

A Matter of Life & Death

by John Piper

This sermon delves into the profound message of Deuteronomy 29 and 30, emphasizing the need for a heart transformation to love God above all else. It highlights the impossibility of loving God without a new heart, the sovereign work of God in circumcising hearts to love Him, and the ultimate purpose of creation and redemption in God delighting in His people's love for Him.

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Scripture: Deuteronomy 29:4, Deuteronomy 30:6, Romans 8:7, Romans 10:6, Ephesians 5:25

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Description

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Transcript

I invite you to turn to Deuteronomy 29. And I hope you will, because we're going to look very detailed at units of this text, and I want you to see for yourself what's really here. In the last two weeks, there have been several unusual providences in my life that have caused me to think that this text, at this time, in this place, before this audience, is of special urgency.

Two weeks ago today, I was in London speaking to the London Men's Convention. And the text was assigned to me. Just like it was assigned to me here.

I didn't choose it. It was 1 Kings 18, 16-46, the story of Elijah on Mount Carmel, defeating the prophets of Baal. And the main point of the text was, if you men turn to God, God turned your heart.

Here's the verse, 1 Kings 18, 37, Elijah, answer me, O Lord, answer me, that this people may know that You, O Lord, are God, and that You have turned their hearts back. That was the point of the encounter with Baal. Make Israel know, when their hearts turn to the living God who defeats these prophets, You turn their heart.

That's the point of the text in London for the men. Now, here we are in Indianapolis, and the text was assigned to me, Deuteronomy 29 and 30. It's not for the men of London.

It's for the women of TGCW 2018. And the point is the same. If you don't turn to God with all your heart and with all your soul and love Him, God didn't give you a heart to do that.

Chapter 29, verse 4, To this day, the Lord has not given you a heart to understand, or eyes to see, or ears to hear. But, on the positive side, if any of you women do turn to God, if you find, rising up in these days, in your heart, a love for God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength, God did that. Chapter 30, verse 6, The Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart.

Now, those coincidences, my wife likes to call them God incidences, those coincidences between London and Indianapolis, an unchosen text and an unchosen text, a main point and a main point, do not increase the authority of this message. This message stands or falls with whether you can see it in the text. However, for me personally, in preparation, two weeks, two continents, two texts I didn't choose, two meanings I didn't create, one for men, one for women, both riveting our attention on the sovereign rule of God over the human heart is striking and gives me a sense, and perhaps you, I think God might have a very special word for you.

So let's pray, and if that's so, that we not miss it. So God, please, help me to so open these two chapters that their meaning for the book and for redemptive history and for the purpose of all creation and for the glory of Christ would be plain to these women's minds and powerful in their hearts. Make it visible.

Let none depend on me, but on your word, seeing. I ask this in Jesus' name, amen. Chapter 29, verse 1, These are the words of the covenant that the Lord commanded Moses to make with the people of Israel in the land of Moab.

That's where they're standing right now on the edge of the Promised Land after 40 years in the wilderness. In the land of Moab, besides the covenant that He made with them at Horeb or Mount Sinai, God is making another covenant besides the covenant at Mount Sinai. And this covenant is very strange.

Very strange. It has elements in it that are shocking, very perplexing for the listeners. Now, you should know by now, but I'll rehearse it.

What's a covenant? A covenant is a relationship between God and man with promises of God toward man and required responses from man. And the nature of the promises and the nature of the responses determine the kind of covenant that it is. And I'm just asking you for right now, keep your mind open, because it's weird.

It's a strange covenant. And He is about to cut it. That's the Hebrew word for how you establish and make a covenant.

And it has more significance in these chapters than you think. Verse 2, Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, You have seen, mark those words. All that the Lord did before your eyes, mark those words.

In the land of Egypt to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, the great trials that your eyes saw, mark those words. The signs and those great wonders. But to this day, the Lord has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear.

But they have seen. It says so. Verse 2, You have seen.

Verse 3, Your eyes saw, seeing they did not see. That's a quote from Jesus. Matthew 13.

What did they not see when they saw? They saw the Red Sea split. Now these are the children of those who died in the wilderness. So everybody He's talking to is 18 years of old.

I mean, were 18 years of old or younger at the Red Sea. Because two years after the Red Sea, Moses said everybody 20 years old and older is going to die in the wilderness. So you've got 18 year olds, 17 year olds, 16 year olds, 15 year olds, hundreds, maybe thousands and thousands of them who saw the sea split.

They saw water from the rock. They saw manna every morning. And they didn't see it.

