

A  
**MESSAGE OF HOPE,**  
comfort and freedom in Jesus Christ

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**“The Choice between Life and Death” by Kyle Murphy**

Our scripture verse for this quarter comes from Deuteronomy. Much of the book of Deuteronomy is comprised of the retelling of the same law that God gave to the previous generation of Israel. This law is laid out in great detail throughout Exodus and Numbers.

That previous generation had been forbidden to enter the Promised Land and was, instead, forced to wander in the wilderness due to their lack of faith and trust in God to give them victory over the Canaanites (see Numbers 13-14).

At this point in the history of the Israelite nation, that generation has died off and this next generation is gathered at the plains of Moab by the Jordan River, looking out over the Promised Land.

Moses, in the form of a farewell speech delivers a message to those assembled, restating the laws of the covenant between them and God and giving them a choice – a choice between life and prosperity or death and destruction.

In the past, the people of Israel had continually turned away from God and to the worship of idols. Moses clearly lays out what will happen if they do so again once they have entered the land of Canaan. If they choose to obey God, the Israelites will experience life and prosperity in the land He has promised to them. But, if the Israelites reject Him and worship false gods or fail to keep His commands, they will experience destruction and be driven from the

Promised Land. As our quarterly scripture verse states, Moses gives them a choice.

To us – and probably to them at the time – this sounds like an easy choice, but as we know, the people of Israel failed in keeping God’s commands and were eventually driven from the land.

I have heard many Christians and preachers use this text and apply it to us and the United States of America saying that if we fail to keep God’s commands, He will also drive us from our land. That is not what this text is teaching us. Again, this is a speech given by Moses to the people of Israel. It was given to a specific people, for a specific time. God has not led us into the land of America or promised it to us.

He does, however, continue to offer life to those who love Him and keep His commandments. That same choice that was given to the people of Israel is given to us.

What will we choose? Will we choose life and prosperity or death and destruction? As was the case with the people of Israel, it seems like a simple choice doesn’t it? Who would choose death over life or destruction over prosperity?

But what about in the day-to-day choices we are faced with? Do we still choose to love God and walk in  
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**Quarterly Scripture Focus:**

Deuteronomy 30:15-16

“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 obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws;”



This past April, we held our first Easter Card Assembly Party. Due to requests from some of our friends, family and congregation asking how they can get involved, we have been trying to find ways in which they can share the love of Jesus Christ with our friends inside. Our Card Ministry is one of those ways – a way in which we can all come together as the body of Christ, fellowship with one another, and serve God.

Message of Hope would like to thank all those who came out to sign, seal and prepare over 200 Easter cards to send to our brothers and sisters in Christ incarcerated throughout the United States.



A huge thank you to Macomb Christian Church for their decision to support Message of Hope Jail and Prison Ministry as one of their local outreach ministries. As Message of Hope has continued to grow and expand we have been trusting God to provide for the needs of the ministry and those we serve. We are very blessed and grateful to MCC for joining with us.

Up to this point, much of our budget was covered through the generosity of Roseville Church of Christ (who continues to support us – thanks be to God) and private individuals.

## Voices for Christ submissions

"Nature's Comfort"

By Trina Peake, Huron Valley Correctional Facility

lookin' out this window  
 I see the snow  
 not through my eyes do I see prison  
 but that of His snow globe  
 white blanketing brown and green  
 frozen life  
 chillen till spring  
 it's miraculous how You do  
 and what all things must go thru  
 how Your plans never fail  
 and it's the Lord's purpose that prevails!

"When I'm Gone"

By Loren Slough, Thumb Correctional Facility

Picturing the day, brings so much pain,  
 That day our Savior left with the rain,  
 The blue jay flew by not making a sound,  
 For all you could hear is the unbreakable ground.  
 Prisoners cheered for the death of an innocent man,  
 Heaven cheered as they received their leader of the perfect clan.  
 The Earth mourned for the Creator of us all.  
 Satan was encouraged because of his fall.  
 Learning from the blue eyes of the blue jay,  
 We've seen that Jesus wasn't here to stay,  
 Yet what he left only the Bible can tell,  
 For his story is ours to yell.  
 If you only let him touch you,  
 you will want him to stay and guide you.  
 For the power that he gives is beyond measure,  
 Yet when you seek his commandments you will find all his hidden  
 treasure.  
 So tell him that you need thee,  
 Every hour I need thee.  
 For then he will bless you with eternity,  
 Granting you the perfect gift of joining his fraternity.  
 So when he says in the Bible,  
 I am going but I leave you someone reliable.  
 Trust him as The Holy Spirit will be by your side,  
 Wanting to direct your path along this life we call a ocean sea side.  
 Jesus didn't mean that he would leave you alone,  
 But had a perfect plan when He said when I'm gone.

"Father Will You . . ."

By Todd Graham, Bellamy Creek Correctional Facility

Running around lost in shadow  
 Where myself I long to know  
 Try to coax him out to see  
 Hiding inside is the real me

Father will You accept this heart  
 It has been battered and oh so scarred  
 Father will You accept this mind  
 Tired from battling all the time  
 Father will You . . .

Always afraid You'd not approve  
 As my self-worth I tried to prove  
 Failing time after time again  
 Contemplating to bring an end

Father will You accept this heart  
 It has been battered and oh so scarred  
 Father will You accept this mind  
 Tired from battling all the time  
 Father will You . . .

Have so much baggage to carry  
 And it all feels way too heavy  
 Spirit's broken and needs repair  
 Right now I feel I just don't care

Father will You accept this heart  
 It has been battered and oh so scarred  
 Father will You accept this mind  
 Tired from battling all the time  
 Father will You . . .

Father I know You hear my plea  
 And You sent Your Son to save me  
 Father I know You've heard my plea  
 In You I am finally free  
 In You I am finally free  
 In You I am finally free

Keeping whose we are in mind!

