

Choices

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Date: 23 January 2022

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[0 : 00] If you have your Bibles, turn with me to the book of Judges chapter 13. We're continuing our study about choices. And today I want to preach about the consequences of our choices.

And we've chosen to use Samson as the life we're going to look at. We're going to do a case study of his life and read about six, seven passages, just real brief little passages, and see what conclusions we can draw from what we've read about his life because I think he's a wonderful example of what we're trying to say to you this morning.

Before I do that, I want to read just a single verse. You don't have to even turn to it. You may put it on the screen. I think you're going to. It's in Proverbs 13, 15. And this is what it says, Good understanding gives favor, but the way of the transgressor is hard.

We had a fellow on our staff years ago who did counseling with a lot of different folks who had addictions, all kinds of problems. And he would often say to them as he would listen to them tell their story, at the conclusion of a sentence or a paragraph, they would look up and he would say, Yeah, I'm sorry.

He said, The way of the transgressor is hard. And they would talk a little bit more and they would tell something else that had gone amiss in their life. And he would again repeat that phrase, driving home that biblical idea that the way of the transgressor is hard.

[1 : 23] And that's something we all need to think about and remember in our life when we make bad decisions. And I want to tell you, I've made a host of them and every one of us in this room have. So don't think that you're being singled out this morning.

Everybody, if you live long, you're going to make some bad, bad choices. But when we do, we shouldn't be surprised to find that what the scripture tells us is true. The way of the transgressor is hard. Boy, it's tough living life.

But it's especially tough when you make bad, bad choices. In Exodus chapter 20, we're given the Ten Commandments. I'm sure most of you, if not all of you, are aware of that.

You get ten statements there, nine of them negative, one of them positive. And they're admonitions from God. Don't do this. And that one single one, do this.

Honor your father and mother. Your days may be long upon the land. The Lord thy God giveth thee. If you read the scripture from Genesis to Revelation, you find in the Old and the New Testament alike that God continually uses men to tell us, here's some things you want to avoid.

[2 : 25] Don't do these things. And then there are other things. Paul, for instance, in Colossians 3, admonishes us to do certain things, to put on certain behaviors, to reflect certain ideas and behaviors in our walk and in our life.

Jesus does that in the Sermon on the Mount, you'll recall. So, if you think about it, what that indicates to us is this. We have a choice in the life we live.

You ever thought about it that way? The scripture would never tell us, don't do this, if it were impossible for you not to do that. The scripture would never admonish us, do this.

God would be rather mean in telling us, do this, if it weren't possible for us to do that. You understand that? So, we have a choice in the life we live.

And the choices we make in life determine, in many respects, the course our life takes. Now, a lot of folk think that it's fate, it's just God decides everything in our lives, we don't have much voice in it, circumstances determine, this determines, that determines, my parents determine, but I don't have much say in the life I live.

[3 : 39] I'll tell you something, that is not true. God certainly has predetermined certain things about you you're never going to change. And there are certain circumstances and environments we live in that impact our choices.

They impact, they don't make the choice, but they impact that choice. We've all seen folk in our lives who you look at them and you think, man, where this guy comes from and the situation he finds himself in and even just who he is as a person, nothing he's done, but just the life that's been put upon him, he doesn't have much shot at making it.

And to our amazement, what happens? Sometimes they just rise to the top and just live incredible, incredible lives. And I could give you a list of names of people I've known personally who that's the case.

You look at them and on the outside you think, they just don't have much of a chance. But boy, they just soar in life. One of my best friends in that category. And I've also seen this so many times. Here are people who are given every opportunity. I mean, they just are blessed with everything. They've got looks, they've got smarts, they're athletic, they're that.

[4 : 50] And you just think, they're going to just knock the top out, so to speak, in life. But you look at them and over the course of their life, they're pretty much dismal failures. Not in every case.

I don't mean to imply that everybody who's born in that kind of situation is always going to fail. They're not. Most of them are going to do well. But sometimes you're surprised to think, hey, is it this person ends up like this when they seeming they had everything going for them?

