



VOLUNTARY OR MANDATORY?

You were not redeemed to stay the same!

IDENTIFY YOURSELF

1. **You have an option to leave here different!**

A. This message is going to force you to choose...

(1) “Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, **“This is a hard saying; who can understand it?”** When Jesus knew in Himself that His disciples complained about this, He said to them, **“Does this offend you?”** From that time **many** of His disciples went back and **walked with Him no more**. Then Jesus said to the twelve, **“Do you also want to go away?”**” John 6:60-61, 66-67

(a) At certain times, Jesus introduced very difficult topics. He used those moments to separate those who were not all in!

1. **This is a hard saying!**
2. **Does this offend you?**
3. **Many walked with Him no more.**
4. **Do you also want to go away?**

B. Whose life are you leading?

(1) **"I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.** That life I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me." Galatians 2:20

(a) Let's begin by getting on the same page...

1. **"The heart is deceitful** above all things and it is **exceedingly corrupt.** Who can know it?" Jer. 17:9

a) Can I get an Amen?

b) We get a steady diet of this in our Christian education.

(b) NO! For you, there's actually a choice... but in my belief, *"Freedom is having NO options; when God's way is the only way you are truly free."*

1. "There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, **who don't walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.**" Romans 8:1

(c) **You were not redeemed to stay the same! You are capable of so much more than you've been told!**

1. Victor/Victim? Powerful/Pitiful? Capable/Culpable?

C. Let's go back to the Foundation...

(1) **"by grace you have been saved through faith,** it's not of yourselves; **it is the gift of God,** not of works, that no one would boast. **[SAVED FOR WHAT?]** For **we are his**

workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for **good works**, which God **prepared before that we would walk in them.**"

Ephesians 2:8-10

(a) Workmanship? Good works? Prepared how?

1. "Being therefore **justified by faith**, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; **through whom we also have our access by faith into this grace in which we stand...**" Romans 5:1-2

(b) Workmanship = God's Servant! Prepared how = God's Grace!

1. "**I was made a servant according to the gift of that grace** of God which was given me **according to the working of his power.**" Ephesians 3:7
2. "He has said to me, "**My grace** is sufficient for you, for **my power is made perfect in weakness....**" 2 Corinthians 12:9

(c) God's Grace is His Power (supernatural empowerment)!

What does God's grace produce (allow/empower?)

Good works!

1. "Be **imitators of me**, even **as I** also am of **Christ.**" 1 Corinthians 11:1

a) What **Good works?** Christlikeness/Imitate Christ!

b) *“Let your light so shine before men, that **they may see your good works** and glorify your Father in heaven.”* Matthew 5:16

D. The Purpose of the Church...

(1) “He gave some to be apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, shepherds and teachers; **for the perfecting of the saints**, to the work of serving, to the **building up of the body** of Christ, **until we all attain** to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **to a full grown man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ**, that we may **no longer** be children, **tossed back and forth and carried about with every wind of doctrine**, by the trickery of men, in craftiness, after the wiles of error; but speaking truth in love, **we may grow up in all things into him who is the head, Christ,**” Ephesians 4:11-15

(a) **The purpose of the Church is to edify itself until it matures into the full stature of Christ!**

1. In other words, **you carry within you what Christ carried in Him.** (What Paul calls “**the perfecting of the saints, so you are not tricked by bad doctrine!”**)

a) John said... “Repent, for **the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!**” Matthew 3:2

b) Jesus said... “Repent! For **the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand.**” Matthew 4:17

(b) What is the Kingdom of Heaven? When will it come?

1. “Being asked by the Pharisees when God’s Kingdom would come, he answered them, “God’s Kingdom doesn’t come with observation; neither will they say, ‘Look, here!’ or, ‘Look, there!’ for **behold, God’s Kingdom is within you.**”” Luke 17:20-21

a) Whatever it is, as a Christian, you are carrying it
WITHIN YOU!

b) If that is true, what should you look like?

c) What should you identify with?

(c) **Pause:** remember where we began. Only you know what you felt and how you responded in that moment when I declared...

1. “***The heart is deceitful above all things and it is exceedingly wicked.***” Jeremiah 17:9

a) Prayerfully, your opinion of yourself is shifting already!

