

Hearing God's Grace: God's Demanding Grace

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[0 : 0 0] 90 in the church bibles so deuteronomy chapter 10 and starting in verse 12 and now israel what does the lord your god ask of you but to fear the lord your god to walk in all his ways to love him to serve the lord your god with all your heart and with all your soul and to observe the lord's commands and decrees that i am giving you today for your own good to the lord your god belong the heavens even the highest heavens the earth and everything in it yet the lord set his affection on your forefathers and loved them and he chose you their descendants above all the nations as it is today circumcise your hearts therefore and do not be stiff-necked any longer for the lord your god is god of gods and lord of lords the great god mighty and awesome who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes he defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow and loves the alien giving him food and clothing and you are to love those who are aliens for you yourselves were aliens in egypt fear the lord your god and serve him hold fast to him and take your oaths in his name he is your praise he is your god who performed for you those great and awesome wonders you saw with your own eyes your forefathers who went down into egypt were 70 in all and now the lord your god has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky and following on in chapter 11 verse 1 love the lord your god and keep his requirements his decrees his laws and his commands always remember today that your children were not the ones who saw and experienced the discipline of the lord your god his majesty his mighty hand his outstretched armed the signs he performed and the things he did in the heart of egypt both to pharaoh king of egypt and to his whole country what he did to the egyptian army to its horses and chariots how he overwhelmed them with the waters of the red sea as they were pursuing pursuing you and how the lord brought lasting ruin on them it was not your children who saw what he did for you in the desert until you arrived in this place and what he did to dathan and arabum sons of elia the reubenite when the earth opened its mouth right in the middle of all israel and swallowed them up with their households their tents and every living thing that belonged to them but it was your own eyes that saw all these great things the lord has done now over to verse 16 be careful or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them then the lord's anger will burn against you and he will shut the heavens so that it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce and you will soon perish from the good land the lord is giving you fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds tie them as symbols on your hands bind them on your foreheads teach them to your children talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road when you lie down and when you get up write them on the door frames of your houses and on your gates so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the lord swore to give to your forefathers as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth well keep it open that those two readings chapter 10 and chapter 11

and let's pray father thank you for your words thank you for the book of deuteronomy thank you for all that we've been able to learn and to hear about you and we pray that you will continue to teach us through this great book teach us about god teach us about ourselves and teach us about the lord jesus and his spirit so please work amongst us and we pray this in jesus name amen well deuteronomy as we have been seeing in our studies is a collection of sermons or a series of talks that's been given by mooses to god's people just before mooses dies and the people cross over into the promised land it's his final his farewell speech and in his sermons he's been telling the people practically right up to chapter 10 of all the things that god has been doing for them and all the things that god will do for them but now as we get to chapter 10 and chapter 11 the emphasis has begun to shift the focus is no longer on what god has done for us but what is our response to all that god has done for us in other words how are they going to live in the land what's their behavior going to be what does god expect of them as they go into the land well we're going to unpack this by looking at three things what god demands from us why god demands of us and how we respond to god's demands so what god demands from his people why god can demand it and how we are to respond to his demands so first what god demands from us that's the question that is being asked right at the very beginning in chapter 12 in fact if you looked at the catechism we asked the question what does the law of god require of us it's the question that we read here in verse 12 and now oh israel what does the lord your god ask of you what is it that god requires what does he expect of his people well look at the rest of verse 12 what does the lord your god ask of you but to fear the lord your god to walk in all his ways to love him to serve the lord your god with all your heart and with all your soul and to observe the lord's commands and decrees that i am giving you today for your own good and this theme is repeated throughout these two chapters so chapter 11 verse 1 love the lord your god and keep his requirements his decrees his laws and his commands always or verse 31 you are about to cross the jordan to enter and take possession of the land the lord your god is giving you when you have taken it over and are living there be sure that you obey all the decrees and laws that i am setting before you today now this is nothing less

than a demand for wholehearted loyalty total commitment and devoted allegiance to god and to nobody else it's as if god is making a claim on our lives he's making it crystal clear that our life is no longer our own it now belongs exclusively to god and we mustn't think that this is an optional extra for the very king this is what god demands of all his people it was spoken to the whole gathering it's not unlike the relationship between a commander and a soldier or a husband and a wife let me use these as illustrations to show a commander because of his very position in the army has the right to demand of his soldiers that they obey him if he gives a command the expectation is whenever he gives an order that they will be carried out without delay a wife because of her relationship to her husband has a right to receive from her husband to receive love there is an expectation that she will experience in her life his devotion and his loyalty now because of the relationship that exists between god and his people god demands our loving obedience and our obedient love it is nothing less than a demand for wholehearted loyalty total commitment and devoted allegiance to god and to no one else so that is what god demands of us he is demanding our whole life everything that we are our heart soul and mind to love him above all else now second question why does god demand of us like this who does he think he is to demand of us his total allegiance and all our love well the reason god can make such demands is because of who he is look at verse 14 to the lord your god belong the heavens even the highest heavens the earth and everything in it who is saying that god owns the entire universe every square inch of the universe belongs to god there is not one blade of grass there isn't one galaxy in space that god cannot say this is mine it all belongs to him and we belong to him but we should never think of god as some distant dictator who's sitting on his throne away out there somewhere abusing his power issuing these orders that we love him just to satisfy his own ego no god can demand of us because of what he has done for us he owns everything we belong to him but he has also done something amazing for us two things first we have come to know his grace everything belongs to god yet look at verse 15 yet the lord set his affection on your forefathers and he loved them and he chose you their descendants above all

