

“The Lord Is Your Life ... So Choose Life!”
Deuteronomy 30:11-20

For the people of God, there is no excuse for not knowing God’s Word. Moses has spent the last 40 years teaching them what God has revealed. If ever they strayed from God’s path, it would not be for a lack of knowledge. It would be a choice they made.

Moses gives voice to the possible excuses the people might have: “Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us?” (30:12) “Who will cross the sea to get it ... so we may obey it?” (30:13). Both sounded logical considering the fact that Moses, the proclaimer of God’s truth, is about to leave them – he would not be entering the Promised Land – his life is drawing to an end.

These are his final days. These are some of his final instructions. And just as we would expect, Moses stresses what is most important for them to remember and do.

So what is the answer to the question? Who will go and retrieve God’s Word now that Moses is departing? What is Moses’ answer? No one! No one need ascend to heaven or cross the sea. Why? Because the word has already been given! Verse 14 – “The word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so that you may obey it.”

God’s good purpose has been revealed to Israel. He has spoken. The issue now is not a lack of revelation – it is a call for obedience.

Verse 11 – “[The command] is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach.” It is not incomprehensible and it is not unattainable. Here, Moses anticipates the familiar excuses and shoots them down. This will not be an issue of aptitude, but of attitude.

By the grace of God and the Spirit of God, obedience is possible ... but are we WILLING? That’s the big question.

Moses emphasizes this frequently. He declares it here near the end of his life in v. 16: “Love the LORD your God, walk in obedience to him, and keep his commands.” And again in verse 20: “Love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him.” But, of course, this isn’t an “Oh yah, and one more thing” moment. This has been the

instruction for God's people since they were set free from slavery and called out to declare his glory and praise – everywhere they wandered! This core command went all the way back to the giving of the Law and the promise of God's steadfast, covenantal love. What was the instruction?

Deut. 6:5 – “Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.” Set your heart apart to *seek* the Lord alone. Set your soul apart to *trust* the Lord alone. Set your strength apart to *serve* the Lord alone. Experience the fullness of joy and life not in yourself, not in this world, not in endless hollow pursuits clamoring for your affections – but in the God who created and redeemed you!

And you know what? Moses was right! It is about WILLINGNESS, the attitude of our heart towards God. If we are honest, the main problem for Israel and for us today, when it comes to obedience to God, is not ignorance, it is defiance. The issue is not “What does God want me to do?” but “Am I willing to do what God wants me to do?”

So how do I cultivate that *willingness* to obey God?

WE CULTIVATE OBEDIENCE TO GOD THROUGH INTIMACY WITH GOD.

Obedience flows from a relationship. I would listen to the advice of a good friend more readily than that of a stranger. I obey the one I trust and respect; not someone I know nothing about.

In the first place, God did not give us a set of commands to obey because adherence to a formula is the bottom line. That's legalism. That's dead religion.

Rather, it is all about a relationship. God wants us to enjoy a relationship with Him and the life that results from it. We obey Him because we know He has designed His best for us. And within His design, intimacy is integral! Communion is key!

There is a famous painting called *The Light of the World* by William Holman Hunt, depicting Jesus standing outside a door. It is based on Rev 3:20 “Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and

eat with them, and they with me.” Jesus is preparing to knock on an overgrown, long-unopened door. According to Hunt: “The door in the painting has no handle, and can therefore be opened only from the inside, representing the obstinately shut mind.”

What was the context in Revelation 3? Jesus was addressing the church in Laodicea: Rev. 3:17-19 – “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm, I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to receive from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent. - Here I am! I stand at the door and knock ...”

The Christians of Laodicea had become so self-sufficient (in their eyes) that they felt no need for God – for his richness, his righteousness, his restoring power, his renewing life. They had grown comfortable. But in their comforts, they lacked communion. In their indulgence, they lacked intimacy. They had exchanged God’s best life for cheap substitutes – His fullness for the world’s emptiness. And that exchange – that pattern – leads only to ... a frail faith and a lukewarm love.