E. **Critical question for honest introspection:**

(1) **Do you identify as a saint or sinner?**

- (a) I know the scriptures that are vying for your attention right now, the ones burning a hole in your brain, screaming, "I'm a sinner, sinner, sinner!"
1. "for **all have sinned**, and fall short of the glory of God;" Romans 3:23
 2. "**If we say that we have no sin**, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." 1 John 1:8
 3. "For we know that the law is spiritual, but **I am fleshly, sold under sin.**" Romans 7:14
 4. "For I know that in me, that is, **in my flesh, dwells no good thing...**" Romans 7:18a
 5. Again maybe even... "***My heart is deceitful and exceedingly wicked.***" Jeremiah 17:9
- (b) And I know that nearly all of you are screaming "Romans 7, Romans 7, Romans 7!"
1. "For we know that the law is spiritual, but **I am fleshly, sold under sin.** For **I don't understand what I am doing.** For I don't practice what I desire to do; but what I hate, that I do. But if what I don't desire, that I do, I consent to the law that it is good. **So now it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwells in me.** For **I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells no good thing.** For desire is present with me, but I don't

find it doing that which is good. **For the good which I desire, I don't do; but the evil which I don't desire, that I practice.** But if what I don't desire, that I do, it is no more I that do it, but sin which dwells in me. I find then the law that, while I desire to do good, evil is present. For I delight in God's law after the inward person, but I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and **bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members.** What a wretched man I am! **Who will deliver me out of the body of this death?** I thank God through **Jesus Christ, our Lord!** So then with the mind [Christ's mind], I myself serve God's law, but **with the flesh, sin's law."** Romans 7:14-25

2. The Romans 7 dilemma solved...

a) **#1 (You are a new creation!)**

- 1) "If anyone is in Christ, **he is a new creation;** old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." 2 Corinthians 5:17

b) **#2 (You have dual access; two spirits are available simultaneously!)**

- 1) "For what man knows the things of a man except **the spirit of the man** which is in him?

Even so no one knows the things of God except **the Spirit of God**. Now **we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God**, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.” 2

Corinthians 2:11-12

c) # 3 (**When sin is present in you, it's NOT you!**)

1) “But now, **it is no longer I** who do it, but sin that dwells in me.” Romans 7:17

2) “Now if I do what I will not to do, **it is no longer I** who do it, but sin that dwells in me.”

Romans 7:20

3) **Who will deliver me out of the body of this death?** Romans 7:24 **CHRIST ALREADY DID!**

4) *You have dual access...* “So then, **with the mind [new nature]** I myself serve the law of God, but **with the flesh [old nature]** the law of sin.”

Romans 7:25

5) However... *“Freedom is having NO options; when God’s way is the only way you are truly free.”*

F. So which YOU do you identify with NOW: Saint or Sinner?

(1) **This is how Paul identified YOU...**

(a) Corinthians, Romans, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians

1. {Sample} “to the assembly of God which is at Corinth —those who **are sanctified** in Christ Jesus, **called saints**, with all who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place, both theirs and ours:” 1 Corinthians 1:2

a) Why? Because the sin issue has been handled?

- 1) “Christ ...will appear a second time, **not to deal with sin**, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.” Hebrews 9:28

(b) **To forget that the sin issue has been handled or to be constantly reminded that you are a sinner is destructive to your walk as a Christian; it is the single greatest deterrent to your growth as a disciple of Christ.**

1. “For he who **lacks these things** is blind, seeing only what is near, having **forgotten the cleansing from his past sins.**” 2 Peter 1:9
2. “**For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come**, and not the very image of the things, **can never** with these same sacrifices, which they offer continually year by year, **make those who approach perfect.** For then would they not have ceased to be offered? For the worshipers, once purified, **would**

have had no more consciousness of sins. But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins.” Hebrews 10:1-4

- a) **Without Christ, there should be a constant reminder of your sins; but with Christ, the only thing you should remember is that your sins are cleansed!**

(1) **What does Jesus, Paul, Peter, and John have to say about the sin issue?**

(a) Instead—let’s believe the words of Christ!

