

Deuteronomy 30:9-14

⁹The LORD your God will cause you to be overflowing with good things from all the work of your hands, in the fruit of your womb, in the fruit of your animals, and in the fruit of your soil. For once again he will rejoice over your prosperity, just as he rejoiced over your fathers, ¹⁰when you obey the voice of the LORD your God by keeping his commandments and his statutes written in this Book of the Law, when you return to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

¹¹Certainly, this commandment that I am giving you today is not too difficult for you, and it is not far away. ¹²It is not up in the heavens, so that you have to say, “Which one of us will go up to the heavens and get it for us so we can listen to it and carry it out?” ¹³It is not across the sea, so that you have to say, “Which one of us will cross over to the other side of the sea and get it for us so we can listen to it and carry it out?” ¹⁴Instead, the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so you can obey it.

The Word Is near You

I.

It was time to retire. He had been the CEO for decades. Time after time he had been the one all eyes turned to for answers. Time after time he had come through for them. He had already been old when he took this leadership role, never imagining it would be this long before he could finally retire.

Moses had been 80 years old when God called him to his life’s most important work. For the last four decades he had been like the face of God to the people. He was the mediator between the people and God. When the people were afraid to face God, Moses went for them. When God had something to tell the people, Moses relayed the message.

It had been important work. Sometimes Moses had done very well, both in the eyes of the people and in the eyes of God. Other times, the people complained against him. Sometimes God had to reprimand him for his impertinence.

The time had come for Moses’ retirement. Finally. There would be no golden years for him to sit back in his rocking chair and reflect on his life, however, there was just one more speech to make. The people must have been excited to gather in the center of their camp to listen to this epic speech. Moses was turning over leadership to Joshua. The people were about to enter the Promised Land at long last.

Moses began his speech. “You have seen everything that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh, to all his officials, and to his whole land: ³ the great trials that your eyes saw, those great signs and wonders. ⁴ Yet the LORD to this very day has not given you a heart to understand, or eyes to see or ears to hear” (Deuteronomy 29:2-4, EHV).

The hopes and expectations of a stirring and emotional speech were dashed. The speech looked back at the history of the people. Moses didn’t have to read a bunch of dry, dusty history books to learn what had taken place, he had *written* the history from the beginning of the world to that very moment in time, as God had told it to him. Over the last 40 years he had lived and watched the history of this people.

The journey this people had embarked on when they left Egypt was not *supposed* to be 40 years, just a few months. It was the disobedience of the people that had resulted in a 40-year wandering in the desert until every person other than Joshua and Caleb who had left the land of Egypt had died before the rest of the nation would be allowed to enter the Promised Land.

“I led you through the wilderness for forty years. Your clothing did not wear out on you, nor did the sandals on your feet” (Deuteronomy 29:5, EHV). With just this one verse Moses called their attention to all the things that marked these 40 years. Fear consumed them when they seemed trapped between the Red Sea and Pharaoh’s army. Loathing of the “miserable food” God gave them from heaven defined their attitude toward the providing hand of a gracious God. Dancing around

a calf made out of gold showed how quickly and completely they could ignore the One True and Only God who had brought them out of Egypt and had done everything for them.

Grumbling and complaining had been the hallmarks of this nation's existence. Moses realized that not much would change as the centuries progressed. He spoke about the fact that Israel would be uprooted from their land in the future because of disobedience to God and the covenant he had made with Israel.

II.

How to prevent such disaster? That was the question. Do what God says. That's the answer.

"Certainly, this commandment that I am giving you today is not too difficult for you, and it is not far away. ¹²It is not up in the heavens, so that you have to say, 'Which one of us will go up to the heavens and get it for us so we can listen to it and carry it out?' ¹³It is not across the sea, so that you have to say, 'Which one of us will cross over to the other side of the sea and get it for us so we can listen to it and carry it out?'" (Deuteronomy 30:11-13, EHV).

It certainly *seems* difficult. At least, for those who are honest with themselves.

Not every generation has experienced Manna from heaven lying on the ground to go out and harvest each day, but every generation has complained about the sustaining hand of God. The food isn't good enough or nutritious enough, or there isn't enough of it. Perhaps it is the quality or the cost that is maligned, or the availability of exactly the food desired, even though it is out of season.

Not every generation has been jammed up against the coastline with an army pushing them relentlessly toward the sea, but every generation has been fearful of some powerful force that threatens their very existence. Every individual from every generation has to face fear. Every individual faces moments of such loneliness that they feel God has abandoned them and is not there for them, or anger against God for permitting some perceived wrong to enter their life, and they are convinced they will be shoved into whatever sea of despair confronts them.