Can I tell you what that's about? It's about the choices we make in life. You are not the victim of fate. And secondly, a lot of people think, well, okay, I have a choice, but that choice just doesn't matter much.

It matters to a huge degree. Every choice you make matters. Which leads me to the third thing. Choices always come with consequences.

Choices. Choices always come with consequences. When you act in a certain fashion, make a certain decision, there's a consequence that comes along with that. Good or bad, right?

[5 : 52] You make some choices that pays, well, great dividends in your life. You make other choices, and boy, you just reap heartache over that. Two quick things I'm going to say, I'm going to jump in the message.

One is this. If I were a parent or a grandparent, and I am, and I've tried to do this, and I'm admonishing you to do the same, you instill in your children, you have a choice.

Can I just be real honest with you? I am sick to hear of hearing people talk, and they've been doing it since I was a boy, but it's grown more and more, that voice is louder and louder, peer pressure. I want to tell you something. Peer pressure is out there, and it's real, and I'm not denying that, but I'm just telling you, you have defaulted. If you come to the place that you think because of all this peer pressure, you don't have a choice.

You do. And I'm not just talking to teenagers. I'm talking to young adults, and middle-aged adults, and older adults. You get roped into believing, I just don't have a choice because here's how the whole world's going, and here's what society's saying, here's what my friends are doing, and here's what they're telling me to do.

[6 : 58] Here's what my family's counseling me to do. Don't buy into that idea that you don't have a choice because you do. And secondly, teach your children there are consequences that come as a result of the choices you make.

I'm going to hit on this later at the end of the message, but let me just briefly plant the idea in your mind now. You are not doing your child, your grandchild, a favor when they make a bad decision, and you rescue them and bail them out.

You may think, well, I'm just being loving. No, you're not. You're depriving them of learning one of the lessons God intends for them to learn from the time their little bitty children own up through adulthood, and that is, with choices come consequences.

It's not that I'm pounding on them, and I'm wanting them to see, see what you did was so bad? I'll stand there at their side and walk with them through that crisis, but I want to tell you something, I don't want to be the one who rescues them from the heartache that they have brought on themselves by their bad decision, because when I do that, I'm telling you something.

Here's the lesson they learned. Mom and Dad bail me out today. They'll bail me out down the road. When you start in the third grade, bail in that little third grader out because he doesn't do his homework, and you send that crazy excuse to the teacher, says, well, he couldn't do it because the cat ate it, or he couldn't do it because we were away, and we were doing this or doing that, you're not doing him any favor.

[8 : 19] When you finish that science project for him rather than let him get an F, you've not done him any favor at all. Now, I want to show you a good biblical example of that. Go with me to the book of Judges.

We're going to look real hurriedly. We've got to move fast. Look at chapter 13 and verse 1 through 3, and then here's what we're going to do. I'm just going to let the cat out of the bag before we get there. Every one of these passages, as I read them, I want you to be surmising, what does this tell me about Samson?

We're going to do a case study of his life. What does this teach me about Samson? Well, look at verses 1 to 3 in chapter 13. The Israelites again did what was evil in the Lord's sight, so the Lord handed them over to the Philistines 40 years.

They were always their nemesis. Verse 2, There was a certain man from Zorah from the family of Dan whose name was Manoah. His wife was barren and had no children. The angel of the Lord appeared to the woman and said to her, It is true that you are barren and have no children, but you will conceive and give birth to a son.

Now please be careful not to drink wine or other alcoholic beverages or to eat anything unclean. For indeed you will conceive and give birth to a son. You must never cut his hair because the boy will be a Nazarite to God from birth and he will begin to save Israel from the power of the Philistines.

[9 : 35] So what do we learn from these three verses we've just read? Here's the first thing. Here's this couple who have always wanted a child. Now, in all likelihood, I don't know who all is here today, but there's probably somebody in this audience, probably more than one or two couples, who can identify with Manoah and his wife.

You've wanted kids, you've tried to have kids, you can't have kids. It's a pitiful situation. But then suddenly, something changes and you now are expecting a baby.

