

Carlos Munoz: Maranatha. Happy Sabbath. Welcome, everybody, to the Granite Bay Hilltop Seventh-day Adventist Church. Welcome to our "Sabbath School Study Hour." It's my privilege to be here with you this morning as we are continuing in our study on the book of Deuteronomy, "Present Truth," amen? And so, before we get started I want to share with everybody here and those that are watching our special gift that we have for today; it's called "Choosing Life: A Christian Perspective on Suicide," and you can obtain a free copy of this by calling 1-866-788-396 or 1-866-Study-More, and you can ask for offer number 882. Or if you are in the United States, you can text the number--the letters "SH151" to number 40544, and you will receive also a digital download of this, "Choosing Life: A Christian Perspective on Suicide."

I have a question. Is suicide a problem and an issue nowadays? Oh, yes, it is, and we're going to talk a little bit about that today with the topic that has to do with choose life.

Now, before we get into our study let's have a word of prayer. Heavenly Father, thank You again for the privilege and the honor of being Your children, of being part of Your remnant church, of being part of this end-time movement, Father, for being co-laborers with You in this. Father, we thank You for Your patience, for Your mercy, for Your love, for Your grace, and we see how all of these are perfectly represented and manifested in Your son Jesus Christ.

And so, Father, as we come together now to open Your Word we ask for a special blessing to study Your holy book on this Your holy day and this Your holy place, because we want to glorify and honor Your holy name. We thank You, Father, again for this blessing. I ask blessing for everybody that's here and everybody that's watching online, on AFacts TV and any other media. We ask a special blessing for them, Father, as we get into such an important and amazing topic. We thank You, Father, for this blessing, and we ask this in Jesus's name, amen.

Everybody say "amen"? Who's excited to be here this morning? All right, I see somebody's excited over there. Praise the Lord. So, the topic for this study, for lesson number 8, is "Choose Life."

Now, I have to admit that the topic or the title was, at first when I looked at it, a little interesting, because, well, in every single sermon or any-- every single gospel presentation that you bring forth you're always choosing, right? You're always presenting to the audience the choice, right? You have to present the facts. You have to present the foundation of the gospel. And then, in every sermon, every presentation there should be a choice, there should be an appeal for somebody to make an informed, educated decision on the choices that they have to make in regards to the gospel.

Now, I say this because that's obviously a component of every presentation and every sermon I've given, but I've never fully given a presentation on the topic of choosing, so that was a little bit challenging for me because I never really thought about it together. And I was like, "Ooh," so I like it because I like when God puts me in situations I haven't been before, amen?

Who likes those kind of situations, right? Little uncomfortable situations. Why? Because then you got to what? You have to learn to depend on Him, right? God is always, always pushing our faith, pushing that line a little bit farther off so that we can never get too comfortable, right?

And if you're in a position where you're too comfortable in your Christian life, then you're in a bad position, because this is about challenges. This is about putting ourselves--this is about taking the next step. This is about what does God want to do. And almost always what God wants us to do is not what we want to do. Very interesting, right? And so, when we talk about choice, right, choice is a very interesting situation, because do you know that there are people that struggle with making decisions?

Maybe you're sitting here today. Maybe you're watching here, and you have struggles with making decisions. I know people, they have anxiety, right? There's actually a whole brand of psychology that has to do behind the concept of decision making and people that have anxiety. They even can get depressed because of the decisions that they have to make, and they're uncertain, right, in regards to this. And so, you ask yourselves, why do people get anxious about making decisions? Why do people get depressed to the extent right, about making decisions? And it's very simple, it could be because of insecurity, right? It

could be because of fear. That's probably the--one of the most driving factors in regards to why we have issues or why we struggle making decisions in our lives.

There was a famous psychologist who said this. He said, "There is no more miserable human being than one in whom nothing is," what? "Is habitual but," what? "Indecision," right? Always, "Did I make the right decision?" And I know people that are carrying around the burden, still questioning and wondering if the decision they make last year, five years ago, ten years ago--still carrying the guilt of some of the decisions that they've been making, whether they made the right decision, did they make the wrong decision.

I have a question: Can you live a happy, fulfilling life if you're always worried about what you're going--what--about your decisions in the past or in the present? Now, it's not wrong to be a little bit anxious about some decision, because some decisions are big, right, right? There are some decisions that it's good to take a step back and say, "Wait a minute, let me think about this thoroughly." Other decisions you can probably make fairly quick, but in this context we're talking about choosing life.

Now, that was an interesting title, "Choosing Life." So, if you're choosing life what would be inferred in the title, choosing life or choosing death, right? And this battle between choices that we have to make, choosing life and choosing death.

Now, raise your hand if anybody here would choose death. Nobody would choose death. Raise your hand if you would choose life. Amen, right? That would be like maybe you've come across some type of a Charismatic preaching, right, where they go to you and they give you the rundown of what hell is going to be like and what the torture and the pain and the suffering for all eternity is going to be like in hell. And then, they say, "And if you don't choose God that's what you're going to get." That's a pretty easy decision to make, right? Nobody wants to be tortured in hell for eternity.