the nations as it is today you see god isn't cold and distant he has actively intervened into this world and into our lives and he has actively loved you he has reached down as it says in verse 15 and he has chosen you he has set his affection on you he is delighted in calling you and giving you his love it is personal and intimate and we must never think that this is in response to what we have done or who we are no look at verse 17 for the lord your god is god of gods and lord of lords the great god mighty and awesome who shows no partiality and accepts no bribes so god is not responding to our love he's not reacting to our obedience he shows no partiality god loves us he sets his affection upon us simply because he loves us it is because of god's grace that we are his treasured possession now this grace is not just a thought or an idea that we have kind of a way out there separate from us it has been experienced in our lives it is grace experienced look at chapter 11 verse 2 remember today that your children were not the ones who saw and experienced the discipline of the lord your god his majesty his mighty hand his outstretched arm the signs he performed and the things he did in the heart of egypt both to pharaoh king of egypt and to his whole country verse 5 it was not to your children who saw what he did for you in the desert until you arrived at this place verse 7 but it was your own eyes that saw all these great things that the lord has done for you you see god's grace is not some hand me down memory it's not a second hand experience that gets passed along the family this isn't somebody else's story that we have to try and relate to it is something that we can experience personally in our own lives verse 7 he says to the people it was with your own eyes that you saw all these great things that the lord has done he had rescued them from egypt he had provided for them in the desert he spared their lives when they grumbled and complained and they disobeyed this is not the experience of someone else somewhere else this was their experience this was their story this was their life and they knew god's act of love in their lives first hand and it is no different for us god's grace is experienced in our lives every single day even this very day we've known his grace to us in providing us with the food that we eat the homes that we live in the families that we have the friends that we have the tap the water that we have from the tap all of these things are signs of god's abundant grace to us and we have them every single day and they just bypass us without any thought but yet they are all

god's good gifts to us and we experience it but above all of this we experience the rescue of god through his son jesus christ who has forgiven us and who accepts us and welcomes us into his family to be his very children he has provided us with all that we have through jesus he cares for us he treasures for us the bible tells us that he has provided us with everything that we need for life and godliness god through his grace gives us everything he doesn't treat us as our sins deserve when we rebel against him and yes we might say okay the death and the resurrection and the life of jesus may have been an event in history a way back there somewhere but it's not a hand-me-down experience of somebody else no through faith in jesus the effects of all that jesus has done for us can be experienced in our lives every single day we can own as it were verse 7 it's with our own eyes that we have seen these great things that the lord has done this isn't somebody else's story this is our story god's grace is known today and it is something to enjoy today and this is the reason why god can demand our loving obedience and our obedient love and we've got to be clear on this god doesn't rescue his people as he as we've seen in deuteronomy and he doesn't rescue and provide for us and then say you know what do what you like when you get into the promised land it doesn't matter how you live you choose how you want to live no god says because of what i have done for you my grace and my love that has been lavished upon you you now belong to me you're mine so god's grace isn't something that we can just take it or leave it and and kind of abuse it whenever we wish no grace is deeply personal and intimate it's relational it's about god who owns the universe being in relationship with people like us and it's binding we can't break out of it it's demanding upon us and because of all that god has done for us in our lives there's not one inch of our lives not one part of our life that god doesn't say mine that means there is nothing that god can't ask of you there is nothing that god can't require of you there is nothing that he can't demand of you we belong to him we are his and so there is this demand that we would love god with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind now i'm sure as we just even think about those two things that what god demands of us our total allegiance our complete love and that why god demands of us this this demand can overwhelm us look at chapter 10 verse 12 again just try and think how we could possibly do this he says fear the lord your god walk in

