

Deuteronomy 30 • Life or Death

Introduction

God views us in terms of the final, inevitable result of the choices we're making, of where our chosen path is leading. If we're making choices **FOR** a right relationship with Him, He sees us as alive; if leading **AWAY** from Him, we're seen as already dead. Our ultimate, eternal fate isn't something that occurs in the next life, but is being determined by how we choose to live this life. The issue of obedience betrays our choice of life or death and that it can't really be put off 'til later.

¹“So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, ²and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, ³then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you. ⁴If your outcasts are at the ends of the earth, from there the LORD your God will gather you, and from there He will bring you back. ⁵The LORD your God will bring you into the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it; and He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers.

[Read v.1-6]

Q: What is the dual meaning of these verses? To whom do they refer literally, figuratively, and as yet to come?

A: They can refer to at least 4 groups or situations:

1. Literally to soon-to-come generations of Israelites that will forsake God, as during the times of the judges.
2. Literally to the generations of Israelites belonging to the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah, who will be taken into captivity by the Assyrians and Babylonians.
3. Literally to the generation of Israelites dispersed by the Romans and included in the diaspora to this day.
4. Figuratively to backslidden Believers who respond accordingly to God's discipline and are restored to a right relationship with Him.

Q: How do we know that simply returning from captivity is not the ultimate sign of restoration? What takes greater precedence over a physical return to the land of Israel?

A: “...and you return **to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul...**” (v.2) The greater sign is spiritual revival, not simply “citizens” returning to their country of origin.

Point: There is still a greater sign of the End Times than just the returning of people to the land—a great, spiritual returning to God, in particular to Jesus the Messiah.

Q: What does this figuratively teach concerning a backslidden Believer?

A: God's discipline came about in the first place as a result of not following His whole Word, and is therefore only and fully redressed by becoming obedient. His Word does not change, so the heart must.

Application: Are you conscience on some level that you're not exactly where you should be or becoming the kind of Christian you'd hoped? Is it possible that you're in a place of God's choosing to discipline you, to get your attention? Is there something with which you're not compliant from the heart? Have you ever considered that the only way to shorten its duration is returning to God from the heart?

⁶“Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live. ⁷The LORD your God will inflict all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. ⁸And you shall again obey the LORD, and observe all His commandments which I command you today. ⁹Then the LORD your God will

[Read v.6-10]

Q: What kind of obedience does God desire? Is it enough to simply follow His rules?

A: He desires obedience from the heart, “...if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul.” (v.10) It's not enough to simply follow His rules because He expects a much more personal relationship based on love: “...to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul...”

prosper you abundantly in all the work of your hand, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your cattle and in the produce of your ground, for the LORD will again rejoice over you for good, just as He rejoiced over your fathers; ¹⁰if you obey the LORD your God to keep His commandments and His statutes which are written in this book of the law, if you turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and soul.

Q: How does such a change come about, especially for someone whose past record of behavior has been anything BUT obedience-based love?

A: "...the LORD your God will circumcise your heart..." (v.6) A genuine return initiated on our part is greeted by God's response to complete the work of the heart. It's accomplished by His grace.

"Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the Lord. "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the Lord, "I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the Lord, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."
Jeremiah 31:31-34

Q: Every generation of Believer seems to embrace the need for spiritual revival. What is the true sign that verifies a true "revival"?

A: When behavior and lives change because the heart has been changed. External signs and wonders are not the chief verification, but the melting of hearts to become His children. In fact, signs and wonders **WITHOUT** the presence of lives changed from the heart betray a false spiritual movement.

Q: How does God's use of circumcision in this instance reveal something special and particular?

A: It's not a circumcision of the flesh, but of the heart. It is not granted based on earthly lineage to Abraham, but to spiritual acceptance of Jesus the Messiah.

Q: What does it mean to NOT possess a circumcised heart? What is the condition of such a person?

A: Since v.6 indicates a circumcised heart is necessary "so that you may live", to **NOT** possess it is the equivalent of death. God sees us in terms of the inevitable result to which our choices are leading, either life in Him now and forever, or eternal death.

Application: Do you treat God like any other authority in life that simply must be obeyed? Why might our affection for God be directly linked to our areas of spiritual weakness and strength? Do you truly see "love" as an "all-or-nothing" proposition that requires us to make Christ the object of our affection?

[Read v.11-14]

Q: What do "up to heaven" and "beyond the sea" represent?

A: Things in heaven are hidden from our view, things across the sea are located a great distance away.

Q: Are God's expectations and ways incomprehensible or inaccessible?

A: No, it "is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach". The God that requires obedience from the heart has brought His Word directly to our heart so that we never have to search for it or wonder if it's complete.

¹¹"For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. ¹²It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' ¹³Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?' ¹⁴But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.

¹⁵“See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, and death and adversity; ¹⁶in that I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that you may live and multiply, and that the LORD your God may bless you in the land where you are entering to possess it. ¹⁷But if your heart turns away and you will not obey, but are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸I declare to you today that you shall surely perish. You will not prolong your days in the land where you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess it. ¹⁹I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, ²⁰by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life and the length of your days, that you may live in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them.”

Application: Is there something in particular—or even perhaps it’s the entirety of God’s Word—that you find difficult to follow? Since God’s Word can reasonably overcome anything, what does this reveal about your heart and mind? Do we see that if it isn’t God making things difficult, it must be us?

[Read v.15-20]

Q: To “love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways” is defined as what in v.15?

A: “Life and prosperity”.

Q: What are the 3 behaviors in v.17 that combine to be defined as “death and adversity”?

1. “...if your heart turns away...”
2. “...and you will not obey...”
3. “...and worship other gods and serve them.”

Q: So is God speaking about people that make small mistakes or experience temporary setbacks?

A: No, this concerns people that at one time were making the effort to maintain a right relationship with Him but have left to replace Him with someone or something else. It’s highly unlikely that love exists when one of the parties would rather spend their time elsewhere.

Q: According to v.19, what must we do?

A: “Choose”. Behavior is only changed or reinforced by the ways we **choose** to behave.

Q: What are the 3 behaviors in v.20 that combine to be defined as “life and prosperity”?

1. “...loving the LORD your God...”
2. “...obeying His voice...”
3. “...holding fast to Him...”

Application: Have you ever considered that to obey or disobey can be a choice leading to life or death? What does it say to you personally that God promises blessings for choosing His life? Do you see that His offers come from His own desires for love rather than judgment?

Overall Application

- Are you in a tough spot because you’re being spiritually tested, or is it the natural destination that results from not fully following God?
- Have you misapplied the need for obedience, that it’s not so much about avoiding judgment as it is a confirmation of one’s loving relationship with God?
- Are you avoiding the truth by making it more difficult or distant than it really is?
- What are the choices you’re going to make going forward that will make the necessary difference?