

No Other Name
August 24, 2014

Choices are good. I like choices. I don't drink soda much at home, but I like to get diet soda with lunch sometimes. Most places to eat only offer one flavor of diet soda. But the new **Coca Cola Freestyle** soda machines give me lots of choices. I can get six flavors of diet coke, six flavors of diet sprite, six flavors of diet ginger ale, as well as diet grape, diet orange, diet raspberry, and more. This machine lets YOU pick from over 100 flavors of soda, both regular and diet.

Choices are good. Our culture is all about personal choices today. Do you like granola bars? I remember when there was only one granola bar on the market. Now, one particular brand offers ten flavors of crunchy granola bars, six sweet and salty granola bars, four protein granola bars, three yogurt granola bars, two Greek yogurt protein granola bars, four trail mix granola bars, and two roasted nut crunch granola bars. This is just one company. And they don't even make all the granola bar choices. Other companies make chewy granola bars and granola bars covered in chocolate, peanut butter, or caramel. There are lots of granola bar choices.

I like choices. I bet you do too. In fact, I think most of us are coming to expect choices in everything. Let me give you three reasons why we do. First, we are Americans. America is a place about freedom of choice. You can choose where to live. You can choose your career. You can choose your goal in life. And through education, hard work, and a little luck almost anything you choose is possible in America.

The second reason is we are rich with choices already. When I was a kid there was only one choice for television, broadcast TV. There were only four Washington DC stations and three Baltimore stations. Today we have several hundred stations of stuff to watch on cable TV, satellite TV, and the internet. We are rich with choices. And many of us can financially afford to choose.

A third reason we expect choices is that it seems anything is possible with modern technology. Through technology there are so many more paths to success in almost every endeavor. If you write music there are more ways to get your music out there. If you write a book there are more way to get your book sold. There are more ways to get your ideas and thoughts out to a wide audience. Technology has increased our choices.

There are three reasons people in our country expect choices in most areas of life today. They even expect choices in religion.

We have access to more religions than ever before. People of all kinds of religions live all around us, in America. No one religious groups dominates our culture like Christianity did 100 years ago. And there is no peer pressure to be a part of any one religion. Instead, people are free to choose to join a religious group or not. They are free to pick and choose and make up their own set of beliefs. And many are doing that very thing. There is no shortage of religion in America today, but increasingly it is not organized religion. People are just living whatever religious ideas they choose.

Our world is rich in choices, relishes its choices, and doesn't want to go back to just a few choices in anything. So we can understand the world's reaction to a key point in the Christian religion. We Christians dare to say to the world that there is only one choice when it comes to getting to God and heaven. This limitation of choices is a crucial part of the Christian faith. We see this doctrine from the earliest days of the church.

A few Sundays ago we looked at the arrest of two apostles, two of Jesus' appointed missionaries. Peter and John had been arrested in the temple. They had healed a crippled man and it caused quite a commotion in the temple courts. Peter addressed the crowd that formed and proclaimed to them the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah from the dead. The religious leaders took offense at this and arrested them. They questioned them the following day. Look at what Peter and John answered them.

Acts 4:8-12 (NIV) Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. He is "'the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone'. Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."

These are the words that offend people all over America today. "There is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." Those are offensive words. They offend every person who believes that we can choose our own way to God. People don't want to hear that there is only one way.

But that is our message. We say there is only one name, one way, one choice. Take it or leave it. And the world reacts with anger and objections. Look at some of the objections of the world to our one way teaching.

The world objects that such a teaching is exclusive.

Well, it IS exclusive. **Truth is always exclusive.** Last year the Seattle Seahawks won the Super Bowl. The Denver Broncos lost the Super Bowl. That is truth. And it is exclusive. You can choose to believe that Denver won the Super Bowl, but you would be wrong. You could choose to believe that Washington won the Super Bowl, but you would be wrong. Only one team won the Super Bowl last February, and it was Seattle.

Truth doesn't change because you want to believe in something different and call it truth. Truth is exclusive. If there IS only one true way to God, then all other ways are false. If Jesus IS God's one and only Son, if Jesus DID die on the cross, if God DID accept His death as the full payment for sins, then every other teaching about how to get to God is false. Christianity cannot be true along with other religions. If it is true, it is true by itself. Yes, that is exclusive. But truth is exclusive. By definition truth excludes what is false.

The world objects that only one path is a ridiculous teaching.

One path isn't ridiculous in light of sin. When considered in light of what the Bible teaches about sin. The Bible teaches that all people are sinners against God. Our sin is an offense to the creator of the universe who deserves praise and thanks. As the offended party, God alone has the right to choose how people can be reconciled to Him.

