

Ripples Of Decisions

By Robert L. Jones, IV

It takes one hundred milliseconds for the brain to make a decision.¹ Yet that decision can have an effect for generations. Our decisions today impact generations to come. Throughout the Iliad, the decisions of soldiers played a vital role on who won the war. In the Iliad, Achilles is considered by reputation the best warrior and by refusing to fight he allows thousands of Greeks to die. The choice that Achilles must make in the Iliad is between life and glory; it is not merely a matter of whether to accept the gifts, or to continue protesting Agamemnon's arrogance, but whether or not he should let thousands of Greeks die over a selfish feud. As a result of Achilles' decision to refuse to fight, the Greeks instantly start losing. The Trojans push them back all the way to their ships. Patroclus decides to fight in order to prevent the Trojans from killing his people, the horses driving Patroclus off in Achilles' Chariot to his death to be struck down by one of Troy's finest warriors, Hector. As a result of losing a loved one, Achilles is infuriated and decides to go to war; single handedly changing the tide of the war by slaughtering Hector and pushing Troy back to their gates. Achilles made the following very important decisions: he must yield to Agamemnon, he must go into the war to save the Greeks and he must finally give Hector back to his father to bury. All of these decisions determined the outcome of the war and whether soldiers lived or died. Although our decisions sometimes do not have a direct input into a life or death scenario of others, decisions we make play a vital impact in how future generations turn out, how others see us, and most importantly how God sees us.

One of the people I interviewed shared how he had no one in his corner. From an early age he was sent off to boarding school and always being the youngest learned a great deal from how older students acted. Being from Iran, he developed a love for American economics which lead to him immigrating during Iran's revolution seeking freedoms and a better education. After escaping a muslimic revolution with restrictions of freedoms he hitchhiked all the way from the west coast to the east of the United States with no money. Having a deep self motivation and a great determination for success, he learned english and went to college. Because of his decisions and his immigration to the U.S., he gave his kids the freedom of choices to experience life, including the right to go to the school of their choice and as many choices to better themselves. Choices he did not get but because of his self motivation, want of better life, and self sacrifice he set up future generations with freedoms he never got.

In the Iliad Achilles hid from his responsibilities choosing glory over the lives of others. The man I interviewed shared how if we are not willing to self sacrifice and pursue certain unalienable rights our kids and their kids will not know the freedoms we have. Just as Achilles'

¹*How does your brain make split second decisions?* By Derek Beres and Jaimee Bell, October 13, 2020, <https://bigthink.com/neuropsych/split-decision-making-process/>, date accessed 7/28/2024.

choices had unforeseen consequences, our decisions also impact lives beyond our immediate understanding. The people we associate with influence our values and choices. Without a moral anchor, we risk becoming swayed by prevailing opinions rather than making decisions based on ethical principles. George Orwell's *1984* and C.S. Lewis's *That Hideous Strength* illustrate the dangers of relinquishing our autonomy and failing to ground ourselves in moral truths. Proverbs 29:12 warns, "If a ruler pays attention to lies, all his servants become wicked." Recent events highlight the importance of truth, underscoring Orwell's warnings about the corrupting influence of unchecked power and misinformation. If we do not decide to tell the truth we will become a people of lies. Overall, our choices, whether personal or societal, have lasting repercussions and shape not only our own lives but also the lives of future generations.