What didn't they see? They did not see in the sea and in the manna and in the rock and the water and the shoes not wearing out and their feet. They didn't see God as supremely precious. They didn't see God as supremely valuable.

They didn't see God as supremely desirable above all else. They didn't see God with compelling beauty. They didn't see Him as their greatest treasure.

And of all the things that Moses might have said about why they didn't see, he says this, verse 4, The Lord has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear. He hasn't given you the kind of heart that moves from amazement at wonders to love for the wonder-working God Himself. He hasn't given you that heart.

So all you see is wonders. Amazing. These are amazing.

No love for God. You have seen Him as powerful and not precious. You love other things more.

Do you? So, the banner flying over this covenant is you can't keep it. The covenant starts with that knowledge. That's where it starts.

This covenant starts with you don't have a heart to keep it. You can't see reality for what it is. You can't hear reality for what it is.

You can't sense in your heart reality for what it is. Your eyes, your ears, your heart are spiritually impervious. They're dead to this beauty of God.

This value of God. This desirability of God. That's the starting point of the covenant.

Dead. That's not peculiar to this generation at the Promised Land in the New Testament. 2 Corinthians 3, verse 14.

This is still true, Israel. It's what Paul says. Their minds were hardened.

For to this day, when they read the Old Covenant, that same veil remains unlifted because only through Christ is it taken away. In fact, that's still true of Israel today. June 16, 2018.

Israel as a whole has no eyes to see her Messiah. Romans 11, 25. A partial hardening has come upon Israel until the full number of the Gentiles comes in.

Now thousands of Jewish people over the centuries have embraced Jesus as her Messiah, or their Messiah. But as a whole, as you know, the Jewish people haven't yet. Now what's more relevant for you Gentiles, maybe Jewish people among us, I hope so, but for most of us who are not Jewish ethnically, what's more relevant is Ephesians 4, 17 to 18, where this condition, God has not given you a heart to understand, or eyes to see, or ears to hear.

That condition is our condition. Listen to these words in Ephesians 4, 17. Paul describes the Gentiles, the nations of the world, all of us, as darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardness of their heart.

Dark understanding, guilty ignorance, hardness of heart. That's us. It's you.

And that's Israel. That's the human race. Unless somehow, Deuteronomy 29, 4 can be reversed.

And for Moses, that's the starting point for this covenant. In chapter 29 and 30. This is one of the most fundamental facts about reality you need to understand everything in your life.

From your children to newscasts, to President Trump, to your husband, to your church. If you don't know this fact about reality, you will be a naive observer of the world all your life. Every human being is blind, deaf, hard, and unable to love God because of the hardness within them.

That doesn't mean that an unbelieving mother can't have tender affections for her child. It means she cherishes that child more than she cherishes God, which is treason! Tender as she is. It means that she has no delight in the living God.

God doesn't treasure the infinitely valuable God. Fallen people are capable of great sacrifices, but not out of love for God. Here's a devastating description of that condition by the Apostle Paul in Romans 8, 7. The mind of the flesh, and that's over against the mind of the Spirit for those who have the Holy Spirit, blood bought by Jesus, the mind of the flesh is hostile to God.

It does not submit to God's law. Indeed, it cannot. And those who are in the flesh cannot please God.

That's a miserable condition to be in. Frightening. And that's the condition of Israel according to Deuteronomy 29, verse 4. And you, apart from the Almighty Holy Spirit and the work of Jesus, to this day, the Lord has not given you a heart to understand, or eyes to see, or ears to hear.

And until that massive, foundational, all-pervasive truth sinks into the core of your being, you will not begin to fathom, or enjoy, or spread what it means to be saved. Because you will have no idea the condition you were saved from. Do you have any idea? Do your children, does your husband, your friends, do you have any idea how deaf and blind and dead in heart you were? How impossible it was for you to hear or see or feel the beauty and the worth of God.

That's the beginning of this covenant. They couldn't. You couldn't.

Now, He proceeds to open the covenant with its stipulations. When He says in verse 9, drop your eyes to verse 9, Therefore, keep the words of this covenant. Do them that you may prosper in all that you do.

When He says that, the words of the covenant in verse 4 are included. Believing, embracing, being broken and made helpless and hopeless and desperate by verse 4 is the first act of responding to this covenant. Keep the covenant.

Let that happen. Don't kick against the covenant indictment. You'll never enjoy this covenant if you reject verse 4 about your life.

