Choose Life

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But if we could, with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling, this morning, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, in the book of Deuteronomy, it's on page 206 in the Pew Bible.

Book of Deuteronomy, we're going to go through this passage that we read, but if we take as our text the words of verse 19 and 20, Deuteronomy 30 at verse 19.

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob to give them.

But particularly the words at the beginning of verse 19, I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse.

Therefore choose life. Choose life. I'm sure we've all heard of this slogan, choose life.

[1:30] Choose life. I'm sure many of us have seen the t-shirt that was worn by George Michael when he sang as part of the band Wham in the 1980s. He wore a white t-shirt with the words choose life on it.

They were written in bold on the front and on the back. And back then the choose life slogan, it was part of this anti-drug and anti-suicide campaign that the band Wham were endorsing and supporting.

But then however, choose life, the choose life slogan, it was then adopted by the popular film from the 1990s, a film called Trainspotting. I haven't seen the film, but apparently the mantra in the film Trainspotting is choose life.

But then in more recent years, the choose life slogan, it was part of an anti-abortion campaign where campaigners, they pleaded that instead of terminating unwanted pregnancies, mothers would choose life.

But you know what always amazes me is that many of the phrases and sayings and slogans that we have in our English language today, many of them, they come from the Bible.

[2:42] And this is one of them. Even Google will tell you that the slogan choose life, it comes from this passage in the Bible. And this passage, as we said, it was first written by Moses.

It was written like Psalm 90, which we just sang, it was written three and a half thousand years ago, which ought to make us realise how relevant the Bible actually is.

That we're still using phrases and sayings and slogans that are thousands of years old. But you know, as important as these campaigns were and still are, when Moses exhorted the people of his day, when he exhorted them to choose life, he wasn't talking about an anti-drug or anti-suicide or an anti-abortion campaign.

Moses was stressing a much more important campaign because it was the campaign of eternal value. It was a campaign about the Christ.

It was a campaign that focused upon the gospel of Jesus Christ. And Moses' campaign was choose life. Choose life. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing.

[4:02] Therefore, he says, choose life. And you know, these words that we have here, they are some of the last words that Moses spoke to the children of Israel.

You'll remember that Moses, he was the leader of the children of Israel. He led them out of slavery and bondage in Egypt. Moses led them through the Red Sea when it was parted.

And then Moses, he was leading the children of Israel on towards the promised land. But in these words, these are the last words of Moses to the children of Israel. Because in the following chapter, Moses resigns, you could say.

He tenders his resignation as the leader and he appoints Joshua as his successor. In fact, Moses is just about to die because in chapter 32, Moses, well, he's taken away.

The Lord takes him away. And so by this point in the book of Deuteronomy, Moses has been a faithful servant of the Lord. He has been with the children of Israel. He has been leading them through the wilderness for the past 40 years.

[5:08] In effect, you could say that Moses has been their minister for 40 years. And he has been their spiritual leader. And he has led this congregation of people through the wilderness on towards the promised land.

And now at the banks of the river Jordan, just about to cross over into the promised land, it's now time for Moses to step down. And these words in Deuteronomy 30 are what you could call Moses' farewell sermon.

In fact, the whole book of Deuteronomy is Moses' farewell sermon. The book of Deuteronomy, in that book, Moses is recounting the history of the children of Israel.

And he's reminding them. He's reminding his congregation of what they've been through and what they've been taught and what the Lord has said to them. Moses reminds them of where they've been as a congregation.

But now as he comes to his farewell sermon, Moses exhorts his congregation to make a decision between life and death. And Moses' plea to his congregation is very simple.

[6:19] He's just saying, choose life. And you know, my unconverted friend here today, in this congregation, my plea to you is choose life.

Choose life. And all I want to do this morning is echo the words that Moses spoke to his congregation all those years ago. Because in his sermon, Moses reminded his congregation.

He reminded them of three things. He reminded them of the commandment, the concern, and the choice. The commandment, the concern, and the choice.

So we look first of all at the commandment. Look at verse 11. Moses says, For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off.

