

Here Are Some Things Clearly Taught In The Scriptures:

1. **Man is a creature made in the image of God.** Gen. 1:26-27; James 3:9
2. **Man has the power of volition, the power to choose between good and evil, right and wrong, truth and error.** Gen. 2:16-17; Deut. 11:26-28; 30:15,19-20; Josh. 24:15; Jer. 6:16; Matt. 7:13-14; Rom. 6:16
3. **Man is not compelled or forced by God to do either right or wrong; he is rather allowed and required to choose.** Other men may pressure us, threaten us, or torture us, but we should choose to suffer and even to die rather than to do wrong. Dan. 3:8-18; 6:4-23; Matt. 10:28-33; Rev. 2:10
4. **Man is allowed to be tempted (by Satan and his agents) to sin, but God will never tempt man to sin.** James 1:13; 1 Pet. 5:8
5. **God will never allow any man to be tempted with any temptation that is beyond that one's ability to resist and overcome.** 1 Cor. 10:13
6. **God will never allow any person to be put in a situation where his only alternatives are sinful ones; he will always be able to choose what is good or right.** *Let's enlarge upon this last point:*

In every congregation I have worked with over a period of more than 58 years I have encountered this situation: A brother or sister begins to talk as if he or she has reached a point at which his or her alternatives or choices are only sinful ones. It usually goes like this: A member begins to miss services and finally quits assembling with the saints. Concerned brethren miss the missing member, make phone calls or personal visits, and ask why the member has quit coming to church services. The response goes something like this: "Well, I had reached the point that by attending church services and pretending to be something I knew I wasn't, I felt like I was being a hypocrite. I didn't want to be a hypocrite or feel like a hypocrite, so I felt the only honorable thing to do was to quit attending church services and to quit pretending."

This line of thinking makes it sound like there are times when our only "choices," "options," or "alternatives" are sinful ones. That way we can sort of "salve" our consciences by choosing what we perceive to be "the lesser of two evils" -- being a hypocritical Christian or being an honest sinner (sounds noble anyway). And who wants to be a hypocrite? Of course that wasn't the whole picture, and God had nothing to do with our getting into that predicament. What is missing from the picture is this. A Christian has chosen to get into and continue in some sin (transgression or neglect). Naturally, his knowledge of the truth and his conscience tell him that he is wrong, and of course he feels hypocritical if he continues to attend church services and to hold up the appearance of being a Christian. What should he do? Surely the only right and sane answer, for the sake of his immortal soul and his eternal destiny and his influence upon others, is to give up the sin in his life, keep attending church services, and really be a Christian. To be a hypocritical Christian or to be an honest sinner are not his only alternatives (and either one will lead to eternal damnation), and no one is being honest who thinks they are. The "pleasures of sin for a season" (Heb. 11: 25) are not worth the price you will have to pay for them. If you miss heaven, you miss everything that is good and worthwhile--including the benefits of really being a Christian in this life. And to miss heaven is to end up in hell. Our decisions and choices in life have eternal consequences.