

## NEGATIVE VOLITION

1. **We all must exercise positive or negative volition toward God.**
  - a. God has issued a general call to all mankind to humble themselves and seek him.
    - (1) See *God's General Call*.
  - b. Though we are fallen, it is within our power to seek God (Ac 17:26-27).
    - (1) **Ac 17:26-27** 26 ...[God] made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, 27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us.
  - c. We can't remain neutral. We must respond positively or negatively to God's general call (2 Co 2:14-16).
    - (1) **2 Co 2:14-16** 14 ...Thanks be to God, who in Messiah always leads us in triumphal procession, and through us spreads the fragrance of the knowledge of him everywhere [God's general call]. 15 For we [apostles] are the aroma of Messiah to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing, 16 to one a fragrance from death to death, to the other a fragrance from life to life. Who is sufficient for these things?
      - (2) Many people say, "I'm not religious," and give God little conscious thought. They seem to think they don't have to make any real decision about God that will effect them in the slightest degree. This is tragic, because in not making a decision, they are actually making a decision, and it won't end well for them.
  - d. We are responsible for our negative volition, not God.
  - e. Our prayers for others cannot override their negative volition.
    - (1) Our prayers can, however, cause God to provide a more active general call to them.
2. **God searches our hearts. He knows whether we are positive or negative toward him.**
  - a. Positive or negative volition happens within our heart, in the innermost recesses of our soul. It is our internal attitude toward God.
    - (1) See *Heart*.
  - b. Volition is happening within our heart every moment of every day.
  - c. God knows our heart (1 Ki 8:39; 1 Ch 28:9; Ps 44:20-21).
    - (1) **1 Ki 8:39** 39 Hear in heaven your dwelling place, forgive, act, and render to each whose heart you know, according to all his ways (for you, you only, know the hearts of all the children of mankind).
    - (2) **1 Ch 28:9** 9 ... You, Solomon my son, know the God of your father [David] and serve him with a whole heart and with a willing mind, for Yahweh searches all hearts and understands every plan and thought. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will cast you off forever.
    - (3) **Ps 44:20-21** 20 If we had forgotten the name of our God or spread out our hands to a foreign god, 21 would not God discover this? For he knows the secrets of the heart.
    - (4) See *God's Omnipresence*.
  - d. God examines our heart very carefully to see whether we are positive or negative toward him. We cannot escape the holy gaze of God.

### 3. Negative volition defined.

#### a. Key passages.

(1) **Pr 1:24-33** 24 Because I have called and you refused to listen, have stretched out my hand and no one has heeded, 25 because you have ignored all my counsel and would have none of my reproof, 26 I also will laugh at your calamity. I will mock when terror strikes you, 27 when terror strikes you like a storm and your calamity comes like a whirlwind, when distress and anguish come upon you. 28 Then they will call upon me, but I will not answer. They will seek me diligently but will not find me. 29 Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of Yahweh, 30 would have none of my counsel and despised all my reproof, 31 therefore they shall eat the fruit of their way and have their fill of their own devices. 32 For the simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them. 33 But whoever listens to me will dwell secure and will be at ease, without dread of disaster.

(2) **Zep 3:1-7** 1 Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled, the oppressing city! 2 She listens to no voice. She accepts no correction. She does not trust in Yahweh. She does not draw near to her God. 3 Her officials within her are roaring lions. Her judges are evening wolves that leave nothing till the morning. 4 Her prophets are fickle, treacherous men. Her priests profane what is holy. They do violence to the Torah. 5 Yahweh within her is righteous. He does no injustice. Every morning he shows forth his justice. Each dawn he does not fail. But the unjust knows no shame. ... 7 I said, Surely you will fear me. You will accept correction. Then your dwelling would not be cut off according to all that I have appointed against you. But all the more they were eager to make all their deeds corrupt.

#### b. Negative volition is characterised by:

(1) A rejection of truth and wisdom (Pr 1:24-25, 29-30; 2 Th 2:10).

(a) **2 Th 2:10** 10 ...With all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

(b) The West no longer pursues wisdom and severely doubts truth. Many Westerners restrict the search for truth to the scientific method. In doing so they are refusing to love the truth. The scientific method isn't the only way to know truth.

(2) A refusal to walk in the ancient paths (Jer 6:16).

(a) **Jer 6:16** 16 Thus says Yahweh: Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is, and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk in it.

(b) Since the Enlightenment, the West has generally rejected the ancient paths, particularly the wisdom tradition of the biblical worldview. Some non-Christians today, like Jordan Peterson, respect the ancient paths. But it is a very small minority.

(c) The biblical worldview is a conservative worldview, not a progressive worldview. The closed canon of Scripture is sufficient for all matters of life and godliness. The Christian faith is not progressing. God is not improving. God's ideal for marriage, gender, and sex is not liberalising.