Of course, we know we're talking about that distorted concept of hell, right, the place of eternal torment that actually has to do a lot about what we're going to talk about today, of how God's character has been distorted, right? How the perception of the image of who God is has been distorted. And, sadly, this concept of eternal hell has bred into that, but the point is nobody wants to choose to be in this hell supposedly for the rest of eternity.

Everybody would want to choose to be in heaven for the rest of eternity, so this got me thinking, then, going deeper into what we're studying, because what? Because this topic of choosing life or choosing death is probably not about this life. It's probably not about now. What do I mean by that? How many of you chose to be alive? Raise your hand. Nobody. How many of you chose--can choose when to die? Nobody; how many of you can choose whether you want to continue living forever or living now? And that's the question-- that's where it gets a little bit more interesting, right?

So, the concept or the title of choosing life or choosing death inferred cannot be talking about this life. It must be talking about what? Eternal life, or eternal death, right? That must be the context, because, again, we can't choose when we live or if we want to live, and we can't choose when we're going to die. And this is where it gets very interesting, and so the study of this week starts off and goes directly into a very interesting concept, which is what happened where? What happened in the Garden of Eden, right? What happened in the Garden of Eden?

And so, when you start to think about the situation, what happened in the Garden of Eden, how many trees did God present to Adam and Eve? How many trees? How many trees? Two trees--I know, all the trees, of course, right? Go with me, please, to Genesis chapter 2. Genesis chapter 2. Let's talk about this for a second. Genesis chapter 2. Genesis chapter 2, verse number--Genesis chapter 2. Let's go to verse number 8. If you have your Bibles with you let's study this. Genesis chapter 2, verse number 8. When you're there say, "Amen." It said, "The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the Lord made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food."

Who says amen to that? Who likes the food off of the trees? Who likes mangoes, avocados? Raise your hand. Whoo, right? Thank You, Lord. "And out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant," I just read that. "The tree of life was also found in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the

knowledge of good and evil."

So, there were two very specific or special trees in the Garden of Eden, which were what? The tree of life, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil, right? And so, this would be--we can presume would be choice, right? This is the choice presented to Adam and Eve.

My question is, is this the first choice? Is this the first decision made, or was there a choice made before this? Did somebody before Adam and Eve had a choice? Somebody else had to have made a choice also. In other words, the choice that Adam and Eve made was not in a vacuum, in an empty--oh, I'm sorry. The options to choose which Adam and Eve received come from a very interesting and sometimes overlooked perspective of choice, because I ask myself who chose first? You know what the answer to that is? God chose first.

Go with me to Ephesians chapter 1. God chose first. And what do I mean by that? Ephesians chapter 1. Let's look at this. To understand, I think that the backdrop--before we jump into what happened in the Garden of Eden we have to understand or see--I think we'll facilitate the understanding of the choice that you and I have to make. It's not just a choice again, that an uninformed, uneducated choice. The choice that we have to make is informed based on the choice that God has already made and the choice that God presents, and off of what God chooses then we will see how easy it is for us to choose. What do I mean by that? Let's go to Ephesians chapter 1. When you're there say "Amen." Ephesians chapter 1 says like this, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who," what? Who what? "Who has blessed us--" in what verb tense is "blessed us"? In the past.

So, were you around when this was written? No. This is way before all of this. God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in who? "In Christ," so, in other words, before you were even created, before--I'm going to go even further than that. Before Adam and Eve were created, God, it says here, had what? Had already decided to bless us with every spiritual blessings in where? In heavenly places. So, where was this blessing, this choice to bless before creation made? In heaven. To bless us in heavenly places in who? In Christ, so notice this. That before the creation of humanity God had already determined or chosen to bless you and me in Christ.

Now, what does that mean? Let's continue to read. "Just as He," what? "Chose us in," who? "In Him." Are you catching that? Humanity has been chosen in who? In Christ. "Before the foundation of the world." In other words, pay attention to this, before God created humanity and foreseeing what was going to happen with the fall of Lucifer, with the fall of Adam and Eve, with the fall of human beings, God was already thinking about blessing you. God, knowing that you were going to rebel, knowing that you were going to be disobedient, knowing this stuff, God already chose to bless you despite that.

It's like Jesus dealing with Judas. Did Jesus know that Judas was going to betray Him? Yes; did Jesus know that Judas was going to backstab Him? Yes, He did, but He still chose him, why? To be a blessing to him, so that he, then, when he makes his decision whether he's going to be faithful, when he chooses whether he's going to choose life and death in or not in Christ, he has all of the information needed. He knows Jesus Christ personally before he makes his decision, so why? So that now he knows Jesus. Now what? Now when he makes his decision he can't say what? "I didn't know." God is saying in Ephesians chapter 1 that before the creation, despite knowing what was going to happen to you and me, He already chose you, to bless you, to love you in Jesus Christ.

Notice this blessing does not come in us but in Jesus Christ. And notice what it says. What is the spiritual blessing that He wants to give us in Christ? That we should be what? Holy and without blame before Him in love. Again, what is God wanting? God already chose you. God wanted you. God chose you and invites you to say what? "I want to give you a holy life. I want to give you spiritual blessings. I want you to be a special, special person on this earth so that others can see my glory and my power through you. I want to be a blessing to you so that you can be a blessing to others."

