

## Doomed to Repeat | January 10, 2021

### Week 2 | Deuteronomy 30 | "Repentance and Restoration"

Now, last week we kicked-off a brand-new series called "Doomed to Repeat." The whole premise of this series is to teach you principles that'll help you avoid repeating the same mistakes over and over again. That, as you move into 2021, you must believe that you are not doomed to repeat the mistakes of 2020; there is another way. Through Jesus Christ, we can all change the patterns of our bad behavior.

To show how to do this, we started looking at Israel's story as they were about to enter the promised land in Joshua 1. There we heard God speak with the new leader of Israel, Joshua. God tells Joshua that he need only trust and obey the commands of Scripture and God give the nation of Israel courage, strength, success, and prosperity.

Today, we'll be moving backward in the narrative from the Promise of the Land to the death of Moses. Last Sunday, the Children of Israel were about to enter the promised land. Today, in Deuteronomy 30, the Children of Israel have just completed their forty-year wanderings and are given some final instructions by Moses. As we read these words today, bear this mind that an entire generation had just dropped dead in the wilderness because of unbelief. Understandably, Moses did not want the next generation to repeat the mistakes of his own age. And so, Moses has some parting words for the Children of Israel that will help them pinpoint their parents' pitfalls and avoid them.

#### **READ:** Deuteronomy 30 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come on you and you take them to heart wherever the Lord your God disperses you among the nations, <sup>2</sup> and when you and your children return to the Lord your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, <sup>3</sup> then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you.

<sup>4</sup> Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather you and bring you back. <sup>5</sup> He will bring you to the land that belonged to your ancestors, and you will take possession of it. He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your ancestors. <sup>6</sup> The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live. <sup>7</sup> The Lord your God will put all these curses on your enemies who hate and persecute you. <sup>8</sup> You will again obey the Lord and

follow all his commands I am giving you today. <sup>9</sup> Then the Lord your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. The Lord will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your ancestors, <sup>10</sup> **if** you **obey** the Lord your God and **keep** his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and **turn** to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

<sup>11</sup> Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. <sup>12</sup> 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?" <sup>13</sup> 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?" <sup>14</sup> No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.

<sup>15</sup> See, I set before you today **life** and **prosperity, death** and **destruction**. <sup>16</sup> For I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, 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.

<sup>17</sup> 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, <sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> This day I call the heavens and the 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 <sup>20</sup> 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.

Last week, the big takeaway was, "Whatever God commands, we will obey. Wherever God sends, we will go." Today, the command is similar but with a slight deviation. Yes, we need to obey God. Yes, we need to go wherever God sends us. But there's something more. Here, in Deuteronomy 30, Moses addresses a fundamental principle in avoiding past mistakes: *repentance*. It isn't enough to only trust and obey God. We must also make repentance a habit in our daily life.

**READ:** Deuteronomy 30:1-3 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come on you and you take them to heart wherever the Lord your God disperses you among the nations, <sup>2</sup> and when you and your children return to the Lord your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, <sup>3</sup> then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you.

**READ:** Deuteronomy 30:9-10 (ESV)

The Lord will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your ancestors, <sup>10</sup> if you obey the Lord your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

In Moses' last address, he warned against turning away from God. He told them, "Don't do it! If you do, there will be consequences." He then goes into a long list of consequence in Deut. 29 which spell out exactly what'll happen to Israel should they turn from God. But then, after describing how God will exile the children of Israel from the promised land, Moses tells them that, eventually, their children's children will once again embrace the ways of their God. That, as their fathers turned away from God, they will return back to God. And, in talking about that returning, Moses gives those future repentant Israelites a promise. He promises that when they return to the Lord, confess their sins, God will restore them. So, the pathway to restoration goes through the valley of contrition. If we want to avoid dooming ourselves to a lifetime of repeating the same mistakes over and over again, we must repent.

Now, at this moment, I can hear two people thinking to themselves...

The first person is thinking, "Pastor, isn't this a series about how to avoid repeating the same errors? Why would we even need to address repentance if you're teaching us how to stop ourselves from making the same mistakes? We shouldn't have to repent if we've stopped doing the bad things. Right?" And while, in a sense, I'd say that was right. In another sense, I think one of the biggest reasons for repeating a mistake is that we fail to acknowledge it as a sin in the first place. And in failing to acknowledge it as a sin we also fail to repent of it. And should you fail to repent of a past error, I can assure you, you will inevitably repeat that same mistake again. You cannot ignore some bad behavior and expect it to, one day, disappear. You must address your own failures head-on and repent of them. That is the only way to move on. That is the only way to keep yourself from making those same mistakes again.

