

Choose Life

Deuteronomy 30:1-20

May 31, 2009

Intro

We are nearing the end of the book of Deuteronomy. Moses is giving his last message to the people of Israel to prepare them to enter into the land that God had promised them. As you read through the book of Deuteronomy you pick up right away that Moses is pouring out his heart to the people of Israel.

He wants them to succeed, he wants them to prosper, and he knows that the only way that will happen is if they stay near to God. Over and over he admonishes them to love God with all their heart and with all their soul.

As we look into chapter 30, it's important to understand that in the chapters leading up to this Moses had told them that after they enter into the land of Canaan, they were to bring all the people of Israel into a valley between the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim. Then they were to station men on each mountain. From Mount Ebal, they were to call out the consequences of turning away from God. From Mount Gerizim the men were to call out the blessings of following after God with all their heart and with all the soul. They were then given the opportunity to choose. "See, I set before you a life and death," God was saying to the people of Israel.

Deuteronomy chapter 30 is very interesting because we see here in this chapter that God wants them to choose life, but he also understands that they may choose to turn their hearts away from him. If they do, the results will be disastrous in their lives. But he then tells them that God will take them back.

What an encouragement this chapter is to us as well. For in a similar way God sets before us life and death, good and evil, and He asks us to choose. The Apostle Paul wrote that these things were written for our example.

I. The Lord Restores the Fallen

- 1 In the first verses God helps them to see that God knows in advance that there would come a time when their hearts would turn away from him.
- 2 When that happens, God was saying, here is what God will do.
- 3 We need to know this in advance. We need to know God's heart because we face the same choices.

A. Return to the Lord with all your heart

- 4 That's one of the most important things to see here in these verses, that when things have gone really badly for them because they rejected God, they should remember the blessings and the consequences.
- 5 They should then return to God. But they need to return to him with all their heart

and all their soul.

Illus – Some people get into some trouble in their lives and start to feel the heat, so then they start to become contrite and even appear somewhat humble. But they only do as much as it takes to get the heat turned off.

Joel 2:12, “Yet even now,” declares the Lord, “Return to Me with all your heart... and rend your heart and not your garments.” Now return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness.”

- 6 Turning their hearts away from God was what got them into trouble in the first place, so he is asking them to return with all their heart and with all our soul.
- 7 In verse 6, Moses said that God would circumcise their hearts. That means that there needs to be a cutting away of the flesh, that’s part of choosing life; cut away the flesh and its desires and you will find life.
- 8 But one thing we see from this as well is God’s heart for them. God wants them to return with all their heart, because He has all His heart toward them.

B. The Lord will again rejoice over you

- 1 In verse 9, Moses makes it clear that God will restore them and God will rejoice over them.
- 2 We know that God rejoices over us when we first come to have relationship with God through Jesus Christ...

Zephaniah 3:17, The Lord your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior. He will exult over you with joy, He will be quiet in His love, He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.

- 3 We also know that the angels of heaven also rejoice...

Luke 15:7, 10, “I tell you that in the same way, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance... In the same way, I tell you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.”

- 4 So here, it’s a powerful thing to understand that God is promising that He will rejoice over them when they return.
- 5 One of the most powerful pictures of this is the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15.

Luke 15:11-24 The Father rejoices at the returning son

- 6 We see in this story the restoring of the prodigal son as well. “Bring the robe, put it on my son.” “Bring the ring and place it on his finger are examples of the restoration of the Lord.
- 7 In verses 3-5, God promises to restore them and gather them from the nations and bring them back to their land.
- 8 There is both a near and far fulfillment of these verses. There was near fulfillment when God restored them from their Babylonian captivity. There is a similar fulfillment in 1948 when they were restored as a nation. But the greatest fulfillment will be in the last days.
- 9 For something is still missing: after their Babylonian captivity they never again fell into idolatry and even saw a portion of them giving God their hearts...
- 10 But today we do not yet see the spiritual revival that God is predicting in these verses. However, when Jesus, their Messiah returns, there will be a great awakening in that day.

Jeremiah 31:31-34 The mark of the New Covenant upon Israel

- 1 When Jesus had the last supper with His disciples, he told them that He was initiating the New Covenant in His blood.

1 Corinthians 11:25, In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, “This cup is the New Covenant initiated in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

C. There is a sadness that leads to joy

- 11 Here in this chapter we see the rejoicing of the Lord at the returning of those who fell away.
- 12 We see that their hearts are circumcised as they return by loving the Lord their God will all their heart and with all their soul. There is a rejoicing in that.
- 13 But when he gives this prophecy of a great returning in the last days, we need to see that it starts with sadness; actually mourning.

Zechariah 12:10, “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.”

- 1 Paul says something is similar when he speaks about a sorrow that leads to

repentance.

2 Corinthians 7:9-10, I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.

II. Life is Very Near You

- 1 Moses then said in verse 11, “This commandment is not too difficult, nor is it out of reach.”
- 2 That is encouraging because many people seem to think that the things of God are difficult or confusing or out of reach.

A. It's as close as your heart

- 1 Verses 12-13 Moses makes it clear that they would not need to do some great feat in order to reach the Word of God. They don't have to climb the seven great mountains or reach some spiritual state of nirvana.

Illus – There is something like this in the concept of penance. This is a practice where some lay great burdens on themselves in order to reach true repentance.

There was a movie called “The Mission” that gave a great example of this. Rodrigo Mendoza had abused and mistreated the Guarani tribe in South America. In a fit of rage he killed his brother and sought repentance from the Jesuit priest who tied the man's armor and weapons in a bundle and attached it to his waist and told him to climb the Iguazu Falls where the Guarani people lived.

- 2 But Paul addresses this when he wrote to the church in Colossae...

Colossians 2:23, These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

- 3 But Moses said that the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart. In other words, it's as close as your decision to confess with your mouth and believe with your heart.
- 4 This is exactly what Paul was referring to in the book of Romans when he quoted these verses to the church at Rome.

Romans 10:1-11 The Word is near you

- 5 You may feel that you are very far from God. You may feel that God is very far from you, but God is very near you.
- 6 It doesn't even matter what kind of life you have been living that has taken you so far from God, anyone can be saved at this very service. All you need to do is to confess with your mouth that Jesus Christ is Lord and surrender your life to him, you can be saved.
- 7 Paul also said that you must believe that God raised Him from the dead. Why is that important? It is the one sign that he gives that declares the power to save.

Matthew 12:38-39, Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, "Teacher, we want to see a sign from You." But He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet;"

B. God wants you to choose life

- 8 From verses 15-20 Moses gives them God's heart, that He wants them to choose life.
- 9 It's not that God sets before them the choice of life and death and then says, "Choose whichever you want, I really don't care."
- 10 God wants them to choose life. He loves them, so he calls them to choose life; that is the very best thing for them.
- 11 Not just to love the Lord their God with all their heart and soul, but also to walk in His ways and to walk in His judgments.

App – the decisions we make determine the direction and thus the outcome of our lives. We have a choice, we have a decision, and that decision will determine not just our earthly future, but our eternal future as well.

- 12 In verse 20 Moses tells them how this is to be done... by obeying His voice and by holding fast to Him.

Illus – Our problem is that many people are empty, they are lonely, they are bored, and they lack purpose. So they try to fill their life with things that will not satisfy. We need to have our cup filled (Psalm 23)

- 1 He and he alone will satisfy the empty life.