

# (Basics) 3. the Power of Choice

by Zac Poonen

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*Zac Poonen emphasizes the power of choice in overcoming sin and developing spiritual maturity through obedience to God.*

**Duration:** 12:57

**Scripture:** Genesis 2:16

**Topics:** "Choice"

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## Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes that animals are solely focused on earthly desires such as food, sleep, and sexual satisfaction. However, humans are created with a deeper part called the spirit, which makes them aware of the existence of God. The chaos and evil in the world are a result of humans ignoring their spirit and disobeying God. The preacher also discusses the importance of understanding sin, which separates humans from God and can cause them to behave like animals.

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## Transcript

Sin. What sin is? People talk about sin, but they don't very often understand what it is. And when we realize that sin is what makes us distant from God, it's important for us to understand it.

Why do some men often behave like animals? Don't you feel sometimes that perhaps you yourself, your behavior, if you were honest, is just like that of an animal? The way dogs bear their teeth at one another, the way some human beings behave towards each other. What's the answer? The answer is because such men are only interested in their bodily needs and their own existence on this earth and in things related to their existence on earth. What is an animal interested in? An animal has got no spiritual values.

There's no animal in the world who thinks about God. You never find a religious monkey or a religious dog kneeling down anywhere or doing any such thing, any act of worship. But when it comes to man, even out there in the jungles, barbarians who know nothing about any religion, who've never been educated or illiterate, they have a sense that there is a God whom they have displeased in some way and that's why they make sacrifices.

Maybe they worship the sun or some tree or something else, some created thing. But it's that sense that they are answerable to some supreme being. Now no animal has that.

What's an animal interested in? Food, sleep, sexual satisfaction, taking care of its little ones and that's all. You see animals with their head always bent down to this earth. They're only interested in the things of earth.

There's no future for them. When they die, they become dust. That's all.

And when a man who was created primarily to be a child of God, we have a body, of course. We need food. God has created us with sexual desire.

We need to sleep. All these things are okay. There's nothing wrong with any of these things, provided they are fulfilled in legitimate ways.

If you're hungry, we shouldn't steal in order to eat food. There are legitimate ways of earning our living. It's proper to sleep, but not to sleep when you're on duty and doing something important.

In the same way with sexual satisfaction, God has ordained marriage for the fulfillment of that. There are lawful ways in which God has planned for man to fulfill these legitimate needs of food and sleep and sexual satisfaction. Now animals don't think like that.

They have no laws. They would try to fulfill these longings in any way possible. Even if it means fighting with other animals and tearing them to pieces, it doesn't make a difference.

When a man behaves like that, we can say that he's reduced to the level of an animal. When he has no spiritual values, but he's only interested in earthly things, we can say he's descended to the level of the animals. But God didn't create us to be like that.

He created us to be like Him. Moral, upright, with character and self-control, and not to be a slave to animal passions. I mean the mere fact that we as human beings are cleverer than animals, and that we're educated, and we can solve mathematical problems unlike a dog or a monkey, it doesn't make us necessarily better than them.

I mean there's a lot of difference between being cleverer and being better. Because we find that even clever, educated people are often slaves to greed and sexual lust and anger and bitterness and selfishness. And very often their behavior, in spite of their being PhDs or intelligent and clever, their behavior is exactly like that of an animal.

And you know why? Because they haven't dealt with the most important problem in their life, and that is sin. There is a part of us which is much deeper than our mind. Many people think of man as just body and mind, or body and soul.

The soul consisting of our mind and our emotions and our personality. But no, man is deeper than that. There's a part of man which is much deeper than even body and soul.

And that's what the Bible calls our spirit. Our spirit is what makes us aware of the fact that there is a God. No animal has this.

And all the chaos and confusion and diseases and evil in this world are the direct result of man disobeying God, ignoring what his spirit is prompting him to hear, the voice of God, ignoring that, and listening to the devil. Now in an earlier study we considered how God gave man a free will. And if we didn't have freedom of choice, as I said in that study, then we'd be like a robot.

