

SINNERS BY CHOICE OR BY CONSTITUTION?

By Jesse Morrell

May you know the truth and may the truth set you free! (John 8:32)

Merriam-Webster's 11th collegiate dictionary defines:

Choice: “the act of choosing: selecting; power of choosing: option.”

Constitution: “the physical makeup of the individual especially with respect to the health, strength, and appearance of the body. The structure, composition, or physical make up, or nature of something.”

Do individuals become sinners by their own personal, moral choices? Or do individuals become sinners by their inherited physical constitution? The answer to such a theological question is of vital importance, as it directly affects the way we view sin and sinners; God and His government; the wisdom or reasonableness of God's requirements and the justice of His wrath.

Choices are voluntary, inherited constitutions are involuntary. Choices are optional, inherited constitutions are unavoidable. If it's by inherited constitution that individuals become sinners, then it's not by choice. If it is by choice that individuals become sinners, then it is not by constitution. If it's by necessity, then it is not by liberty. And if it is by liberty, then it is not by necessity.

Those who have advocated a constitutional sin often attempt to use Ephesians 2:3 in support of their doctrine: Eph 2:3 “Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as the others.”

In context of the whole verse this passage means that those who choose to walk after “the lust of our flesh“, to gratify “the desires of the flesh”, are therefore children of wrath “by nature”, that is, they are children of wrath because of their usage of their constitution, because of the usage of their nature, because of their habit, conduct, character, custom, or manner of life. “Children of wrath” (Eph 2:3) are very simply “children of disobedience” (Eph 2:1) who are wrongly using their constitutions, who are choosing to walk in a manner of life that is forbidden and selfish, thereby creating for themselves a wicked character.

Let it be clear that God is the author of our nature, that is, God is the author of our constitution (Isa. 49:5; Jer. 1:5; Ps. 139:13-14; Ecc. 7:29), so He forms each of us in the womb in His image (Gen. 1:26-27, 9:6). Therefore we are all created with a free will and a conscience, created capable of good or evil. Since God created us capable of moral action, capable of forming moral character, we are subjects of His Moral Government, intended to be governed by Him. The word nature can be used to describe a man's God given constitution (Rom 1:31, 2:14, 2:27; 2 Tim 3:3) or the word nature can mean a

man's chosen character, custom, habit, or manner of life (Jer. 13:23; Acts 26:4; 1 Cor 2:14; Eph 2:2-3; Gal 2:15; 2 Tim 3:10; 2 Pet 1:4). While God is the author of our constitution, each man is the author or self-originator of their moral character (Ecc. 7:29; Matt. 12:34-35, 15:19; Mk. 7:21-22; Lk. 6:45).

Only what is physical, our fleshly bodies, is hereditary. (Gen 1:21, 1Cor 15:38-39, Heb 2:14) While we inherit our physical bodies from our parents, which are now subjected to death and disease because of Adams sin (1Corinthians 15:21-22), we do not inherit our parents guilt. (2Kings 14:6, Deu 24:16, 2Chr 25:4, Eze 18:2-4, Eze 18:19-20) Neither do our souls come from our parents but rather our souls come directly from God in its spiritual condition. (Ezekiel 18:4) That is why a child is neither guilty of evil nor praiseworthy of good until he himself is born and make's his own choices. (Rom 9:11) And so each man is responsible for "the things done in his body", and is judged "according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad". (2Cor 5:10) In punishment or reward, it is all according to their own works. (2Cor 11:15, Rev 22:12)

The flesh has lusts, cravings, or desire, which can be gratified through the forbidden means of sin. (Gen 3:6) These lusts are at first involuntary lusts, cravings, or desires, being strictly physical and not moral. There are involuntary physical desires and then there are intentional committals of the will. One is involuntary while the other is intentional. The former is physical, the latter is moral. But involuntary physical impulses do not bring forth moral (or immoral) sin until the will selfishly serves them supremely (James 1:15) instead of self sacrificially serving the highest well-being of others. (Luke 10:27). Physical temptation becomes immoral sin when the will yields itself to it.

It was the natural, physical lusts, cravings, or desires of the flesh which were the source of temptation for Eve in the Garden. (Gen 3:6) She "saw that it was good for food", "pleasant to the eye", and "desired to make one wise". These were all natural, physical appetites for food and wisdom which she sought to gratify through sin or disobedience to God. This was the first case in history when a human being submitted their will to serve their flesh supremely rather than submitting their will to the truth of God revealed to their minds. This was the first case in the history of a human individual doing what feels good over against what she knew was good. And this is exactly what every sinner does.

