

## Trade Places

One of Six Decisions that will Change Your Life  
June 20 & 21, 2009

### Intro:

We've been talking about decisions that will change your life. I've urged us all to make the choices to *get well, let go, open wide, dig in, and grow up*. Those titles seem like an overwhelming whirlwind when they all come at once, but one by one, they are choices we all need to make.

There has been an entertaining common denominator in the feedback I've received after these messages. People have approached me saying, *that sermon would've been perfect for my brother in law. Or, my daughter needed to hear that!* It's nice when God brings *conviction* to other people.

Now I want to say something important about the whole series as I launch into this last installment. If you've made the mistake of thinking of these as *self-help messages*, you've missed something really crucial. These *decisions* and the *changes* that result are *impossible* without the power of God. We can't do much by ourselves. *Self-help won't do*. When we try to *fix things* on our own, they can *get worse*.

I noticed in the men's room that the stall door was pushed past the stop, so I tried to fix it and ended up pulling the door away from the wall. Later, Glen and others had to fix what I had fixed. ([2 photos here](#))

It's hard to fix things by ourselves, our own way. This *applies to our lives* as well. When we rely *only* on *self-help*, we end up in worse condition. The solution is to *call on someone* who knows what he's doing. When we're talking about *changing our lives*, Jesus is the one with the *know-how, the tools and the power* to help.

This final message in our series is all about the need to *let God do what only God can do*. My title is *Trade Places*. I'll devote the whole message to explain what I mean. I'm convinced that *the single most important decision you can*

*make is to let Jesus take your place and take his place as well*. To trade places with Jesus is a *choice* that will *change your life* forever.

**T** - There are two halves to this decision, first:  
**Let Jesus take your place...**

**1. Let Jesus take your place, after all, he already died for us.** *He's done his part.*

I remember when I first began to understand the Bible and came to realize that *someone is going to die for my sins* but that *it doesn't have to be me*. If Jesus already paid the price of my sin, then *why would I want to do the same?*

Think of it, Jesus voluntarily accepted *death in your place* so you could *live*. Talk about *trading places!* At the cross a supernatural exchange took place. There, Jesus took what you deserved so you could experience what he deserved. *The Son of God became man so that men could become the sons of God*. We come out on top in this trade. **2 Cor 8:9 - You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that you through his poverty might become rich.** What an exchange: *the only innocent person took on guilt so guilty people could be set free*. In a nutshell, Jesus died for our sins (**1 Cor 15:3**) so we wouldn't have to.

**Why was all this necessary? Rom 3:23 - All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.** The standard is high. **1 Pet 1:16 - Be holy, because I am holy.** *Who can do that but Jesus?* We've got a problem: we can't get it together and live the kind of lives that are acceptable to a holy God. **Is. 53:6 - We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way.** We *neglect or reject* God, doing *our own thing*. Whether it's *active rebellion* or *passive indifference* ... **Is 59:2 - Your sins have separated you from your God.** But God doesn't want us separated from him. **1 Pet. 3:18 - Christ died for sins once for all, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God.** *What happened when he died? He bore our sins* (**1 Pet 2:24**) so

*we wouldn't have to. He served our sentence and it cost him his life. Jesus paid the death penalty in our place.*

*I'm not so bad!* We evaluate sin on a relative scale; judging ourselves as *better than others*. We think of good as *good enough*. **James 2:10 - For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.** The bar is set so high that self-help doesn't help. Since the *standard is the glory of God*, it's *not too hard to admit* that we're *guilty as charged* and in need of a Savior.

**What now?** Here's the ultimate decision that will change your life: *Accept the invitation to come into God's family based on Christ's death for your sin.*

The *invitation* is yours for the taking: **The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Rom 6:23).** Like any *gift*, salvation must be *received*. **John 1:12 - To all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.**

*That's your decision. You've got to step over the line.* If you've not yet *traded places* with Jesus in this way, then I urge you to *accept the invitation to come into God's family*. I'll give you a chance to *act* on my challenge in a few minutes.

**T** - To trade places not only means letting Jesus take your place; it also means you...

## **2. Take the place of Jesus, after all, he already told us to follow his example.**

This second half of the message follows logically from the first: since he *died* in our place, we're to *live* in his place. Jesus *died our death* for us that we might *live his life* for him.