- 1. “You shall **be perfect**, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.” Matthew 5:48

(b) Instead—let’s believe the words of Paul!

- 1. “May the God of peace himself **sanctify you completely. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved *blameless** at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Thessalonians 5:23

- a) ***“You shall be blameless** with Yahweh your God.” Deut. 18:13

b) Pay attention to this amazing revelation...

- 1) **“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ** also loved the assembly and gave himself up for her,

that he might **sanctify her**, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, **that he might present the assembly to himself gloriously, not having spot or wrinkle** or any such thing, but that she should be **holy and without defect.**" Ephesians 5:25-27 WEBUS

- c) Who is the wife? What is Paul really saying?
 - 1) "This mystery is great, but **I speak concerning Christ and the Church.**" Ephesians 5:32
- d) That's you... glorious, not **having spot or wrinkle** or any such thing, ...**holy and without defect.**

(c) And, let's believe the words of Peter!

- 1. "but just as he who called you is holy, **you yourselves also be holy in all of your behavior**, because it is written, ***"You shall be holy, for I am holy."**" 1 Peter 1:15-16 [*Lev. 11:44-45]

(d) And, let's believe the words of John...You are designed and empowered to walk like Christ!

- 1. **"God's love has most certainly been perfected in** whoever keeps his word. This is how we know that we are in him: he who says he remains in him **ought himself also to walk just like he walked.**" 1 John 2:5-6

- a) What was Jesus' walk like and what is it meant to produce in you?
 - 1) "For him **who knew no sin** he made to be sin on our behalf, **so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.**" 2 Corinthians 5:21
 - 2) "For we don't have a high priest who can't be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, **but one who has been in all points tempted** like we are, **yet without sin.**" Hebrews 4:15

G. You, tempted, but without sin; is it possible?

- (1) **Contemplate the title of this message. Voluntary or Mandatory?**

- (a) "**No temptation** has taken you except what is common to man. God is faithful, **who will not allow you to be tempted above what you are able**, but will **with the temptation also make the way of escape**, that you may be able to endure it." 1 Corinthians 10:13

1. Rapid diagnostic test:

- a) **Contemplate your last sin, was it voluntary or mandatory?** Now, go back one sin: was it voluntary or mandatory? Now, keep going!
2. Then, ask yourself a few final questions:
 - a) **If my sins are voluntary, can I stop volunteering?**

- b) If my sins are voluntary, do I want to stop volunteering?
- c) If my sins are voluntary, should I stop blaming the devil?
- d) If my sins are voluntary, should I stop blaming others?

1) “Everyone who sins also commits lawlessness. Sin is lawlessness. You know that **he was revealed to take away our sins**, and no sin is in him.” 1 John 3:4-5

(b) **Stop volunteering to sin and begin following in His footsteps.**

1. “For you were called to this, because Christ also suffered for us, **leaving you an example**, that **you should follow his steps, who didn’t sin**, “neither was deceit found in his mouth.”” 1 Peter 2:21-22

a) Those steps...**holy, guiltless, undefiled, separated from sinners...** Hebrews 7:26

H. A Father’s Heart...

(1) A Final Self-Examination

(a) Pride and Humility

1. “**Pride goes before destruction**, and **a haughty spirit before a fall**. Better to be of a **humble spirit** with the

lowly, than to divide the spoil with the proud.”

Proverbs 16:18-19

- a) The two faces of pride...
 - 1) One says I am a self-made man and I can do it on my own.
 - 2) One says I am made by God, but even with Him I can't!
- b) The two faces of humility...
 - 1) **True:** One says I am a lowly nothing without God.
 - 2) **False:** One says I am still a lowly nothing, even with God.

(b) Discipline of Two Fathers

- 1. “If you endure chastening, **God deals with you as with sons**; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? But if you are **without chastening**, of which all have become partakers, then you are **illegitimate** and not sons. **Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect.** Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live?” Hebrews 12:7-9

- a) Your Heavenly Father

- 1) Yahweh is your Heavenly Father and to prove His love, He will not let you do wrong without correcting you!
- b) Your Earthly Father
 - 1) Even a good earthly father who loves you would not let you do wrong without correcting you.