Sin is a corruption of yourself or a personal choice to corrupt yourself. (Exo 32:7, Deu 9:12, Deu 32:5, Jdg 2:19, Hos 9:19) Sin is a corruption of what was meant to be good. (Gen 1:31) Walking in the flesh bears fruit unto death. (Rom 7:5) The fleshly lusts wage war against the soul. (1Peter 2:11) To be carnally "minded" (phronema = purposed), is death. But to be spiritually "minded" (phronema = purposed), is life and peace. (Rom 8:6) Those who are carnally purposed, "do mind [phroneo =interest oneself in] the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit [interest themselves in] the things of the Spirit. (Rom 8:5)

The lust of the flesh, or desires of the sensibilities, are the source of temptation for sin. (Rom 7:21) Sin consists in selfishness which is being self-purposed, self-interested, self-serving or self-willed. (Isaiah 14:13-14, 2Peter 2:10) This is when one's will is for their own happiness supremely. But the revelation of moral truth presented to the mind or intelligence, as revealed by the Spirit of God, is an influence towards obedience and submission. (Rom 7:12-13) Obedience consists in being self sacrificial, God-purposed,

God-interested, God-serving, or God-willed. (Luke 9:23) This is when one's will serves God and not self. (2Cor 5:15)

The demands of the flesh as imposed by the sensibilities and the demands of the Spirit as presented to the intelligence are contrary on to another, being hostile towards each other, being at an antithesis. (Rom 7:23) The former demands self indulgence and self-service supremely, the latter demands self denial and God-service supremely. (Rom 7:25)

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.” (Rom 6:13) The physical constitution of man is a mere tool or an “instrument” without any inherent moral character in and of itself. The body is properly and strictly neither moral nor immoral, good nor bad, sinful or holy, in and of itself apart from its usage as controlled by the human will. As a tool or “instrument“, the body or “members” can be an “instrument of sin” or an “instrument of righteousness“, depending on what the human will “yields” it to. (Rom 6:13)

“As ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness.” (Rom 6:19) “For he that sows to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that sows to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.” (Gal 6:8)

Christians still live “in the flesh” (2Cor 10:3), but they do not live “according” to it. (2Cor 10:2) The physical body that Christians have is the same exact physical body they had when they were children of wrath (Php 3:11-12), and it will remain the same exact body until they die (2Peter 1:14) until the resurrection when they receive a glorified body. (1Cor 15:53-54) While the constitution itself is the same, the usage of the constitution has changed. Christians have obeyed the command to “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom 12:1). “And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.” (Gal 5:24) Christians are those who “let not sin reign in” their “mortal body” to “obey it in the lusts thereof”. (Rom 6:12) Christians have gone from being governed by the flesh (Col 3:7) to being governed by Christ. (Col 1:13) They have cleansed themselves from the filthiness of the flesh. (2Cor 7:1)

Sin is when the will is submitted to the sensibilities, to the lusts, desires, or affections of the flesh (IJohn 2:16), over against the moral demands of God clearly perceived by the mind. (John 1:9, John 16:8) Sinners do what “*feels good*,” seeking their own pleasure and happiness as the end in which they are in pursuit. But obedience is when the will is submitted to what is “logikos“ or “reasonable“ or “rational“, when the will performs its “reasonable service“. (Rom 6:13) This is when a sinner comes unto God to “reason together” (Isaiah 1:18), when he comes to his senses (Luke 15:17), when the sinner “considers and turns” (Eze 18:28) when the will submits to the intellect, or to the moral truth of God which the Spirit reveals to the Mind. (Acts 17:11)

Christians do what they “*know is good*” for the glory of God and the well-being of others. (Matt 22:37) Those who walk in the Spirit do not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. (Gal 5:16) A single individual cannot serve both the flesh and the Spirit, serve both self and God, or

serve any two Masters at the same time. (Matt 6:24, James 3:11) It is by willfully escaping “the corruption that is in the world” that comes by obeying “lust“, by yielding unto the moral demands presented by the Spirit, that we become “partakers of the divine nature“. (2Peter 1:14)

The bad nature (or old man, Rom 6:6, Col 3:8-9) is when you submit your will to the sensibilities (Eph 4:22), when you use your body as an instrument for sin. (Rom 6:13) But the divine nature (or new man, Eph 4:24, Col 3:1-2, Col 3:12-14) is when you submit your will to your intellect (Col 3:10), when you use your body as an instrument for righteousness. (Rom 6:13) This is when a person “does by nature the things contained in the law.” (Rom 2:14)

