

Life is Hard—Choose Wisely
Psalm 119:129-136
Romans 8:26-39

British Prime Minister Herbert Asquith once spent a weekend at the Waddesdon estate of the 19th-century Rothschild family. One day, as Asquith was being waited on at teatime by the butler, the following conversation ensued:

"Tea, coffee, or a peach from off the wall, sir?"

"Tea, please," answered Asquith.

"China, India, or Ceylon, sir?" asked the butler.

"China, please."

"Lemon, milk, or cream, sir?"

"Milk, please," replied Asquith.

"Jersey, Hereford, or Shorthorn, sir?" asked the butler.¹

Making choices is a part of life. We make them all the time—from the clothing we choose to wear to the things we choose to do. Some of the choices we make have little impact on life around us, such as the choice of coffee cup we use. Yet other choices leave lasting impressions and change, such as where we live and whom we choose or not choose to marry. With each choice we make, we are left with the impact of separation. In making a choice, we choose one thing over another. This leaves us separated from the one we did not choose. For example, if we are shopping for a particular item and we find two that we like, we ultimately can only choose one. For even if we buy both items, we can only use one at a time and are therefore separated from the other. Or consider making a career choice.

Famous tenor Luciano Pavarotti relates: "When I was a boy, my father, a baker, introduced me to the wonders of song. He urged me to work very hard to develop my voice. Arrigo Pola, a professional tenor in my hometown of Modena, Italy, took me as a pupil. I also enrolled in a teachers college. On graduating, I asked my father, 'Shall I be a teacher or a singer?'

"'Luciano,' my father replied, 'if you try to sit on two chairs, you will fall between them. For life, you must choose one chair.'

¹ *Today in the Word*, May 5, 1993. <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/c/choice.htm> (accessed July 19, 2011)

"I chose one. It took seven years of study and frustration before I made my first professional appearance. It took another seven to reach the Metropolitan Opera. And now I think whether it's laying bricks, writing a book--whatever we choose--we should give ourselves to it. Commitment, that's the key. Choose one chair."²

Choosing what is best for us in the long run is not always easy. This is why God has given us the Spirit. The Spirit does know what is best for us, and when we are unable to pray as we ought, the Spirit intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. When we look to God for guidance in the choices that matter, God can give us the guidance we need to make the right choices.

When we love God, and make the right choices, then things work together for the good of those who love God. And even when we don't make the right choices, we still have assurance that nothing can separate us from the love of God. Paul reminds us that the only one truly able to condemn us is God in Jesus Christ, and he himself died, rose, and intercedes for us.

Paul is "...convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." This means that even when we make poor choices, God still loves us. It means that when we make the wrong choices, God still loves us. Like a parent who unconditionally loves a child, God loves us.

While we strive to make the right choices, we are assured that even when we fail to make the right choices God still loves us. And while we know that God will always love us, we also need to make sure we make our own choices.

Former president Ronald Reagan once had an aunt who took him to a cobbler for a pair of new shoes. The cobbler asked young Reagan, "Do you want square toes or round toes?" Unable to decide, Reagan didn't answer, so the cobbler gave him a few days. Several days later the cobbler saw Reagan on the street and asked him again what kind of toes he wanted on his shoes. Reagan still couldn't decide, so the shoemaker replied, "Well, come by in a couple of days. Your shoes will be ready." When the future president did so, he found one square-toed and one round-toed shoe! "This will teach you to never let people make decisions for you," the cobbler said to his indecisive customer. "I learned right then and there," Reagan said later, "if you don't make your own decisions, someone else will."³

Indecision is the same as choosing to let someone else make the decision. Yet allowing someone else to choose for us does not always guarantee that the choice made is for the best. God wants us to choose to give God glory and praise. God wants us to choose to ask for His forgiveness and choose to receive his love and mercy! And when we choose faithfulness over selfishness, we find that we are inseparable from God.

² *Ibid. Guideposts.*

³ *Today in the Word*, MBI, August, 1991, p. 16. <http://www.sermonillustrations.com/a-z/d/decision.htm> (accessed July 19, 2011)

This means that even when we make poor choices, God is with us. God is with us through the thick and thin, through the good and bad, and by our side even when we feel the most lonely! Even in our most vulnerable moments, when we think the worst has come, God is right there next to us—by our side through it all. For like Paul, I too, am convinced that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Let us therefore trust the Spirit to intercede for us when we know not what to pray. Let us trust that even when we make poor choices, God continues to love us. And let us find assurance and comfort knowing that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Prayer:

Trustworthy and Everlasting Lord,
We know that you are by our side through the thick and thin. Help us to always remember that you are by our side and we can trust in your Spirit to intercede for us when we know not what to pray. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.