(c) Expectations and Source

1. “I can do **all things through Christ** who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13
 - a) Your Heavenly Father says that with Christ anything is possible!
 - 1) ... *“With men this is impossible, but **with God all things are possible.**”* Matthew 19:26
 - b) If your earthly father showered you with praise saying, *“You are excellent, capable, talented, beautiful, and I’m confident in you,”* and you rejected his beliefs by denying his words and being self-degrading...
 - 1) How do you think he would feel?
 - 2) How do you think God feels when you do that to Him by denying you are who He says you are?

I. The chief work of that serpent in the Garden was to poison human DNA with sin.

(1) **However, Christians have antivenin (anti-venom) against specific poisons, especially those in the venom of snakes!**

(a) **The antivenin is called the BLOOD OF JESUS and it delivers its potent treatment with an injection of GOD'S GRACE!**

1. "For as through the one man's disobedience many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the one, **many will be made righteous**. The law came in that the trespass might abound; **but where sin abounded, grace abounded more exceedingly**, that as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Romans 5:19-21

a) Grace: God's Power (supernatural empowerment).

(b) **Grace is not an excuse to sin, it's the remedy for sin!**

1. **"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? May it never be! We who died to sin, how could we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him through baptism into**

death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, **so we also might walk in newness of life.**" Romans 6:1-4

J. This process is working in you RIGHT NOW!

(1) To destroy the works of the devil!

(a) **"He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. To this end the Son of God was revealed: that he might destroy the works of the devil."** 1 John 3:8

1. Process... From glory to glory!

a) **"We all, with unveiled face** seeing the glory of the Lord as in a mirror, **are transformed into the same image from glory to glory,** even as from the Lord, the Spirit." 2 Corinthians 3:18

2. Timing... With the restoration of all things!

a) **"Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ,** who was preached to you before, **whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things,** which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." Acts 3:19-21

3. Outcome... **Perfecting those being sanctified!**

- a) “but he, when **he had offered one sacrifice for sins forever**, sat down on the right hand of God, from that time **waiting until his enemies are made the footstool** of his feet. For **by one offering he has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.**”

Hebrews 10:12-14

K. Now that you have been introduced to the new real you...

(1) **Let’s finish strong with a Daily Practice and your Marching Orders!**

- (a) **Daily Practice:** *Take every thought captive; be ready to punish disobedience!*

1. “**casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God**, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and **being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.**” 2 Corinthians 10:5-6

- (b) **Marching Orders:** *Be an ambassador for Christ; speak on His behalf!*

1. “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all things are of God, who has

reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has **given us the ministry of reconciliation**, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has **committed to us the word of reconciliation**.

Now then, **we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us:** we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God. For **He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."** 2

Corinthians 5:17-21

(c) **Now get to work...** *"Christ is coming a second time, not to deal with sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him."* Hebrews 9:28

1. ***"You were not redeemed to stay the same! And, you are capable of so much more than you've been told!"***
2. *"Freedom is having NO options; when God's way is the only way you are truly free."*

TAKE-AWAYS

1. You were not **redeemed** to stay the same!
2. You are **capable** of so much more than you've been told.

3. The purpose of the Church is to edify itself until it **matures** into the full stature of Christ!
4. When sin is present in you, it's NOT **you**!
5. To forget that the sin issue has been handled or to be constantly reminded that you are a **sinner** is **destructive** to your walk as a Christian; it is the single greatest **deterrent** to your growth as a **disciple** of Christ.
6. Rapid diagnostic test: Contemplate your last sin, was it **voluntary** or **mandatory**?
7. If my sins are voluntary, **can** I stop volunteering? If my sins are voluntary, do I **want** to stop volunteering?
8. If my sins are voluntary, should I stop blaming the **devil**? If my sins are voluntary, should I stop blaming **others**?
9. Stop **volunteering** to sin and begin following in His footsteps.
10. The chief work of that serpent in the Garden was to **poison** human DNA with sin.
11. Christians have an **antivenin** (anti-venom) against the venom of snakes; it's called the **BLOOD OF JESUS** and it delivers its potent treatment with an injection of **GOD'S GRACE**.
12. Grace is not an **excuse** to sin, it's the **remedy** for sin.