

Hearing God's Grace: A Reminder of God's Power

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[0 : 00] When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come upon you and you take them to heart, wherever the Lord your God disperses you among the nations, and 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 have commanded you today, then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where I scattered you.

Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the Lord your God will gather and bring you back. He will bring you to the land that belongs to your fathers and you will take possession of it.

He will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. 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.

The Lord your God will put all these curses on your enemies who hate and persecute you. You will again obey the Lord and follow all his commands I am giving you today.

Then the Lord your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land.

[1 : 29] The Lord will again delight in you and will make you prosperous just as he delights 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.

Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. It is not up in heaven so that you have to ask, Who will ascend into heaven to get it and obey it to us so that we may obey it?

Nor is it beyond the sea so that you have to ask, Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so that we may obey it? No, the Lord is very near to you. It is in your mouth and in your heart so that you may obey it.

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 his ways and to keep his commands, decrees and laws.

Then you will live and increase, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess. But if your heart turns away and you are not obedient, if you are drawn away to bow down to other gods and worship them, I declare to you this day that you will certainly be destroyed.

[2 : 47] You will not live long in the land you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses.

Now choose life so that you and your children may live, and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice and hold fast to him, for the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Thank you very much. Michael Grant is going to come up and preach for those who do not know Michael.

Amongst other things, he is also Johnny's father. But Michael is formerly a pastor down in Waterford, and he has worked in a missionary society. ECM, is it?

Yeah. Yep. And he is currently, Middleton Church, you are currently attending. So Michael, thank you very much for coming. We always enjoy you coming. I am just going to pray for Michael as he does bring his, God's word, not his word.

[3 : 51] Father, we do thank you for Michael. We thank you for the many years of service to your people, his desire to bring your word to so many people. We thank you for the abilities you have

given him in looking at your word, and understanding it, and just to be able to communicate it to other people.

Thank you for being so willing to come here this Sunday. And I pray that as we hear your word, that indeed we would be willing to be challenged, to be encouraged, or whatever you would have, Lord, that we would be open to it this very day.

In Jesus' name. Amen. Thank you, Michael. Well, it's nice to be back with you once again, and to be able to bring to you God's word.

When I looked at these chapters, I thought there's an awful lot in them. How do you reduce it to one sermon? And I will hear from Jonathan if I go over my time, no doubt, when he returns, as he checks up on me.

But I do remember these particular chapters, but there's one particular verse that is etched in my mind. Many years ago, a man was speaking, and I was listening to his sermon, and he said that there's a verse here that's very helpful.

[5 : 15] If you're asked a question, and you don't know the answer to it, and there are certain questions that we simply do not know the answer, God hasn't revealed it to us.

Like the origin of sin. How does the responsibility of man and God's sovereignty work together? These are questions that the Bible doesn't give us answers to.

And this young man had been asked the question, a particular question, and he didn't know the answer to it, and he didn't think there was an answer to it.

And he said, instead of saying, the answer is found in Deuteronomy 29, 29, which he intended to say, he says you'll find the answer in Deuteronomy 28, verse 28, which says, the Lord will afflict you with madness, blindness, and confusion of mind.

Well, I trust that we won't do that this morning, but rather that those things that have been revealed to us, we will be able to bring before you.

[6 : 25] It's a tremendous book, the book of Deuteronomy, and these two chapters are very precious. They look back, of course, to the covenant that was made with Abraham, that God would bless him, that God would give him the land, that God would give him a seed, and that in the seed of Abraham, all the nations of the world would be blessed.

And the very fact that we're here this morning is an indication of that blessing. We are here because God always keeps his promise. And we also can say that the promise, these chapters look forward to the Lord Jesus Christ.

I was talking to Paul in the week, and I said, how did things go in Karageline? And he said, well, I think they went very, very well. And he said, I was able to say something about the law being the one that brings us to Christ, that leads us to Christ.

And so that is true. So these chapters both look back, they look forward to the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. These words, as you probably heard already, were uttered just as the Israelites were on the edge of the land of Canaan.

Moses would soon be taken from them, but they would go into the land, and God calls them to enter into a covenant with him. The key verse I would suggest in these verses, in these chapters, is found in Deuteronomy chapter 30, and verses 19 to 20.

[8 : 11] They really sum up what is being said. This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses.

Now choose life, so that you and your children may live, and that you may love the Lord your God, listen to his voice, and hold fast to him. For the Lord is your life, and he will give you many years in the land he swore to give to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Well, I've tried to bring these two chapters under five headings. Couldn't reduce it any more than that, but let's look at them together.