Boy, those couples who've tried and worked hard to have a baby and they can't and suddenly they become pregnant. There is a joy in their face and in their life that's just, you've seen it before, it's just incredible, right?

They're so thrilled. At last, we're pregnant. That's how this couple was. Secondly, we know this. Even before prenatal care was a phrase, she was already getting good prenatal care.

This angel, the Lord told her, he said, don't drink alcoholic beverages, don't eat food that will defile you, and the reason is because this is a special boy you're going to bear.

[10 : 40] So for her health, the health of the baby, for what the Spirit of God has told her through this angel, she just takes great care of herself during this pregnancy. Third thing I realize is this when I read these three verses, this boy is destined for greatness.

Now, every one of you, when you first held your baby, if you're like me, you thought, pro football player, right? Smartest doctor right here who's ever lived, right?

All those kind of things. We see our children as one day being great, but listen, God speaks to her through this angel and says, your baby is destined for greatness and even says, here's what it's going to be.

He's going to be a great Savior of Israel. These are the chosen people of God. They brought them in the promised land. We know from reading this book, he became a judge in Israel.

Not a judge with a black judicial robe, but a judge in the biblical sense who was a warrior. He was a champion, a war hero, if you will. He's going to rescue his people physically from the hands of the Philistine.

[11 : 48] So right off the bat, man, he's got good genes, good parents. He's destined for greatness. Look at the second passage. Look at chapter 14, verses 1 to 3.

Samson went down to Timnah and saw a young Philistine woman there. He went back and told his father and mother, I have seen a young Philistine woman in Timnah. Now, get her for me as a wife. Well, that sounds a little bit abrasive, don't you think? I mean, get her for me as a wife. But his father and mother came to him, can't you find a young woman among your relatives or among any of our people?

Must you go to the uncircumcised Philistines for a wife? So, again, what do we discover? Well, we discover as a young man, he's wanting to date a Philistine and even marry a Philistine girl.

Now, to you, that's just a word. But in his society, man, that's a big deal. Because you see, when God allowed them to go in and take possession of the land, he gave clear instructions.

[12:51] This has been going on for years and years and years. don't marry outside the Hebrew race. And there was a track record that proved that was good advice. Both before and after this, ask Israel about King Ahab who married Jezebel, a foreign woman, and brought all that religious garbage with her into that marriage.

And so God says, keep the race pure. Don't marry anybody but a Hebrew. He had parents who told him, advised him, hey, here's what the Scripture says. Here's what God says. Why do you want to go marry this philistine?

Don't do that. Go get me that woman. I want to marry. He's pretty strong-willed, don't you think? He doesn't heed the advice of his parents.

I want to ask for a show of hands. I wouldn't embarrass anybody here, but I want to tell you something. Every one of us in this room were parents. There's been some point in your life, they may have heeded 99% of your advice, but there's not a parent in this room at some time you looked at your child and you said, don't do, and they did, right?

Or you said, do this, and they didn't, right? So sometimes our words fall on deaf ears. I have a feeling by looking at his response, I don't want to wrongly judge him.

[14:06] I have a feeling this young man who his parents may have doted on him, I get the feeling here's a young guy who he doesn't know the word no. I mean, he's not used to hearing the word no.

He certainly has not been willing to easily accept the word no. Look at the third passage, chapter 14, this time verses 5 through 7.

Samson went down to Timnah with his father and mother and came to the vineyards of Timnah. Suddenly a young lion came roaring at him. The spirit of the Lord took control of him and he tore the lion apart with his bare hands as he might have torn a young goat.

But he did not tell his father or mother what he had done. Then he went and spoke to the woman because Samson wanted her. Well, what do we learn from this? A, he still got it bad for this Philistine girl, right?

Have you ever seen your kids get head over heels in love with somebody and they just lose all reason? I mean, you can tell them until you're blue in the face, don't do it, and that's what, they're going in that direction. Well, we know that, first of all.

