Deuteronomy 30:9b-10 The Lord will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your fathers, 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.

Your right. You could say I nag. You could say I nag because according to my dictionary the definition of “nag” is, “to annoy by constant scolding or urging.” There are definite times when I scold. There are definite times when I urge. When you look at that definition I have to admit that I am a nag.

Of course, I don’t know too many pastors who couldn’t then be labeled “nags.” The very premise of the work that we do could lend itself readily to this term. Consider the very words that are found on the call that each and every congregation extends to its pastors. That divine call says:

*“****In extending this call to you we solemnly charge you***

*To preach the Gospel of our Lord among us in its truth and purity, and to administer the Sacraments in accordance with the inspired Word of God and the Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, as laid down in the Book of Concord of 1580, and to establish and maintain sound Lutheran practice at all time:*

*To discharge toward all the members of our congregation the function of a pastor, that is, to watch over their souls in an evangelical manner, in particular, to visit the sick and dying; to admonish indifferent and erring members; and to be ever zealous for the winning of souls for Christ’s kingdom.*

The very definition of the pastor’s call says that he will be a nag. He will use the Word of God’s Law to scold, to correct and rebuke the members of the congregation that sin might not run rampant and God’s kingdom destroyed. He will use the Word of God’s Gospel to urge, encourage and promote the Christian message of salvation and the Christian life that Christ may be the light of our lives for all the world to see that His Kingdom come. Yep, I readily admit to being a nag.

However there are those who might argue that nag is not quite the right word. Not quite the right word because of what the definition says. The definition said, “To annoy by constant scolding and urging.” When I carry out my duties as a Pastor it is not my intent to annoy. To constantly use the Law and Gospel properly, that is what I intend. But I do not do it to annoy. I do it because I realize that I am involved in work that has eternal implications. I do it because souls are at stake. I do it because clearly such work is exactly what God’s servants are called to do.

Take the example of our text. Our text is taken from the last book of Moses. Moses had been told by the Lord that he would soon be taken to his eternal home in heaven. As a result of this revelation Moses then takes the opportunity to gather the people of Israel and remind them of what it meant to be God’s people. You might say that this text contains a portion of Moses’ farewell sermon to God’s people. It is a sermon where Moses scolded and urged for the sake of souls.

Let’s look at this section of God’s Word and apply it to ourselves. Our theme will be: **LIFE AND DEATH. 1st. God’s Offer. 2nd. The big “if”. 3rd. Our choice.**

As I said before, this text is considered to be Moses’ farewell sermon to the people that he served. You might at first wonder why I chose the theme of **LIFE AND DEATH** since that phrase didn’t really occur in our text. Well, I chose that theme for two reasons.

The first reason is because I know how this text begins and how this text ends. This text actually begins with Moses’ purpose behind gathering the people. He doesn’t just want to preach to them. He doesn’t gather them so they can proclaim his worth or shower him with accolades before he leaves. His main purpose behind gathering the people is to have the people of Israel renew the covenant that they had made with the Lord God many years before. A covenant is a solemn promise between two parties. The people of Israel had promised to be God’s people. They promised that they would hear, obey and trust in God above all things. Moses wanted these people to renew that promise that they might remember all the more what they were to be. They were to be and act like the children of God! What Moses is doing is the act of a caring shepherd of the Lord.

The second reason for our theme is because truly our text is one that deals with life and death. Moses knew what was at stake. Moses knew that the eternal souls of Israel were the real issue. Should they remain faithful to the Lord they would receive eternal life. Should they fail to remain faithful it would be eternal death. Moses wasn’t just concerned with them as a people of this world. Moses was most concerned with them as souls who faced the life and death issues of eternity. Because it is not really about this world. It is about the eternity that is to come. Either an eternity of death or an eternity of life.