I can picture Jesus talking to his followers: *what have you been seeing me do?* He had been leading people to follow. *Now it is your turn; do what I've done.* He told his disciples: **make disciples (Mt 28:19).** *He's handed off the family business.*

Remember, Jesus said he came to the world **to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10).** He said, **As the Father has sent me, so I send you (John 20:21).** Explained in **2 Cor. 5:18 God reconciled us to himself through Christ and then gave us the ministry of reconciliation.** God brought us back to himself through the sacrifice of Christ. Now he's called us to *extend his invitation* to others. Those who have come in are to *reach out* and help others *enter the relationship* they were *created to enjoy*. There's a *word picture* to help us understand our role:

**5:20 We are... Christ's ambassadors,** *We represent Christ and his kingdom in this needy world.* The verse continues to describe our role: it is **as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God!** Notice the passion! There is life-saving news to announce!

**What now?** *Accept the commission to give your life to serve God by continuing the work of Christ.*

Why would we want to participate in God's program? **14 For Christ's love compels us...** In response to his loving sacrifice, we take up the mission where he left off. We're the body of Christ doing his work on earth. **15 ...he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.** Who do you live for? Jesus *gave his life* for us, now we are to *give our lives* to him.

**Sum:** So, to *trade places* with Jesus has two halves. First: *let him take your place*; accept his death on the cross for you.

I'm challenging you to *accept his invitation*.

The second half is to *accept his commission* to take his place by continuing his work. These are *life-changing decisions*. Don't miss the moment; step over the line today.

### **Your decision:**

We don't like *making commitments*; we want to remain *casual*. And we don't like *drawing lines*; we want to remain *inclusive*. But Jesus *drew a line* and called for *commitment*. He talked about *two ways*, one leads to life and one to

destruction. He talked about *two foundations*, one will stand, one will fall. He talked about *two animals*, one is *in the fold*, one is *outside*. He didn't draw such clear lines because he *doesn't* love us, but because he *does*. That's why he wants us to come to grips with *where we are* in relation to God.

**(Lay rope in circle.)** Envision this rope as a line to cross.

**First: honestly assess where you are. In? Or Out?**

Are you in, trusting what Jesus did on the cross, or are you out, doing life on your own, going your own way?

There's another decision...

**Next: admit which direction you're facing. In? Or Out?**

Let me explain what I mean by considering the options - you are in one of four situations:

**Outside, looking out:** *I'm not following Christ. And I haven't been showing much interest in changing either. I do my own thing and live my own way.* If that is you, then I'm asking you to **turn around and look in** - not just at the church, we're fallible - take a good look at Jesus.

**Outside looking in:** maybe today, for the first time, you've realized that you are outside. You've never really traded places with Jesus. You haven't made the decision to *let him take your place*. If that is you, then I'm asking you to **step over the line**. I'm going to give you a chance to do that right here at the foot of the cross. **(Lay longer rope in big semi-circle.)** Today you can say, *I know I'm in!*

**Inside looking in:** Some of you have already crossed that line but your focus has been inward. If that is you, then you need to **look out**, like Jesus said **look out at the fields, for they are ripe for harvest**. You'll get a chance to symbolize that as well. Make today a day of decision. It will be life changing.

**Inside looking out:** Great. This is what Christ has commissioned us to do. Your job right now is to pray for this moment of decision.

Whichever stage you are at, I'm calling you to action right now. You can come up and step over the line today to

stand for Jesus. Let your feet express your heart today. Do you believe Jesus took your place? Come to the cross as a statement that you accept his gift! *Step over the line and trade places* with Jesus.

The *band* is going to come lead us in a **song** and I'd like our *celebration prayer team members* to come up front to provide a point of connection for those who will respond. During this song, you have time to come up and make your decision public. Don't be ashamed.

To all those outside, the invitation is clear: *Step over the line*. Come in. Join the family of God.

To those already inside the commission is clear: *look out!*

What is your life-changing decision today?

**Prayer:** *Do you believe?* Let's say so.

## More Meat (unused ideas):

While there are no magic words, we do, at some point, receive God's gracious gift by faith. And that is a prayer He loves to answer. Why? 1 Tim 2:4 - God ... wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.

Acts 16:31 Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved.  
Rom 10:9 - If you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Rev. 3:20 - Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. A relationship is available. Don't keep the door closed.

John 14:6. Acts 4:12 - No other name...

We're to influence the world. To do this we must enter it. John 1:14 - The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. Metaphors for the church - salt, light - denote penetration.

It's not too hard to admit I'm not holy. The tough part is to give up on my efforts to make it on my own. We try to make it to God by all sorts of means. The alternative to admitting sin is to try harder and turn to religious effort. The whole point of the standard is that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God (Romans 3:19).