And I have five hours, which I hope will fix these chapters in your mind. First of all, Moses reminds them of God's power.

chapter 29 and verses 1 through to 8. Here's Moses. He's urging the people to choose life, that life that comes with a relationship with the living God.

[9 : 22] And he's going to call them to obedience, but before he does that, he gives them a brief history. He takes them back 40 years to the time when they were slaves in Egypt.

And in this brief overview, he speaks to them of the power and the might of an almighty God.

He speaks about events in Egypt, verses 2 and 3. He knows that there are people there, though many have died in the wilderness. There were among the people eyewitnesses of these things. But everyone is included. Nobody was ignorant of what had happened in the land of Egypt. They knew about Aaron's rod that had been turned into a snake.

They had heard of the river that was turned into blood. They'd heard of the one plague that followed another, of frogs, of gnats, of flies, of livestock being taken from the Egyptian, of boils breaking out upon the Egyptian, of hail, and locusts, and darkness.

[10:38] And then they'd heard of that final plague when God had sent his avenging angel and the angel had come into the Egyptian homes and the firstborn had died.

But how the Israelites had been kept and watched over as the blood had been put upon the doorposts. The angel of death passed over their houses.

They were protected. They were watched over. And Moses rehearses these things. He shows that the Lord's hand was stretched out in power.

And even the Egyptians had to admit that they were powerless before this great God. Remember that some of their magicians had been able to mimic some of the plagues.

But as the plagues proceed, they can only say, this is nothing else but the finger of God. So he reminds the people of God's power in the land of Egypt.

[11:47] Moses reminds them of the events that happened in the wilderness, verses 5 and 6. Forty years they had been wandering, but their clothes hadn't worn out.

Their sandals didn't need to be taken to any cobbler to be repaired. They were watched over. They didn't sow corn. They didn't plant vineyards.

But they didn't go hungry, for the Lord provided. Have you ever thought of the fact and stopped to consider the amount of manna that was needed to provide for over a million people?

And day after day it was provided by an almighty God. I did this, says God, that you might know that I am the Lord, your God.

So God reminds them, Moses reminds them of God's power through the events in Egypt, through the events in the wilderness. And he reminds them of events that were comparatively recent.

[12:59] He takes them back and tells them how Zion and Og, how they were defeated, how the God of Israel showed himself to be more powerful than the nations.

Events that were recent, how enemies were defeated as they stood on the edge of the land, and how the land of these people had been given to the various tribes.

God had watched over them. God had been with them. And it is this God who calls them into a covenant relationship.

But right in the middle of these verses, we have Moses saying to them that they hadn't always understood. Verse 4, But to this day the Lord has not given you a mind that understands our eyes at sea or ears at hear.

They didn't always give God the glory. But he wants them now to be convinced that this is the God they are to serve. This is the God in whom they will find life.

[14:14] This is the God who will be with them as they enter into the land of promise. You know, it is not unusual for God to argue in these ways.

To show us how good and gracious he is in order that we might be ready to follow him wherever he might lead. We have every incentive to follow.

If you look at the gospel account that we have in John, for example, you have the rehearsal of all that God has done through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

You have the miracles recorded of the water being turned into wine and the various other things that happened during the ministry of the Lord Jesus. And they are referred to in John's gospel as signs.

Why are they there for us? That we might put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. John 20 and verse 30 says, Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book.

[15:29] But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ and that by believing you may have life through his name.

So a reminder of God's power should cause us to want to follow the Lord our God. The rehearsal of all that Christ came to say and to do should be an incentive for all of us to follow in his footsteps, to walk in the way that he would have us walk.

But we move on. Not that it's just a reminder of God's power. we're given reasons why men should enter into this covenant in verses 9 to 15.

We know obviously that they were to glorify God and that's a great incentive to follow him and to enter into covenant with him.

But on the human level there's surely this reason that they might be confirmed as the Lord's people. Look at verses 12 and 13.

[16:44] You are standing here in order to enter into a covenant with the Lord your God. A covenant the Lord is making with you this day and sealing with an oath to confirm you this day as his people that he may be your God as he promised you and as he swore to your fathers Abraham Isaac and Jacob.

Moses takes them back to a promise that was made to Abraham that was confirmed to Isaac and Jacob.

What was that promise? Well he would make of them a great nation that he would give them a land to live in and that all the peoples of the earth will be blessed through their seed.

Remember how Abraham was taken out and shown the stars in the skies and your offspring he said will be just like this. And as I say these promises were repeated again and again.