The mind was designed to receive revelation or moral truth from the Spirit of God. (Rom 2:15) The will was designed to be under submission or obedience to the mind, to obey it’s moral demands. (Rom 6:17) And the sensibilities were meant to serve the will and mind, to wholesomely and wonderfully experience and enjoy life. (Ecc 5:18, 1Tim 6:17) The will was always supposed to rule over the sensibilities. (Gen 4:7) But sinners have established the gratification of the sensibilities as supreme, having subjected the will to be in submission or obedience to the impulses and pleasures of the sensibilities. (Php 3:19) And they have suppressed in unrighteousness the truth of God as revealed to the mind. (Rom 8:1, 2:8; 2Thes 2:10, 2:12). And so sinners have “perverted that which was right” (Job 33:27), using for evil what was intended for good.

Sinners are enemies of God through wicked works (Col 1:21), because they are obeying the “lust of the flesh” or wrongly using their natures, constitutions, or faculties (Eph 2:3). Because sinners have indulged the flesh, rather than mortify it’s members, they have come under the wrath of God. (Col 3:5-6)

All sin in essences consists in a wrong moral choice (1John 3:4) to serve self as opposed to serving God’s glory and the well-being of others (Luke 10:27). Sin is a condition of the heart, a selfish state of the will. (Matthew 15:19) This is why there is no scriptural reason for any sort of “physical” regeneration in this life in order to be saved, because there is no such thing as “physical” sin, but only a physical temptation which attempts to direct the will. (Gal 4:14, James 1:14) The flesh, with its lusts, is the source of temptation, but it is not sin itself. And so the body does not need to be removed before we can be saved, or before we can have victory over sin in this life (Gal 1:4), but rather God’s grace teaches us to ‘deny ungodliness and worldly lust’ that we would be “godly in this present world”. (Titus 2:12) And so Christians are to glorify God while in their physical bodies. (1Cor 6:20) Whether absent or present in the body they are to be acceptable unto God. (2Cor 5:9)

Rather than a physical regeneration, the Spirit of God brings about a “moral” regeneration at conversion (2Cor 4:16), because all sin is a moral choice, all sin consists in sinning. (1John 3:4) Sin is willful rebellion against what the mind knows is right, against perceived moral knowledge. (Heb 10:26, James 4:17) Sin is always avoidable, always being optional. (1Cor 10:13) The Spirit changes our will (Eze 18:31, 36:26), not by force or by might, but through the influence of truth upon the mind by the Spirit (John 6:44, John 12:32, John 17:19, Titus 3:5), so that we can be saved in this life. (1John 3:14) And if the

will changes, everything changes! (2Cor 5:17)

But the Spirit does not change our physical bodies, in this life, in order for us to be saved. Conversion is not the reception of any new faculties, but it is the proper use of the present faculties. (Rom 6:13, 6:19) Christians are spiritually, not physically, transformed in this life. (Rom 12:2) This is truly what it is to be “born again” (John 3:3) or to be “born of the Spirit”. (John 3:6) And we will receive a glorified body, which is not subjected to death and disease, in the next life. (1Cor 15:42, Php 3:21)

The choice to serve the lust of the flesh unto death or to obey the truth of the Spirit unto life is freely yours. (Deu 30:19, Gal 6:8) Turn from the idol of self unto the living God! (Thes 1:9) If you turn away from all wickedness and do what is lawful and right, God will forgive you instead of punished you. (2Chron 2:14, Eze 33:13-14) If you repent, God will give you mercy and grace because of Jesus Christ. (Acts 2:8) Those who submit their will to the Spirit, rather than the flesh, have no condemnation in Jesus Christ. (Rom 8:1) Those who obey Christ from the heart have eternal salvation. (Heb 5:9, Rom 6:17) Christ was crucified for you and rose from the dead that you might be forgiven. (Matt 16:21, 1Peter 2:24) But you must “obey the truth” to have forgiveness in Christ. (Gal 3:1) You must die to self-will. (1Cor 15:31) You must crucify your flesh. (Gal 2:20, Gal 5:24) You must forsake all. (Luke 14:33) You must deny yourself. (Matt 6:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23) And you must follow Christ. (John 10:27) Choose you this day who you shall serve! (Joshua 24:15)

I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
I have decided to follow Jesus;
No turning back, no turning back

The world behind me, the cross before me;
The world behind me, the cross before me;
The world behind me, the cross before me;
No turning back, no turning back.

Though none go with me, still I will follow;
Though none go with me, still I will follow;
Though none go with me, still I will follow;
No turning back, no turning back

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