(d) Rest for our souls is not to be found in the new roads but in the ancient paths.

- (e) Rest for our souls is not to be found in capitalism nor communism, white supremacy nor the Black Lives Matter movement.
- (3) A refusal to pay attention to God, his prophets, and his words (Is 66:4; Jer 6:19; 35:15-17; Zep 3:2; Zec 7:11).
  - (a) **Jer 6:19** 19 Hear, O earth! Behold, I am bringing disaster upon this people, the fruit of their devices, because they have not paid attention to my words. And as for my law, they have rejected it.
- (4) Pleasure in unrighteousness (Ro 1:18; 2 Th 2:12).
  - (a) **Ro 1:18** 18 ...The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.
  - (b) **2 Th 2:12** 12 ...In order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.
- (5) A refusal to draw near to God (Zep 3:2; Jn 5:40; Jas 4:8).
  - (a) **Zep 3:2** 2 [Jerusalem] listens to no voice. She accepts no correction. She does not trust in the Lord. She does not draw near to her God.
  - (b) **Jn 5:40** 40 ...Yet you [Jewish leaders] refuse to come to me [Jesus] that you may have life.
  - (c) **Jas 4:8** 8 Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.
- (6) Judging oneself unworthy of eternal life (Ac 13:46).
  - (a) **Ac 13:46** 46 ...Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly saying, It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you [the Jews in Pisidian Antioch]. Because you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.

#### 4. Negative volition is like:

- a. Hardening one's heart (Ex 8:32; Zec 7:12-13; Ac 28:27; Ro 2:5; Eph 4:18).
  - (1) **Zec 7:12-13** 12 They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the Torah and the words that Yahweh of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from Yahweh of hosts. 13 As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear, says Yahweh of hosts....
- b. Physical deafness (Is 6:9; Ac 28:27).
  - (1) **Is 6:9** 9 ...[The Lord] said, Go, and say to this people: Keep on hearing, but do not understand. Keep on seeing, but do not perceive.
  - (2) **Ac 28:27** 27 ...This people's heart has grown dull, and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed....
- c. Physical blindness (Is 6:9; Jer 35:17; Jn 9:39-40; Ac 28:27).
  - (1) **Jer 35:17** 17 ...Behold, I am bringing upon Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem all the disaster that I have pronounced against them, because I have spoken to them and they have not listened, I have called to them and they have not answered.
  - (2) **Jn 9:39-40** 39 Jesus said to [the formerly blind beggar], For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind. 40 Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things and said to him, Are

we also blind? 41 Jesus said to them, If you were blind, you would have no guilt. But now that you say, We see, your guilt remains.

- d. Stopping one's ears (Zec 7:11).
  - (1) **Zec 7:11** 11 ... They refused to pay attention, turned a stubborn shoulder, and stopped their ears that they might not hear.
- e. Stiffening one's neck (Pr 29:1).
  - (1) **Pr 29:1** 1 He who is often reproved, yet stiffens his neck, will suddenly be broken beyond healing.
- f. Turning a stubborn shoulder (Zec 7:11).
  - (1) **Zec 7:11** 11 ... They refused to pay attention, turned a stubborn shoulder, and stopped their ears that they might not hear.
  - (2) God is an excellent body language reader!
- g. Kicking against the goads (Ac 26:14).
  - (1) **Ac 26:14** 14 ... When we had all fallen to the ground, I [Paul] heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew language, Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.
- h. Paying no attention to the prince's wedding feast (Mt 22:5).
  - (1) **Mt 22:2-7** 2 The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who gave a wedding feast for his son 3 and sent his servants to call those who were invited to the wedding feast, but they would not come. 4 Again he sent other servants saying, Tell those who are invited, See, I have prepared my dinner, my oxen and my fat calves have been slaughtered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding feast. 5 But they paid no attention and went off, one to his farm, another to his business, 6 while the rest seized his servants, treated them shamefully, and killed them. 7 The king was angry, and he sent his troops and destroyed those murderers and burned their city.
- i. Excusing oneself from a great banquet (Lk 14:18).
  - (1) **Lk 14:16-24** 16 ... A man once gave a great banquet and invited many. 17 And at the time for the banquet he sent his servant to say to those who had been invited, Come, for everything is now ready. 18 But they all alike began to make excuses. The first said to him, I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it. Please have me excused. 19 And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them. Please have me excused. 20 And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. 21 So the servant came and reported these things to his master. Then the master of the house became angry.... 24 I tell you, none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet.

