
HEALING WORDS

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Spring, 2010

CHOICES

By Philip C. Zampino

As we enter the Easter season and join in the yearly celebration of our Lord, Jesus Christ's victory over the grave, it is important to look beyond the joyous festivities and see the many choices which brought our Lord to this point.

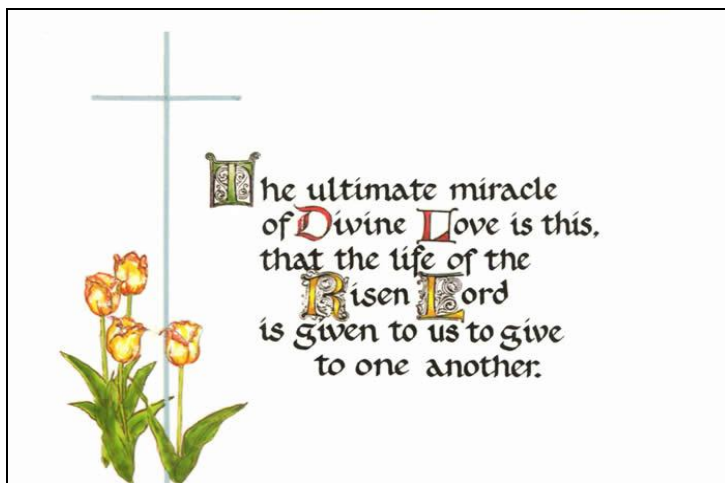
There is perfect love in the Godhead and where there is love there is free will and the freedom to make choices. Jesus was not forced to make choices by His heavenly Father, nor was He coerced by the Holy Spirit to descend into our world, to face death on a cross, and to ultimately be resurrected. This was a choice Jesus made out of love within the Trinity and love for fallen humanity. Jesus not only brought reconciliation between God and man, He set before us an example as to how we should live our lives, choosing to trust in the love and power of Almighty God.

Because of love God created mankind in His image, giving us free will, and the ability to make choices. Where there are no choices, there is no freedom, only slavery. Being created in the image of God, we must be free to love, and love demands that we have the ability to choose.

Let us examine our own lives and the decisions we make in the light of the example Christ Jesus has set before us, which takes place immediately after His baptism. We will use the text of the temptation of Jesus as recorded in Luke 4 :1-14. It is important to note that Satan's temptation occurred immediately following Jesus' baptism. The same is true for us. There is a spiritual war that rages between God and Satan, and once a person is baptized and becomes part of the Body of Christ, he becomes a battle ground.

After the Baptism of Jesus it was the Holy Spirit who led Him into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. Why? In order to answer this question we must remember that Jesus was both fully human and fully God. He came to earth to live as a human being in order to defeat Satan, as all of us are to defeat him, so He had to set the examples for us. The first example was that of baptism where he was filled with the Holy Spirit. At baptism you and I are also given the Holy Spirit to begin the equipping process for the battles we will face against the devil. The second example was that in His very weakened condition, after fasting forty days and nights, He was still able to withstand the temptation and wiles of Satan. Here we see the power and the strength that is available to us when we choose to follow the call of God on our lives. Lastly in this passage we see that the victory Jesus won against the temptations of the enemy strengthened Him so much that as He left the wilderness and went into Galilee, He went in the *power of the Holy Spirit*.

Now let's look at the temptations themselves. Satan first sought to create doubt as to who Jesus really was saying "if you are the Son of God, command this stone to become bread". (Luke 4: 3) Satan attacks us with that as well. Jesus knew that He was the Son of God but Satan wanted to flood Him with doubt. In His physically weakened state, Jesus had to make the choice to believe in who He really was. After all, He was truly man as well as God, and at this point His humanity was being severely tested. He had to choose to trust in God the Father and not succumb to the lies of Satan. His response was to defend His faith with the authority of the written Word. You and I have often been tempted in similar ways. Have you ever heard the little voice in your head say something like, "If you were really a good Christian you would trust God and would not need your medicine", or "You do not need a job because God will supply all your needs," or "What kind of Christian are you? You sin like everyone else." Satan tries his best to get us to doubt who we are in Christ. He is trying to move us to spiritual failures that would cause us to doubt our Lord. Jesus did not fall for it and neither should we.