It is not in heaven that you should say who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it. Neither is it beyond the sea that you should say who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it.

[7:22] But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it. The commandment that Moses is commanding his congregation to follow, it wasn't any particular commandment.

Because what Moses was commanding his congregation was to make a decision about following the Lord. Moses was commanding his congregation to finally make a decision to obey and to follow the Lord.

Because for years, years, for decades in fact, the children of Israel, they had failed to listen to the Lord. They had refused to obey his word. And that was the reason they were lost in the wilderness for 40 years.

It was because of their waywardness. It was because of their disobedience. And time and time again, Moses' congregation, they failed to listen to the Lord. They failed to respond in obedience to the Lord.

And like Moses' congregation, my unconverted friend here today, you have been in this congregation for many years. And for years, decades.

[8:36] I don't know how long you've been sitting there. But for decades, maybe, you've been lost. Wandering aimlessly in the wilderness of this world. And you're wandering without safety, without salvation, without security.

For years, you have been wayward and disobedient. And you have failed to listen to the Lord and obey his word. But the Lord is speaking to you again today. And the Lord is commanding you to respond in faith and obedience.

But notice what Moses says. It's not too hard for you. It's not difficult because this isn't something that's impossible for you to do.

Or so far away from you that you can't reach it. It's not too hard for you. Because what the Lord is asking you to do today isn't something difficult.

He's not asking you to run a marathon. He's not asking you to swim the minch. He's not asking you to row across the Atlantic. The Lord isn't asking you. In fact, he's not asking you to do anything.

[9:39] Because it's all been done for you. Forgiveness has been granted. Redemption has been achieved. Salvation has been completed. All because Jesus bore our sin in his own body on the cross.

Jesus died in the place of sinners. Jesus rose triumphantly over the grave. Jesus is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. So my unconverted friend, the Lord isn't asking you to do anything.

Because it's all been done for you. All the Lord asks from you. Is that you respond to his offer of salvation. In faith and obedience.

And Moses is saying, as he said to his congregation. It's not too hard for you. It's not too hard for you to follow this commandment. And earnestly seek the Lord with all your heart.

And commit your life to him. It's not too hard for you. And you know, for his own congregation. Moses knew that responding in faith and obedience to the Lord.

[10:44] He knew that it's not something that's difficult or even impossible. That's why Moses says in verse 12. It's not in heaven that you should say. Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us.

That we may hear it and do it. Neither is it beyond the sea that you should say. Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us. That we may hear it and do it. Moses is saying to his congregation.

That responding to the Lord in faith and obedience. It's not in heaven. It's not in heaven that you have this excuse of doing nothing.

And that you can claim that while following the Lord is something that's so far away from you. That you can just excuse yourself from it. Moses says, who will ascend to? Moses says that the people could be asking.

Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us. That we may hear it and do it. But you know what's amazing is that Moses even goes in the opposite direction. He goes in the opposite direction to cover every possible excuse.

[11:43] That his congregation could come up with. Because he says that responding to the Lord in faith and obedience. It isn't even beyond the sea. That you still have the excuse of doing nothing.

Where you can claim that following the Lord is something that's so far away from you. That you can come up with some wonderful excuse. And say, well who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us.

That we may hear it and do it. And you know what Moses is addressing here with his congregation. And what needs to be addressed in this congregation. Is the fact that the unconverted in the congregation.

Claim that they will only respond in faith and obedience. When salvation is brought right to them. They say, bring it to us.

Bring it to us. But you know Moses had been with his congregation long enough. To know that instead of obeying his commandment. They would just make empty excuses.

[12:47] And well nothing's changed. Because the unconverted in this congregation. My unconverted friend. You're still coming up with empty excuses.

As to why you can't respond to the Lord. In faith and obedience. But as we said, it's all been done for you. There's nothing more that needs to be done for you.

Jesus has done everything for you. That's why Moses could say to his congregation. And that's why I can say to you this morning. The word of God is very near you.

It's in your mouth. It's in your heart. So that you can do it. This word. This commandment. To respond to the Lord in faith and obedience.

It's very near you. It's right before you. It's being held out to you. In fact Moses says that you've heard this commandment so often.