Now, the second person is thinking, "Okay, I get that. I must repent in order to move on. That makes sense. But isn't that also a little too simplistic? Like, isn't this series supposed to give me new tools to help me overcome my personal demons? Pastor, so far, you've told me, "trust and obey," and now you're telling me, "repent." I know and do these things already. Surely there is something new, or something different that I can do?" Well, to this person, I'd also agree...to a certain extent. "Trusting," "obedience," and "repentance" are all concepts and ideas that are easy to understand and are familiar to our context. And while I *will* be giving you some newer ideas on how to combat your personal failures later on in this series, I'd be remised if we didn't first address the basics before diving into more "advance" techniques. Interestingly, we hear this kind of principles in the sports world all...the...time. For instance, Michael Jordan said once in a *Sports Illustrated* interview that, "You can practice shooting eight hours a day, but if your technique is wrong, then all you become is very good at shooting the wrong way. Get the fundamentals down and the level of everything you do will rise."

What's more, the tendency when confronting those errors in our life which seem to play on repeat is that we want to make them unique (cf. 1 Cor. 10:13). We want to think of them as our greatest weakness; they are our kryptonite; they are our Achilles' heel. As such, we tend to believe that these "super" sins need a unique approach in order to overcome them. But that is just not the case. While the consequences of sin are not all same; all sin, at its core, is addressed the same way: *repentance*. The pathway to avoiding past mistakes begins with the most straightforward approach. It isn't complicated or hard to understand. Everyone from the really old to the really young can grasp this concept. Before you even begin to uproot the cancerous growth of your own bad behavior, you must first repent.

In fact, this is the very point that Moses makes to the children of Israel.

**READ:** Deuteronomy 30:11-14 (ESV)

<sup>11</sup> Now what I am commanding you today is **not too difficult** for you or **beyond** your reach. <sup>12</sup> 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?" <sup>13</sup> **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?" <sup>14</sup> No, the word is very **near** you; it is **in** your mouth and **in** your heart so you may obey it.

Every fresh start begins at the same place: repentance.

Not surprisingly, the Bible has a lot to say about repentance. (*A real shocker, I know.*) One of my favorites comes in Proverbs 26. The writer uses the metaphor of vomit to explain what it's like for someone to lead an unrepentant life. As you'll see, the way of the unrepentant soul is a depressing life.

**READ:** Proverbs 26:11 (NKJV)

*As a dog returns to his own vomit, so a fool repeats his folly.*

What an image. As a free man, to return once again to the bad habits which once ensnared and enslaved you makes you no better than a mindless mutt who pukes and then makes a meal out of his own sick. The body, whether human or canine, is not met to be sustained by vomit. Yet, this wretched beast craves the very thing which has made it sick. A fool's folly ought to hold no appeal whatsoever, and yet still, the unrepentant soul cannot resist it.

How many of us know of someone who has a habit or an addiction that is ruining their lives? They can see it. You can see it. But still, they persist in their poor behavior. Why do they do this? Well, honestly, there's a variety of reasons. But top amongst them is that they have not truly repented. They have not acknowledged that their sinful behavior is ruining their life. It's become almost cliché now, but this is why the first step in Alcoholics Anonymous is, "We admitted we were powerless over alcohol and that our lives had become unmanageable." What do you think that admittance is? It's repentance. It's an acknowledgment that you have made mistakes.

But how many of us know of someone who won't admit that they're wrong? Quite possibly, THE primary example of unrepentance in the face of destruction, in Scripture, is Pharaoh. Time and time again, Pharaoh came to Moses and Aaron and ask them to pray and ask God to repeal whatever plague had descended upon Egypt.

**READ:** Exodus 8:8, 12-15 (ESV)

<sup>8</sup>Then Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and said, "Plead with the Lord to take away the frogs from me and from my people, and I will let the people go to sacrifice to the Lord."

...

<sup>12</sup>So Moses and Aaron went out from Pharaoh, and Moses cried to the Lord about the frogs, as he had agreed with Pharaoh. <sup>13</sup>And the Lord did according to the word of Moses. The frogs died out in the houses, the courtyards, and the fields. <sup>14</sup>And they gathered them together in heaps, and the land stank. <sup>15</sup>But when Pharaoh saw that

there was a respite, he hardened his heart and would not listen to them, as the Lord had said.

**READ:** Exodus 9:27-28, 34-35 (ESV)

<sup>27</sup> Then Pharaoh sent and called Moses and Aaron and said to them, “This time I have sinned; the Lord is in the right, and I and my people are in the wrong. <sup>28</sup> Plead with the Lord, for there has been enough of God's thunder and hail. I will let you go, and you shall stay no longer.”

...