## 5. Negative volition is a lack of humility toward God.

- a. God is looking for those who admit they're sick (Mt 9:11; Mk 2:17; Lk 5:31), sinful (Mt 9:13; Mk 2:17; Lk 5:31), and blind (Jn 9:40-41).
  - (1) **Mt 9:11-13** 11 ... When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners? 12 But when he heard it, he said, Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. 13 Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy, and not sacrifice. For I came not to [specially] call the righteous, but sinners.
- b. It is the wise, powerful, and strong who are most likely to be negative toward God.

- (1) **1 Co 18:26-29** 26 ... Consider your calling, brothers and sisters. Not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise. God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong. 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God.

## 6. Negative volition often corresponds to bad influences we allow in our lives.

### a. Examples:

#### (1) Solomon.

- (a) **1 Ki 11:4** 4 ... When Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly true to Yahweh his God, as was the heart of David his father.

#### (2) Joash.

- (a) **2 Ch 24:17-18** 17 ... After the death of Jehoiada the princes of Judah came and paid homage to the king [Joash]. Then the king listened to them. 18 And they abandoned the house of Yahweh, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols.

### b. If you hang out with people who are negative, you will most likely be negative.

- (1) "Birds of a feather flock together."

## 7. God is patient toward those who are negative toward him.

### a. God's kindness is meant to lead us to a change of heart (Ro 2:4).

- (1) **Ro 2:4** 4 ... Co you presume on the riches of his kindness, forbearance, and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to a change of heart?

### b. God's patience waited in the days of Noah (1 Pe 3:20).

- (1) **1 Pe 3:20** 20 ... God's patience waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through water.

### c. God sends prophets to warn, but relatively few pay attention to them (2 Ch 24:19; Jer 35:15; Zec 7:12-13).

- (1) **2 Ch 24:19** 19 [Yahweh] sent prophets among them to bring them back to Yahweh. These testified against them, but they would not pay attention.
- (2) **Jer 35:15** 15 I have sent to you [Israel] all my servants the prophets, sending them persistently saying, Turn now every one of you from his evil way, amend your deeds, and do not go after other gods to serve them [God's general call], and then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to you and your fathers [eternal life]. But you did not incline your ear or listen to me [negative volition].
- (3) **Zec 7:12-13** 12 They made their hearts diamond-hard lest they should hear the Torah and the words that Yahweh of hosts had sent by his Spirit through the former prophets. Therefore great anger came from Yahweh of hosts.
- (4) The job of the prophet is difficult because he or she is usually dealing with people who are clearly negative toward God.



## 8. At first, a person hardens his or her own heart. Then God begins to actively harden.

- a. The saga of Moses, Pharaoh, and Yahweh is a case study on how one's heart is hardened. The hardening of Pharaoh's heart was a cooperative venture between Pharaoh and Yahweh:

Exod 4:21 And the LORD said to Moses, "When you go back to Egypt, see that you do before Pharaoh all the miracles that I have put in your power. But I will harden his heart, so that I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and though I multiply my signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Pharaoh's heart is hardened; he refuses to let the people go. But the magicians of Egypt did the same by their secret arts. So Pharaoh's heart remained hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. But when Pharaoh saw that there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. Then the magicians said to Pharaoh, "This is the finger of God." But Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them, as the LORD had said. But Pharaoh hardened his heart this time also, and did not let the people go. And Pharaoh sent, and behold, not one of the livestock of Israel was dead. But the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people go. But the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh, and he did not listen to them, as the LORD had spoken to Moses. But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet again and hardened his heart, he and his servants. So the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people of Israel go, just as the LORD had spoken through Moses. Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go in to Pharaoh, for I have hardened his heart and the heart of his servants, that I may show these signs of mine among them, and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go. But the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he would not let them go. Moses and Aaron did all these wonders before Pharaoh, and the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart, and he did not let the people of Israel go out of his land. And I will harden Pharaoh's heart, and he will pursue them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, and the Egyptians shall know that I am the LORD." And the LORD hardened the heart of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he pursued the people of Israel while the people of Israel were going out defiantly. And I will harden the hearts of the Egyptians so that they shall go in after them, and I will get glory over Pharaoh and all his host, his chariots, and his horsemen. But Sihon the king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him; for the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, that he might give him into our hand.