You've heard the gospel so often. You've heard this message of salvation so often. You've heard the call to repent and believe so often. So often that it's already in your mouth.

And it's on your heart. My unconverted friend. You've been hearing the gospel all your life. So much so that you know a lot about the Bible.

And you know passages of this scripture. You know it off by heart. The word is very near you. But what are you doing with it?

Why are you not responding to the Lord in faith and obedience? Why are you not following the Lord and living according to his word? Because as Moses said to his congregation.

It's not too hard for you. It's not too far away from you. It's not too difficult for you. The word is very near you. And on your heart.

[14:48] So what does Moses say? Choose life. Choose life. That's what he wants to say to you. Choose life. And so having reminded his congregation of the commandment to respond in faith and obedience to the Lord.

Moses he then continues to plead with his congregation. And he pleads with his congregation by revealing the concern he has for them. So the commandment then secondly the concern.

Look at verse 15. We see the concern. Moses says. See I have set before you today life and good. Death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God.

That I command you today by loving the Lord your God. By walking in his ways. And by keeping his commandments and statutes and his rules. Then you shall live. And multiply.

And the Lord your God will bless you. In the land that you're entering to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away and you will not hear. But are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them.

[15:55] I declare to you today. That you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you're going over the Jordan to enter. And possess. And so as Moses continues to preach his farewell sermon.

You can see that he has this pastoral care. And this pastoral concern for the people in his congregation. Because he's been with them. As we said for the past 40 years.

And during that time Moses has preached to them. He taught them. He challenged them. He rebuked them. He exhorted them. And over the years Moses got to know them. He got to know them as individuals.

And as families. Within the congregation. And he was even there when there were births. He was there when there was illness. He was there when circumstances in their family changed.

When family members died. Moses was there for his congregation. Because he loved his congregation. And he loved ministering to his congregation. And in many ways I can relate to what Moses knew and felt about his congregation.

[17:02] But you know I can also relate to the fact that Moses knew his congregation. And he knew what they needed to do.

Because Moses knew that his congregation needed to choose life. But Moses also knew that he couldn't choose for them.

And so Moses he reveals to his congregation. This pastoral concern that he has for them. And he reminds them of what he has preached to them over the years.

He says in verse 15. See I have set before you today life and good. Life and good. Death and evil. I've set before you today life and good.

Death and evil. In other words Moses is saying to his congregation. Over the years. As your minister. I have set before you the way of life. And the way of death.

[18:01] I've reminded you again and again. That the way of life is good. And it's filled with all of God's blessings. And God's promises. But the way of death is evil.

And it's filled with God's wrath. And God's judgment. And what Moses pleaded with his congregation. Is that he has set before them. The way of life. And the way of death.

But he says you must now choose which one. Or which way you will go. You must choose. And Moses then says in verse 16. If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God.

That I command you today. By loving the Lord your God. By walking in his ways. By keeping his commandments. And statutes. And his rules. Then you shall live. And multiply.

And the Lord your God. Will bless you. In the land that you're entering. To take possession of it. Moses says that if you respond. In faith. And obedience to the Lord. If you follow the Lord.

[18:59] If you choose the way of life. If you love the Lord. If you walk in his ways. If you keep his commandments. Then you shall live. You will receive life.

And the promised blessings. Blessings of life. But you know what we must notice. About Moses' plea to his congregation. It's not an intellectual exercise.

Responding in faith and obedience to the Lord. Is not a response of the head. It's a response of the heart. Moses says to them.

You must obey the commands. Of the Lord your God. By loving him. By walking in his ways. By obeying and keeping his commandments.

Moses has this emphasis upon the heart. You must love the Lord. You must walk with the Lord. You must keep the commands of the Lord. And Moses is pleading with his congregation.

[19:58] He's saying to them. That they need to respond in faith. To the Lord. With whole hearted commitment. And obedience. And my unconverted friend.

Whole hearted commitment and obedience. Is not a response of your head. It is a response of your heart. It's a response of your heart.