Then in verse 13, Moses makes plain that the aim of this covenant relationship is that the people grasp with their hearts and eyes and ears God as their God and we as His people. And that nothing is more to be desired than that relationship. You are my God.

I am your people. That's the aim of the covenant. Look at verse 13.

That He may establish you today as His people. And that He may be your God. So, evidently, what is impossible with man is going to be possible with God.

God is pursuing a covenant relationship. He's not saying, oh well, in view of verse 4, this is over. He's pursuing it.

Where they will be His people and He will be their God. Even though their heart is hard and their eyes are blind and their ears are deaf, they can't keep the terms of the covenant and He means to have it. If He does, it's going to happen.

Now what could that possibly mean? What could that possibly mean? You can't keep it. I'll have it. I'm going to have a people.

What could that mean? And the first thing He does, strikingly, is say what it does not mean in verses 16-21. So important that you understand what God's sovereign intention to have a people does not mean. It does not mean that God's sovereign ability to create a people for Himself where there's only deadness implies you can go on boasting in your stubbornness and think you're safe just because you belong to Israel.

And I'm going to have Israel. Or a church or a family. I belong to this church.

I belong to this family. I belong to this nation. I'm safe.

No, you're not. Verse 18. Beware, lest there be among you a root bearing poisonous and bitter fruit, one, very important word, one single person, woman, man, one who when he hears the words of this sworn covenant, blesses himself in his heart saying, I shall be safe though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart.

That's an important verse. Notice two things. One, God deals with individuals in Israel so many scholar types say that we TGCW types are way too individualistic in our thinking about salvation.

You don't grasp corporate realities, corporate categories in the Bible, which are everywhere and all important. You make salvation way too much a matter of the individual heart and that heart's relation to the Almighty. Well, verses 18-21 are pretty clear.

Just be Bible women, would you please? Just be Bible women. This text is radically focused on the individual. Over against the corporate, pointing out the danger of corporate thinking.

Safety in my corporateness. That's the danger. I would venture to say, not in the text, an opinion.

I would venture to say there are vastly more people in hell today because of the false securities of corporate thinking than there are in hell today because of over individualizing the doctrine of salvation. No question in my mind about that. Millions upon millions of people led to destruction because they belonged to some institution.

Verse 21, are you with me? Verse 21, The Lord will single him out from all the tribes of Israel for calamity. In fact, this person's horrific mistake is to think he's safe in his stubbornness because he belongs to Israel. Oh, how many people have perished because they think, my family, my tradition, my tribe, my church, my nation.

In fact, nobody. I have thought carefully about this sentence. Nobody is saved by belonging to a group.

Any group! When their individual heart is hard toward God. That's the first thing to notice from verse 18. I've said there were two.

The first is, don't let anybody give you mumbo-jumbo about the Bible not prioritizing the individual when it comes to getting saved. Second thing to observe from verse 18, this verse is quoted in Hebrews 12.15. And the issue in Hebrews 12.15 is exactly the same. Of course, they're inspired.

The New Testament gets the Old Testament right. And the issue is, an individual in the community to which Hebrews is written thinks he's safe with no heart for holiness. I'm in the covenant community.

I'm the new covenant community. You don't need holiness. We're justified by faith.

To which the writer in Hebrews says in verse 14 of chapter 12, strive for the holiness without which nobody will see the Lord. That's straight out of Deuteronomy theology. That's a warning to the whole church.

Don't play fast and loose with grace in God's new covenant community thinking you are safe because of baptism or church membership or eating the Lord's Supper every Sunday. You're not safe if you don't keep the covenant. Now, the rest of chapter 29 is a warning.

It matters. Mr. Stubborn, it matters. Miss Stubborn, it matters.

Whether you boast in your brokenness before a God that you need mercy from or whether you boast in your belonging to the chosen people, it matters because judgment is coming and oh, it will come. It's going to come. Now at this point, they have to be confused.

I'd be confused. I was confused. The Bible regularly confuses me.

Which is why you have to meditate on the law of the Lord day and night pleading for help. Here's why I would be confused if I were in their shoes. Was confused.

First, Moses, God, you tell us that we're standing here to enter a covenant, verse 1. Then you tell us you haven't given us the heart to keep the covenant. We can't do it, verse 4. And then you tell us you're going to do it. You're going to be gracious to us.

There's going to be a covenant. We're going to be your people. You're going to be our God, verse 13.

And then you warn us about these rascals that we might be who presume upon that promise that we're going to be your people and strut around, we're safe, in that promise. And then you tell us judgment is coming. There's going to be an exile.

