

# Break Free...

*A Thought for the Week From Patrick Kemper at  
No Strongholds Ministries*

*Week 22*

## How Do You Respond... In Ignorance or in Truth?

*2 Corinthians 5:17 (Darby)*

*<sup>17</sup> So if any one [be] in Christ, [there is] a new creation; the old things have passed away; behold all things have become new:*

*1 John 1:9 (Darby)*

*<sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us [our] sins, and cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

Is it better to respond to the self-inflicted pain of our lives in ignorance... or in truth?

Most fully functioning, mature individuals would immediately respond by saying the answer to the question is not just simple, it's obvious. But is the seemingly logical answer to this question really the way we *respond* after making a wrong choice?

Let's suppose you are someone who is striving to deepen your relationship with Jesus... and then you make a stupid choice that leaves you crushed in spirit, and dark in attitude.

What do you do?

From scripture we understand that confession and repentance are necessary (and effective) for righting the relationship, but how far do we have to go? What do we have to do so we no longer feel as though we just farted, audibly, in a crowded elevator? What must we do to get beyond the sense of dread that insists we to take the stairs until people no longer remember why we look familiar? How do we move past the mistake (or the terrible, intentional choice) and get back to being okay again?

We choose.

We make choices in light of the truth of who God is, how He sees us and what He actually expects from us.

Huh?

Our imperfection (our inability to ever be perfect), and the inevitability of failure inherent in our humanness, is challenged and overcome by God's omniscience. His limitless knowledge and His holiness produce unquantifiable patience, uncompromised

compassion and unending faithfulness to forgive... when we are in an authentic relationship with Him.

When we have a relationship with Jesus (we have submitted ourselves to follow Him at all costs and honor Him daily in worship), the Bible assures us we are no longer what we used to be; we have become new creatures because of His sacrifice. God the Father sees us as acceptable... because of Jesus.

**2 Corinthians 5:17 (HCSB)**

*<sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, [he is] a new creation; old things have passed away, and look, new things have come.*

It is critical that we recognize, believe and live in this truth. Equally important is the depth of our resolve, our tenacity, for choosing to get up after a failure, rub some dirt on it and get after it again (more determined than ever) for His glory.

God has prior knowledge of our past, present, and future mistakes. There are no surprises for Him. The fact that we are defective does not diminish the efficacy of His attributes and His interest in forgiving and restoring us is not reduced by our sin... it is intensified. While this is not a license to act however we choose, it does provide a truthful fact about God's desire to interact with us – a truth that stands in stark contrast to what the enemy wants us to believe and practice.

The enemy has spent a huge amount of their advertising budget working to convince us the most effective method for correcting our mistakes (the pile we just stepped in) is to sit, uselessly, and smell like our mistake for a while. Apparently, this is the best way to show our sincerity and how stupid we are *supposed* to feel. With this kind of mentality, God's compassion and faithfulness to forgive (when we confess) are rendered impotent – *conceptually* in our minds and *effectively* in our lives - if we choose to roll around in the pasture, in the manure, attempting to flog ourselves back into acceptance.

Why do we believe sitting in the manure will ever make us clean? Languishing in the stench of our mistakes will only produce a prolonged stink and prevent us from moving forward.

God came to earth to provide redemption (rescue) for a free-willed creation that has gone rogue. He offers to make each one a new creation (no longer subject to the choices and desires of the old version) and installed a system by which these new creations can continue to receive His input and benefits... confession and submission.

## *Application*

### Know Your Enemy

You have been entrusted to make all the choices for your life.

For some reason, this time, you made a really stupid choice and the fallout is, at a minimum, killing your attitude and motivation. Although playing the victim card is always much easier than taking responsibility, such convenience does not beget truth.

Sometimes God is gracious and allows for the immediate results of your poor choice to be enough to make the necessary impression. Other times your choices come with severe, lasting consequences. It doesn't matter which becomes reality for you after your synapse misfire; on the back side of wrong decisions there is always additional work you will have to do.

The first thing you need to do is settle, in your mind, the difference between feelings and facts. Feelings *can* be factual... but they can also be liars. Facts can never be anything but truth.

When you screw up, you “feel” like you have damaged your relationship (your connection, your closeness, your interaction) with God. In this case, the feeling and the prognosis are both fact. But it is at this point that the messenger (this feeling) must be heard, received, acknowledged... and then sent on its way (bearing your appreciation and your gratitude, of course) in the company of an escort of truth... all the way to the gates of your castle.

The escort of truth must accompany these *messengers of feelings* all the way out of your life. If they remain inside the castle (if you continue to focus only on the feeling that you made a stupid choice and now things are messed up), they will begin demanding your hospitality. These messengers will become a distraction and prevent you from responding productively to the issue that was brought to your attention by their arrival.

The messenger has only one purpose – deliver the message. Do not allow them to take up residence or assume management responsibility for the castle. Have these feelings escorted, politely but authoritatively, to the gates of your castle with an acknowledgement that the message has been received. Then wish them a pleasant journey wherever they are headed next.

