couple of places that people are either for Him or against Him. Well He is for you and me, and I am for Him. I hope you are for Him, too. God bless you all, with whatever you need.

Brother Roland

Ask me ... Send your Bible questions to me and I'll try to answer them in the "Good News Guide."
Your question may help someone else. **Brother Roland, P O Box 14, Fayetteville PA 17222**

Matthew 24:1-44 (ESV)

Jesus left the temple and was going away, when his disciples came to point out to him the buildings of the temple. But he answered them, "You see all these, do you not? Truly, I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another that will not be thrown down."

As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?" And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray. For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are but the beginning of the birth pains.

"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake. And then many will fall away and betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray. And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.

"So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let the one who is on the housetop not go down to take what is in his house, and let the one who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak. And alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! Pray that your flight may not be in winter or on a Sabbath. For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world until now, no, and never will be. And if those days had not been cut short, no human being would be saved. But for the sake of the elect those days will be cut short. Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or 'There he is!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will arise and perform great signs and wonders, so as to lead astray, if possible, even

the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. So, if they say to you, 'Look, he is in the wilderness,' do not go out. If they say, 'Look, he is in the inner rooms,' do not believe it. For as the lightning comes from the east and shines as far as the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever the corpse is, there the vultures will gather.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.

"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

"But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

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Choices

“ I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life” (Deuteronomy 30:19-20)

Puzzle:

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 B A C T K Z V B Y E S K I N S J A E I G D G L D U T Y B A L
 C T S S E N H S I F L E S N G R K L N N O N T N R U C A R P
 T I C O M M I T M E N T R G G D D C E A R I Y E D R E C I Z
 H S E R V I N G S A T A N V I P A K S T P G S S E I H K N Z
 I F A N Y O T H E R W A Y E I V E R S I M N L S N T G B G K
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 E T E R N A L S O R R O W G C H E O G E D S N T Z R M M A E

Words:

Unproductive choices

ADDICTION
 ANGER
 ANY OTHER WAY
 BACKBITING
 BEING A BURDEN
 BEING A THIEF
 BEING LONELY
 BITTERNESS
 BRINGING PEOPLE DOWN
 BRUTALITY
 CHILDISHNESS
 CYNICISM
 DENIAL
 DISSATISFACTION
 ETERNAL SORROW
 FEAR

FOOLISHNESS

GREED
 GUILT
 HARDNESS OF HEART
 IRRESPONSIBILITY
 LAZINESS
 MAKING MISTAKES
 PUNISHMENT
 SELFISHNESS
 SERVING SATAN
 SPREADING DARKNESS
 STAGNATION
 TEARING DOWN
 UGLINESS
 WASTEFULNESS
 WAYWARDNESS
 WORRYING

Productive choices

BEING A BLESSING
 BEING A LIGHT
 BUILDING UP
 CLEANLINESS
 COMMITMENT
 CONSIDERATION
 DILIGENCE
 FACING FACTS
 FAITH
 FORGIVENESS
 FREEDOM
 GENEROSITY
 GENTLENESS
 GOD’S WAY
 GRACE
 GROWTH
 HONESTY

HOPE

JOY FOREVER
 KINDNESS
 LIFTING PEOPLE UP
 LOVING OTHERS
 LOYALTY
 MATURITY
 PATIENCE
 PAYING FOR STUFF
 PEACE
 PRODUCTIVITY
 RESPONSIBILITY
 SELF DISCIPLINE
 SERVING JESUS
 THANKSGIVING
 TRUSTING GOD
 WISDOM