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Choices

Again Satan sought to tempt Jesus with authority and glory. He offered Jesus an easy way to obtain what He had come to accomplish, which was to reclaim the world from the hands of Satan. All He had to do was to worship Satan. What an offer ! Had Jesus, in His humanity, succumbed to this deception, the result would have been worse than the sin of Adam. When Adam sinned all the world which was under his authority was handed over to Satan. Jesus had come, as part of His mission, to reclaim the world and all its authority which was now under Satan's control. Satan, the father of lies, was offering Jesus an easy way that would keep Him from the cross, the sacrificial death and the atonement He came to accomplish. Since Jesus was not only fully man but fully God, if He had bowed down and worshiped Satan He would have abdicated all to Satan. Jesus, in His humanity, had to make a choice and the choice He made was to tell Satan that it was written that we were to worship and serve only God. Satan constantly tempts us to worship other idols, whether they be money, sex, power, leisure, material goods and time to name a few, but we must choose as Jesus did, to only worship the Lord our God.

In the last temptation, Satan challenged Jesus to throw Himself down from the pinnacle of the temple to see if His Heavenly Father would really have His angels save Him. But Jesus again rebuked Satan saying that we are not to put the Lord our God to the test or to tempt Him. Again Jesus made a choice which sent Satan on his way until another time. Let us note there are two things here: 1) Jesus made choices which caused Him to win battles over Satan even in His weakened condition. 2) After defeating Satan, Jesus went forth in the *power of the spirit*. The same is true for us. When we stand against Satan and defeat him by trusting in Jesus and making right choices, we too can go forward in the power of the Holy Spirit, no matter how weak we may feel we are.

Jesus set an example for all who would follow in His footsteps. He wants us to see how we are to deal with the choices of life, especially the difficult and painful ones, and those that are a matter of life and death. God's ultimate plan for all of His children is life, abundant life, life with Him for all eternity. This is His promise and our hope. In Deuteronomy 30:19 God made clear to Israel and to all of us that He sets before us " life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live:" This is the loving heart of God, that we may choose Him, choose His ways, and thus choose life.

Jesus has set for us another example of choice. Good Friday and Easter are about the choices of God that have assured life to all who believe in Him. Jesus chose to obey the Father who, in love for us, sent Him to the cross and death to atone for the sins of the human race. We must realize that Jesus, the Son of God, had a choice in this matter. His decision was not blind obedience. He had seen many crucifixions; they were all too common in His time and they were public. In the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus prayed to the Father that if it were possible to let this cup pass from Him, but He also prayed, "Nevertheless, not as I will but Your will be done." (Matt. 26: 39, Mark 14:36 and Luke 22: 42) Jesus had a choice to make in the Garden and He made it out of love for the Father and for you and me. Freedom, choice and love always go together and Jesus has demonstrated this best for us in the Garden and on the Cross. The end result of that love and choice was His resurrection from the dead and a pathway to heaven for all who would choose follow Him in love and obedience.

HEALING WORDS BY EMAIL

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My Weakness – His Strength

By Jean L. Zampino

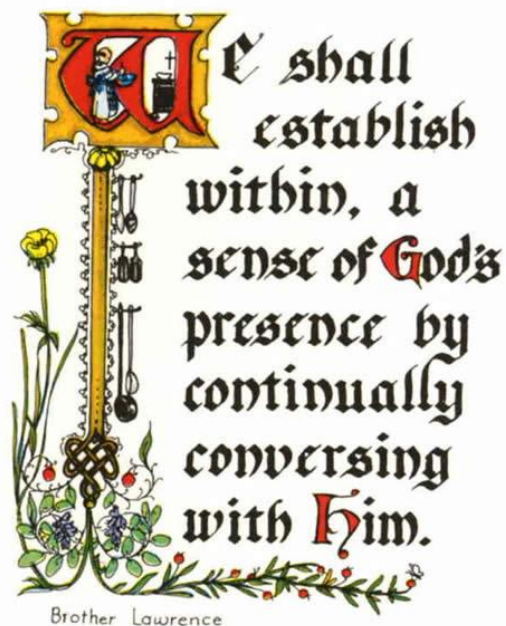
I am overwhelmed by the vast, unconditional love of God, by His tender mercies, and His incomprehensible humility. How can we begin to understand the Creator of the universe stooping to enter our world in the personage of Jesus Christ in order to bring this lost creation back into relationship with Himself? We honor earthly kings with magnificent gifts of gold and precious jewels, but the King of kings and Lord of lords seeks only gifts from us which deepen our relationship with Him. And what are these gifts our Lord desires? He desires the gift of ourselves, wholly and completely. He yearns for us to acknowledge our brokenness, our sins, our weakness, and our utter dependence upon Him.