Notice this. "That we should be holy, without blame before Him," in? "In love, having," verse 5, "predestined us to," what? Predestined us to what? "To adoption as sons," and daughters, "by Jesus Christ to Himself," so let's break this down a little bit. We are already blessed. We have already been chosen by God, right? Before the foundation of the world God chose us to be holy, untouched, perfect in His presence, and these blessings which we receive in Christ are guaranteed already. They're fulfilled. And

how do I know that? It's very simple; look at what it says in "Desire of Ages," page 773. "Before the foundation of the earth were laid, the Father and the Son had united in a covenant to redeem man, humanity, "if he should be overcome by Satan. They had clasped Their hands in a solemn pledge that Christ should be the," what? "The surety for the human race."

This is what we're talking about. This is what Ephesians chapter 1 is talking about. Before we even came, God knew what was going to happen. And what did He do? He already made a covenant, the everlasting covenant between the Father and the Son to what? To redeem humanity should humanity fall. God already made a pledge, and He says, "Despite this I am going to make a promise. I am going to give them spiritual blessings so that they can live holy lives in My presence. They can be blameless before Me," amen? And it says here that Christ to be what? The surety. Now, I--that word "surety," maybe we're unfamiliar with the word "surety," so I went and I looked for a couple of definitions so I can share with you what does this word "the surety for the human race" mean.

Look at what I found here. "A formal engagement (such as a pledge) given for the fulfillment of an undertaking: a guarantee." Ooh. Whoo-hoo! "A person who takes," what? "Responsibility for another's performance of an undertaking, for example their appearing in court or the payment of debt."

And I love this one: "One who has become legally liable for the debt, default, or failure in duty of," what? "In duty of another." Did you catch that? Christ is our surety because Christ has done what? Christ, before the creation, took--He made a covenant with the Father to take what? To take our responsibility for falling, to take our place, to--He became legally liable for the debt. He didn't have to, but He says, "You know what? I am going to take this in Myself. I am going to deal with this so that humanity can have a second chance," amen? And He chose us. He chose you. He was looking at you when He--when this covenant was made between the Father and the Son so that He would take our place from the very beginning. Whoo. Isn't that mind-blowing?

So, when we go back to first-- Ephesians chapter 1, He has chosen us, verse 5, "Having been predestined us to adoptions as son by Jesus Christ," who? "To Himself," so it is in Christ that we have what? That we have this choice and this option to become sons and daughters of God. Based on what? Based on the understanding that God has already presented--before we were ever created, before the fall of man, God had already presented Jesus Christ as the guarantee and the surety that if humans fall, there is one that will take their place. There is one that is going to be there for them and not permit condemnation to fall on the human race. There is one that was going to take it on Himself.

Now, in that context we talk about predestination, if we're not going to talk about--we're not talking about the Calvinistic predestination which is a distortion, which basically assumes or presumes that there are dual predestinations, where one is to be saved for all eternity or one is to be lost, right? That God has already predetermined that before the cause of creation, because here it's saying the total opposite. Here it's saying that God is choosing us to what? So that we can see His love and that we can respond to that love once we are conscious, once we are aware that God has already provided an answer for this problem.

There's nothing predestined. There's a choice. God made the choice so that we can also have a choice, so that we can be what? Predestined; now, let's talk about predestination for a second, because there is a lot of confusion because of this Calvinistic concept of predestination, that God had already predetermined, right? And that has a whole litany of theological implications and problems that you come across when somebody has this idea that you're already going to be saved no matter what you do, and you're going to be lost no matter what you do, right? That it's already predetermined, but when you look at predestination here this is how I like to explain predestination.

Let's say I'm going to fly to Los Angeles. And what do I do? I buy a plane ticket. What am I? I am predestined to go to Los Angeles, right? I am predestined to go to Los Angeles, let's say, on Monday. I have my ticket in my hand. I am ready, but what do I need to do? What do I need to do? Can I just sit on my sofa and say, "Oh, I'm predestined to go to Los Angeles, so I'm just going to sit on my sofa and wait for the plane to leave"? No. What do I have to do? I have to put myself in a position where I can get to the place that I need to be for what? For that plane to take me to the destination, because if I'm not on that plane, no matter how much I paid, no matter how much I complain, no matter how much I scream and pound my feet on the ground, if I'm not on that plane, that plane is leaving whether I'm there or not. Are

you catching me?

Another way of looking at it is--when I try to explain this, especially to young people, it's like a check, huh, right? Let's say right now I give each and every one of you a check for \$1 million. Raise your hand if you would be happy. Raise your hand if you would be happy, I just give you a check for \$1 million. Wow. You're easy to fraud. How many of you would not be happy if I gave you a \$1 million check? Raise your hand. I see two people. It's because they probably know me, right? Why should you not be happy? Because it's just a check. It's a what? It's a promise, right? I can have that check all day, and I can jump up and down and, "Ooh, look, somebody gave me a million-dollar check. I'm so happy, whoo, I'm a millionaire," no, you're not.

What do I need to do to reap the benefits, the blessings of that promise? I need to deposit the check, right? And then, once I deposit and then you see the money in your bank account, then you could be like, oh, now you're happy, right? Ones that said that they wouldn't, maybe because they know that Carlos doesn't have a million dollars, right? Can barely stand on his own two feet.

