

It Is Written

*A weekly publication of the
Junction Highway church of Christ in Kerrville, TX.*

Vol. 8

October 11, 2026

No. 41

WE ARE OUR CHOICES

By Steven Harper

The title for this article is a quote from philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, and it is a truism that we are who we choose to be. Author and motivational speaker Stephen Covey said, similarly, “I am not a product of my circumstances. I am a product of my decisions.” Covey’s statement echoes that of Sartre, but also seeks to prevent us from defaulting to excuse-making about our circumstances in life and why things are as they are, pointing to the fact we all make choices every day that lead us down the path to where we now are. Ultimately, we are who we choose to be.

In spiritual matters, this is an important point, and we hopefully take it as serious as it is. When I stand before Jesus Christ and God the Father in the final Judgment, I will not be able to excuse my disbelief or my failure to obey the will of the Lord because of what someone else did or because circumstances conspired against me; the reality is, “(W)e must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2nd Cor. 5:10).

No doubt, many will nevertheless make excuses and seek to shift the blame, but my eternal destination will ultimately be because of my choices [and God’s grace, of course]. By His grace, we have a plan by which we may be saved, but I must personally choose to believe Jesus is the Christ and be baptized (Mark 16:16); I must personally choose to repent of my past sins against God (Acts 2:38; 17:30); I must personally have “faith in the working of God,” that He will make me “alive together with [Christ]” and forgive my trespasses (Col. 2:12-13); I must personally confess “the Lord Jesus and believe in [my] heart that God has raised Him from the dead” (Rom. 10:9); and I must personally choose — daily — to keep believing and keep obeying the Lord until the end of my earthly life or the end of all things, whichever comes first.

But how can I make wise choices, since my soul is what is at stake here? What can I do to ensure I am choosing wisely, whatever the choices laid before me? Consider the following as some pointers that may help:

Pray for Wisdom. The deist believes in God, but also believes He created all things and then ‘stepped back’ from His Creation and does not interact with it or us. The Scriptures teach differently. Even Jesus, the night before He chose the 12 who would be His closest disciples during His earthly ministry, “continued all night in prayer to God” (Luke 6:12); I would imagine the prayer included words that pointed to the future that He and they would face together, much like many decisions we face. To this end, James wrote, “If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him” (Jas. 1:5). True wisdom — especially needed when making decisions — comes from God; we would be wise to “lean not on [our] own understanding” and instead hear and heed what God has to say (Prov. 3:5, 6)

Seek for God’s Answer. God will not answer our prayer with some still, small voice, or through dreams and visions; He answers us through the already-revealed written word. It is those Scriptures that are “able to make you wise for salvation” and which help us to “be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2nd Tim. 3:15-17) — the very things we need for making wise decisions in spiritual matters.

We may be tempted to, or already do as a habit, seek answers from the uninspired writings of

men, including the creed books of the denominational churches. That is not wise! When these books contradict one another and sometimes contradict what the Scriptures say, confusion will be the result, instead of trustworthy solutions. Follow the pattern of the Bereans who, when Paul spoke to them, “searched the Scriptures daily to find out whether these things were so”(Acts 17:11). Ask, as did the apostle Paul, “For what does the Scripture say?” (Rom. 4:3), and then follow that.

Examine Self. I would like to think that my motives are always right prior to and including the decisions on spiritual matters, but I should not take that for granted. Every man may be influenced by outside forces and inner desires, and sometimes without realizing that is the case. When making important decisions on spiritual matters, that can be dangerous!

The wise writer reminds us, “All the ways of a man are pure in his own eyes” (Prov. 16:2), and it is when we refuse to believe we could be mistaken or our motives wrong that poor decisions will likely follow. The psalmist once prayed to the Lord, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my anxieties; and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psa. 139:23, 24). That would be a wise choice for us, too, before making many of our choices!

Seek Wise Counsel. As long as I have lived and as much as I have seen and done, I know I haven’t seen it all, experienced it all, or — most importantly — know it all. But, I know plenty of brethren who have also had life experiences and wise views on spiritual matters [i.e., guided by God’s word and God’s ways], and I can seek their advice before making decisions. Again, the wise writer warns us, “Without counsel, plans go awry, but in the multitude of counselors they are established” (Prov. 15:22). I must realize I don’t have all the answers, but some brethren may have the ones I need; I just need to seek them out and maybe dig a little deeper to find an honest, complete answer to the matter at hand.

When seeking counsel, I must be wise in that choice, too; some may not be truly wise (cf. Prov. 15:7). But when the wise speak, I need to heed what they are saying, compare it to the word of God, and follow the advice that aligns with God’s will. But I must listen, heed, and do it; all the wise instruction in the world will do me no good if I do not. Ignoring that wise advice, I reveal myself to be a fool (Prov. 18:2; 15:32)!

Weigh the Consequences. God does not expect us all to blindly follow His word without first investigating it, whether it is true or false, and then the consequences of either following or rejecting it. Jesus, in fact, once warned against entering into His service without consideration of whether we will be able to go with Him all the way (Luke 14:26-33); what He spoke of was counting the cost of discipleship!

Far too many times, individuals make choices — even some eternally-important ones — based on the moment or their feelings at the time of decision-making, and think nothing of what this might mean to them in the future days when the world may turn against them. When Jesus informed the apostles that, after He left, they would be put out of the synagogue or some kill them, thinking they were doing God service (John 16:1-4), they then had to decide whether they would continue walking with, or turn back to their old ways; if they had lacked that information, any decision would have been based on incomplete data and their decisions might have been different.

Yes, God has a plan for our salvation, but it is up to me, individually, to accept His grace or reject it; He has not already made that decision for me. For that reason, it is I who will be judged in the end, and it is I who will have to answer for my choices. I will not be able to lay the blame on any other man — or on God — if I fall short

Choose wisely!