Oh yes, there will. It's not just a possibility. It's going to happen.

I know you're stiff-necked heart. To which they would say, I don't get this. I don't know what you're up to.

Not fitting together at all. And is it not interesting? More than interesting that at this point, verse 29, one of the most famous self-standing verses in the Bible for those who have problems. The secret things belong to the Lord our God.

But the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever that we may do all the words of this law. In other words, there will always be things you might like to know that you cannot know. Some things God chooses not to reveal.

The secret things belong to the Lord. And what He chooses not to keep secret, but reveal, is for your good so that you can do them. Which I take to mean, I tell you all you need to know to live the way I want you to live.

If I hold things back, you don't need to know it to keep My covenant. You don't need to know it. So relax.

It is confusing. And I'm not done. I'm not done.

There's another chapter. And it will answer some of your questions. Okay? So here we go.

Amazing things are coming in chapter 30. Verses 1 to 3. Yes, judgment and exile are on the way. You are a stiff-necked people.

It's going to go bad for you. I know that you kick against the pricks and harden yourself over and over again. And then comes verses 2 and 3. When you return.

Now literally, when you turn. When you turn. That is, repent.

Turn. Repent. Change your mind.

Stop going that way towards those idols. Go this way toward me. Don't let your heart go that way, this way.

When you turn. When you turn to the Lord your God, you and your children, and obey His voice in all that I command you today, with all your heart, with all your soul, then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have mercy on you. To which, surely, had He paused, which He didn't, but had He paused, they would have said something like this.

So, you make our restoration to favor and blessing, you make our restoration dependent upon our repentance, and you've told us we can't do that. Because our hearts are encased in a hard, God-rejecting, deadening, callous flesh. We can't see you, we can't hear you, we can't feel the treasure that you are.

How in the world are we going to turn, repent to you with all our heart, all our soul, like you say to do in verse 2? Well, He didn't pause to let them ask that question. You can pause because you're reading it. You just pause and ask it.

I did. Before they have a chance to ask that question, He answers it in verse 6. This is the most precious, most hope-filled verse in the book of Deuteronomy. I would venture to say.

The Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring so that you will love the Lord your God. With all your heart, with all your soul, that you may live. Now, I admit to a certain awkwardness of a man speaking to 7,000 women about circumcision.

However, I've gotten over it. And now I'd like you to get over it. Because this metaphor describes the most wonderful, joyful, satisfying, eternally pleasing experience in the world.

I don't think that's an overstatement. I said experience. There are greater realities.

But human experience. This is the greatest. So get over the awkwardness.

This is God's stunning, all-gracious answer to how people with hearts encased in deadening callous, God's burning flesh can repent. Namely, how God unilaterally, sovereignly cuts this burning deadness away. I said there was more significance to cutting a covenant than you might think.

Meaning, lay the metaphor aside now, meaning He gives you a new kind of heart. He gives you. What kind of heart? He tells us.

He tells us a heart that will have as its natural reflex, its effect, a heart, verse 6, second half of the verse, put your very eyeballs on it, so that you will love the Lord your God. That's what the new heart does. That's the meaning of the new heart.

If it's not happening, the heart's not there. Or there's a temporary hardening that's come upon this new heart. The new heart loves God with all the heart and with all the soul that you may live.

You will keep the covenant. Now, I believe, this is another sermon, but I'll sum it up in a minute. I believe that that promise applies literally to corporate Israel, not apart from individual conversions, but this.

I believe that if I live long enough, I would see someday the headlines in Tel Aviv and Jerusalem flash, millions of Jews turn to Jesus as their Messiah. I think that's implicit here, and the reason I do is because Paul does. In Romans 11, verses 1 and 2, 11 and 12, 15, 24, 26, I can't put those verses together in any other way than all Israel will be saved does not mean all the elect from Jews and Gentiles will be saved, which is what most of you have been taught, probably, if you belong to a, but I won't say the kind of church.

I love these people. They're my best friends, okay? I'm not going to kick anybody out of anything over this. So another little sermon tucked in here.

By the way, I think I haven't given any arguments for this one now. That implies, that's kind of an argument, that implies that today the state of Israel is a covenant-breaking state. They reject, as their King and Messiah, Jesus Christ.

And in that covenant-breaking condition, neither God nor the United States of America is obliged to treat them any differently than any other state. Justly. A sermon I did not preach, but a point I very much believe and hope that we can get it right as a church, for the sake of the Palestinians especially.