So, this is what God has given us: He has predestined. He has given us salvation in Jesus Christ. He has already guaranteed on Jesus Christ that there is a opportunity for humanity, for you and me, He has chosen for you so that you can be in heaven with Him. That you can be his son and his daughter so that He can adopt you in. And if you've never been adopted it's probably something--a concept that may be difficult for you to understand, but those that are in adoption centers, or those that are waiting to be adopted, go talk with those children. Go talk with adults that have been in adoption centers or been jumping from adopted family to adopted family. It is a difficult life. There's no security. There's no foundation.

But when God says, "I'm going to adopt you," understand that He's adopting you with all of the promises and the guarantees of the covenant gospel, amen? He's wanting to offer everything to you, and He's guaranteeing it to you how? On Jesus Christ. He's guaranteeing that you will receive those promises, that you will receive those blessings, that you will receive the inheritance that He has said in His covenant, why? Because you look at Jesus Christ, and you can say, "God said it, He did it, and I can take it to the bank," amen? That's a promise you can deposit. That's a promise that you know that God is going to be fulfilling; who says amen to that?

So now, in that context, in that understanding, when we go then to the tree of life, when we go to the situation in the Garden of Eden, what happens? God says, basically, "Here are your two options," right? Basically, if you want to look at the tree of life, look at the tree of life as a voting booth. What do I compare the tree of life to? A voting booth. In other words, what does that mean? God--in the scheme of the great controversy, the devil had already rebelled, right? The whole universe is now in this political debate, the war, the war in heaven, the polemos, the debate is God worthy?

Does God deserve honor and praise? Should we trust in God? Is God as good as He says? These are the dilemmas of the great controversy, right? Satan putting God's character in doubt, in question, and so now God says, "Ah, I'm going to bring forth this new creation that has not been exposed to this debate. They're neutral, and I'm going to bring them forth in this great controversy so that they can choose." And what happens? God gives them the option. "If you choose to not eat of the tree of knowledge and good and evil," what happens? What government are they voting for? If they choose not to eat of the tree of the good-- of the knowledge of good and evil, what government are Adam and Eve voting for? The government of God, the government of life. But if they choose to eat off of the tree, what happens? What government are they voting for? Satan.

So, when God creates Adam and Eve, He doesn't create these machines, He creates them as free moral agents, right? Because remember the essence of God is love, and the essence of love is freedom, right? The essence of love is choice, and so God says, "I am not going to impose this on My children. I want to give them and give them this informed decision." Now, remember before this happens God had already given them and shown them the world. He had given them a tour of the world. He had said, "All of this, this planet that I have created, is My wedding gift to you."

How many of you received a microwave for a wedding gift, or some plates? Imagine receiving a whole planet as your wedding gift. God gave Adam and Eve a planet as their wedding gift. He says, "Here it is.

This is My gift to you." Even to Adam, right? He put it even for him. "This is My gift to you, Adam." You think Adam wasn't happy? "O Lord, You're so good." He gives him this beautiful gift, and then He says, "But remember there's still a choice to be made. If you stay on My side, if you choose to be loyal to Me, then," what? "All of these blessings that I have given you, the kingship of this earth, everything shall be yours. It's yours." Except for what? One tree.

Now, is that a difficult option? Is that a difficult test, one tree? Tell me, yes or no? Some say yes. Some say no. Why is it not a difficult option? Because there are thousands and thousands and millions of trees, right? So, God, in the abundance of His blessings, in the abundance of giving Adam and Eve everything that they need to live, He says, "All of this is yours, except," what? "Except this one tree." This is the one test, a small test.

Now, if there are only two trees on earth and Adam and Eve are eating off of the same tree all day, they're going to start to be thinking, "I wonder what that tree tastes like," right? Because that's how we are, we're always thinking about what we don't have, but God gave them in abundance. And they chose what? What did they choose? Now, why? Here's the key. Go with me, please, to Genesis chapter 2. Genesis chapter 3. I'm sorry. Watch this. Here's the key. Genesis chapter 3. Genesis chapter 3. When you're there say, "Amen."

Now, we know who shows up in the Garden of Eden, right? And notice what it says in verse number 1. "Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said to the woman, 'Has God indeed said to you, "You shall not eat of every tree of the garden"?' " Now, we know that that's not what God says. We know that--what does the devil like to do? He likes to twist and turn. And why do I say this? Because the topic of this lesson is "Choose Life." And you're saying, "Well, who would choose death?" Well, there are people that choose death, and we're going to explain now in this context why people choose death.

Who would choose death? Well, the devil doesn't present it as black and white as we think sometimes. The devil is a cunning, deceptive liar and manipulator, and so he knows he's not going to present it to you in black and white, he's going to do what? He's going to try to distort and turn and manipulate truth with error so that it looks that way.

Now, what does he do here? Look at what it says here. Verse 2, "And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the tree of the--fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has says, "You shall not eat of it, nor shall you-- or shall you touch it, lest you die.' " " Again misquoting a bit. Verse 4, "Then the serpent said to the woman," what? "God is a liar. God is a manipulator. God is deceiving you." That's what he's telling her. "God told you you weren't going to die-- you were going to die? You will not surely die."

