

The choice of LIFE verses DEATH!

Sermonette by Robert Schmid

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Have you ever considered that life, all of life, consists of nothing more than a series of choices, one choice after another, just as you go through life taking one step after another, so, everything you do in life is the consequence of a choice.

Left or right, up or down, eat or not eat, get married or stay single, rob the bank or get a job. Tell me anything that you can do without making a choice?

Oh – I realize that some choices we make are more obvious, more deliberate, and some are made more conscious than others, but they are all choices and we must make them – like it or not!

I have entitled this sermonette “**The choice of Life verses Death.**” It’s not an original subject or original title, rather than it is the heading when you read Deut. 30:15-20 in this Harper Study Bible. I am going to read these verses because they state the purpose of this sermonette better than I can. After all, these are the words of God and who can improve on that. Deut. 30:15-20; God is speaking through Moses and He says:

“See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you this day, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments, and his statutes and his ordinances, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land which you are 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, I declare to you this day, that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land which you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live, loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him; for that means life to you and length of days, that you may dwell in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

Does this sound like the harsh and stern God of the Old Testament, a view that many of us carry with us to some degree or another from our religious upbringing in the past? Or, is this not the passionate plea of a father to his children, to please realize that there is a choice to be made, to realize that there are two ways to go, and in the Father’s great concern, and in this outpouring of the Father’s love, He tells us in plain, unmistakable language what choice to make, when He tells us to **choose life and not death, good and not evil.**

Who can ever accuse God of not speaking plainly, of leaving His creation in doubt as to what choice to make? Heaven and earth – in vs. 19 – is His witness against us that we have been warned, that we have been told what choice to make and so He tells us:

“I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse: therefore – and here again we can feel the loving and fatherly concern therefore, He pleads, choose life.”

Some could say at this point; what’s the big deal? Obviously, everybody chooses life over death, good over evil, blessings over cursings! But, is this really so? Is it necessary for God to tell us the obvious? Well, the fact of the matter is that it is very much necessary. The fact of the matter is that the world has chosen death and evil, and now, to add insult to injury, is blaming God for the consequences of their choices.

I have just returned from Germany where I spend two weeks with my sister. Her son Steffen, whom some of you met when he was here with his brother in 1976, just committed suicide. Steffen was a tremendously intelligent and talented young man, only 27 years old. But, Steffen had difficulties accepting the shortcomings of a society that he saw as corrupt and hypocritical. He couldn’t handle the pressures of life because he tried to handle them by himself. Oh – yes, he was searching for his God; and when he took his life with a bottle of pills and a bottle of whisky that cold, wintry night in a forest not far from his home, he had with him a candle, a New Testament and a Hindu prayer necklace. Steffen was searching alright. Steffen, you see, made a choice, and he chose death.

Now, we can all agree that this was an extreme step. But, what about us – you and I, as Dr. Zimmerman would say: “You, what’s your name?” – how do we deal with our Fathers plea to choose blessings and life instead of curses and death? Oh – I realize that none of us has taken the extreme step of instant death, even though thousands every year do precisely that, but what about the slower, the more subtle ways of choosing death and curses?

Take for example the more than 390,000 people who die each year from smoking! Is it not suicide, a choosing of death with the same end result as swallowing a bottle of pills as my nephew did? What about the consumption of excessive amounts of alcohol, the eating of harmful foods? What about every time we break a law, commit a sin, no matter how small or how big! Is it not a choosing of death instead of life, of curses instead of blessings?

God’s plea to his people Israel is a plea to you and me today when He says:

“IF you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you this day, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in His ways and by keeping His commandments and His statutes and His ordinances – then you shall live.”

Notice, the promise is conditional!

Notice, here the biggest, little word in the English language, the word IF – IF you obey! IF you choose the way of give instead of get! IF you love God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your might! – then and only then you shall live, then you shall have blessings and not curses.

Remember the story in the 8th chapter of John when Christ confronted the woman who was caught in adultery! He did not condemn her, but he admonished her to make a choice: *“Go, and sin no more!”* That command required action, it required the making of a choice, and making this God recommended choice will lead to a life of blessings and to eternal life.

You see, to sin, or not to sin, is a choice we must make every day, every hour, and every minute.

In John 5:14 Christ told the man who was just healed of a life of sickness: “*Sin no more that nothing worse befall you.*” Yes, the man had to make a choice. To continue in sin, or quit and accept his Healer, his Savior Jesus Christ.

In a short few weeks we will again partake of the Passover. Without the Passover, without the shedding of blood, there would be no choice; there would be no life, for we are all sinners, deserving death and nothing else. But, because Jesus Christ died for OUR sins and paid the death penalty for US, we all have a choice. The question is: **What choice will we make?** Life or death, blessing or curse, good or evil? God’s recommendation is that we choose life; God’s recommendation is that we accept the blessings He freely wants to give.

Listen to God’s assurance, His promise in verses 11-14 of Deut. 30:

“For this command which I command you this day (that is the command to choose life and not death) is not to hard for you (no, with the help of God we can make the right choice), neither is it far off. It is not in heaven, that you should say, Who will go up for us to heaven, and bring it to us, that we may hear 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?’ But the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you can do it”(yes, the Word of God is laying right there in front of you in your lap).

The question is: **Will we take Him at His Word?** I pray that we all do.