Our great God created us for relationship with Himself, and He wants to lift off our shoulders *anything* which would block that relationship. This was true from the very beginning with the creation of Adam and Eve. Their lives only reached their God-given potential when they were in union with their Creator, when they communed with Him moment by moment. The same is true for us. We were created to be completely dependent upon God.

David, the sweet psalmist of Israel, understood this when he said, "... thou didst keep me safe upon my mother's breasts. Upon thee was I cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me thou hast been my God." (Ps. 22: 9-10 RSV) We were each " fearfully and wonderfully made ... intricately wrought" (Ps. 139: 14-15) by our God. We were formed and fashioned uniquely and individually to be cast upon Him, to rest in utter dependence upon Him, to become one with Him.

As we go about our daily routine, how much do we allow ourselves to be submitted to our Lord? Even though we were created and designed to be dependent upon God, we were also given free will; we have been given the ability to choose to run our own lives or to cast ourselves upon God. This is where knowing and acknowledging our weakness comes in. When we view ourselves as strong and capable, independent of God, He will step back and allow us to run our lives to our own detriment. We can continue in this pattern for a long time, not even aware that we have strayed from God's Presence, but all the while He gently woos us back into relationship with Him, offering us forgiveness of our sins and loving us unconditionally.

When Saint Paul was struggling with his " thorn in the flesh," Jesus spoke to him saying, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my strength is made perfect in weakness." Paul's faith-filled response is amazing. He wrote, "Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong." (2 Cor. 12: 9-10) So powerful is the strength of Jesus when united with Paul's weakness, that the apostle actually took pleasure in hardship in order to receive that strength.



Drawing strength from God in the depth of our weakness casts us upon our Creator and unites our spirit with His, forging a bond so powerful that the powers of hell cannot penetrate it. It is our weakness, not our prideful view of our human strength, which unites like a magnet with the perfect strength of God, bringing us into a victorious relationship with Him. When we stand pridefully in our own so-called capabilities, we actually repel the strength of God working in our lives and our relationship with Him is damaged or broken.

Our human weakness is a profound link with God. He created us with weakness so we would turn to Him, that we would be dependent on Him. Therefore, rather than berating ourselves for our sins, weakness and imperfections because it is so unpleasant to view such ugliness within us, let us rather be patient with ourselves and let God work in our weakness. Like Saint Paul, may we rejoice in all that is weighing upon us and allow God's strength to be made perfect in our weakness.

UNLESS A GRAIN OF WHEAT

**“Unless a grain of wheat falls to the earth and dies, it remain alone
but if it dies, it produces much grain.” (John 12:24)**

**“To everything there is a season, a time for every purpose under heaven:”
(Ecclesiastes 3:1)**

After more than a year of seeking the Lord for direction for the next phase of our life and ministry, He has impressed upon us the two Scriptures above. The Lord has also asked us to “lay it all down,” to allow Him to prune us in order to prepare us for transplanting and resurrection. In obedience to that call and with the strong affirmation of our bishop, we are taking the following steps:

- 1. The Life in Jesus property has been put up for sale.** This was a painful but necessary decision. Please pray that it will be purchased in a timely fashion by people who will continue to use it for Christian ministry.
- 2. We are actively looking for a new residence and a place for ministry.** Please pray that we will hear God clearly, again, in a timely fashion.
- 3. We will be discontinuing our printed newsletter with this spring edition .** We will continue to post articles and updates from time to time on our Web site www.jesusourshepherdacna.org . To receive teachings and updates by e-mail send your e-mail address to lijhealingwords@gmail.com or complete the form below and send it to us in the enclosed envelope. If you do not use e-mail but would like to keep up with what we are doing, please indicate the same on the form below and we will do our best to keep you informed.
- 4. We will discontinue our healing services during this transition period.** We will be waiting on God as to where, when and how we are to continue this aspect of the healing ministry.
- 5. We will continue our Sunday morning services.** Services begin at 9:00AM where there is opportunity for anointing and healing prayer. All are welcome.

We want to thank everyone who has supported us prayerfully and financially over the years. We also want you to know we are not ceasing in ministry, simply taking these new steps and waiting for the Lord’s direction for the next one.

Name _____ Phone# _____

Address _____

Please send me future information by e-mail. My e-mail address is. _____

I do not use e-mail but would still like to be kept informed. Please check the following line. _____

Philip Zampino Ministries Inc.

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Sunday Morning Services

9:00 a.m.

Bible Study Following

Artwork by the Sisters at All Saints Convent, Catonsville, MD. Scripture quotes marked NKJ are from the New King James Version © 1972, 1982, Thomas Nelson, Inc.