2 Cor. 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation! - not just rehabilitated, but remade. Re-created! A huge change is available! You can experience new life in Christ. 17b the old has gone, the new has come! Can you imagine this? You can experience it! You can confidently

*let your past pass.* God has set you free. The chains that bind have been broken.

Ps 103:10 - he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

We exchanged our set of consequences. He paid the death penalty, we got life – not imprisonment, but *life as it was meant to be lived!*

Imagine being broke (*that's easy.*) You've got a debt you can't pay. It *looms* over you, keeping you in a *constant state of dread*. There is *nothing you can do*; it's too late and you are *going to lose everything*. Doomed. But someone steps up who owes nothing and *takes all you debt upon himself*. You're free! Better: his riches are imputed to your account!

Jesus said, Mk 8:38 - If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels.

Two ways: Matt 7:13-14.

It is *not the exact words* we say, but *our heart's response* to God's gift that counts. *Reciting a formula* doesn't mean a thing, but actually coming to God by faith for forgiveness means everything! The power of salvation is not in *our words*, but in *God's Word*, which says we're saved by grace through faith.

*Sounds too easy!* But it wasn't easy for Jesus. *It cost him everything* to graciously give us the gift we freely receive.

Heb. 9:26 - Put away sins by the sacrifice of himself.

One of the most common cries in our culture is "Not Fair!" Spell out the difference between justice, mercy and grace. Do people really want justice?

We can't save ourselves, our best efforts fall pitifully short. Our *self-righteousness* is inadequate.

How should we view the people around us? As sheep without a shepherd, lost and needy.

When you picture Jesus, you may think of him on the cross. And if this is what comes to mind, you're thinking well, because all of Christ's time down here pointed to that climax. Knowing what awaited him, he walked into Jerusalem saying, No one takes my life from me...I lay it down of my own accord (Jn 10:18). And he did.

2 Cor. 5:21 God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, Why? Because we had sin and couldn't get rid of it on our own.

The bar is set so high that even people like Mother Teresa and Billy Graham look outside of themselves for righteousness. Their own wouldn't do.

Those who demand independence in this life experience it in the next.

Rev 22:17 - Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life.

The only one who had the right to claim his rights didn't.

1 Tim 1:15 - Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

2 Cor 5:18 - God brought us back to himself through the sacrifice of Christ. We were alienated from God, but he

decided to not count men's sins against them... (19). Instead, as was prophesied in the OT - Is 53:6 - the Lord has laid on Christ the iniquity of us all. Our sins were counted against his account and he paid the debt in full.

We can't deny our need (1 John 1:8,10).

Break down of Rom 6:23

### **The problem:**

People pretend that living apart from God won't have consequences. But that's not what the Bible teaches. Rom. 6:23 contains both problem and solution.

#### *oThe wages...*

Something we've worked for, something earned. The reward we receive for what we've done. When we work, we expect compensation. It is only right that a person gets what he deserves. We are paid our wages.

#### *oof sin...*

Def: any lack of conformity to God's commands or character. Separates us from God. *I'm okay!* People misunderstand the height of God's standard. Rom 3:23; James 2:10. God has a holy standard.

#### *ois death.*

Separation: of body and soul. Physically, everyone dies. Death rate is 100%. Then comes judgment (Heb. 9:27). If a person chooses to reject God while he is alive, that separation will continue into eternity.

This consequence applies to more than our destiny. Sin is self-destructive in this life as well. The wages are *daily* rations given to a soldier for his service. Not paid all at once in one lump sum. Life seeps away, as if some exist in living death.

### **The solution:**

#### *obut...*

The situation doesn't have to stay this way. Hope: something has been done.

***othe gift...***

A gift is not purchased by the recipient but for them. God gives us what we don't deserve. Contrast a deserved payment with an undeserved gift.

***oof God...***

God wants to give you a gift. Why? He loves you 5:8.

***ois eternal life...***

***oin Christ Jesus...***

Sounds like it is answering the question *where?* But it answers the question, *how?* Means. Acts 4:12 - no other name. Jn 14:6 - Jesus said He's the only way to the Father.

***oour Lord.***

This reminds us who He is and what He wants. He is the Master. Lordship implies obedience. He died for you, you live for Him.

There are three contrasts in Rom. 6:23. The contrast between wages and a gift makes sense (and between life and death). Say one and think of the other. But this third contrast is not what comes to mind. The word *sin* does not suggest *God* as its antonym. Opposite of sin is righteousness. But righteousness can't give, it can only earn.

Eternal life: Conscious existence in His presence. Def.: John 17:3 - knowledge of God. Not just after you die. Starts now. 1 John 5:13 - present possession.