[15:12] But there's something else I see here too. And the only way I know to put it is this. He is freaky, freaky strong, right? Any of you ever been out walking in the neighborhood and a dog get after you?

Kind of scares you a little bit, big dog, showing teeth, driving, snipping at your heels, you're trying to get away, you're looking for a stick or a rock and you're kicking him or trying to get away from him? This isn't a neighborhood dog. This is a lion. I mean, a lion. Can you imagine that? I mean, I just can't get my head around.

A lion comes out of these vineyards and he attacks him. What does he do? He grabs that lion and he rips it as though it were a baby goat.

He just tears it to shreds. I'm going to tell you something. He's a bad dude. He is freaky, freaky strong. He's otherworldly strong.

[16:11] You know somebody strong and picking. Some of you right now got an image of somebody. No, you don't know anybody like Samson. I mean, he just rips this lion to shreds.

He's freaky strong. Well, what else do we know? Look, you will, at chapter 14 and this time verse 10. His father went to visit the woman and Samson prepared a feast there as young men were accustomed to do.

When the Philistine saw him, they brought 30 men to accompany him. Let me tell you a riddle, Samson said to them. If you can explain it to me during the seven days of the feast and figure it out, I will give you 30 linen garments and 30 exchanges of clothes.

But if you can't explain it to me, you must give me 30 linen garments and 30 changes of clothes.

Tell us your riddle, they replied. Let's hear it. You know what they're thinking? He's all muscle.

He doesn't have anything between his ears. He's one, we're 30. Give us your riddle. Give us seven days. We're going to take your clothes. So he said to them, out of the eater came something to eat and out of the strong came something sweet.

[17:22] Now, most of you here already know this story, but some of you maybe don't. if you read between the verses we read just prior to this and what we've read just here, you find that he keeps going back and forth to Timna to see this girl.

And on the way down there to see this girl one day, this lion comes running out and he tears it apart as we read just a minute ago. Here's what you didn't read. On a trip back home, he passes by that same lion's carcass and guess what?

Bees have come, honeybees, and they have built a hive inside the carcass of the lion. And so it puzzles him. He reaches down and he pulls out some honey and tastes it.

And that's when he comes up with this idea about this riddle. Who would have ever thought you'd get honey out of a lion? Now, I want to tell you something. If I'm looking at this and putting all this together and trying to get good info on Samson, do a profile of Samson, you know what I immediately determine from that?

If you've got the image, here's this big muscle bound guy and he's just stupid, you're wrong. This guy has got not only brawn, he's got brains.

[18:39] I mean, you read this poem, right? That's pretty smart writing. I mean, that's pretty cool thinking. He's a guy with some good ideas. He's not anybody's dummy.

I think God has just positioned him. He's given him everything he needs to be successful in life. He's given him physical strength, but listen, he's given him intellect as well.

Now, here's the sad thing. We often mistakenly think if you're smart, boy, you can just write your own ticket. You're smart. You're just going to be smart in everything. Can I tell you something? I know folk who are real, real, real smart in one area of life.

They don't have the sense to get in out of the brain in another area of life. Common sense just isn't so common anymore. Have you found that? I mean, I know a lot of folk who they're brainiacs.

I mean, they can think about things I can't even consider, but it doesn't mean they're smart in every walk of life. It doesn't mean they make good decisions.

[19:39] There's a difference in being smart and having good judgment. You know what I mean? You've known folk who didn't have a lot of education who weren't just the sharpest pencil in the box, but they used what they had and they had good judgment.

They didn't make bad mistakes. Samson is lacking that. Super smart, not very good judgment at all. Well, I want you to see something else about him.

Look at verse 10 to 14. We just read that. One last thing I want to say about that before we press on. One of the things I know about him from reading this passage, you probably have already guessed it, he's a risk taker.

He's a gambler. And I don't mean in the sense that he's going around gambling a lot. I don't know if he put down a lot of money a lot of times or not, but I know this from what he did. He likes living on the edge.

He likes getting right up to the edge of life. He likes living on the edge. He pushes the envelope.

