

Reflecting on God's Word

Reading: Deuteronomy 30:11-20 (OT page 209)

Background to the reading

Our passage is the last speech of Moses before he retired as the leader of Israel. As he is handing over the reins, he reminds the people of Israel once again of their responsibilities and challenges as God's people.

They have a choice to make and it will mean either life or death. If they choose to obey God and love him unconditionally, then they will live in the land of milk and honey and they will become a great nation. But if they choose not to listen to God and do not love God unconditionally then they will become exiles.

And Moses tells them that this is not something too difficult for them to understand. It is within their reach. The two metaphors of "in heaven" and "beyond the sea" were indicators of the things that is not within the reach of human beings. God has given them His law whereby everything that He expects them to do is written down. He expects them to love Him, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws.

But we also need to understand something else about the context. Most of the people could not read and therefore the priest had to read to them the law of God. In fact we know that the people of Israel had to gather every seventh year to hear the

complete law of God. The people of Israel had to memorize every word in order for them to know the law. It was the only guarantee for them not to disobey one law!

Moses ends his speech by saying that he calls "heaven and earth" as his witnesses. It is as if the tone and urgency of the whole speech suddenly changes. To speak of witnesses can only apply in a legal setting which of course corresponds to the legal contract that existed between God and Israel. Moses is now reemphasizing the fact that what he has said, is part of the legalities of the contract or covenant. And his witnesses are "heaven" and "earth" because they will endure long after their generation have died. Without these witnesses the contract would not be legally binding for the people of Israel. Now they are bound to accept it and act accordingly!

In light of the formal solemnity of covenant transaction, then, Moses set before Israel "life and death," that is, the blessings or curses that follow covenant obedience or disobedience. Obedience brings life in all its fullness whereas disobedience causes the greatest curse of all, namely death.

The meaning of the text is clear: There are no excuses for the people of Israel not to be obedient to the Lord!

It was such a powerful message that even the apostle Paul referred to it in the New Testament in his letter to the Romans chapter 10.

But he reinterpreted the words of our reading into a Christological setting, explaining that Christ is the end of the law - so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes. Paul said that in Christ there is no more righteousness through the law of God but through faith in Christ. And there are no excuses not to follow Christ. He applies the same words of Moses but in a new light saying: "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: ⁹ That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."

I guess after comparing the two texts they come to the same conclusion driving a very important message home. Christ did not come to abolish the law but He fulfilled it because He was the only One who could fully obeyed God's commandments stated in the Law. But because of what He has done, every believer can obey and follow him. And the same rule applies - no excuses!

Amen

MP 624

Take my life

Sermon

The text for the sermon comes from verse 11:

Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach.

I do not know about you but I do not like choices. I am never sure what to pick and what to put back on the shelf. When it comes to life changing choices it is even more difficult. But in the event of making a wrong choice it is always easy to come up with a good excuse. And may I say we are very good with coming up with all sorts of excuses.

It is no wonder that Moses gave the people no option of any excuse, in the event of choosing not to follow God. They have all the knowledge to their disposal to make the right choice. God gave them clear indications of exactly how He wants them to behave. He even entered with them into a contract whereby He promised them that He will be there God if they obey His commandments. And in this contract is everything they possibly need to know about Him. It is not beyond their reach.

From history it is evident that the people of God did not obey Him which resulted in their Babylonian exile just as Moses has warned them.

Mercifully God intervened in history. In and through Jesus Christ He entered into a new relationship with everyone who believes in His redemption, resurrection and ascension. And once more just as Paul said in Romans chapter 10 there are no excuses not to follow Christ. He did everything possible for every believer to enter into a living relationship with Him and inherit His heavenly kingdom.

SO we have a choice, actually a very easy one to make – do we follow Christ or do we go through life without His loving care or in more concrete terms do we choose death or life? But we must know whatever choice we make it will have life changing consequences. To follow Him will mean total devotion and complete commitment. Our choices will always determine how we go through life and how we act, and speak.

I read about a man who had a very positive attitude in life. He is the kind of guy you love to hate. He is always in a good mood and always has something positive to say. When someone would ask him how he was doing, he would reply, "If I were any better, I would be twins!" He was a natural motivator.

One day he fell 60 feet from a communications tower. Afterwards he said that when he was falling he thought about the well-being of his soon to be born daughter. And when he was lying on the ground he remembered that he had two choices: He could choose to live or he could choose to die. But he chose to live! The paramedics were great. They kept telling him he was going to be fine. But when they wheeled him into the Emergency Room, he got scared when he saw the expressions on the faces of the doctors and nurses. He said: "In their eyes, he read "he's a dead man. Something within him told him that he needed to take action." "When a nurse asked him if he was allergic to anything he replied. "Gravity." Over their laughter, he told them, "I am choosing to live. Operate on me as if I am alive, not dead."

He survived. Why? because of his amazing attitude.

In the same way if we choose to follow Christ we also fall from towers but survive because He will hold us. If we live with Christ we also get ill but know that He is there for us. If we choose Christ we will be determined that nothing will deter us from following Him.

May we show some determination, action and attitude when we choose to invite other people to Back to church Sunday. After all you are offering them new life that is only possible through faith in the Triune God alone.

Amen

[e Deut. 30:14](#)