God took Abraham he made him his very own he says you are my friend and then God takes from the seed of Abraham this nation of Israel and out of all nations says Exodus 19 and verse 5 out of all nations you will be my treasured possession though the whole earth is mine you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation enter into covenant love me with all your heart with all your soul and with all your strength I'm going to make you my people of course he had redeemed them hadn't he out of the land of Egypt but now he wants to confirm that with them notice how

[18:52] God condescends to them he pleads with them I have set before you life and death blessings and curses now choose life that you might be confirmed that you are my people that you are the seed of Abraham by faith that you are the seed of Abraham because I have adopted you as my very own what an incentive to follow the Lord to know that we are part of his family that he has entered into covenant with us that we are his not just for time but for eternity but as we look at this reason to enter into covenant we notice that it is presented to all of the people they were present together verse 10 carefully follow the terms of this covenant so that you may prosper in everything you do all of you are standing today in the presence of the

Lord your God your leaders and chief men your elders and officials and all the other men of Israel together with your children and your wives and the aliens living in your camps who chop your wood and carry your water you are standing here in order the Lord your God so all of the people are given this reason that they might become the Lord's people they were in the presence of the Lord and all were called to enter into this covenant this covenant that would mean life this covenant that meant a living relationship with a living God it had on that day universal appeal not just to Israelites but also to those who had become part of the camp of

Israel if you like aliens living among them slaves perhaps they were but they also could know this life by having a relationship with the living God doesn't this remind you of the wonder of the gospel the gospel invitation is for all men everywhere come said Jesus unto me all you that labor and are heavy laden all you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest take my yoke upon you and learn from me and you will find rest for your souls and not only does this invitation this reason to enter into the covenant that we might be the Lord's people it also look forward to our day and generation because the invitation is for those who are not here today as we see in verse 15 for future generations who will be called to enter into covenant with the living

God here's Peter on the day of Pentecost as he preaches repent and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins the promises for you and for your children and for all who are far off for all whom the Lord our God will call that we might know him the living God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that our sins might be dealt with that we might enter into this relationship with him who loved us and gave himself for us but as we proceed we notice there are certain realities that surround the covenant that was being made all those years ago and we see those realities in chapter 29 and verses 16 to 29 Moses is addressing real people who live in a real world they're not living in glass houses they were people that were met with real temptations they were people who had sinful hearts people that had failed in the past and people that would fail again in the future and Moses addresses those realities enter into covenant choose life but there will be difficulties and you will fail and you will fail miserably that's what he seems to be saying in these verses he speaks

about the reality of idolatry in verses 16 to 18 remember the people had lived in Egypt Egypt had a multiplicity of gods all around them were heathen temples and idols and as they made their way towards the promised land after being delivered by the almighty hand of God they met the gods of other nations as well this was a reality verse 17 speaks of detestable images and idols of wood and stone of silver and gold so surrounded by idols in

[25 : 02] Egypt idols on every hand as they traveled so they would enter into the land of Canaan the promised land would idolatry be suddenly banished no they would meet with the idols and they would have to deal with the idolatry of the new land but God calls them into covenant choose life he says obey the terms of the covenant what does the covenant say you shall have no other gods before me you shall not make an idol you shall not bow down to them or worship them Moses says of these idols they're like bitter poison but you'll meet them but choose life and turn from them choose life says

Moses but you do so against the backdrop of this persistent temptation into idolatry and God calls you and I doesn't he to follow him in a world that is full of idolatry we have it around us here every day what are the things that hold people today what are the things that we hear on the news day by day what are the important things the economy why are people so interested in the economy well because it's in a bad way you might say but I'll tell you another reason it's because of the secularization of society it's because where men's hearts are the idolatry of a secular society of saying that money is everything and the love of money is the root of all evil so we are told and so we believe

Mark 10 records the story of a rich young man this man really wanted eternal life and Jesus says to him obey the commandments well I've kept them he says but Jesus knows his heart and he looks deep down into that man's heart and he sees an idol there go he says sell everything you have and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven then come follow me at this the man's face fell he went away sad because he had great wealth you and I are called to follow our God we're called to be obedient but sad to say we give in again and again to idolatry how we need a savior who will deliver us how we need the law being written into our very hearts so that we will be able to say with the hymn writer the dearest idol