The portion of our text that I highlighted for you is a portion where Moses is emphasizing the graciousness of God. Our text said, **“The Lord will again delight in you and make you prosperous.”** This is about God’s grace. About how God will delight and God will make prosperous. Notice the emphasis is on what God is doing! Moses then told them how that grace could be theirs. He said, **“Obey the Lord, keep his commands, turn to the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul.”**

You do realize that Moses was preaching and teaching the very same thing that we hear today? This isn’t just saying that if you are good that God will reward you. Moses knew that we are sinful. He knew that people couldn’t perfectly obey the Lord. What Moses was doing was directing the people to God’s Book, the Bible. He was directing the people there because the Bible (in this case, the first five books of the Bible) laid out the truth of God’s gracious plan for the salvation of mankind. It is when you understand the whole truth that you understand these words.

The whole plan revolved around the promised Messiah. Everything about the first covenant of God’s Law was designed to point to the Messiah and how He would win the victory of salvation for them. The people would be considered obedient through the Messiah. The people would be God’s people when they put their hearts and souls in God and the gracious Savior to come. The Lord would delight in them by grace through faith. You see, the only difference between these people and us is that they were to believe in a Savior promised while we are to believe in the Savior who has come. It is through the Savior that we win for life.

By the way, did you catch the big word of this text? The text said, “IF.” If you obey the Lord, keep his commands…” By that word we understand a couple of things. First, If implies there is a condition here. The condition is sticking to God’s Word. We are God’s people only when we stick to God’s Word. Not some of it, but all of it. Second, it implies that we have a responsibility. We could label that responsibility as “obey, keep, and turn.”

Obey the Lord tells us we need to hear what God says. Keep says that we are to believe what God says and reveals. Turn emphasizes that God’s Word is the most important thing in our lives, because we turn, we have a change of direction in our lives.

Again, nothing has changed from then to now. A true Christian is someone who hears, obeys and follows the Word of God. But what is meant by that is so important to grasp. Can you obey, keep and turn when it is the Law? No! We, the entire world, are nothing but miserable sinners. We can’t even get close to obeying, keeping and turning when it comes to the Law. What makes the difference is the Gospel, the promises of God for a Savior. God told them how the Savior would win the victory and pay for their sin. God told us, showed us how Jesus has now won the victory for us. We believe it, just as they believed in the one to come. God tells us that the love of Jesus will fill us and overflow in our lives. And so it does.

It does because of the forgiveness of sins Jesus won for us. Jesus lived the perfect life we could not and do not live. Jesus obeyed!! Jesus keeps as precious all the Father says. Jesus turns his full attention to seeing to it that the entire Word of God is fulfilled and done in Him! And then Jesus offered himself on the cross to pay for our sins and rose from the dead!!!! Don’t you see, that is how we are accounted before God as holy and blameless in his sight! That’s how all of these words can be true in our lives, sinners though we are…Jesus makes them true. Jesus clothes us with his righteousness. Jesus causes his Father to see in us only His perfect goodness and wonder. Yes, Jesus give us life, eternal life and chases away the whole issue of eternal death.

Now be sure to get the whole gist of this. The condition still stands! That “if” is all about Jesus. If you reject the Savior, reject the salvation he has won for us and determine that you can earn heaven all on your own you will be in deep and eternal trouble. You cannot overlook the work of Jesus or the salvation He has won. You cannot ignore the call of the Lord to be sanctified, that is to hate sin and desire to live a life pleasing to God. You cannot just decide that you can do whatever you want and God will just have to accept it. That is not faith. That is not “being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.” That is not believing in Jesus! How did Mark put it in his gospel: **“Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved but whoever does not believe will be condemned.”**

There you have it in a nutshell: Life and Death. Life as offered in the sweet nectar of God’s Gospel, life as only the sugared righteousness of Jesus can provide. Life that is eternal. Or you can have death. Death as found in the curse of God’s Law. Death, the rot of sin and unbelief that is found in our fallen world. Death that is eternal too.

Which would you have? God has provided everything for life in Jesus, His Son. May all of us hear and believe this message of Jesus, a message of life and death, of obedience and righteousness in His salvation. A message that is salvation by grace through faith in Jesus. It is the only way it works. Amen.