

Freedom to Choose**Sunday 1 July 2007****Nic Denny-Dimitriou, Church of the Ascension, Hilton**

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**Readings:****Psalm 16****Galatians 5: 1 & 13-25 [Freedom in Christ / Fruits of the Spirit]****Luke 9:51-62 [Discipleship themes]**

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CALL TO WORSHIP: (Ps 100)

Sing to the Lord in triumph all the world
Worship the Lord with gladness
Come before Him with joyful songs

Never forget the Lord is God
It is He who made us and we are His people

So enter the temple with thanksgiving
Go into His courts with praise
Give thanks to Him and bless His holy name

For the Lord is good, His love is eternal,
and His faithfulness lasts for ever. AMEN

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## **Sermon**

I entitled this, "Freedom to Choose", also based upon a meditation of the same name, which I will use shortly. Speaking of choice... difficult choices today re readings, with several important themes, including in the Gospel passage of Jesus having his priorities absolutely clear and not being dissuaded or sidelined by people's acceptance or rejection of him; and words about the priority of discipleship over our own agendas.

But I chose (there's that word again) to focus on the NT passage, a well-known one from Paul's writings to the Christians in Galatia.

Paul is clear about what enslaves us, and what the Spirit brings in freedom. He gives us two lists:

### **vv 19-21 - a list of what enslaves**

- fornication,
- impurity,
- licentiousness,
- idolatry,
- sorcery,
- enmities,
- strife,
- jealousy,
- anger,
- quarrels,
- dissensions,
- factions,
- envy,
- drunkenness,
- carousing,
- and things like these.

**and vv 22-23 - a list of Spiritual fruits**

- love,
- joy,
- peace,
- patience,
- kindness,
- generosity,
- faithfulness,
- gentleness, and
- self-control

The thing about these lists is that they are not just a list of forbidden or desirable activities. They are about how we relate with one another. Each quality that Paul identifies is about

- how we treat one another,
- how we relate with one another,
- how we relate with creation,
- how we relate with God,
- how we value relationships.

Building the temple of the Holy Spirit involves relationships.  
It can't be done on our own.

**The Choice – a meditation on the NT passage, Galatians 5:1 & 13-25**

[Unchanged from the original]

Acknowledgement: Max Lucado  
“*When God whispers your name*”  
W Publishing Group 1999

It's quiet. It's early. The coffee is hot. The sky is still dark. The world is still asleep. The day is coming.

In a few moments the day will arrive. It will roar down the track with the rising sun. The stillness of the dawn will be exchanged for the noise of the day. The calm of solitude will be replaced by the pounding pace of the human race. The refuge of the early morning will be invaded by decisions to be made and deadlines to be met.

For the next however many hours I will be exposed to the day's demands. It is now that I must make a choice. God gives us freedom of choice, and so I choose.

I choose love.

No occasion justifies hatred; no injustice warrants bitterness. I choose love. Today I choose to love God and what God loves.

I choose joy.

I will invite God to be the God of circumstance. I will refuse the temptation to be cynical. I will refuse to see people as anything less than human beings created by God. I will refuse to see any difficulty as anything less than an opportunity to see God at work.

I choose peace.

I will live forgiven. I will forgive so that I may live.

I choose patience.

I will overlook the inconveniences of the world. Instead of berating the one who takes my place I'll invite them to do so. Rather than complain that the wait is too long, I will thank God for the moment to be still... for the moment to pray. Instead of cringing at new assignments I will face them with joy and courage.

I choose kindness.

I will be kind to the poor for they are alone, kind to the rich, for they are afraid, and kind to the unkind - for that is how God has treated me.

I choose goodness.

I will go without a dollar before taking a dishonest one, be overlooked rather than boast. I shall confess rather than accuse. I choose goodness.

I choose faithfulness.

Today I will keep my promises. Debtors will not regret their trust. Associates will not question my word. My family will not question my love. And my children need never fear that their parent will leave them and not come home.

I choose gentleness.

Nothing is won ever, by force. I choose to be gentle. If I raise my voice might it be in praise. If I should clench my fist, might it be only in prayer.

I choose self-control.

We are spiritual beings. After this body is dead, our spirit will soar. I refuse to allow that which will decay, to rule the eternal. I choose self-control.

I will be drunk only with joy. I will be impassioned only by faith. I will be influenced only by God. I will be taught by Jesus. I choose self-control.

Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control: To these I will commit the day. If I succeed, I shall give thanks. If I fail I shall seek grace. And then, when this day is done, I shall give thanks to God, and rest.

**BLESSING / CONCLUSION**

Go out into the world in peace. Live as those  
who have already passed from death to life.

Give aid and be willing to receive it,  
trust and be trusted,  
forgive and be forgiven,  
give respect and be respected,  
love and be willing to be loved.

Receive the blessing of the Holy Trinity,  
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.  
Grace, mercy and peace be with you always.

AMEN