When I use those kind of phrases, does it bring somebody to mind in your life?

[20:47] A son, a daughter, maybe you, maybe somebody you work with, they're just always taking risks. You say, well, preacher, how do you get that out of what we just read? Here's how I get it. I know because I know the rest of the story.

He doesn't have the money to cover this bet. He's just bet 30 garments. He doesn't own. He's bet 30 changes of clothes.

He doesn't have. So he's risking something. He doesn't have to pay off if he loses. You know why? Because he's arrogant, because he's confident, because he's impetuous. He thinks he's a sure thing to win this thing, which is what risk takers often do.

They don't consider, what if this thing goes sour? They just want what they want. They're driven by greed. They're impetuous. And they don't see any way this can go bad when there might be a hundred ways it could go sideways.

But he doesn't see that. You understand that? So he just puts himself out there. Well, how in the world could they figure out this riddle? Well, you're about to find out. Look, if you will, at the fifth passage.

[21:52] The fifth passage. Beginning in the latter portion of verse 14, we read these words. After three days, they were unable to explain the riddle. On the fourth day, they said to Samson's wife, persuade your husband to explain the riddle to us, or we will burn you and your father's household to death.

Did you invite us here to rob us? So Samson's wife came to him weeping and said, you hate me and you don't love me. You told my people the riddle but haven't explained it to me.

Look, he said, I haven't even explained it to my father and mother, so why should I explain it to you? She wept the whole seven days of the feast and at last on the seventh day, he explained it to her because she had nagged him so much.

And all the men said, amen. Then she explained it to her. Then she explained it to her people. On the seventh day before sunset, the men of the city said to him, what is sweeter than honey and what is stronger than a lion?

Well, she did him in. Now, let's just be honest a minute because we always see this from Samson's perspective, but if you're that girl, you haven't known him long.

[23 : 08] You don't know him well. This is an arranged marriage. They've come threatening to kill you and your family if you don't tell them the answer to the riddle.

I'm going to tell you something. I understand exactly why she did what she did. I'm not excusing it. She should have found another way. He shouldn't have put her though under that kind of circumstance.

Wouldn't you agree? So, it's just a mess. And what I realize is this, this guy cannot say no to a pretty face. And I'm going to tell you something.

There are a lot of guys out there and gals like that, but more guys than gals, if I'm honest about this morning, my experience has been, who they just have such an attraction to the opposite sex, they lose their mind.

You know what I'm saying? They just so want this other person, they just lose their mind. Well, look at a sixth passage found in verses 19 and 20 of chapter 14, the last two verses.

[24 : 13] The Spirit of the Lord took control of him and he went down to Ashkelon and killed 30 of their men. Did you just hear what I said? He killed 30 other men.

I want to ask you to raise your hand if you know somebody in your lifetime who's been a murderer. But I know this, you don't know anybody who's murdered 30 people. I mean, when you start talking about people who killed 30 people, that's a lot of folk.

That's a lot of people. This is a man with a bad, bad, uncontrollable temper who has put himself in between a rock and a hard place and now he kills 30 people in order to capture their clothes.

He stripped them and gave their clothes to those who had explained the riddle in a rage. Samson turned to his father's house, returned to his father's house, and his wife was given to one of the men who had accompanied him.

Boy, here's the final thing I see about Samson I'm going to tell you today. He is bad with women. He's lost his marriage and is only seven days old.

[25 : 23] He's bad with women. And this isn't the only episode he has with women, he has others, but the climactic ending relationship is with a woman by the name of Delilah, another Philistine woman, and you know that story.

That's the one that makes Samson famous. It's found in chapter 16, so I'm not going to read it. Let's just rehearse it together for a moment. Remember how that story goes down?

He goes to her house. They're talking. He's wanting to be with Delilah. He's sweet-talking her. She's sweet-talking him. The Philistines have come unbeknownst to Samson, and they say to Delilah, find out the source of his strength.

There's got to be something that makes this guy so strong. If you can discover that, here's how we'll reward you. So she plays him. He's got his head in her lap, and she says, Samson, you're so good-looking.