I have known whatever that idol be help me to tear it from the throne and worship only thee and if you and I claim to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ we cannot hold on to our idols as well we cannot serve two masters choose life says the Lord but the idols must go and as he brings before them the realities that surround this covenant they're called to make he speaks about the reality of judgment if they do not follow the Lord and they do not put their idols from them he speaks about an individual in verses 9 to 21 here is a man who thinks and wants to do his own thing this man obviously predated

Frank Sinatra but he would agree with him and I won't attempt to sing it but remember Frank Sinatra I did it my way and this man is saying something like this well I want to follow God and I keep my fingers crossed as it were in order to follow him he invokes a blessing on himself and therefore thinks I will be safe but he's still doing things his way and he's still holding on to his idols but we're reminded in these verses that God doesn't bypass sin and we read his wrath and zeal will burn against that man all the curses that are written will come against that man and his name will be removed not a true child of

[30 : 40] God not one who was truly walking with the Lord as he ought to be he's like the one who says Lord Lord but his heart is far from the Lord choose life yes we are all of us called to choose life but if we choose life idols must go we are all called to take up our cross and follow the Lord Jesus Christ the reality of judgment that will come upon the individual who holds on to idols do you have an idol this morning what are you holding on to what is first in your life what is first in my life but you see what happens to an individual can happen to a nation and in verses 22 to 29 again we're reminded of the realities you see failure to obey always has implications and

Moses moves from the individual to the people verse 25 they abandoned the covenant of the Lord and Moses sees a future generation returning to the land of promise he sees people looking on at the devastation that has come upon the land he sees foreigners observing the scene and the picture is not pretty in verse 22 he speaks about calamities and diseases in verse 23 the burning waste of salt and sulfur of nothing sprouting no vegetation verse 23 like Sodom and Gomorrah this land a land flowing with milk and honey became a land like Sodom and Gomorrah because the people held on to their idols all of these things happened because the curses written were fulfilled

God keeps his word follow him walk in obedience love the Lord your God and there will be blessings but if you do not judgment will come when the people saw what had happened perhaps they would return as we shall see in a moment but the Lord says to them in verse 15 of chapter 30 see I set before you today life and prosperity death and destruction therefore choose life so you and I as we look around us what do we see we see the idolatry we see a country a people you and I we see it with our own eyes why have these things happened to us is it because as a nation we have forgotten God is it because we have turned far away from the Lord Jesus Christ are we not told in Proverbs 13 and verse 34 that righteousness exalts the nation but sin is a disgrace to any people have any of us today turned away from the promises that we made all those years ago to be followers of the Lord Jesus Christ oh then we saw our failures then we saw our sins then we saw our degradation and we turned in repentance and faith to the only Savior but have we since abandoned him then today is the day to come back to him realities of living in a fallen world and again and again we're reminded that we are in a fallen world so

Moses reminds them of the greatness of God he gives them a reason for following the Lord that they might be the Lord's people but he reminds them too of the reality of failure of sin and the law continually reminds us of our failure the Lord continually reminds us that there is only one thing that we can do is turn in our sin to the only saviour and that leads us on to the fourth point and that is remarkable grace and we have it in chapter 30 verses 1 to 10 again we've reminded of God's power we've seen a good reason for entering into covenant that we might be God's people we've seen the reality of sin and judgment that comes upon individuals and nations because of sin is there any hope we might ask ourselves well yes there is because we see remarkable grace we see amazing grace in these verses

[36 : 35] Moses in these verses foresees a nation that has been scattered because of their sin he sees them captive in foreign lands but he also sees them recognizing their sin and turning to the Lord and he sees a number of wonderful things happening because they turn to the Lord in their failure and in their degradation and what are those wonderful things that happen well he will have compassion look at verse 3 of chapter 30 then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you what is compassion well it's the Lord's heart going out to them we see it of course in the person of the

Lord Jesus supremely he saw the people as sheep without a shepherd and he had compassion he felt for them he identified with them he came alongside them they deserved the judgment but God blessed them and there was even grace in the judgment what do I mean by that how can there be grace in judgment well there's grace in judgment because grace is such that God uses the judgment that people might turn to him that's what the Lord does it shows us our faults and our failures and when the curses of failure come upon us we say what hope is there for us and we turn to the Lord and as happened to

