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## Epiphany 6 • Deuteronomy 30:15–20 • February 16, 2014

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### **Choice Is More than Choosing**

Christians are confronted with many choices in this world of biomedical technology, and a rash of legal decisions has placed life and death decisions in the hands of loved ones. We face these choices and many more every day. Within the text of Deuteronomy 30:15–20, choice is a covenant theme, and God is the subject. Christian choices affirm the baptized life that we have in Christ Jesus our Savior; hence, our choices are more than simply choosing what we believe is best for us.

- I. Choice set before Israel is “life or death” in Deuteronomy 30:1–20
  - A. Moses reminds Israel of Yahweh’s covenant love for them (vv. 1–14). Herein, Moses reflects on Israel’s future: they will go into exile; they will repent and live with Yahweh’s blessings; as they remain obedient to the will of God and his commandments, the blessings will continue. Failure to follow the word of God will result in death, that is, they will perish.
  - B. Choice: source and purpose (vv. 15–20). Moses reminds Israel that they should not forget the source and purpose of the blessings: Yahweh. The Lord God has given countless blessings to Israel by his grace and mercy. Yahweh is the subject of “choice” used in this text, for he chose Israel to be his people.

- II. Choice set before Israel is life: a covenant of grace and mercy
- A. Israel's choice: death, evil, and the curse go together. If Israel's choice is apart from Yahweh and their faith and obedience to his grace, then the result is their unification with death, Yahweh's eternal wrath (vv. 15 and 19). Attention should be given to the definite articles in these verses. To reject Yahweh as the source of life is to reject Yahweh. Choice is not a means to an end, but to an ongoing purpose: living the life of Christ in this world by his grace through faith as we witness the reality that the Lord God chose us; we didn't choose him (Jn 15:16).
- B. Choice is more than choosing (loving and caring for the "other"). Choice is a covenant term, wherein Yahweh is the subject. He is the source of choice and gives it its purpose: to live in faith and obedience to the Lord God Jesus Christ. As Israel is commanded to choose life, this is the same as choosing the Lord God as their source and purpose of living in this covenant. The purpose is explicitly given in verse 20. As the Lord of our life, our whole life, our witness affirms the source and the purpose for the abundant life that we have in Jesus Christ. We choose life because the resurrected one has assured us of the life that we have in him through baptism. Christians don't choose "death" because Jesus has destroyed death in his death and resurrection. Life in Jesus Christ is about caring for the "other" and not targeting our personal desires or whims to control who lives and who dies. This text has implications for life and death issues that permeate our society that is always looking to justify itself and its ways.

Christians are confronted with many choices as we live the life of Christ in this world. All too frequently, our sinful flesh caves into the world's definition of "choice": picking and choosing those things that will be good for me at the expense of serving my neighbor. Choice within the context of Deuteronomy 30 is not a matter of picking and choosing. Choice is a covenant term wherein God is the subject. Those who choose the way of the world and sinful flesh will be lost forever. Christians who, by God's grace through faith, choose to continue to live their lives in Christ are assured of his presence and strength throughout their pilgrimage in this world. "You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide, so that whatever you ask the Father in my name, he may give it to you" (Jn 15:16 ESV).

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