And you know as Moses said to his congregation long ago. It needs to be said to this congregation today. You need to love the Lord. You need to walk with the Lord. You need to keep the commands of the Lord.

You need to respond to the Lord in faith. And obedience. And it must be a response of your heart. Not a response of your head. It must be this whole hearted commitment.

To the Lord. Because as Moses assured the people of his congregation. In verse 16. The same is true of the people of this congregation. He said. When you respond in whole hearted commitment to the Lord.

[21:02] And live by faith and obedience. Moses says. You shall live. You shall grow. You shall multiply. And the Lord your God.

Will bless you. You will receive from the hand of the Lord. What you don't deserve. You will receive something that you haven't earned.

You haven't worked for. You haven't achieved. In and of yourself. But the Lord blesses you. He freely. And lovingly gives to you. The promise of eternal life.

My unconverted friend. The Lord your God. Will bless you with life. When you choose life. And respond with whole hearted. Commitment to him.

So choose life. Choose life. But you know Moses. He had to go on. He had to proceed on.

[22:00] To warning his congregation. And he says in verse 17. But if your heart turns away. You will not hear. But are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them.

And I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you're going over. The Jordan to enter. And possess. And notice in verse 17.

It's not the head that turns away from the Lord. It's the heart. In your head my friend. You might want to be a Christian. In your mind.

You might long to be saved. In your thoughts. You might think that Jesus. Is a wonderful savior. But my friend. You're not saved by committing your head to the Lord.

You're saved by committing your heart to the Lord. But if your heart says Moses. If your heart turns away from the Lord. You will not hear. If you will not listen.

[22:58] If you will just sit. In amongst this congregation. Just thinking of other things. Planning the week ahead. Daydreaming and filling your mind. With all the things. That have no eternal value.

Do you know what Moses says. If your heart turns away from the Lord. And you will not hear. But are drawn away to worship other gods. And serve them. I declare to you today. That you shall surely.

Perish. My unconverted friend. As Moses assured his congregation. You are being assured today. That if you will not. Give your heart to the Lord.

And respond to him in faith. And obedience. Then you are giving your heart. To a dumb idol. And you are responding. In obedience.

To that idol. Now an idol. It doesn't have to be made of stone. Or wood. An idol. It's just. Something. Or someone. That you put.

[23:58] Put before God. Idolatry. Is when you fail to respond. In faith and obedience. To the Lord. Because you're putting something. Or someone. Before the Lord.

And whatever it is. Whatever that thing. Or that person. May be. To you. It is of greater value. Than following the Lord. My friend.

Idolatry is. When the Lord is not number one. And as Moses said. To the people of his congregation. He said. When the Lord is not number one. When the Lord is not king.

When the Lord is. Is rejected. I declare to you today. You shall surely perish. Perish. My unconverted friend.

When the Lord is not number one. In your life. When the Lord is not king. In your life. When the Lord is rejected. And you do not choose. The way of life. I declare to you today.

[24:54] That you shall surely. Perish. You will perish. Perish. And you know. Moses. He said this to his congregation. Not only because he had a great concern.

But he says it with such an emphasis. It's an emphatic statement. He says. If your heart. Turns away from the Lord. You shall surely. Perish.

It's the way of death. And that was the concern for Moses. For his congregation. That's my concern. For this congregation. That you. My unconverted friend.

Who are part of this congregation. And you've been coming here. Week in. Week out. For years. My concern for you. My burden for you. My plea. To you.

Is that if your heart. Turns away from the Lord. You will. Surely. Perish. That's it. That's the reality of it.

[25:55] But as you know. And as you've heard. So often. The promise. Of this gospel. Is that God. So loved the world. That he gave his only begotten son. That whosoever.

Whosoever. Believes in him. Will not. Perish. But have. Eternal. Life. My friend. There is the way of life. And there is the way of death.

And I plead to you. Today. Is choose life. Choose. Life. But you know. My unconverted friend.

If I can just say this to you. Give me your ear. For a moment. Stop daydreaming. About whatever it is. For a moment. Just a moment. I'm sure that if I were to ask you.