In other words, what is the devil doing? He's lying. He's defaming. He's attacking the character of God. "God lied to you, Eve. You can't trust in God," so notice what the devil does is he what? He tries to--the devil, in order for us to make the wrong decision--and, of course, we think, "Life or death? That's pretty easy."

What the devil does is he distorts the character of God. He distorts the image of God. He distorts or perverts who God is so that you can make a misinformed decision in regards to thinking you're choosing life, when you're really choosing death. I'll give an example for you. I told you when I was raised, those of you that know, I was raised and I was shown the concept of eternal torment and burning in hell. Now, who would want to choose and follow a God like that? I'm like, "That doesn't sound like a loving God to me, that I would live 80 years of my life and he would choose to torture me for the rest of eternity."

That was a distorted or perverted image that was presented to me of the character of God, and so what did I do? What do you think I did? They did it, of course, for me to behave. "Carlitos, this way you can behave. You can be a good boy." And instead what that made me do is reject God completely. What was my choice? I rejected God based on the premise or the false premise, the false concept, the false image that was given to me of who God was, and so I made that decision. Is everybody following me?

And that's what the devil does. He makes us think that we're choosing correctly, because anybody that would come to the conclusion that I could would think I made the right decision. Why would I want to

serve a God like that? And this is what he's doing with Eve. "God is a liar. God is a manipulator. God is a deceiver, and not only does God do that," but look at when we continue to read it says in verse 4--5, "For God knows that in the day that you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing," what? "Good and evil."

Now, I struggle with this concept of knowing good and evil. So, the devil basically says this, "Not only is God lying to you, Eve, but God is lying to you because He's selfish. God is lying to you because He knows that if you eat of that tree you will be like Him, and He's selfish. He doesn't want you to be like Him," even though to a certain degree Adam and Eve already had what? They were like in the likeness of God, right? But this is the manipulation. This is the distortion that the devil brings upon us, and so, "God is being selfish. He does not want you to be like Him."

Now, what does it mean to be like God? Who wanted to be like God, first of all? Who wanted to be like God? Satan, right? Was he able to obtain it? No. So, what does he do? He tricks us to thinking we can be like God, to trick us to think that we can be like God. And what does that mean? Knowing good or evil. Now, I struggled with this concept of knowing good and evil for a long time. What does that mean, knowing good or evil? Mmm. I struggle with that. And here's where I did. I went and I asked a couple of people, looked for some commentaries, couldn't find an answer, so I go and I go inside, and I look for a "Strong's Concordance," and I find the word "for knowing" is the word "yada." What's the word? Yada. Now, the word "yada" does mean "to know." It does, but there are other definitions to the word "yada." And it also means not just to know, but to declare or to determine. So, in other words, when you read it in this context, it says, "For you will be like God, declaring or determining what is good and what is evil."

I have a question: Who is the one that determines or declares what is good and evil? God, it's not us, so what he's basically saying to Adam and Eve is, "You know what? You don't need God to tell you what's right or wrong. You can determine and declare it on your own. You don't need God for that." I have a question. Has anything changed from the Garden of Eden? No, right? Postmodern theology, what is it? "Oh, you can be like God, you don't need--" right? I'm saying "theology" in a facetious way, right? The postmodern mindset is saying what? "You don't need God, you don't need God to tell you what's right or wrong. You can determine and declare what's right or wrong on your own."

Nothing has really changed. The devil has the same deception, and it has this theology, I call it postmodern theology. Has this come inside of the church? Yes. "Well, the Bible--" No, just go by what you feel, right? You don't need God to tell you what's right or wrong. Just trust your feelings. Trust your gut. Trust your instincts. No, just go by that.

Do we have an issue in Christianity where people following their feelings and their emotions and their gut more than the Word of God? Yes, and this is what this lesson is about. It's not just about choosing right or wrong, right, in the context of choosing the devil or choosing God. Nobody would choose the devil.

The real lesson in this is, do we trust in God so much that we follow and obey His Word and listen to His calling and His direction more than my own? That's what this is really about. Or am I going to choose to follow in the Spirit and follow the Word of God, or am I going to choose to follow my flesh, my carnal desires, my carnal inclinations, my carnal impulses over the Word of God? "Well, I know God said this, but I want to do this." And that's the problem, and that's the deception. That's the foundation, basically, of this concept of choice, because nobody would choose death. Nobody would choose the devil, but every day you're going to choose which camp you want to be in with what? With whether you're going to choose to live your life according to God's Word or according to your own will and your own ways, your own desires. And sometimes this is not as clear either, because sometimes even inside the devil wants to bring deception, not clarity.

Go with me to Romans chapter 6. Let's look at this in another context. Romans chapter 6. I like how Paul explains it in Romans chapter 6. Now, after Adam and Eve chose that, the condemnation was to fall on humanity. I have a question: Did humanity suffer the condemnation of eating off of the tree of the knowledge and good and evil that God said, "The day you eat of it you shall surely die"? They chose. Did they choose or did they not choose to eat of it? Yes or no? Yes.

Eve is considered to be-- have deceived by the devil. Adam wasn't. Adam chose, basically, Eve over God, right? He made an idol of his wife. Could be that you're making an idol of your wife. You're making an

idol of your children. You're making an idol of your work. You're making an idol of your theology. You're making an idol of your impulses, of your desires. This is not just some--we're not just talking about things. We're talking about thoughts and mindsets.

