

**Deuteronomy 30:15-20**July 25, 2010 – 9<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST**CHOOSE LIFE!**✚ **Guarding God's Word (vv.15-16)**✚ **Fearing the LORD (vv.17-18)**✚ **Eager for His blessings (vv.19-20)**

In the name of Jesus, who is truly Christ our Life, dearly redeemed family of God,

Does this strike you as strange? *“See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction.”* What kind of choice is that? Why would anyone choose *death and destruction* over *life and prosperity*? People do it all the time. Whether you talk about wars by powerful aggressors or the battle in the womb, whether it's protecting the life of unborn babies or fighting this genocide against African Americans, choices for *death and destruction* are all around us. But are they in us? The LORD's prophet Moses says so. He's preaching to God's people just before they enter the Promised Land. He has been reminding them about their deadly choices to sin with the golden calf and rebel against God in so many other ways. Now he is also warning them to **Choose Life!** If people who ate manna every morning and the LORD's provision of quail every night, needed help with this, so do we. **Choose Life...**

✚ **Guarding God's Word (vv.15-16)**

Can you tell where God is going with this? He obviously wants to bless His people by teaching them to trust His promises of a Savior to come. Just across the Jordan River is the land God promised to their forefathers – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Now nearly 700 years after Abraham, they're ready to cross over and take possession of their inheritance from God. But past performance clearly indicates future problems. If they rebelled while Moses was alive working miracles, how much more when he is gone and they're living in great cities they did not build, drinking wine from vineyards they did not plant? The land flowing with milk and honey will be their undoing if they fail **Guarding God's Word**.

See why the LORD wants Moses to say this? *“See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.”* We talked last week about our failures to love the LORD God with all our heart and soul, mind and strength; and to love our neighbor as ourself. Only Jesus is the truly Good Samaritan. But let's look closely at one of the Ten Commandments where church people have the biggest problems with the heartfelt obedience God's holy law demands.

Maybe you haven't physically murdered anyone, or committed adultery, or stolen. You may not even be aware of sins against these commandments in your heart. But what about this one? *“You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.”* (Deuteronomy 5:20 NIV) Not in courtroom perjury perhaps, but have you ever spoken evil against your neighbor or a relative? Have you ever listened to gossip? Hardest of all, have you ever failed to take your neighbor's words and actions in the kindest possible way? Here's where the preacher condemns himself under God's law. How can I begin to remember every time I've misjudged especially those closest to me in my family? And how can I stand before God who is *“a consuming fire”* (4:24) when I've failed so miserably to forgive and forget? The Law of God cuts me no slack. It demands complete compliance every minute day and night. Since I have failed to guard and treasure God's Word, my obedience has suffered countless times. What can I do?

✚ **Fearing the LORD (vv.17-18)**

First, the LORD gets Moses busy stripping away all my excuses. *“But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them,”* –

not just idol images, but false gods of money and self, Moses says, ***“I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.”*** Wasn't Moses himself a striking example of that harsh reality? Forty years of leading such a rebellious people, then the death of their sister Miriam, then more rebellion at Kadesh Barnea – and Moses and Aaron became so upset, they failed to honor God before the people and lost the Promised Land. (Numbers 20) At least four times Moses has blamed the people that he does not get to cross over (1:37, etc.), but no matter. God's judgment stands against him. Likewise, another prophet, Jeremiah. Remember what God said to Jeremiah's complaint about the people plotting against him? ***“If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me; if you utter worthy, not worthless, words, you will be my spokesman.”*** Jeremiah could not compromise God's Word to get along: ***“Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them.”*** (Jeremiah 15:19 NIV) He could only repent, **Fearing the LORD.**

Whether serving on a committee or in the kitchen, men or women, pastor or people – ***“the only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.... If you keep on biting and devouring each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other.”*** (Galatians 5:6,15 NIV) When I am harsh and unkind in my comments and judgments on another, I do not deserve their forgiveness or God's. **Fearing the LORD** I can humbly seek their forgiveness and trust that I have His whether they forgive me or not. But if I fail to forgive those who sin against me, Jesus warns, ***“But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”*** (Matthew 6:15 NIV) Do you want proof of God's mercy? Just look at the sun. Does it shine selectively, only on homes of good, Bible believing Christians? Doesn't God's rain fall on the lawns and fields of farmers and engineers whether they praise His name or curse it in unbelief? Think of someone who has hurt the most. Admit it; you're looking in the mirror. Then forgive as you've been forgiven – **Fearing the LORD.** ***“If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O Lord, who could stand? But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared.”*** (Psalm 130:3f NIV)

### **Eager for His blessings (vv.19-20)**

Finally Moses calls God's people into the courtroom of creation: ***“This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”***

Every time you and I bow our heads together or privately and say the Lord's Prayer, we are showing God that we are **Eager for His blessings.** Think of this! “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have sinned against us.” That means as you pray you are forgiving me my sins and everyone else who has sinned against you, while I am also praying with the rest of God's church of Jesus throughout the world that all your sins be forgiven. Such awesome **blessings** of forgiveness Jesus paid for in blood on Calvary's cross and stamped with God's seal of approval by rising from the dead.

Oh, but God's not done. He gives countless more **blessings** than our **Eager** hearts can ask or imagine. **Choose Life** – because by Word and sacrament Christ lives in you, ***“so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life....”*** You can count on God to bless you even if others fail to forgive you. You can be sure God is pleased when you look at others through the wounds of Jesus Christ and say with Him, ***“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”*** (Luke 23:34) And if you're having trouble forgetting the way God forgets your sins and mine, use every memory as another opportunity to forgive them and pray for them again. ***“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.”*** (Matthew 5:44–45 NIV)

In Christ's forgiving love, you always have the power to **Choose Life! Guarding God's Word, Fearing the LORD, Eager for His blessings** – that's the only way to live. Amen.

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