Personally. Today. Do you want to be a Christian? You would say to me. Yes. And you'd probably say it.

[26:54] Without any hesitation. Or doubt. Because. Well. You want to be saved. You want to be forgiven. You want to know the Lord.

You want. To have the promise. Of eternal life. You want to be a Christian. Christian. But sadly. I also believe. That for many of you. If I were to ask you today.

Do you want to be a Christian? You would be honest enough. With me. To say. Yes. I want to be a Christian. But not today.

I want to be saved. But not today. Any other time. But not today.

Later on in my life. But not today. When I'm more ready. But not today. My unconverted friend.

[27:50] You have been in this world. Long enough. To know. That you have been given today. You are not promised. Tomorrow. You have been given today.

You are not promised. Tomorrow. So choose life. Choose life.

The offer of life. Is held out. To you today. It might not be held out. To you. Tomorrow. So choose life. You know.

It's a wonderful farewell sermon. That Moses has. He's reminding his congregation. Of the commandment. To respond in faith. And obedience. He's revealed the concern.

That he has for his congregation. That they will choose. The way of life. But now. As Moses comes to the end of. His sermon. For one last time.

[28:53] Moses. Moses. Pleads. He makes this plea. To make it. For his congregation. To make a decision. Between life and death. And you know. Well this is my plea.

Choose life. We see the commandment. The concern. And then lastly. The choice. The choice. Look at verse 19. I call heaven and earth.

To witness against you today. That I have set before you. Life and death. Blessing and curse. Therefore choose life. That you and your offspring. May live. Loving the Lord your God.

Obeying his voice. Holding fast to him. For he is your life. And length of days. That you may dwell in the land. That the Lord swore to your fathers. To Abraham. To Isaac.

And to Jacob. To give them. Abraham. It's often been said. That we are the choices. We make. We are the choices. We make. And the choice.

[29:47] That's been set before you. As a congregation today. Is the most important choice. You will ever make. Because it's the choice. Between life and death.

Blessing and cursing. Heaven and hell. But you know what I find. So solemn about this. Is that Moses said. To his congregation. He says. I call heaven and earth.

To witness against you. Today. I call heaven and earth. To witness against you today. In other words. Moses is saying. To his congregation. God is my witness.

That I have faithfully. Preached to you. And ministered to you. As a congregation. Moses is saying to them. I have faithfully. And consistently. Set before you. The way of life.

And the way of death. The way of blessing. The way of cursing. And so Moses says. Choose life. Choose life. I call heaven and earth.

[30:45] To witness against you. Today. And you know. I hope I can say the same as Moses. That I have faithfully preached to you. And ministered to you.

As a congregation. And that I have faithfully. And consistently set before you. The way of life. The way of death. The way of blessing. The way of cursing. The way of heaven. The way of hell. I hope that I have set before you.

So clearly. And explained to you. And exhorted to you. And encouraged you. To choose life. Choose life. But you know.

The solemn reality. About what Moses says here. It's. That it's not only God. Who has witnessed. What you have heard. The angels of heaven.

Have witnessed. All that you have heard. Even the creation itself. Has witnessed. All that you have heard. The sun. The moon.

[31:42] And the star. The sun. They've all witnessed. What you have heard. The people of this community. Who are sitting beside you. Have all witnessed. What you have heard.

These pews. That you're sitting on. And have been sitting on. For many years. Have witnessed. What you have heard. These walls. That have been standing. Longer than you. Have been living.

Have witnessed. What you have heard. This pulpit. Has witnessed. And presented to you. Everything. You have heard. But my friend. This is what Moses said.

To his congregation. And this is what I'm saying. To you today. I call. Heaven and earth. To witness. Against you today. Today.

They have all witnessed. God. The angels. The sun. The moon. The stars. These pews. These walls. This pulpit. They've all witnessed. What you have heard.

[32:41] In church. This morning. And when you stand. Before Jesus Christ. The righteous judge. On the last day. They will all be called.

As witnesses. They will be called. As witnesses. To testify. Against you. My unconverted friend. That you have heard. The good news.

