

# A Call to Judgment

by J. Wilbur Chapman

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of making a choice between life and death, and encourages listeners to choose life by turning away from sin and towards God.*

**Scripture:** Deuteronomy 30:19, Proverbs 14:12, Luke 15:20, John 14:6, Revelation 20:12

**Topics:** "Eternal Consequences", "Salvation"

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## Description

J. Wilbur Chapman preaches on the solemn choice between life and death, blessing and cursing, urging the audience to choose life to experience God's best. He emphasizes the importance of making a record of faithfulness and helping others come to know Christ, highlighting the eternal consequences of our choices. Chapman discusses the two ways in life - one leading away from God and the other towards Him, stressing the urgency of turning towards God for salvation. He concludes by encouraging the audience to choose life, sharing powerful testimonies of transformed lives and the hope found in Christ.

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## Transcript

TEXT: "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing, therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."--Deut. 30:19.

Moses was a wonderful man; whether you view him as a poet or as a leader of men, he is alike great. This text was spoken by him to the people of Israel at the close of his career. The leadership of God's chosen people is now to be transferred to Joshua, and it is in order that he may speak to them as they should be addressed, and at the same time in order that he may free himself from judgment, that he speaks as he does.

I have two great desires as I present this message.

First, that I might myself be faithful, and that it might be said that I am free from the blood of all men, for I have not shunned to declare unto you the whole counsel of God.

Second, that I might help some one to the knowledge of Christ. This is no time for argument, for argument always calls forth discussion. It is no time for theory. Practical, every-day people of the world care nothing for mere theories. And it is no time for speculation, for to give such to the people is like giving a stone when they have asked for bread. But it is time for eternal choice. The audience of the preacher vanishes when he thinks of the text and its meaning and he is face to face with the Judgment when he shall be

judged for the way he has spoken, and the people shall be called to account for the way they have heard. It is indeed a solemn word. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

I

Record. I desire to use this word as if it were a noun for the time being, for it will bring to us the same truth. This leads me to say that every one is making a record, either good or bad. Deep down through the surface of the earth you will find the evidence of storms centuries ago; the record was indelibly made.

Two records are being kept. This is indicated in the twentieth chapter of Revelation, where it is said, "And the books were opened." Notice that it is plural and not singular. There is a record in heaven kept by the Recording Angel. If it were in the memory of God it would be an awful thing, for while God does not remember forgiven sin, he cannot, from the very nature of the case, forget unpardoned sin, and if that is the record one day we shall meet it face to face.

There is also a record upon earth. We have seen it in the characters of men who have gone astray, and in the faces of those who have been affected by their sins.

In an eastern city where I was preaching my attention was called to a young man of brilliant prospects. He was a member of a great wholesale grocery firm, and young men looked at him almost with envy; but he began to drink, and at the end of a year the senior partner called him in to say that he must change his conduct or retire from the firm. He made promises only to break them, and finally, going from bad to worse, he was forced to retire. One morning we read the news in the paper that his bloated body had been found floating in the Hudson river; and his old father, up to a few years ago, walked up and down the streets with bowed head, giving every evidence of an almost broken heart. Sin is an awful thing and makes its record on whatever it touches.

II

Two Ways. There are just two ways in this world along which men may walk, and they are not parallel ways. I used to have that idea, but I am sure it is wrong. As a matter of fact, it is but one way; going in one direction is death, and in the opposite direction is life.

First: Away from God, away from his love, every step only leads us farther from Him--not because of anything he is, but because of what we have done ourselves.

A father in the South sent his boy to a northern university, and for seven years he was away from the restraints of his home. Then he came back with his diploma but with the habit of intemperance fastened upon him. It seemed impossible for him to break it, and his old father was fairly crushed. His mother broke her heart and died, all because of her boy. And yet the father loved him. One day the old father stepped from his carriage in the town in which he lived. The son was heard to make a request of him, and when evidently it was refused the boy turned and struck him full in the face. The old father staggered and would have fallen to the walk except for assistance. He entered his carriage, drove back to his home, the servants saw him go out into the grove where his wife was buried, throw himself on the grave and shriek aloud. Some time later the boy returned and the father met him at the door to say, "You must go away; you have disgraced my name and killed your mother and broken my heart." This is the measure of a father's love perhaps in this one instance, but think how many times you have trifled with God, spurned his

love, disregarded his Son, and yet he has loved you. And remember also that word which says,

"There is a time, we know not when, A place, we know not where, That seals the destiny of men For glory or despair."

Second: Towards God. How easy a thing it is, therefore, to be saved if there is but one way and this way runs in opposite directions, meaning either life or death. It is just to "right about face," as the soldier would say, by an act of the will and with the help of God to turn away from sin and from self. I am very sure we can do it, because it is commanded in this text, and God would not mock us with a command which could not be obeyed. I am equally sure that we must do it now, for God has plainly stated this in his Word.

III

Choose Life. As has been indicated, the text proves that we may choose life if we will, but I have more especially in mind the question, "Why should we do it?" and I answer, because it is the best sort of life and the only life.

One of my friends used to tell of a man whom he saw in Colonel Clarke's mission. The man rose for prayers and accepted Christ. Later on he saw him again in the mission. He went forward to testify. He had that look upon his face the result of sin, because of which you could not tell whether he was young or old, and leaning up against the platform he gave his testimony. Among other things he said: "I came to Chicago some little time ago from my home in the east, my father having made two requests--first, that I should change my name because I had disgraced his; second, that I should go away and never return. I had fallen too low here for them to receive me even in the station house, and I was on my way to end it all when I heard the music of this mission and came in and found Christ. As I came down the aisle this evening I heard one man say to another, 'He is getting paid for this,' and I wish to say that I am. I have a letter in my pocket from my father, and he tells me that I cannot come home too soon for him. Boys, I am getting paid. I have a sister at home whose name I would hardly dare to have taken upon my impure lips, and she writes me that every day she has prayed for me and that a welcome home awaits me. I am getting paid, for to-night I am starting back to my New England home."

It is life which we may choose, and life of the very best sort. It is better than anything that this world can give. Men have tried other ways, and they have ended in despair and shame and death, but this way is the path of the just and shines brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. Therefore choose life and choose it now.

In St. Paul's cathedral in London it is said that under the dome there is a red mark, and I have been told that this mark indicates the place where a workman lost his life. He fell from the scaffolding and was dashed to pieces upon the floor. I have been told that in the Alps very frequently you will see black crosses where men have slipped into eternity as the result of an accident. But I suggest these stories in order that I may say that where you are at this present moment may be the black cross of death, because there some one rejected Christ. If you feel this, choose Jesus Christ; choose him, and choose him now.

"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

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