

Chosen
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Deuteronomy 30:1-10; 19-20

Did you ever try to get a one-year-old to look at the camera and smile for the picture? You're trying for that great family group picture, everyone is smiling beautifully, and the baby is looking everywhere else but at the camera. Susan and I experienced this with young Knox and the Northpoint Mall Santa picture. Santa tried, the photographer tried, Grandma tried, and yet Knox's focus was everywhere except the camera.

Then Granddad had an idea to stand behind the camera making a silly sound that always makes him focus and smile. He heard the sound, looked, smiled, mission accomplished, memory preserved. We achieved the "blessing" of a great photo not the "curse" of the distracted or distraught face in the Santa photo.

- What does that have to do with Deuteronomy 30? Stick with me and see.
- We're nearing the end of Moses' life, the end of his instructions for the Children of Israel, and the end of this book Deuteronomy.
- Chapters 27 and 28 give us a long list of "blessings and curses" for Israel.
- Moses warned them that keeping God's commands would bring blessing, but breaking the covenant in disobedience would bring horrible curses.
- God in His sovereign wisdom has given people a will and a choice to follow Him or reject Him. This "sermon" was specific to the nation of Israel. Their choice to obey or disobey God would determine the course of history for their nation as God's chosen people. It applies in a different way for us.
- The sound of God's voice calls for a choice!
- Flip over to chapter 28. The phrase "obey His voice" appears in this chapter in verses 1, 2, 15, 45, and 62. Then in chapter 30: 2, 8, 10, 20.

- The sound of God’s voice calls for a choice!
- A truly blessed life comes only by living according to God’s purposes.
- What are God’s purposes or “will” for people?
- Scripture tells us God “*desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth...*” that we hear the voice of the Holy Spirit and trust Christ in repentance. He also desires that we obey His commands.ⁱⁱ

Big Idea: The sound of God’s voice calls for a choice: life or death, blessings or curses. A truly blessed life comes only if we live according to God’s purposes.

- In 30:1 after listing all the blessings and curses, Moses prophesies that Israel will disobey God, break the covenant, and be scattered in exile.
- If you’ve studied the Old Testament you know how this story unfolded.
- **In the days of King Solomon’s reign how were things for Israel? Describe Israel’s relationship with God after Solomon. How did the Babylonians factor into the history of Israel?**
- Let’s look at the first five verses of Deuteronomy 30. Reading in the NLT.

Deuteronomy 30:1–5 (NLT)

“In the future, when you experience all these blessings and curses I have listed for you, and when you are living among the nations to which the LORD your God has exiled you, take to heart all these instructions. 2 If at that time you and your children return to the LORD your God, and if you obey with all your heart and all your soul all the commands I have given you today, 3 then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes. He will have mercy on you and gather you back from all the nations where he has scattered you. 4 Even though you are banished to the ends of the earth, the LORD your God will gather you from there and bring you back again. 5 The LORD your God will return you to the land that belonged to your ancestors, and you will possess that land again. Then he will make you even more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors!

- **What are the “if” statements in verse two? “If” they do the things in verse two, what would God do “then” in verses 3, 4, and 5? Did those “blessings” happen for the nation of Israel in biblical history?**
- A “Cliff’s Notes” history lesson on the nation of Israel before Christ:
 - As Moses predicted, Israel disobeyed God following idols and in 586 BC they were conquered by Babylon, Jerusalem and the temple were burned to the ground, and the people were taken as exiles to Babylonia or scattered across many nations.
 - Then God caused Cyrus the Great, king of Persia to conquer Babylon, and in 538 BC he allowed the Jews to go home.
 - Eventually Jerusalem and the temple were rebuilt and Israel began to prosper because of God’s blessings. Moses predicted this too:

Deuteronomy 30:6–10 (NLT)

6 “The LORD your God will change your heart and the hearts of all your descendants, so that you will love him with all your heart and soul and so you may live! 7 The LORD your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate and persecute you. 8 Then you will again obey the LORD and keep all his commands that I am giving you today.

9 “The LORD your God will then make you successful in everything you do. He will give you many children and numerous livestock, and he will cause your fields to produce abundant harvests, for the LORD will again delight in being good to you as he was to your ancestors.

10 The LORD your God will delight in you if you obey his voice and keep the commands and decrees written in this Book of Instruction, and if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul.