On December 7, 1941, the Japanese navy bombed Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. We were suddenly at war. An ally, a friend had turned on us and ended friendly relations. Once the war was over reconciliation was needed between our two countries. America got to choose how reconciliation could be made. Japan did not get to choose how to do it. It wasn't their right to choose. They had caused the problem in the first place. As the offended party, America got the choice of how reconciliation could be made.

The same is true in man's relationship with his creator. We have sinned against God. As the offended party, God gets to choose how reconciliation can be made. And in His sovereignty He has chosen that there be one path. That path is through the one Savior He has provided. There is nothing ridiculous about God getting to choose how many paths there will be for reconciliation.

The world objects, "How can so many people choose the wrong path?"

As sinners, man continues to make sinful choices. The world wants to believe that most people are good and deserve heaven. This goes directly against what the Bible teaches about sin. If what the Bible says about all people being sinners is true, then we should expect that most people will reject the truth of the one path. As sinners, man continues to make sinful choices.

Even we Christians, who know the truth about sin, make continue to make sinful choices. Sometimes we find ourselves on the wrong path in our finances or in relationships.

I have hiked in the woods many times. More than once I have been following a path in the woods and it peters out into nothing. Suddenly I'm not on any path. I am surrounded by branches and leaves, by bushes and trees. I am separated from the right path. Someone I turned off the right path onto another path and that path gradually ended.

We do the same thing in life. Because we are sinners, we make sinful choices that get us off the path of following Jesus.

These are just a few objections. Maybe you have heard others. Most have one thing in common. They stem from sinful man wanting his own way instead of God's way.

Instead of continuing to answer objections to only one path. Let me give you a couple of positives.

While the one Christian path is exclusive, it is clear. Saying there are many paths to God and heaven is not helpful to the person who genuinely wants to know what God

expects of us. Saying you get to choose leaves too much to chance. It leaves too much in the dark. It explains too little.

If I asked you how I could get to Washington DC and you said, "Oh, there's lots of ways to get to Washington." That would not help me at all. That would not clarify anything for me. I need specific direction. I need clarity, not confusion.

The one path of Christianity is the clear path. As one Christian hymn says it, "**Jesus paid it all. All to Him I owe.**" The Bible is clear that every person needs a Savior. The Bible is clear that God has provided the Savior we need, Jesus. The Bible is clear that we can be forgiven of sins not because of any work that we do, but because of the work Jesus did on the cross. The one path is clear. To say there is a million paths is not.

While the one Christian path is exclusive, it is also focused. Jesus is the focus of the one path. Just focus on Jesus. Focus on His sacrificial death. Focus on His resurrection. Focus on His teachings. Focus on His identity. Focus on His instructions. Focus on His promises. Focus on His commands.

Man wants choices because man wants glory. Man wants the glory of choosing his own way and taking pride in himself. People want to choose because they want to be in control. All such desire to be in control is sin. Humble yourself to the one path, the one name, the one choice.

Instead of objecting to only one path, give thanks that there IS a path.

Look at John 3:16.

John 3:16 (NIV) "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16 is not restrictive but freeing. It is the freedom to choose to be saved from sin. God did not provide one path instead of many. God provided one path instead of none. One path is infinitely better than no path. Man doesn't deserve a path to heaven.

Instead of objecting to only one path, give thanks that you heard of the path. God has worked to bring you to the knowledge of your need for a savior. Give God thanks for this knowledge. Thank Him for the knowledge of your sin. Thank Him for the knowledge of the Savior. Thank Him for the knowledge of the one name, the one path, the one choice.

Instead of objecting to only one path, give Jesus thanks for making possible the path.

Jesus' voluntary death made possible the one path. It is only because of Him that we have any choice at all. Yes, it is an exclusive choice. Yes it is a restrictive choice. But it is the choice of God's own choosing. It is the choice that gives God the glory that should be his alone.

Make this choice today. Choose the one name of Jesus to trust in.

Invitation

There is no other name given to mankind by which we must be saved. There is no other name. There is not some other name in another religion. It is not that everyone will get saved through another religion because Jesus died. No, you must personally call on Jesus. You must personally receive Him as YOUR Savior and YOUR Lord.

Only one name is exclusive. It is intended by God to be. No other name is a truth intended to make enemies or friends. Today, you get to choose which you will be. Will you be God's enemy or His friend? Will you serve Jesus or yourself? Yes, you get to choose. But be careful, for this choice has eternal consequences.