

See, I set before you today life and prosperity, death and destruction. For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, and if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

In the name of our Leader and Guide, Jesus Christ, dear friends,

The phone rings. You pick it up and the voice on the other end informs you that you have won a prize in a sweepstakes held by Foot Locker at the mall. You can have your choice of either a brand new pair of Nike tennis shoes worth up to \$225 (so you can get the Nike Flyknit Air Max, if you want them!) or one old, smelly, sweaty, ripped out, worn out tennis shoe.

You're fortunate enough to receive a special gift card for a dinner out at a restaurant. You arrive at the restaurant and find that your special card allows you two options for dinner that evening: A full buffet, or a plate full of mud and sewage.

The city gives you a choice: You can enjoy living in your home as you always have, or they will come by and demolish it with a wrecking ball, offering you nothing in return.

Your teacher says that you've done so well in her class that you can pick your own grade for the semester. She says that you can have an A+ or you can choose an F.

Those examples seem absurd. The choices any normal person would make appear to be obvious. Only someone who was out of their mind would willingly pick the poorer options. Who would give up such good things in order to get such useless things?

It seems ridiculous but people make choices worse than those every day! The sad part is, they make bad choices when it comes to their faith and their eternal salvation.

Moses spoke the words of Deuteronomy 30:15-20 to people who were evidently having some trouble making appropriate choices. And so Moses lays it on the line with them. In effect, God's representative says to God's people:

### **SO, WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE?**

- 1. Death and Destruction, OR (15,17,18)**
- 2. Life and Prosperity (15,16,19,20)**

Now that first option Moses presents to God's people seems ridiculous: Death and Destruction. Who's going to pick that? Yet it does happen. This is how it happens. Remember that Moses is talking to God's people. These people have heard God's Word. They have heard the truth; they have believed it before. They are now confronted with the choice whether or not to continue to follow the only true God. So you see, this is not a call to faith, a call to come to believe in God. They believed already and are being asked whether or not they intend to continue following the LORD.

People in this situation do sometimes make the foolish choice. Some simply “turn their hearts away” as God warns against in verse 17. To some, God’s Word becomes so distasteful that it’s not much different than a plate full of sewage. You’d turn your head away from that if it was placed before you and some do the same thing when they turn their hearts away from God. A variety of excuses might be offered: God’s commands aren’t realistic in today’s world. If we can’t keep His commands anyway, why try? The Bible does nothing but try to take all the fun out of life.

Oh really? Who knows better, the sinful fool who talks that way or the Almighty God who says this in the verses right before our text: ***Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, “Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?” Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, “Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it? No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.*** God’s Word is right here with us—in our hearts, in our Bibles. It’s not too hard for us. But we are reminded here that some are not obedient to it—even after hearing it and believing it for a while. Sin affects some people to the point of causing them to turn their hearts away.

Others find something else more attractive than God. Our text warns to not ***bow down to other gods and worship them.*** For the people that Moses spoke to, the lure of false gods, carved idols, was a real temptation. Some of them disobeyed the 1st Commandment: ***You shall have no other gods before me.*** They left their Savior God for dead pieces of wood or stone. A foolish choice.

The result for those who would choose to turn their hearts away or chase after false gods is DEATH AND DESTRUCTION. God said to them: ***I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed. You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess.*** God had in mind for his people to cross over and inhabit this land described as one “flowing with milk and honey.” God had blessings galore planned for those who loved him. For those who decided that following God was distasteful and unattractive, death and destruction would be their end. Not only would the blessings of that new land not be theirs for long, but the blessings of heaven would be something they would never experience. Destruction in hell would be the reward for their rejection of God.

You know, we have the same choices today. And don’t get all fired-up about chastising the foolish people during Moses’ day and even today, who, given the choice, pick the foolish option of DEATH AND DESTRUCTION. Recognize that it is us too! From time to time, our sinful nature leads us to pick the things of this world, instead of the things of God.

