

The hard work of choosing life

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I played competitive tennis as a teenager. At one point, a new player started working with my coach. He was a natural athlete—quick, agile, and well coordinated. I was impressed.

My coach was not. He said, “That kid will never be any good.”

It seemed to me like he already was pretty good. “What do you mean?” I asked.

“Watch him,” my coach replied. “He’s goofing off out there. Anybody who won’t work hard in practice is not going to be able to win big matches.”

Following this analogy, Moses is the coach and the ancient Hebrews are about to take the court. They have had a long tutelage under Moses. He is worried about how they will perform moving forward, because their time in the wilderness has been spotty at best. Remember the golden calf? Their grumbling about the food, their questioning if they would have been better off staying enslaved in Egypt? Moses has done what he could for them, and now he is giving them their final instructions: “I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity... Choose life so that you and your descendants may live.”

The decision comes to every generation. God moves us to faith—but God also has given us free will. Choosing God means giving up the freedom to order our own lives and taking on a life that is ordered by God’s commandments. Choosing God—living in obedience to God—means living in ways that put others’ interests before our own. It means proclaiming God’s justice especially on behalf of those not invited to be a part of the discussion, and radiating God’s love in the wildly indiscriminate way God

shows love to all people.

Just like excelling on the tennis court, being a faithful disciple—choosing life—is hard work. But this time, the final win is already assured.