This is the real struggle and the real battle that is happening in choosing. Are we going to want to follow what is comfortable for us, what we like, or are we going to follow what God has chosen for us, what God is asking for us? Is everybody with me? And so, we see that in the Garden of Eden. God chose for Adam and Eve. God chose for humanity what? A second chance. A predisposition. He chose to give them that second chance, why?

He chose--God chose us, or I look at it this way: God chose you first so that you can then choose Him, amen? God chose us first. He says, "Despite what was going to happen, I still chose you first. And I chose you how? Through My son, in My son Jesus Christ giving it all." And that informed decision, my loved ones, is where it starts.

Now let's go to Romans chapter 6. Look at here, let's go back-- let's go deeper into this concept of decision making, right? Choosing life, or choosing death. I think this is the best place that it's explained. Romans chapter 6. Let's start on verse number 15. When you're there say, "Amen." "What then? Shall we sin because we are not under the law but under grace? Certainly not! Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to," what? "Slaves to obey, you are the one slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to," what? "Righteousness."

So, basically, what we're saying here is that we are all born slaves. The question is, slaves to what? Slaves to what? We're all slaves here. Every single one of us that is standing here right now in this moment is all a slave. The question is, to what or to who? Because through your life, through your giving, through your life, through your choices and the decisions you make you are choosing who you want to be a slave to, whether slave to the flesh or a slave to the Spirit.

Look at what he says. "But God be thanked," but God be thanked, "that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered. And having been set free from sin, you became slaves of," what? A slave is somebody that has given their will over, that has given everything that they are, some by choice, but most obviously not by choice. But in this context the word "slave," even though it might carry a negative connotation in our society, right, because of the slave trade and the implications of slave, in the quest or in the concept of theology and the quest and the concept of the gospel I want to be a slave to God.

I want to freely--I choose to give and decide to give my life, my mind, my thoughts, my preconceived ideas, my presuppositions, my family, my relationship, my resources, whatever I have. I can choose to put it and put it under the bondage of the righteousness of God, or I can choose to continue to live as what? As a slave to the flesh, as a slave to self, as a slave to my own desires and my own inclinations, so as Christians--because that's the concept of the--the context of the word of the--of this lesson on choosing. He's talking to His people.

In Deuteronomy chapter 30, God is talking to His people. He's talking to you and me, and He's saying, "Choose." Choose what? You can choose to be a mediocre, stagnant, complacent, lukewarm Christian if you want. You can choose that, and if you're choosing that you're choosing death, but you can also choose to live a vibrant, joyful, powerful life in Christ. You can choose to have a life full of hope, full of blessing to others to where God can reveal His power, His glory, His holiness. You can choose that, too.

And how do we know what we're choosing? How do we know what choice are we choosing? Are we choosing the side of God, the side of living in the Spirit, or are we choosing on the side of the flesh, on the side of me, of selfishness? The Bible says, "You shall know them by their fruits," and I'm asking this not because I'm pointing the finger. Remember I've said this before. Any time I come to present the Word of God in any type of environment, whether it be a Bible study, one-on-one Bible study, a group, sermon, whatever, I'm always looking at myself. I'm analyzing and studying this in view of me. Am I a lukewarm, carnal Christian? Am I deceiving myself by thinking that because I work at Amazing Facts, because I stand here, because I do this, because I do that and I do this, can I be deceiving myself to thinking that I am living the life that God wants when I'm really living my own life?

I have a question: Can I be deceiving myself, yes or no? Yes; now I'll throw the question back at you. Can you be deceiving yourself? Ooh. Think. Choose life or death. It's not that white and black in this context, because the choosing that you make is who are you choosing to be a slave to? Who are you choosing to obey? Who are you choosing to surrender?

And again, God presents all of this in the context of what? Of this covenant. Now, when we were born or when--after the fall of Adam and Eve, we were stripped. Humanity was stripped of willpower. That means you cannot fight against your fallen carnal impulses and desires. You just can't, but in the new covenant, in the everlasting covenant, God promised the Holy Spirit.

Notice, because some people will ask me, "Well, in that quote it doesn't say that the Holy Spirit was involved in the covenant. It says that the Father and the Son made that covenant to redeem man, with Jesus Christ as the guarantee before. Where was the Holy Spirit?" You know why? Because the Holy Spirit is the promise of the covenant. It's through the Holy Spirit that this covenant was going to be what? In Christ, guaranteed to you and to me. And so, when we receive the Holy Spirit, as Doug talked about last night, when we accept Jesus Christ, when we say, "Lord, I want to begin a new life. I want to ask for forgiveness," we receive that Holy Spirit. Even before, but especially in that moment. The Spirit comes into us.

What does the Spirit do? I'll give it to you in a very simple way. The Spirit basically gives us back willpower. He doesn't make the decision for us. The Spirit doesn't make that choice for me or for you, but the Spirit does give us back what? Willpower so we can what? So we can choose, choose righteousness or unrighteousness, choose to walk in the Spirit or walk in the flesh, choose to walk a holy life or choose to walk a carnal life. That decision is given to us. That willpower is given back to us, and now we, as co-laborers with God, we as partakers, we then now have to decide if we are going to choose to follow in that same path. Is everybody with me? Amen. And so, when God presents before His people in Deuteronomy chapter 30, the context is the covenant.