God's commands seem to pop into our minds at what our human nature considers inopportune times. On the verge of a sinful action or thought or word—or in the midst of sinful behavior—we remember God's Word. But it's not the choice we make at that moment. We turn away and we are disobedient. Something else takes the place of God for that moment—it becomes a false god that we choose to serve.

If we were to choose to make ignoring God's commands our way of life, we would lose our faith and our destiny would be DEATH AND DESTRUCTION for all eternity. And if God had never entered our lives and hearts and given us faith in him in the first place, that would certainly be our future.

Knowing that we could have been left that way, with hell as our eternal home, you'd think that we'd be pretty smart now and that we would always, with great caution, be sure to make godly choices. You'd think that our thankfulness to God for our faith and salvation would move us to always follow him. Our loving God presents us with the choice again today. **SO, WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE?**

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We can pick that first poor choice, DEATH AND DESTRUCTION, or we can make the good choice—LIFE AND PROSPERITY. When you put them side by side, it would seem foolish to pick anything but LIFE AND PROSPERITY! You'd be dumb not to take the Nike shoes, the buffet, your intact house, the A+ and you'd be dumb not to take LIFE AND PROSPERITY!

In verse 16 God tells us the way of LIFE AND PROSPERITY: ***For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws;*** In the New Testament, in 1 John 5:3, we're told something else about God's commands: ***This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome, for everyone born of God overcomes the world.*** God's commands are not a burden to us. They are not a burden to a Christian because when we see how much God loved us in His Son Jesus Christ, we are moved to respond in love to God. He tells us that what makes Him happy is when we live by His Word. So we want to live by that Word.

And besides all that, God tells us that He gives us His commands so that when we live by them he can send numerous blessings our way and keep certain kinds of trouble from ever entering our lives!

Listen again to verse 16, especially the end of it: ***For I command you today to love the LORD your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws; then you will live and increase, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess.*** God attaches the promise of LIFE AND PROSPERITY and blessings to those who will continue to follow Him!

Those Old Testament believers were given the promise of a new land full of blessings in which to live. We are also given the promise of a new land to live in, filled with God's blessings. Ours is not an earthly land, but our heavenly home. That blessing comes not as a result of our perfect obedience to God because our sin would keep us from obtaining it. Instead, it comes to us as a result of our Savior's perfect obedience to God. Our trust is simply put in him and the promise of salvation through what he did.

It may not be clear to us why some would make the foolish choice of rejecting God and his promises, especially when we see what God has in mind for all people. He wants LIFE for everyone. That eternal life comes only through Jesus' death on the cross where he paid for the sins of the entire human race. Eternal life in heaven is what He wants for us. He also wants PROSPERITY for everyone. That prosperity comes in the form of a full and rich life on earth. Remember Jesus' own words: ***I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*** Apart from God, there is no true happiness and peace, but with him we can have a full and prosperous life. Remember that "increase" or prosperity or a blessed life takes many forms—it's not merely earthly wealth. It may not be that at all. We do know that PROSPERITY finds perfection as we enter the glories of eternal life with our Savior in heaven.

Let me give you one final story: You may recall a man named Joshua—yes, the one who fought the battle of Jericho. He succeeded Moses as the leader of God's people. He had to confront those people again later on with the same choice. In effect, he too said to them, SO, WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE? Be inspired as you hear the words of Joshua chapter 24: ***Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then 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 (v.14-15) And the people said to Joshua, "We will serve the LORD our God and obey him (v.24).***

May God's Holy Spirit inspire you through the Word this day to react in the same way—to make the proper choice—the one your LORD wants for you. Every day of your life, Christian friends, you have the choice—DEATH AND DESTRUCTION or LIFE AND PROSPERITY. SO, WHAT'S IT GOING TO BE? God does make his preference for you known when he says: ***Now choose life, so that you and your children may live and that you may love the LORD your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the LORD is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.*** For you who continue to follow the Lord and are faithful to your Savior, He will bless you now and give you eternal life in the promised land of heaven. Amen.

**Now the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding,  
will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.**