You're so strong. Would you tell me the secret of your strength? He probably tries to put her off at first. Then he just makes up this cockamamie tale.

[26 : 35] And so, to his amazement, when he goes to sleep finally, she does exactly what he says would rob him of his strength.

And says, Samson, the Philistines are upon you. And he jumps up, and it's obvious that was not the truth. Well, she allows him to lay back down in her lap, and I can see her brushing his hair.

You're so good-looking, Samson. You're so strong. Man, I'm so lucky to have you. But you know what? You and I, we're not as intimate as we need to be because you just won't tell me the source of your strength.

You lied to me while I go. Tell me what the real source of your strength is. Now, I'm not a very smart guy at all. But you know what should have been going off in his head?

Wait a second. I just told you how I go lie, but you used that lie against me, and if it had been the source of my strength, well, I'd be in big-time trouble right now.

[27 : 34] But that never registers, apparently, with Samson. So he spins another tale, but this time, get this, this time, it involves one aspect of the story.

It involves his hair. Sure enough, it's not the truth. She does the same thing, tries to use his strategy to make him helpless. They're upon you.

They rush in the room. He's as strong as ever. He causes them to flee. Third time, he's in her lap. Samson, you just won't be honest with me. You won't tell me. You don't love me.

If you loved me, you'd tell me. Like the goofball he was, he tells her a third story. Again, not the truth, but watch what's happening.

Remember what I said about he liked living on the edge? He tells another story about his hair, but this time he's getting closer and closer to telling him the real secret. She does that, again, to no avail.

[28 : 32] Fourth time, he's fed up. He's tired. And he just says, okay, here it is. I'm a Nazirite. I've been a Nazirite since the day I was born. I've never drank alcohol. I've never done this. I've never shaved my head.

If I cut my head, I'd be like anybody else. He falls asleep. She does just that. They rush in, and his strength is gone.

They power him down and gouge out his eyes. Can you imagine the inhumanity of that?

Can you imagine taking your fingers and ripping out somebody's eyes right out of the socket?

That's what they do. They hate him. He's public enemy, number one. You go to a Philistine post office, and there's Samson's picture.

I mean, they hate him. They hate him. He's killed so many of their folks. He's taken 300 foxes, tied them tail to tail, and put fire on their tails, and had them run through their fields and destroyed their landscape, their economy.

[29 : 39] They hate his guts. And finally, they got the upper hand. His strength is gone. They gouge out his eyes. I want to show you a pitiful, pitiful picture, and then I'm going to make some summary statements, and we'll close.

Go with me, if you will, to chapter 16, and I want you to look at verse 21. The Philistines seized him and gouged out his eyes.

They brought him down to Gaza and bound him with bronze shackles, and he was forced to grind grain in the prison. Here's this superhero, superhero in the minds of the little boys and girls in Israel. Can you imagine a little boy or girl passing Samson? Hey, y'all. Samson. Strongest guy in the world. Philistines run from him.

And I want you to look at him now. Here he is in the basement of this prison, and he's pushing a lever around and around this mill, grinding their grain.

[30 : 44] And his eyes, I don't mean to be grotesque, but his eyes are gouged out. It's not that he's blind. We just kind of think blind. No. There's no replacements in these sockets.

They're just empty. It's hard to look at him in the face. They're just empty sockets. And he is a shell of the man he once was.

And here's what I want to ask you. Who would have ever, ever, ever guessed it? Who would have ever envisioned that's how he'll end up one day?

So we go to him. And we say, Mr. Samson, do we have a word with you? We've been your fans. We've seen you in Israel.

And man, you're so highly regarded over there. But we look at you now and, well, you're a mess. Your strength is gone. You're used to being a slave.

[31 : 44] You're in shackles. You're not free to go and come as you please. You can't get around unless somebody leads you by the hand. How did it get like this? How did it end up like this?

