

## The Power to Choose

"And if it is evil in your eyes to serve the LORD, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell. But as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:15, ESV)

When Israel stood triumphant, having taken the land of Canaan by the working of Yahweh God, Joshua put forth this challenge to the people: You have the ability to choose. If it is evil in your eyes to serve Yahweh, then choose one of the dead pagan gods of your ancestors or one of the dead pagan gods of the peoples of your neighbors. But, as for me, the man who stood at the forefront in the siege against Canaan, me and my house with me will serve Yahweh God who made this victory possible and fought our fight for us.

God didn't haphazardly get Israel to agree to serve him. He didn't trick them. He didn't deceive them. He didn't promise one thing and deliver another. Yahweh God kept his word. I AM told Israel what he would do for them and told them what they should do. But, when Israel agreed to serve God, Yahweh made sure they understood the depth of their commitment and the seriousness of their willing service to him. They chose to serve, and once they decided and were bound by the covenant, they were bonded for their lives and the lives of their children after them.

If God gave Israel of that age the right to choose, he has even more given humans now the right to choose to serve him. People can and should put away those things that are honored as God and are not God and choose to serve the One Living God, Yahweh, and his Christ, Jesus his Son. We should indeed not fill ourselves with the spirits of the world but be filled with the Spirit that comes from God. (Eph. 5:18)

If God gave Israel of that age the right to choose, he has even more given those outside of Christ the right to choose to serve him. Let us treat these people with respect, though they may not treat us with respect. Let us be sanctified in God's sight, even though those in the world do not understand why we desire to be holy. Let us respect their right to choose, not compelling others but gently leading them by our example and our good deeds for them. (cf. Gal. 6:9-10) The Truth, when it convicts someone in the world of their sins, will be the compulsion they need to come to the Father and obey his Son. Let us seriously stress the commitment and seriousness of service to God and his Christ so that we do not make obedience to Christ seem a simple thing but a sincere thing.