The antidote? Cultivate obedience by building intimacy with God. *How?*

We can build on these 4 areas:

1. TIME – Make time to be alone with God. It takes time to get to know someone. Guard your quiet time with Him.
2. TALK – You simply cannot have a relationship without communication.
3. THINK – Think about God’s goodness and gifts. Every day, hundreds of distractions vie for our attention. Train yourself to listen to His voice in the midst of the noise.
4. TRUST – Without trust, obedience won’t follow. As our knowledge of God grows, our intimacy with Him grows, and our trust in Him deepens.

As we invest in each of these, we become less and less fixed on the things of this world and more and more fixed on the God who love us beyond measure.

Paul put it this way: “I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things.”
(Phil 3:8)

Moses said it twice: V. 15 – “I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction” and V. 19 – “I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses.”

Now, you must choose! [P] On the surface, the options look ridiculous. On the one side is LIFE and the other DEATH. Who with the right mind would choose death? And why is Moses telling a group of people, who are alive and well, to choose life?

Obviously, this life and death is not about mere physical existence. Moses is not offering a survivalist course on the tail end of their 40 years of wandering.

Rather, the life Moses sets before them refers to something much more significant – a quality of life possessed by a person who walks in obedience to God. It refers to a life that is meaningful and purposeful, substantive and significant. In short, as Jesus describes it, life abundant or life to the full!

It seems like a no-brainer. But that fact remains, every day, so many choose vain, trivial, hollow, and hopeless pursuits over that which endures forever. Verse 17 warns of the destruction that results “if your heart turns away ... and if you are drawn away to other gods ...” As those who have been marred by sin, our attentions have been turned, our affections twisted, our love misplaced. We’ve lost our basic sense of what is valuable in life – what is of true worth. We forsake what we have been graciously given – and so we end up forsaking the Giver Himself. We need an awakening!

And so Moses declares: The word is near you ... Now CHOOSE LIFE! “Choose life, so you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him!” (vs. 19-20) Choose to obey God and do what He says.

Moses wants the people to know the SCALE of this decision. It's no small matter. "For the LORD is your life!" (30:20) In other words, apart from a relationship with God, they cannot be the people of God. Without keeping God's Word, they may have an existence, but not the life that is truly LIFE, the way God designed it to be.

If you've lost the sense that life is profoundly meaningful, don't try to beef it up with more things, with more of what the world offers. Nothing can fill it up and give you a LIFE. Only an abiding relationship with Jesus can! Only Jesus Christ can give us the life that is truly LIFE!

Jesus tells the Samaritan woman at the well – the water you get here will cause you to be thirsty again. I am the LIVING water. Receive from me and you will never thirst.

And so the people of Israel had a decision to make. They can't stay neutral. Joshua, Moses' successor, gave the same call when they stepped into Canaan: "Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the river, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." (Joshua 24:15)

They cannot be passive about this. They can't just go through the motions taking the days as they come. They (and WE) are challenged: MAKE A CONSCIOUS CHOICE TO HONOR GOD. You know why? By not making a choice, it is a choice itself. Passivity is a choice. If you don't decide, someone or something will decide for you.

You want to cook a simple dinner. You leave home to buy some groceries at the store. But on your drive there, you see the billboards outside the mall telling you a big sale is on. No harm taking a quick look. As you walk through the aisles, colorful displays catch your eye, and you are enticed to check them out. An hour later, you eventually walk out carrying bags of stuff and a receipt for \$200.

Now off to buy groceries. You had in your mind what you needed. But as you walk through the store, you see many yellow sales tags, and you're drawn to put some of those into the shopping cart. You need them somehow. Finally you came out with twice as much as you meant to get.

By now, you've been out for two hours longer than you anticipated. You are hungry. There is little time to cook. You stop by your fast food of choice for a quick bite. After it's all said and done, you got more than you needed; you spent more than you planned; you took longer than expected; and you're left feeling only more tired and strained.

This happens to anyone (me). It's common and we see it happening often. BUT this cannot be our everyday way of living. We can't do life on the spur of the moment, reacting to random chances, responding to what catches our attention, all the time and expect to thrive. Where is your attention? In what are you invested? And for Whom?

The saying is true: "All that glitters is not gold. All that is gold does not glitter."

Pause and take stock of your life. Look for the GOLD in life - the things that are significant, lasting and precious. Choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve.

Don't let your life, your meaning, your influence be modeled after the world. You are the redeemed of Christ! The Lord is your life!

Set before you this day are life & death, blessings & curses. Which will you choose?