You know what experience as a counselor tells me he would probably have said, if we're being honest about it this morning? He'd have probably turned, especially in the early going, a day or two after it happened, in the early going, he'd have turned and he'd have looked at you and he said, it was that stinking Delilah.

She did this. I trusted her. She nagged me. She begged me to tell. And I put my faith and trust in her because I loved her and wanted to be with her. I wanted to be her husband. And she did this.

It's her fault. Well, those Philistines, they're barbarians. Who would do this to a man? Who would belittle? Why didn't they just kill me?

Why didn't they just kill me instead of make me a prisoner and subject me to this kind of lifestyle? It's those barbaric Philistines. They're to blame. Boy, if you'd had a lot of courage, you'd have really been tempted to have said, Mrs. Sampson, with all due respect, didn't you do this to yourself?

[32 : 54] Isn't this kind of about the bad choices you made? Do you bear any of the responsibility for this? You say, well, certainly you had to. I want to tell you something. I meet a lot of people in life, have met a lot of people in life over the course of 50 years of being a pastor.

They never take any responsibility at all. It's their mama. It's their daddy. It's their grandparents. It's the house they lived in. It's the job they didn't get or the job they were forced to do.

It's their bad spouse. It's their rotten children. It's their rotten parents. It's the breaks. It's God's fault. And they never come to grips with, you know what?

You made some real, real bad choices. Three things I'm going to say and I close. One, no one is responsible for your choice but you.

Just as no one is responsible for my choice but me. Have I been pressured at times? Oh yeah. You can't be a pastor and not get pressure from the outside and the inside and everywhere to do something that you know is not the right thing to do.

[34 : 06] But I'm going to tell you something. At the end of the day, when I make a decision, when I make a choice about anything in my life, it's mine. I may not want to own it but it's mine.

It's only mine. And you can say, well my boss made me do that. That's how this company operates. I wouldn't have a job. No. It was your decision. Were they wrong?

Yeah, they were wrong. But that was their decision. You're responsible for your decision. So I'm going to tell you right now, whatever bad thing you may have ever done in your life, whatever bad decision you made, the best thing you can do right now is to own up to it and say, you know what?

That was my decision. I know the circumstances were bad. I know the situation was bad. The environment was bad. A lot of pressure. But at the end of the day, I got to own that decision because I want to tell you something.

I can never put it behind me. I can never repent of it. I can never move on until I come to own it. And you've made some bad decisions in your life. I've made a lot of bad decisions in my life.

[35 : 06] The question is, have you ever owned them? Have you ever just stepped up to the plate and put on your big boy pants and said, I own this. This is mine. I did this. It's not anybody else's fault but mine.

Secondly, our choices, as I said earlier, have consequences. They always do. It's called the law of the harvest.

Galatians 6-7 says this. Listen. Paul writes, God is not mocked. Be not deceived. God is not mocked. For whatsoever man sows, that shall he also reap.

So if I do this good thing, I can expect something good to come out of it. But if I do a bad thing, I should expect to reap a bad harvest. You understand that?

Good decisions bring blessing. Bad decisions bring heartache. And I know as parents and grandparents, we want to do it on our children and love our children and give them every opportunity to help them to rise to the top.

[36 : 13] I want to tell you something. The way you do that is not by doting on them and erasing their mistakes and saving them and rushing in, saving the day and being the savior and the hero and bailing them out.

The way you do that is let them learn as a little bitty child and all the way through life, I'm here for you. I'll stand beside you but I'll not pay the penalty for you. I'll not bail you out because I want to tell you, it's in their best interest to learn there are consequences to our decisions.

I didn't plan to say this and the service didn't say it in the last but I know our time's late but I just feel so compelled to tell you this. I'm watching TV in about the year 2000 and a news flash comes up.

There's been a shooting in a middle school in Alabama. The cameras show a little 14-year-old boy he's being arrested he's being put into a squad car he's taking his grandfather's shotgun who he lives with his grandfather to school and he shot a schoolmate.

They're putting him into the squad car they're beating him over you know how they do to keep him from bumping their heads and they're putting him in the squad car and he looks back out the door and there's a guy with a camera there and the guy's asking him what were you thinking?