Go with me, please, to Deuteronomy chapter 30. The lesson goes straight into the chapter, but you have to--when you study the context of what's going on, right, they're about to reenter--not to reenter. They're about to enter the Promised Land. And already their parents were not faithful to God, and so God is already trying to explain to them, show them through these 40 years in the desert that there's a better decision to make, because they made the wrong decisions. Why? Why was the decision wrong?

They loved it when God liberated them. They loved it when God opened the Red Sea. They loved it when God gave them victory over the Egyptian enemies, but they did not love it when they were eating manna all day. They did not love it when they were thirsty. They did not love it having to be in the desert. They did not love it, and so despite the blessings and the glory of God they started to murmur. And so, God is trying to tell them, "Listen, learn from the mistakes of the past." That's what circumcision is. Learn from the mistakes of others and don't fall into the same trap.

And so, when God is presenting in Deuteronomy chapter 30, I love this part of Deuteronomy chapter 30 because what it presents to us is very, very clear and simple. If you read it in a--with a certain lens, a certain legalistic lens, all you'll see is, "Obey, obey, obey, obey, obey." But if you look at it from the context of the loving God and what He wants to do, look at what it says in Deuteronomy chapter 30, verse number 2. "Return the Lord--to the Lord your God and obey His voice, according to all I command you today, and your children, with all your heart and with all your soul." Verse 6, "And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants." That's the new covenant. That's the everlasting covenant, God giving us a new heart. "To love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, that you may live."

Look at what it says in verse number 14. "But the Word is very near to you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it." Verse 17, "But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear, and are drawn away--" You have to give your heart to the Lord first so that He can give you the power to obey. Verse number 20, "That you may love the Lord your God, that you may," what? "Obey His voice."

How is it possible to obey God's voice? It's only if we love Him. It's only through love, and that's the option, that God chose us from the beginning, to present to us His love and His mercy, and so we choose based on that. "To choose that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that

you may cling to Him, for He is your life." Ooh, that just sounds so beautiful, clinging to the Lord. That's what the Lord wants, but it's based off of what? You have to be able to have a relationship with God. You have to know God, because if you don't know Him you won't love Him. And if you don't love Him, you won't serve Him. And if you don't serve God, if you don't choose to be a slave to God, if you don't choose to surrender completely, totally everything that you are, you will be a slave to self. Psalms 48 says, "I delight to do Your will, O my God, and Your law is written," where? "Within my heart," amen?

That's the choice, my loved ones, is to surrender your heart or not. God is not asking us for obedience on the top, why? Because He knows we're incapable of obeying because of our fallen nature. God is saying, "Love Me, accept Me, and let Me give you a new heart. Let Me give you a new mind, and I will put the love and surrender to My will in your heart, and I will give you the power to obey," amen? "I will give you that strength and that power." In other words, and this is very important, obedience is not the condition or obligation of God for us in the Everlasting Covenant. We have to change that mindset. "Oh, I have to obey, I have to comply, and that's what I have to do in the covenant."

No, obedience is not the condition or obligation of God for us in the Everlasting Covenant. Obedience is the promise and the blessing of God for us in the Everlasting Covenant, amen? God wants to--He tells us, "Give Me your heart, and I will give you the power to obey. I will give you the strength. I will give you what I want you to do."

Look at what it says in the book, "Patriarchs and Prophets." "The covenant of grace was first made with man in Eden, when after the Fall there was given a divine promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head. To all men," and women, "this covenant offered pardon," forgiveness of sin, "and assisting grace of God for," what? "For future obedience through faith in Jesus Christ."

I have a question: What comes first, the covenant or obedience? What comes first, the covenant or obedience? The covenant comes first. That's what it says there. God presents the covenant of grace, and through that man, the responsive man, is to give their lives, and then God gives us the power, the assisting grace for future obedience through faith in Jesus Christ.

Go with me to Hebrews chapter 13. Ooh, see, this is crucial to understand, because if not, we're going to go around trying to think, "Oh, I'm going to be-- I'm going to obey God and--" no, you can't obey God. That's the whole point of it. We are unrighteous. We cannot produce righteousness. The point of it is surrender your heart to God, and He will give you the power to obey. He will give you the strength so that you can live according to His will. Hebrews chapter 30, verse 20. "Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant," through the what? The blood of the everlasting covenant. What does it say then?

Watch this. What does the blood of the everlasting covenant do? "Make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ," amen? I have a question: What came first, the covenant or obedience? The covenant. The promise came first, and then our response to that promise, to the covenant that Christ has done with the Father. Then we are given that response. Who says amen to that? And so, I'm going to finish looking at it this way. This is you and me in our lives. We are wandering children in this world. We are wandering around not knowing where to go. This is how we come to the life, right? Even when we have parents that are God-fearing, that present a household for us where we can--but at the end of the day we're all wandering and struggling.