Not every generation has melted down gold and cast it into gods, dancing and singing and worshipping those gods as if they actually had some power to save, but every generation and every individual has elevated *something* or *someone* above the One True and Only God. Every generation and every individual has devoted time and attention and resources on things that have no power to save as if they were the most important things in all eternity.

Of course, the *real* disaster isn't being uprooted from your homeland. The real disaster is to be uprooted from your proximity to the Lord. The real disaster is to be separated from God, not just by being banished to a foreign country, but by being banished to hell for all eternity—separated from God forever.

How to prevent such disaster? That is the question.

In today's Gospel (Luke 10:25-37), the expert in the law asked Jesus how to prevent such disaster. He wanted to know what he *must do* to inherit eternal life. Jesus asked him to recite the law. The expert replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind; and, love your neighbor as yourself" (Luke 10:27, EHV). Jesus told him: "Do this, and you will live" (Luke 10:28, EHV).

Doing what God says doesn't seem to be possible. The expert in the law finally realized he couldn't do it to God's satisfaction. The best and brightest of the Patriarchs—the Father's of the Faith—still disobeyed God's commands. Moses *himself* disobeyed God's commands. Is there any hope for those of us who don't stand atop Mt. Sinai and speak personally with God?

III.

Moses explains in the verses before our text: "The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, with the result that you will live" (Deuteronomy 30:6, EHV). It isn't what *you* can do that will save you, but what *God* can and will and has done *for* you. You cannot, on your own, love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

Jesus came to take away the disaster threatened by the law. Jesus came to deal with the curses

of the law Moses recited in his farewell speech to the people. Jesus came to take on himself all your grumbling and complaining about the way God takes care of you, and the times you are angry with God, and all your idolatrous behavior in putting yourself and other people and things above God.

He carried them all for you to the cross and paid the full price of being separated by God for those sins and every other sin you have ever committed. Jesus himself sent the Holy Spirit to cleanse and purify your heart for you from the inside—he gave you faith in Jesus that believes that all that Jesus did was done for *you*. That is how God circumcised your hearts. And *that* is how your New Self has the power and the strength—given by God himself—to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

It is God’s goodness for you and to you that explains what Moses says in our text: “The LORD your God will cause you to be overflowing with good things...For once again he will rejoice over your prosperity, just as he rejoiced over your fathers, ¹⁰when you obey the voice of the LORD your God by keeping his commandments and his statutes written in this Book of the Law, when you return to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deuteronomy 30:9-10, EHV).

Return to the Lord repentance. Repentance isn’t just a one-and-done thing, but a continual attitude. Is your grumbling against God *really* and *honestly* something that only lies in your past? Do you never more experience fear that God has abandoned you, or anger against God for something that is happening to you in your life? Can you honestly claim that *nothing* ever gets elevated above God in your life? Repentance and a return to God is a continual refrain for the Child of God. It *must* be, for we daily sin much.

IV.

“Certainly, this commandment that I am giving you today is not too difficult for you, and it is not far away. ¹²It is not up in the heavens... ¹³It is not across the sea... ¹⁴Instead, the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so you can obey it” (Deuteronomy 30:11-14, EHV).

The daily repentance attitude is *not* difficult. God has made his Word abundantly available. Moses spoke to people who, by and large, could not read and did not have access to the written Word of God. The books of Moses were read to them. They memorized large swaths of the Word so that it wasn’t just outside them, but part of them.

Today, the written Word of God is available in so many ways and so inexpensively. Children sometimes chafe at being asked to memorize passages because they insist they have a Bible in book form, or digital, close at hand and can always look it up.

Looking up what God says is valuable, but even if you can’t quote chapter and verse of Scripture, knowing bits and pieces from God’s Word means that it is in your heart. When the Word is near you and in your heart, it can be on your lips in your speech to others. It doesn’t have to be your retirement address to a nation, but the simple words and actions that reflect the joy you have in the salvation God has given you by cleansing your mind and purifying your heart.

All eyes turned to Moses because he had been the national and spiritual leader of the people for so many years. You don’t have to be that omnipresent a figure to be seen by friends and family and coworkers as the one to whom they look to see a visible representation of the Word of God. Live as one who recognizes that the Word is near you—that it is in your mouth and in your heart, and reflected in your life. Amen.