[37 : 26] And this is what he said I'll never forget he looks in the face of the camera and he says I just want to go home. I just want to go home to my grandpa I just want somebody to take me home to my grandpa and as a parent and a grandparent he just broke my heart because I thought to myself son you're never going home.

You're not have your folks not taught you? There are consequences to your actions and your world has just changed forever. Forever.

And I'm telling you and not just kids and teenagers and young adults but middle-aged adults and older adults boy you better think before you act because every action has a consequence and there's some actions you take they're not very significant where I eat lunch they don't matter a whole lot but I'm going to tell you something if I'm unfaithful to my wife that can wreck my whole life if I take something that's not mine if I deal under the table if I'm not honest boy that can have the implications that just devastate my whole life do you understand that?

Teach your children and by teach them I don't mean just verbally tell them you got to let them experience it you got to be standing there with them and say boy I'm sorry and like my friend put your arm around and say the way of the transgressor is hard isn't it?

boy I'm sorry son I'm sorry daughter boy when you mess up there's a price to be paid in and I'm sorry I'm sorry you didn't get to go to Disney World I'm sorry you didn't get to be on that ball team I'm sorry you didn't get that scholarship but we'll learn from this when we're going forward way better thing to do than to rescue them every time they fail thirdly good choices lead to a good life and poor choices lead to a bad life of undue heartache well if you spill enough heartache we don't need to make it harder on ourselves I close by telling you this the book of Proverbs is about wisdom it's called wisdom literature that word wisdom people think of this white sage long beard he's like a contestant on Jeopardy who knows all the answers no the word wisdom actually means skillful and he was used in a variety of circumstances but let me just tell you three of them they used that word wisdom about skillful of a surgeon who could take a scalpel and cut somebody's body and instead of doing them harm relieve them of a bad organ or bad tissue right take skill to do that they used it of a gem cutter who would take a stone and carefully take a hammer examine that rock carefully and put that hammer in exact place and strike that with a that chisel with a hammer in exactly the right spot and you'd have multiple good diamonds instead of just ruining it they used it of the navigator at sea in ancient days who could take a ship and in the middle of the night without any of the modern scientific methods we have take just a sextant and just a few tools and a knowledge of the stars and he could guide that ship to its destination that's skill and that's what the writer of Proverbs is saying leave your life skillfully so that you do this you're walking through life and here's this obstacle and you just step around that and you move over here and here's another obstacle and you find a way to get around it and you just skillfully walk through life versus you've seen those folk who every day they live it's like a bull in a china shop they're just wreaking havoc and breaking things and you just kind of shake your head and say boy it's just one disaster after another after another you know what that's from a lifetime of making bad bad bad choices so in the closing moments of this sermon here's what I want you to do

[41 : 25] I want you to take a good hard look at yourself forget the past you can't do anything about that but right now today are you in the midst of making some bad decisions some good decisions some godly decisions some ungodly decisions some decisions that will help your family some decisions that could train wreck your family what kind of decision are you making right now today financial decisions social decisions some of you have friends I want to be honest with you you ought to lose them because they've got your ear they're speaking things into your ear that's influencing you you're not even aware at times they are but they're influencing you down a path and you're going to wake up one day and say you know what I didn't really want this but I guess this is a choice I've made I'm asking you right now to do inventory in your life and say what about my choices young old in between what about my choices right now am I making choices that a year from now

I'll be glad I made or am I making some choices a year from now my whole family could have blown apart because of my stupidity let's bow together in prayer father lead us and guide us today in this time of invitation time of reflection more than anything to think about the choices we're making every one of us young and old in this room if we're making God honoring choices lord I'm so grateful for that and I know many are but there's some of us who are being careless and reckless in our decision making and I pray God that you bear to mind today give us a warning signal today

awaken us from a stupor that would allow us to see you know what I'm headed down a road that leads to disaster and teach us Lord it's never too late never too late to do the right thing we ask this in your name for your sake amen