I can't tell you how many kids growing up or raised in the Seventh-day Adventist Church have become--have left the church because what? Because they were not presented a solid perception and image of who God really is. They presented this legalistic mindset. "You have to comply. You have to obey." Instead of, "You have to surrender." The word "obey" is implicit, the word, the power to obey. God is trying to give us this power, but we have to first what? Surrender our hearts, it's a heart problem that we have, and then God gives us the power.

So, we're wandering around in the rain, in fear, the winds and the enemy attacking and bombarding us, giving us these false impressions, this false concept of who God, and we're struggling to know who God is. And then, God brings what? God brings and comes a cross, amen?

This is one--a very famous picture in 2015 that became viral, of this father with the umbrella over his son,

and the son holding on to the umbrella, and the father is taking his son through the rain, amen? He's walking us through, and this is--I think this is the perfect picture of what justification is. We were lost. We were in the rain. We were abandoned. We--but God says, "No, you are not. Here I am, son. You have an option. You can choose Me. You can walk with Me, and I will take the burdens." Doesn't mean we're not going to get sprinkled because of the consequences of sin, but God is walking with us as he's walked--this father is walking with his child, taking this on Himself.

But where does choice come, life or death? Where does it happen? You can choose to walk away. You can choose to not continue to walk under the grace of God. You can choose to not want to continue to walk with God, and God says, "If that's your choice, I'm going to let you." But God has given us already everything that we need to know so what? So that we can live in His glory, amen? It's your choice. You choose.

And the question or the thing I want you to think about today is, am I truly living a life of faith in the Spirit? Am I truly living and growing in faith or am I stagnant, am I unjoyful, am I not seeing the power of God manifested in my life? Am I not growing in faith? If this is the case, then we need to reanalyze. We need to refocus. We need to change the things that we're doing so that we can begin to see the glory of God and we can choose life, amen? Because the ways of the flesh, the ways of ourselves are not going to lead us anywhere but to death.

It's only when we choose to be slaves to God and to surrender completely and totally will we then see the glory and the power of God in our lives. That's the choice that we make every day. Am I going to follow me, what I want, what I like, what I desire, or am I going to surrender completely, totally to the will of God through His Word? How many of you choose life? Amen. Let's pray.

Father, we thank You. We thank You, Father, because before creation of humanity everything was presented, the plan of salvation. The everlasting covenant was there for us to accept, for us to receive. The choice is whether we're going to be grateful and receive it or if whether we're going to choose to live in our own ways and follow our own path. Help us, Father, to make the right choice.

Help us, Father, to make the informed choice. Help us to show others who You really are so that they can make the correct choices and follow Your Word and live in accordance to it, Father. Help us so that we can see the blessings and the promises of Your covenant, and we can then, through Your power, live and obey in them. We thank You, Father, for this blessing, and we ask this in Jesus's name, amen.

Announcer: Don't forget to request today's life-changing free resource. Not only can you receive this free gift in the mail, you can download a digital copy straight to your computer or mobile device. To get your digital copy of today's free gift, simply text the keyword on your screen to 40544 or visit the web address shown on your screen. And be sure to select a digital download option on the request page. It's now easier than ever for you to study God's Word with "Amazing Facts," wherever and whenever you want. And most important, to share it with others.

Announcer: "Amazing Facts" changed lives.

Female: Well, my conversion story is when I was in the Philippines, I just graduated as a nurse and afterwards I did not have any religion and one time I found myself inside a small church, Catholic church, in Manila, and before a big cross. And I was kneeling before and I could hear Jesus telling me to enter the convent, save myself and also my family. And I said, "Lord, I would like to follow You all the way."

At that point, I seemed to be happy externally, but because inside the convent we don't read the Bible, we don't study about the Word of God. We prayed the rosaries, we also at the same time studied the lives of the saints and also our founders, and the encyclicals of the Pope and the Virgin Mary. And so I do not know the truth and I had this torture of conscience, the guilty feelings that cannot be resolved. So I would confess to the priest in the confessional box, saying, "Father, forgive me, since my last confession was last week. Since then I have committed the following sin," including the root cause. Why am I falling and falling in that same sin over and over again? And still for 21 long years, I struggle and I struggle and I struggle.

I realized that I was totally empty, I was totally helpless and hopeless. And so depressed and so desperate that I would like already to end my life. I was working for five years as dean of the University of San

Agustin College of Nursing in Iloilo City, one of the islands in the Philippines. After five years I received a commission from my parents to help my sister who is being a battered woman. This is one of the reasons why I came over to United States. It is because my sister needs my help.

As I was working in the hospital in New York, my boss-- he was so gracious enough to give me an invitation to the Millennium Prophecy. As I was listening to Pastor Doug Batchelor's presentation, my heart really was beating so fast, and my mind, I'm able to grasp the truth, that this is the truth that I've been longing to hear all my life, that I have been seeking for so long.

My personal relationship with Jesus, I can see Jesus as my personal Savior. He is not only the Savior of the whole world but He is my personal Savior. He was the one who delivered me mightily from the depths of sin, from the miry clay. Pastor Doug Batchelor has been used by the Lord in my conversion. The Amazing Facts, I owe to them. The Lord really blessed this ministry and I'm so proud I was able to attend this Millennium Prophecy. My life has never been the same. It has given me the peace, the joy, that never--I have never tasted in my life, and now I am set free to be able to work for Him and to follow Him.