We would obey God automatically like a robot obeys, but we could never become children of God, just like a robot cannot be your child. So God took that risk, we can say, of the possibility of man disobeying him, of bringing chaos and confusion into the world by disobeying him and listening to the devil, being deceived by the devil. But he was willing to take that risk because he wanted children.

He wanted those who would obey him out of voluntary choice freely, not out of compulsion. The first man and woman that God created, the Bible says their names were Adam and Eve. They were created innocent and they had to make a choice if they were to be holy.

They had freedom of will. And in order to make that choice, they had to be tempted. How do you know, for example, whether your child will obey you if you put him in a room and say, you can do whatever you like? Supposing when you're going away from home, you tell your son, your little boy, you can do anything you like till we come back.

You never discover whether your son is obedient or not. If you want to find out whether your son is obedient or not, you should say something like this. Well, you can do anything you like in this house except one thing.

You should not open that tin of biscuits and eat any biscuits while daddy and mommy are away. When you make one restriction like that, then you can at least find out whether he's obedient. He can play, he can do anything he likes, he can read books or do anything.

But there's one thing you've told him not to do. And when you come back and you discover he has done that one thing which you told him not to do, you discover whether he's obedient or not. So that is why temptation is necessary for man to prove his obedience, for man to make a choice to say, I say no to something and yes to God.

And that's the reason why when God created Adam and Eve, we read the Bible says He placed them in a garden. And in that garden, they could eat of any tree. There were beautiful trees with plenty of good fruit.

And God said, you can eat anything. It's like, you know, you're telling your son, you can do anything you like except one thing. And that's what God told Adam and Eve.

There's one thing I don't want you to do. There's one particular tree here which I don't want you to eat of. That wasn't very difficult.

There were a thousand trees which had excellent fruit which they could have gone to. So there was another tree called the tree of life which they could have gone to also. So it was not that God planted 1,000 trees and told them that they were not to eat of 999 of them and they could only eat one.

Then we could say that would have been tough. I mean, if you left your son at home and told him 999 things he could not do, he probably wouldn't even remember them. And you allowed him to do only one thing.

That would have been difficult. But it wasn't like that. You left your son at home telling him to do anything he liked except one thing he should not do.

In the same way, God told Adam and Eve there was only one tree that they should not eat of. And there we see the purpose of temptation. For man to become holy.

As man said no to that temptation, he could become holy. But if he said yes to that temptation, then he would sin. That choice was necessary.

We already saw the reason for freedom of choice. Now we read about this in the first book of the Bible, in Genesis chapters 2 and 3. Now there's a lot of difference between being innocent and holy. Innocence is what you see in a baby.

You know, ignorant of good and evil. Neither holy nor perfect. But if a little baby as it grows up is to become a man of character, it has to make choices.

Adam, in a sense, though he was physically like a grown man, was in a sense like a baby, innocent. And he had to make a choice of refusing evil and choosing God in order to be a mature spiritual man, which is what God wanted him to be. Now there we understand the reason why God permits us to be tempted.

With our passions, with things that we know are wrong, and why God allows Satan to come and tempt us. And when we refuse to yield to temptation in our minds, you know what happens? Every time you say no to a temptation, you are developing character. And the type of person you are today is the net result of all the decisions that you have made in your life so far.

If others around you are better, it's because they made better choices. And if you are evil, it's because the choices you made were evil. We can't do anything about the past, but we can do something about the future.

This is sin, to choose evil. Holiness is to choose God. Jesus has come to show us this, so that we can know what is good for us.

And he's not only come to show us what's right, he's come to help us. Will you pray a little prayer right now? And say, Lord, I can't do anything about the past years of my life, but I want to do something about the future. I want to choose what will please you.

Lord Jesus, help me.

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