You've heard. The message. Of the gospel. And you've had it. Ringing in your ears. You've been presented. With the ruin of sin. And the remedy of salvation. In Jesus Christ. You have.

Clearly. Had set before you. The most. Important. Choice. That you will ever make. In your life. The choice between. Life. And death. Blessing.

And curing. Heaven. And hell. You will have to stand. And give an account. For all that you've heard.

[33:37] And as Moses said. I say to you today. I call heaven and earth. To witness against you today. That I have set before you. Life and death. Blessing. And curse.

Therefore. Choose life. Choose life. But notice what Moses says.

Choose life. That you. And your children. May live. And you know. Moses mentions your children. Because. Well let's be honest.

If your life changed. If you chose life. If you followed the Lord. If you lived by faith. And obedience. If you became a Christian.

Think of the impact. That that would have upon your family. Your children. And your children's children. Choose life. He says. That you. And your children.

[34:34] May live. Choose life. Not only for yourself. But so that you'll teach your children. You know. Think of the impact.

It will have upon your home. And your family. My unconverted friend. Whatever you do. Please. Do not lead your children. To hell with you. Please. Choose life.

That you and your children. May live. How do you choose life? How do you choose life? Moses. He concludes his sermon. By saying. In verse 20. That in order to choose life. You must love the Lord.

You must obey his voice. And you must cling to him. You must love the Lord. Obey the Lord. And cling to the Lord.

Choose life. He says. Love the Lord. Obey the Lord. Cling to the Lord. And as we said. Moses. He wasn't on this. Anti-drug. Anti-suicide.

[35:35] Anti-abortion campaign. No. All these campaigns. As important as they are. Moses. Was on this campaign. Of eternal life. That's the campaign. I'm part of.

The campaign. To present to you. The reality. Of life. And death. Blessing. And cursing. Heaven. And hell. And I plead to you today.

Choose life. Oh. Choose life. Choose life. My friend. May the Lord bless these thoughts to us.

Let us pray. O Lord our gracious God. May give thanks to thee for another opportunity.

An opportunity to be in church. An opportunity to hear the gospel. An opportunity Lord to hear thy voice speaking to us. And presenting to us what we have heard from our youth.

[36:38] The reality of life and death. Blessing and cursing. Heaven and hell. And Lord we plead. Oh that we would respond.

And that we might choose life. That we might have life. And have it abundantly. Bless thy truth to our souls we plead. Help us to seek thee while thou art to be found.

And call upon thee while thou art near. Oh forgive us Lord for our waywardness. Our stubborn hearts. Help us to submit. And to commit everything. Into thine hand.

Oh go before us then we pray. Do us good. Take away our iniquity. Receive us graciously. For Jesus' sake. Amen. We shall bring our service to a conclusion.

By singing the words of Psalm 16. Psalm 16. It's on page 216. In the blue psalm book.

[37:48] Psalm 16. We're singing from verse 8. Down to the end of the psalm. And this is a psalm of the resurrection.

It speaks very clearly. And it prophesies about Jesus. That being resurrected. And we see that in verse 10. It says. Because my soul engraved to dwell. Shall not be left by thee.

Nor wilt thou give thine holy one. Corruption to see. That's speaking of Jesus. But because Jesus was raised from the dead. He presents to us. The way of life.

That's what we see in verse 11. Thou wilt me show the path of life. Of joys there is full store. Before thy face at thy right hand. Are pleasures evermore.

And Psalm 16. It's a psalm that's telling us. To choose life. So Psalm 16. From verse 8. Down to the end of the psalm. To God's praise. Before me till the Lord I said.

[38:56] That it is so that he. Doth ever stand.

At my right hand. I shall not move at thee.

Because of this my heart is glad.

And joy shall be expressed. And that it is so that he shall be reunited. Estabilt my faith.

About me till the end of the loan. And body shall move at thee. Because of this my heart is endless.

[40:07] to dwell shall not be let by thee nor wilt thou give thy holy part for our heart to see thou wilt me show the path of life of joy that is full store before thy face at thy right hand are pleasures ever more the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ the love of God the Father and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore

Amen Amen