The escort of truth is comprised of knights of the highest order. The First Knight in the escort is God's honor – His word. The Bible reveals how God does not break His promises and He does not change over time (Hebrews 13:8). It also assures us that as His Spirit dwells within us (through a relationship with Jesus), we are no longer required to play nice with the choices of our old nature:

***Romans 8:6-12 (NIV)***

<sup>6</sup> *The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace;*

<sup>7</sup> *the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so.*

<sup>8</sup> *Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.*

<sup>9</sup> *You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, **if the Spirit of God lives in you**<sup>1</sup>.*

*And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ.*

<sup>10</sup> *But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness.*

<sup>11</sup> *And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.*

<sup>12</sup> *Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation - **but it is not to the sinful nature**<sup>2</sup> - to live according to it.*

The other knight in the escort is God's omniscience – His prior knowledge of your lousy choice (and all of those you will make in the future). He made you, and He never forgets you are a finite, imperfect creation. Since He has all knowledge, He is capable (and willing) to be patient and compassionate with your failures and shortcomings.

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<sup>1</sup> Emphasis mine

<sup>2</sup> Emphasis mine

Stop sitting in the manure. It isn't required and it doesn't fix, or prove, anything. Receive the message that reveals the truth and consequences of your choice, then have it removed from the castle by the knights of the escort of truth... God's word and God's omniscience.

## Engage in the Fight

Okay, so you choked.

You are fully aware of the impact your choice has made on your connection with God, you have received the message, escorted the messenger to the gates and waved until the doors were closed.

What now?

God has always been a planner. In His infinite wisdom, in His compassion and patience, God provides a way to rectify these situations. I John 1:9 reveals to us that when we confess, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness - period. There is nothing more required to right what is wrong. This is a fact, not a feeling. This is a message that should not be escorted to the gate... it is a truth that should be persuaded to stay for dinner.

How should this truth affect your life?

In order for you to get up and out of the manure, run through the shower and get back to your responsibilities, another decision is required. You need to believe God's cleansing (upon your confessing and submitting) will wash away the manure and you will no longer be offensive. If you take a shower but spend all your time apologizing for the way you smell, all who must endure you will conclude you have suffered a serious disconnect with reality. Agonizing over something that does not exist wastes time, effort, energy and emotion... and you remain unproductive. Games, set, match... enemy.

You must take God at His word – you are forgiven and cleansed when you confess – and then you must choose to get back on the horse and continue following God through the pasture of life. From this position (*in* the saddle), you should always remember what it was like to sit in the manure. Never forget the impact of the choices that previously led you there... and resolve to never return for an encore performance.

You are no longer the creature who functions that way – you are a new creation and you have the option to live like one. This is operating in the truth of His word instead of being held hostage (and rendered useless) by messengers. Rotten, thoughtless, selfish and destructive choices are always going to be a possibility within the human condition. You must be on guard. Recognize that while they are your choices to make (and there will be times you will make some doozies), you must refuse to let these lapses in judgment hold you hostage.

You get to choose.

You can choose to entertain the *feelings messengers* (in ignorance) like a naïve, over-polite host allowing them to remain in your castle (draining life and hospitality out of you), or you can send them packing with the escort of truth and choose to resume your life of obedience... guided by God's truth.

# Homework for the Week...

1.) Are you currently struggling to re-connect with God after a poor choice?

- How are you responding? (Write it down)

- What do you believe is the response God is wanting from you? (Write it down)

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2.) Write down exactly what you are doing in response (i.e. feeling bad / guilty, trying to show God how sorry you are by punishing yourself, secluding from the things you love, from things having any connection to worship, prayer or people that care about you and your walk, etc.)

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3.) Is it working? Do you believe this is what God desires when you make a wrong choice?

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4.) Think about God's honor and His omniscience. What do you really believe these attributes can do for you?

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5.) Do you have an authentic, reciprocal relationship with Jesus? If you say, "Yes," then are you choosing to live like the old creature, or the new creation? Are you choosing to sit in the manure of your choice, hoping it will prove your sincerity? Is that a fact, or a feeling? (Write it down)

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6.) Are you letting a messenger stay too long? Have you accepted the information and escorted them all the way out and closed the gates behind them?

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7.) Ask God, right now, to help you. Confess your choice (sin) and submit to follow Him at all costs. Accept His promise of restoration and choose to move forward, freely, in a life of obedience.

8.) Mid-week check. How are things now? Write down how you are responding to the poor choices you might still be making (or maybe they are gone?) and explain where you are with choosing to live outside the practices of the old creature (this is your obedience indicator).

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9.) If you are still struggling with choices and the way you respond, maybe it is time to consider the sincerity of your heart when you asked God to help, or perhaps examine the facts regarding your relationship with Jesus – have you asked for His forgiveness? Have you asked Him to come and take over the management of your life? Have you submitted your life for whatever He asks of you? Did you commit to follow at all costs? Check your heart; be authentic. Ask God to show you the way through what is blocking you from submitting in obedience. Write down what applies to you and ask God to help you see what is keeping you from moving forward.

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3.) How are you doing compared to the way you started the week? If you still need improvement, refuse to move on to the next session. Stay here, submit, and choose to be obedient no matter what it takes. Write down how you have improved, or what you would like to see get better, and make a commitment to continue working. When you are operating in obedience in this area of your life... turn the page and move to the next session.

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