[20 : 05] all his ways love him serve the lord your god with all your heart and with all your soul or chapter 11 verse 1 love the lord your god and keep his requirements his decrees his laws and his commands always or verse 32 be sure that you obey all the decrees and laws that i am setting before you today now that to me is is a huge big weight that's heavy upon our shoulders and the weight of it is this we know what is required of us we know that we are to love god with all our heart we know that we're meant to obey all of his commands but here's the crunch of it we know that we'll never do it deep down we know that this is just an impossible task so how are we to respond to such demands well i think there's two very helpful steps that we can take that will help us to love god and to obey his commands the first is this circumcise your hearts can you flick it up there graham i think it's there there we go circumcise your hearts look at verse 16 circumcise your hearts therefore and do not be stiff-necked any longer now circumcision we know with this outward sign that you belonged to god you were part of the covenant family but we also know that this external procedure doesn't actually change your heart having your foreskin removed doesn't suddenly enable you to love god and to obey god it it doesn't work like that so he's saying here verse 16 look circumcise your hearts therefore and do not be stiff-necked any longer what we need is not an external procedure but an internal procedure we need a surgeon who's going to come along and cut away the impure the wrong motives the false desires and deal with our hearts so that we will be able to love god well you say that's grand circumcise your hearts well who's going to do that are we meant to do it well look at deuteronomy chapter 30 go to deuteronomy chapter 30 30 now here's a promise from god in deuteronomy 30 and it comes in the context of our disobedience okay this is important we get this right it comes in the context of our disobedience so chapter 30 verse 2 it says when you and your children return to the lord your god and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything i command you today so they've already kind of gone off side a little bit they've been disobedient he's now called them back to himself and then he makes this promise in verse 6 the lord your god the lord your god will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your

soul and live god is going to be the surgeon he's the one who's going to do the cutting away he's going to deal with our hearts so that we can give him our loving obedience now that's good news for us because i don't know about you but i can't deal with my heart i can't love god as i ought to i need somebody else to do it so god says i'm going to do it for you but but again how is he going to do it well jump forward to romans chapter 2 romans chapter 2 this is where god's promise to circumcise our hearts becomes a reality and he tells us how he's going to do it romans chapter 2 verse 28 so he's been talking all about the tradition of circumcision the outward and how it doesn't change anybody so we get to his little summary in verse 28 of chapter 2 it says there a man is not a

Jew if he is only one outwardly so let me just try and paraphrase this a little bit so we can get to grips with what's being said verse 28 a person is not a true believer if he is only one outwardly nor is circumcision merely outward and physical no a person is a true believer if he is one inwardly and circumcision is circumcision of the heart and that circumcision of the heart is done by the spirit you see the only way our hearts can be changed the only way that we can love God and obey God is when the Holy Spirit goes at work in our hearts and begin to change us because we are completely and utterly powerless to meet God's demands without him we cannot love him with our heart soul and strength but how often do we come before

God and ask him to perform this kind of surgery in our lives when when was the last time we sat down and said spirit of God change my heart to love you more spirit of God change my heart so that I will obey you because we cannot do it on our own and he has given us the very resources to do it so that's the first step we need to circumcise our hearts by the spirit of God calling on him to do that change the second thing we need and they're both connected so i don't want to see these as two different things but as one big step together we need to go back to Deuteronomy chapter 11 for this the second step is this to fix God's words in your hearts fix

God's words in your hearts chapter 11 and verse 18 he says fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your forehead and teach them to your children and so on now literally people did tie verses of scriptures on their wrists and on their forehead they were called the lac trees they were just little boxes with verses of scripture and tied around their heads and this was this external sign to show their love and devotion and obedience to God but we all know that words tied on your hands or on your forehead they don't change us or transform us it's the same as maybe me getting a nice big tattoo of Kirstie on my arm here with saying I love you dearly or something like that now a tattoo isn't going to make me love my wife it might remind me but it doesn't make me do it in the same way words of scripture aren't going to change us they must be as it says in verse 15 these words must be fixed in our hearts they must be written in our hearts internally but how is that going to happen well as we read

[29 : 08] God's word the spirit not only cuts away what is unclean in our hearts but he puts God's words into our hearts into our lives you see if we're ever going to meet these great big demands of God if we're going to fear God as it says in verse 12 if we're going to walk in his ways if we're going to love him and serve him with all our heart and with all our soul if we're going to keep his commands if we're going to follow his laws as his people in this world what we need to do is this we need to book in for regular surgery and I want to leave us with this image or this picture as something that we should be doing on a daily basis we need to go into God's operating theatre and as we go into

God's operating theatre there we will find the chief surgeon the Holy Spirit and in his hands if we can picture it like this in his hands are the instruments for doing that surgery that instrument is God's word so the Holy Spirit the surgeon has the implements God's word and as we submit to him as we submit to him in the operating theatre the Spirit of God takes the word of God and he begins to cut away to circumcise our hearts to take away the unclean and the impure to take away the loves that we have for other things and for other people and then he begins to write on our hearts the beauty and the purity of God's word written in our hearts in such a way that we begin to live out that word in our lives day by day that we begin to love

God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind and it's only by taking these two steps that we can respond to God with loving obedience and obedient love let's just pause there for a minute and let's right now individually and on our own just talk to God right now we've seen his demands and why he demands because of his amazing grace but we can't do that on our own we need to go to God's operating theatre so let's now in prayer privately and quietly ask the Holy Spirit to take God's word to do his work in our lives right now so that we will love him and obey him as we should let's do that now and he

Thank you.

Thank you.

[33 : 45] Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you. asking that your spirit, through your word, would do his work, changing us, so that you have our loving obedience and our obedient love.

Thank you for the great God that you are. Please go on changing us, we ask in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Well, the song that we're going to finish picks up on that final song.