- They heard His voice and turned back to “face the camera” for God’s perfect picture of blessings on the nation.
- Sounds like a happy ending, right? By the time of Jesus’ birth the Jewish homeland was prosperous, the population large, and many thousands of Jews from other lands made regular pilgrimages back to Jerusalem.ⁱⁱⁱ

- **In Jesus' time how did Israel lose focus and turn away from God (think Scribes and Pharisees?)**
- Ironically, their focus on keeping the law and extra rules became an idol.
- There is much debate on how this prophecy about Israel will be fulfilled. It's beyond the scope of this lesson but I'm giving you some commentary on it in the footnotes if you want to read further.^{iv}
- I want to apply this text to our lives today. Let's look back at verse six.
- Verse six says God changed their hearts. Your translation may say God "circumcised" their hearts. We know God established physical circumcision of Jewish boys eight days after birth as a sign of His covenant with Israel. Lack of circumcision represented being without God.
- Moses used that very vivid imagery they all understood to describe a different surgery, "spiritual surgery" on the "heart." Transplant surgery.
- This verse reminds us of Ezekiel 36:26-27: ²⁶ And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. ²⁷ And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.^v
- The only way Israel could truly turn to God in repentance then is also the only way people today can turn to Him and obey Him: a NEW heart!
- God's voice calls for a choice. Moses presented that choice to them:

Deuteronomy 30:19–20 (NLT)

19 "Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, so that you and your descendants might live!

- How did they and how do we choose life? Look at verse 20:

20 You can make this choice by loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and committing yourself firmly to him. This is the key to your life.

And if you love and obey the LORD, you will live long in the land the LORD swore to give your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

- If we believe the Bible we know that the natural state of humans is not to obey God, it's the opposite. Before Christ scripture says everyone is “were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh” (there's that word again!)^{vi} So, **how can people like that accomplish verse 20?**
- Moses says, “Choose life!” Jesus said: ³⁶Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life; whoever does not obey the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God remains on him. ^{vii}
- God's voice calls for a choice and the first choice is to follow Christ as Savior and Lord. Apart from that decision we can't accomplish verse 20.
- If we believe in eternal security (that you can't become “unsaved”) then once our salvation choice is made we're all set to live like Christ, right?
- **Even after we've trusted Christ, how do we have to “choose life” daily? As a follower of Christ, how am I like a one-year-old getting his picture made? What causes that distraction? What causes me to “turn back to the camera” for God's blessings?**

So, What's the Takeaway?

- The sound of God's voice calls for a choice.
- A truly blessed life comes only by living according to God's purposes.
- We can only live in God's will by first choosing to accept His free gift of salvation through trusting Christ as Savior and Lord.
- That choice is presented when our heart hears the voice of the Holy Spirit convicting us of our sin and calling us to Christ.
- Trusting Christ is a once for all time decision. But even after we're saved our sinful nature still causes us to stop looking at Him and become distracted by the “world, the flesh, and the devil.” (See Mark 4:15-17)
- Like that one-year-old who won't look at the camera, we need to hear the voice of our Heavenly Father and turn to focus on Him and His word.

- Here are two verses (among many) that speak to making a daily choice to obey God:

Isaiah 30:21 (ESV) 21 And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, “This is the way, walk in it,” when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.

James 1:25 (ESV) 25 But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

- After we’ve chosen “life” through salvation, we need to daily make the choice to “die to self” and follow Christ in obedience and trust.
- This week as we start each day I hope in our minds we hear Moses saying, *“Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. Now I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life[!]”*

ⁱ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (1 Ti 2:4). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

ⁱⁱ John 14:15

ⁱⁱⁱ Explore the Bible Leader’s Guide – Lifeway 2019

^{iv} Bible scholars disagree about the future of Israel. Some say that the church is now “spiritual Israel” and that all of these Old Testament promises are now being fulfilled in a spiritual sense in the church. Others say that the Old Testament promises must be taken at face value and that we should expect a fulfillment of them when Jesus Christ returns to establish His kingdom on earth. Moses seems to be speaking here to and about Israel and not some other “people of God” in the future, such as the church. The church has no covenant relationship to the land of Israel, for God gave that land to Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 15), and the blessings and curses were declared to Israel, not the church. It would appear that there will be a literal fulfillment of these promises to Israel. When they repent, turn back to Jehovah, and open their hearts to the operation of His Spirit (Ezek. 37:1–14; Isa. 11:2; Joel 2:28–29), God will save them from their sins and establish them in Messiah’s glorious kingdom (Zech. 12:10–13:1; 14:8–9).
THE WIERSBE BIBLE COMMENTARY: OLD TESTAMENT © 2007 Warren W. Wiersbe

^v [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Eze 36:26–27). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

^{vi} [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Col 2:13). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

^{vii} [*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*](#). (2016). (Jn 3:36). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.