- b. God gave Israel a spirit of stupor in much the same way.
  - (1) **Ro 11:8** 8 ...As it is written, God gave [Israel] a spirit of stupor, eyes that would not see and ears that would not hear, down to this very day.
- c. Today, God sends a strong delusion to those who refuse to love the truth.
  - (1) **2 Th 2:9-12** 9 The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power, false signs, and wonders, 10 and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. 11 Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, 12 in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

## 9. The result of persistent negative volition is:

- a. God's silence (Pr 1:28; Zec 7:13).
  - (1) **Pr 1:28** 28 ...They will call upon me [Wisdom], but I will not answer. They will seek me diligently but will not find me.
  - (2) **Zec 7:13** 13 As I called, and they would not hear, so they called, and I would not hear, says Yahweh of hosts.
- b. God's abandonment (2 Ch 24:20).
  - (1) **2 Ch 24:20** 20 ...The Spirit of God clothed Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest, and he stood above the people and said to them, Thus says God, Why do you break the commandments of Yahweh, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken Yahweh, he has forsaken you.
- c. God's anger (Zec 7:12; Mt 22:7; Lk 14:16).
  - (1) Disaster (Pr 1:26-27; Is 66:4; Jer 6:19; 35:17).
    - (a) **Is 66:4** 4 I...will choose harsh treatment for them and bring their fears upon them, because when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, they did not listen.

- (b) **Jer 6:19** 19 Hear, O earth! Behold, I am bringing disaster upon this people, the fruit of their devices, because they have not paid attention to my words. And as for my law, they have rejected it.
- (2) Destruction (Pr 1:32; Zec 7:14).
  - (a) **Pr 1:32** 32 ...The simple are killed by their turning away, and the complacency of fools destroys them.
- (3) Disgrace (Pr 3:35).
  - (a) **Pr 3:35** 35 The wise will inherit honour, but fools get disgrace.
- d. Believers and unbelievers compared:
  - (1) The persistent negative volition of a believer results in divine discipline, the sin unto death, and loss of rewards at the judgment seat of Messiah.
  - (2) The persistent negative volition of an unbeliever results in unbelief, condemnation, God's wrath, and eternity in hell.

#### 10. Those who encourage negative volition will receive severe punishment.

- a. **Mt 18:6** 6 ...Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.
- b. Contemporary examples of those who lead people astray are:
  - (1) Bart Ehrman.
  - (2) Four Horseman of New Atheism:
    - (a) Richard Dawkins.
    - (b) Sam Harris.
    - (c) Christopher Hitchens.
    - (d) Daniel Dennett.
  - (3) The advocates of "Progressive Christianity."
- c. All who are responsible for corrupting the minds of youth and stealing their innocence.
- d. Those who push out Bible in Schools in New Zealand.
  - (1) Here's the stats on Otago schools.

#### 11. When we face persistent negative volition, we are to shake the dust from our feet.

- a. **Mt 10:14-15** 14 ...If anyone will not receive you [disciples] or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet when you leave that house or town. 15 Truly, I say to you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town.
- b. **Ac 13:46** 46 ...Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly saying, It was necessary that the word of God be spoken first to you. Because you thrust it aside and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles.
- c. **Ac 18:6** 6 ...When [the Jews of Corinth] opposed and reviled [Paul], he shook out his garments and said to them, Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.
- d. Principles.
  - (1) Facing persistent negative volition can be extremely disheartening and frustrating.
  - (2) Once we've shared with an unbeliever the gospel message, we've fulfilled our responsibility to him or her. We've fulfilled our duty of due diligence.

- (3) In evangelism, don't over-focus on those who show little sign of positivity toward God. Move on to others. "There's other fish in the sea."

## 12. As long as a person is alive, there's always a chance he or she may turn positive.

- a. A person may be negative for a very long time and then suddenly turn positive.
- (1) **2 Ch 33:10-13** 10 Yahweh spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they paid no attention [negative volition]. 11 Therefore Yahweh brought upon them the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria, who captured Manasseh with hooks, bound him with chains of bronze, and brought him to Babylon [divine discipline]. 12 And when he was in distress, he entreated the favour of Yahweh his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers [positive volition]. 13 He prayed to him, and God was moved by his entreaty, heard his plea, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that Yahweh was God.
- (2) **Lk 15:17-20** 17 ... When [the son] came to himself, he said, How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants. 20 And he arose and came to his father [positive volition]. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him, felt compassion, ran and embraced him, and kissed him [God's special call].
- (3) **Lk 23:39-43** 39 One of the criminals who were hanged railed at [Jesus] saying, Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us! 40 But the other rebuked him saying, Do you not fear God, because you are under the same sentence of condemnation? 41 And we indeed justly, for we are receiving the due reward of our deeds. But this man has done nothing wrong. 42 And he said, Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom [positive volition]. 43 And he said to him, Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in paradise.
- b. As long as a person is alive, there's a chance for him or her to turn to God. A person may turn positive to God even on his or her deathbed. It likely happens more often than we think.
- (1) This is one important reason why euthanasia should be opposed. Euthanasia cuts short the amount of time God has sovereignly given a person to believe in Jesus.
- c. A person may be positive to God at certain points in his or her life but never reach the point of faith in Jesus.
- (1) God determines the point at which a person is sufficiently positive toward him for him to elect and specially call that person to faith in Jesus.