<sup>34</sup> But when Pharaoh saw that the rain and the hail and the thunder had ceased, he sinned yet again and hardened his heart, he and his servants. <sup>35</sup> So the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, and he did not let the people of Israel go, just as the Lord had spoken through Moses.

And, as you all know, the pathway of unrepentance, at least for Pharaoh, led to a watery grave. The point I'm trying to make is that there is very little hope for one who was once a fool, was enlightened by God's word, but yet persists in their foolish ways.

In fact, the Apostle Peter had some powerful words about such a person.

**READ:** 2 Peter 2:20-22 (NKJV)

<sup>20</sup> For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. <sup>21</sup> For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known *it*, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. <sup>22</sup> But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: “A dog returns to his own vomit,” and, “a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.”

You see, Peter says to be entangled once again by the sins of your past puts you at risk of being overcome by them. In this context, Peter is specifically speaking about those who preach a false gospel. Yet, suppose we return to the sins of our past. In that case, we may not be preaching and teaching a false gospel to eager listeners, but we would still be preaching and teaching a false gospel to *ourselves*.

When we persist in our unrepentant states, we invite a special kind of destruction into our lives. So much so, that, Peter says, the end of such a person is worse than if they

had never met Jesus at all! Just let that sink in for a moment. Peter is saying that those who preach a false gospel, one of unrepentance, either to themselves or to others, are apostates/traitors of the faith. He tells us that their endings will be far worse than those who had never repented at all. This ought to shake us to our cores. To refuse to repent is to become nothing more than a beast, a dog who loves his vomit and a pig who loves her mud.

Interestingly, Jesus Himself warned about the perils of returning to an unrepentant life.

**READ: Matthew 12:43-45 (ESV)**

<sup>43</sup> “When an impure spirit comes out of a person, it goes through arid places seeking rest and does not find it.<sup>44</sup> Then it says, ‘I will return to the house I left.’ When it arrives, it finds the house unoccupied, swept clean and put in order. <sup>45</sup> Then it goes and takes with it seven other spirits more wicked than itself, and they go in and live there. And the final condition of that person is worse than the first. That is how it will be with this wicked generation.”

Jesus is illustrating the peril of repenting of the wrong, without inviting the good into our life. In his story, he speaks of a demon-possessed man who is rescued from his bondage. The demon which once tormented this poor fellow left, but, sadly, the man has failed to fill the vacuum in his life.<sup>1</sup> The bad is gone, but the good has not taken its place.

Meaning, you can profit from the sound teachings of God; but, if you do not then embrace, or, in this case, invite Jesus Christ into your life, you risk becoming worse than you were in the beginning. This is why true biblical repentance is not merely a confession of your sins; it is also an adoption of a new way of life. It is admitting the bad habits and asking God to give you better ones. A man’s house may be swept clean. It may appear to be in order. But if that house does not have a good tenant residing and filling that home with His goodness, it is nothing more than a life that is ripe for destruction.

**SO, WHAT’S THE TAKEAWAY?**

**A life of unrepentance is doomed for ruination. But a life of repentance is destined for restoration.**

---

<sup>1</sup> Turner, David L., *Matthew*, The Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, (Grand Rapids; Baker Academic, 2008), p. 327.

Look back to our primary passage once again. Moses says at the beginning of his message...

**READ:** Deuteronomy 30:1-3 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come on you and you take them to heart wherever the Lord your God disperses you among the nations, <sup>2</sup> and when you and your children return to the Lord your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, <sup>3</sup> then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you.

And then he says at the end of his message...

**READ:** Deuteronomy 30:19-20

<sup>19</sup> This day I call the heavens and the 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 <sup>20</sup> 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.

The choice was simple for Moses. Either trust God, obey His commandments, and repent of your sin; in so doing, you will be choosing *life*. Or, distrust God, disobey His commandments, and do not repent of your sin; and in so doing, you will be choosing *death*.

**READ:** Proverbs 28:13 (ESV)

Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

**READ:** 1 John 1:9 (ESV)

<sup>8</sup> If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. <sup>9</sup> If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. <sup>10</sup> If we say we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

To deny there is no sin is to embrace a sinful life. To admit there is sin is to adopt a righteous life. In the fourth century, Saint Augustine, the theologian of his age, famously said, "The confession of evil works is the beginning of good works." You cannot start a new life without first dealing with the sin of the old life. The first good work you may need to do in 2021 is to confess the bad works you did in 2020.

SO, WHAT'S THE **TAKEAWAY?**

A life of unrepentance is doomed for **ruination**. But a life of repentance is destined for **restoration**.

---

**Video Description**

---

**“Message in a Minute” Video Description**