Israel the Lord gathered them as we read in verse 4 he puts his arms around these rebellious people and calls them his own he never forgets his covenant and his covenant is always one of grace grace underlines all that he does so he has compassion on them and we're told he brings them back to the land verse 5 he will bring you back to the land of your fathers and you will take possession of it and the pages of the Old Testament we see the people going off into idolatry into sin we see them carried away into the land of Babylon we see them being ill treated there as captives did God abandon them no he did not read the books of Ezra Nehemiah Daniel and Haggai and Zechariah read of God's dealings with his people in captivity and read of their return did they deserve such love did they deserve such grace no not at all it's remarkable grace that he brought them back into the land and bless them there but doesn't the Lord continue to do that think of the prodigal in his far country and how he came to the end of himself what shall I do I have nothing the pigs have more than I do I will arise and go to my father and while he was yet a great way off while he was far off his father runs to him and draws him back he gives him a new coat a ring for his finger and has a great big party rejoice this my son was dead and he's alive he was lost and he's found and he welcomes him and that's the wonder of God's grace when we break the law and we all break it thank God he draws us back to himself and here's the wonder of it in verse 6 of chapter 30 he circumcises the heart how do we understand this well circumcision wasn't it was a sign of the covenant it was done in the flesh but here's something even more wonderful than the circumcision that's done in the flesh this is the circumcision of the heart the Lord dealing with the heart of people's problems and I would see in this promise of a new

covenant that would be made a new covenant that is referred to in Jeremiah 31 verses 31 to 34 where

[41 : 56] God says I will give them a new heart I will write the law into their hearts and I will remember their sin no more I will deal with the problem absolutely and completely that's remarkable grace he circumcises our hearts he gives us new birth he gives us new life and we see it here in seed form all of these things come to us because our God is a God of great grace and then we're told also in these verses that he would pour out blessing verse 9 these people who were constantly disobedient he promised to bring them back and to bless them all the blessings would come from him and when the

Lord calls us to himself what does he do well he pours out blessings upon us I love Ephesians chapter 1 I love the whole book of Ephesians it's one of my favorite epistles and remember how it says in Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 3 and as Paul goes on through the following verses and he reminds the people of all the spiritual blessings that are theirs in Christ praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ then he lifts those blessings he's chosen us he's predestined us he's adopted us he's redeemed us and there's many more there's heaven too does this mean that you and I can sit back and bask in grace well in one sense we can but also we're called to follow him in obedience and a covenant people a people that truly belong to the Lord will recognize how much they have beloved they will see this remarkable grace that demands their soul their life their all there's one final thing that we have to say as we bring this message to an end there's right and wrong choices in chapter 30 and verses 11 to 20 in these final verses

Moses makes his final appeal he has brought them the word of God what are they going to do about it he offers them life or death the words are clear they're unambiguous a child could understand them an adult could ponder them a person who had great education could look at them again and again and a person who had very little can still understand I offer you life or death and he tells them that this decision is not beyond their reach verses 11 to 14 you don't have to climb up to heaven he says and you don't have to cross the widest sea no no the message is here it is present in your mouth in your heart isn't what that was what Paul was saying when he spoke to the Athenians he's not far he says this God whom I'm proclaiming he's not far from any one of you so Moses calls the people to take to heart what he is saying you know what to do make the right choice there are two options he says in verses 15 to 18 there's life and blessing or there is death and destruction what's it going to be you're about to enter the land

God promised make your choice well surely the only sensible thing to do is to be found in verse 16 choose life I set before you today life and death for I command you today to love the Lord your God to walk in his ways to keep his commands decrees and laws that you will live and increase and the Lord your God will bless you in the land you are entering to possess it's obvious isn't it the choice is there and he goes on I call you today to choose life it seems so obvious yet many of them would choose death rather than life the alternative to life is not just death in the sense that we all die it is eternal death eternal separation from an eternal

God so I urge you to choose life this day how do we obtain that life well we can't get it through the law because we know that the reality is that we will fail and they will come short of all that God has commanded to us of us but in our sin we can turn to the saviour our perfect law keeper and we can find in him a life that is abundant and everlasting so the final appeal that Moses make and the final appeal that I can make is choose life we have a God of great power we have every reason to follow him because we become his children and as his children we can walk in his strength in the realities of a sinful world and we can walk knowing that he is with us to keep us for he will circumcise our hearts in his remarkable grace so he reaches out to us today that we might make the right choice and follow him let's pray together father we thank you that you have given us your word we pray oh lord that we will do the right thing that we will follow the lord jesus christ that we will see him as the one who died in our place for all of our transgressions for the many times that we have walked in idolatry and broken the law of god lord we pray that we might know that our transgressions have been taken by the lord jesus and he has given us life that is abundant everlasting indeed he has given us resurrection life so father we pray that you will speak to us now and that you will speak to us in the days that lie ahead may we choose life in jesus name amen son that

[50 : 24] Thank you.