## A Letter from Inside

Joseph Jones, one of our members of Next Step Christian Recovery at Macomb Correctional Facility, was recently transferred. He sent the following letter that we wanted to share with all of you. Joe writes,

"I really enjoyed Next Step Christian Recovery and pray that others may receive as much as I did in that class. Next Step was a place for me to open up about my struggles, my weaknesses. Growing up, my thoughts of a Christian was of a strong person, able to fight off the devil and any evil. Even in prison the brothers never wanted to seem weak or not in control. I couldn't relate to some of them because I have to work daily to fight off my demons. Truthfully, that's why I am so thankful for Next Step. It was a place for me to open up in a safe environment with people who know the struggles and know that we are weak and only with the help of Jesus can we live a pro-social life. Thanks for being a place for learning, teaching, healing and spiritual growth."

Big Joe

### Voices for Christ submissions continued...

"Let perseverance finish its work"

By Jose Alonzo, Muskegon Correctional Facility

God has a way of teaching us things, if we are willing to learn them. Every day, through prayer and Bible study, we come to learn what God wants us to know and how He wants us to live. Our aim should be to please Him with our lifestyles and our character. I have always been the "straight forward" type, and some might even say argumentative, but I beg to differ. I'm just firm in my beliefs and opinions. But what I've come to realize is that Satan can use this against me to pull me into anger. He knows that I don't like to be talked to any kind of way and when done so I can get defensive and harsh. I have to be careful because the old me tries to resurface. And there's been times where I was willing and ready to become violent because of it! But where's the God in that? Does that please Him in any way? I think not.

The Bible talks about testing, trials, tribulations, and temptations (external/internal). Although there's many different situations and scenarios that could be addressed I want to focus on one in particular: Dealing with people who try to pull you off your square with their words. Now we know that our battle is not against flesh and blood but against the powers and principalities of the air (Eph. 6.12). Satan uses the hearts of people to try us and tempt us. In the face of trials, where someone may be trying us, we may be tempted to react carnally in a negative way. Here is where our faith is being tested. What is going to be our reaction? Will we utilize our godly character or not? When we persevere through that testing and trial with godly character and not succumb to the temptation of the flesh to react carnally, we will surely profit from it. In the spiritual sense we become more mature, enabling us to handle even more the next time, should a similar situation arise. Romans 5:3-5 says to glory in tribulations, knowing that they produce perseverance, character and hope. This hope does not disappoint. Why? Because if we are filled with the Holy Spirit, it is the Spirit which will get us through it because we will have the love of God in our hearts, and it is that very love that will compel us to react in a godly manner during those critical moments. James 1:2-4 says to consider it pure joy when we face trials of many kinds, knowing that the testing of our faith develops perseverance. We must allow for perseverance to finish its work so that we may be mature and complete, lacking nothing. Again, we will be better equipped to handle future occurrences of that same type. James 1:12 says blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, withstanding the test. He will receive the crown of life God has promised to those who love Him. And finally, James 1:19-20 says we should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to anger, for our anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

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obedience to Him when dealing with stress, frustration, adversity, disaster? When dealing with our spouse, family, bunky or ARUS, do we display God's love? When dealing with issues that arise at work or school do we remain obedient to Him? When we are victimized by someone else...maybe someone cuts in front of you in line, abuses you, steals from you or harms you. Do we turn to the worldly way of dealing with things and retaliate or do we keep God's commands, His decrees and laws? When we are faced with the death of a loved one, what do we do? Do we choose life?

Speaking only for myself here, I often do NOT choose life. As is evident by simply looking at my actions or reactions to stress, frustration, adversity or disaster it is obvious that I do NOT always choose to love God or keep His commands. I praise the Lord for Jesus Christ and for the sacrifice He made on my behalf so that I can be forgiven and reconciled to God when I choose death and destruction rather than life and prosperity, but I must continue to strive to make the right choices when God places things before me or when life happens.

What about you? When dealing with stress, frustration, adversity or disaster how do you react? When given the choice between life or death, between loving God and keeping His commandments or living according to your own desires, what choice are you making?

We must choose life! In easy times and in difficult times, we need to continue to love the Lord our God, to walk in obedience to Him, and to keep His commands, decrees and laws. Today and every day, choose life!



We have some exciting news in regard to our Next Step Christian Recovery program. Hunter, who started the Next Step program at Carson City Correctional Facility (DRF) back in September 2015, has now been transferred to Macomb. He will be with us at Macomb for a couple more weeks and then will be going home!

We praise the Lord for all Hunter has done to further the kingdom of God and for his willingness in partnering with Message of Hope over these last few years. We look forward to whatever God has in store for him and us in the future.

We are also excited to announce the names of those individuals who will be taking over the facilitation of the Next Step program at DRF. Message of Hope would like to welcome **Michael Berlanga** and **Daniel Greene** to the family! A huge thank you to both of you for answering the calling God has placed on your lives and for your willingness to help others find freedom from their addictions through Jesus Christ.

Please keep these brothers in your prayers!



To our friends inside who have already enrolled in the correspondence courses offered through Message of Hope, we thank you and would like to encourage you to keep up the good work!

If you still have a lesson sitting around in your room that you haven't completed, please do so and send it on back. We are always excited to hear from you and to know that you are growing in your relationship with God. Receiving the Study Guides back from you is always an encouragement to us. For those who are not yet enrolled, feel free to contact us to obtain a list of courses we offer.

Special thanks goes out to Tracy Leigh at Women's Huron Valley Correctional Facility (WHV) who continues working diligently for the Lord. We have had several individuals enroll in the correspondence courses after hearing about it from her.

Thank you Tracy for your servant's heart and your love of the Lord!

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