Now, God has made it plain. That was a point that I think verse 6 of chapter 30 teaches that all Israel corporately, because every individual will be grafted back in to the rich root of the olive tree called the Abrahamic covenant. That's going to come true.

That's not my main point here and if you don't think I've given you enough support for that, lay it aside. Let's go to points I want to make. God has made clear, and verse 6 now underlines, that the miracle of having 29-4, verse 4 of chapter 29, reversed.

He has not given you a heart to know or ears to hear. That is reversed by chapter 30, verse 6. One person at a time. Because it's a heart.

It's a hard heart that's being replaced. This is not a corporate esprit de corps that comes across Israel. This is a human heart with deadness and blindness and deafness.

Cut away! And in its place, a heart that loves God, loves God, loves God, loves God. That's the new heart. Loving God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength.

This is God, verse 6 of chapter 30, is God sovereignly securing, guaranteeing, bringing about the ultimate purposes of creation and redemption. The reason He made the world. Let's go to verses 9 and 10.

Here He describes what happens when He gives His people a new heart to love Him. Look at the second half of verse 9. I want you to see these very words, because I'm going to build the rest of this message on this. It's the greatest news in the world.

I hope you will see. Verse 9, second half of the verse. The words, The Lord will again take delight in prospering you.

Let's let those sit for a minute. The Lord will again take delight in prospering you. Surely, that does not mean He will delight in doing good things for you while finding you yourself to be morally ugly, displeasing, reprehensible.

I delight in doing good things, but when I look at you, I get no pleasure at all. You're hard, you're blind, you're rebellious. Surely, that is not what verse 9 means.

The doctrine of the justification of the ungodly. Let's get this clear now. The doctrine that every one of you who is a believer, a Christian, was justified as an ungodly person before you were beautiful, before you were pleasing, is a magnificent essential doctrine and it's not here in the foreground.

It's in the background. What's in the foreground here is the beautification of the people of God on the basis of mercies. What's in the foreground here is a heart that once hated God now loves God.

That's beautification. The beauty of the people of God is their love for God. So when it says that He takes delight in them, in prospering them, it means I'm going to enjoy you again.

Verse 10, at the very last clause of verse 10. When, this is going to happen, when you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul. In other words, when verse 6 comes true, I'm going to delight in you.

Now let's linger here for a moment because we're on the brink of the most ultimate purpose for which God created the world and performed a history of redemption and sent His Son and established a church and

will bring everything to consummation. What's it all about? We're very close to the center of answering that question. So God is securing, in verse 6, securing, guaranteeing, bringing about in our hearts the purpose of creation.

And to see the wonder of this, we have to pause here and ask about the meaning of loving God with all your heart. Almost every speaker has alluded to this. So let me pick on Don Carson.

Entailments. You like that word? Don Carson likes that word. And he gave us five entailments of loving God.

Now Don, that's an ambiguous word. Entailment, he didn't leave us in ambiguity about the relationship between loving God and obeying God because Don Carson has not become a book writer blessing to the church by specializing in ambiguity. I'm sitting right there.

And he's right here. And I know this point in my message is coming and I don't like to disagree with Don Carson. So I'm listening really carefully.

And on his first of five points, he said, loving God entails obeying God. Everything goes up to me. What does entail mean at that point? Because it could mean loving God is obeying God or it could mean loving God results in obeying God.

Well he left us in no doubt. He went for number two. It was his language.

Consequence. Reflection. Grounded in.

Amen, amen, amen. Thank you Don. Don't have to disagree with Don Carson in public.

Because I want to say this is just vastly important that doing things for God is not the essence of loving God. It's fruit. It's result.

It's consequence. It's reflection of. It's grounded in.

Love for God. Which raises the question, well, what is it? And Don quoted, lest anybody have this text in your mind, Jesus said, if you love me you'll keep my commandments. Right! Those are separate things.

If you love me, result, you will keep my commandments. It does not say, if you love me, that is keeping my commandments. Or if you obey me, that is loving me.

It's not equal. You raise a kid who thinks that loving God means obeying mommy and daddy. All you'll have is a legalist all your life.

There is something deeper. Something higher. Something more real on the inside.

Before these little hands don't put their fingers in the electric socket. What is it? Loving God is treasuring God more than anything or anyone else. Watch my verbs.

I'm just groping like you would. I'm just trying to find English words. Treasuring.

Loving God is finding Him to be supremely precious. Loving God is being satisfied in God more than spouse, more than children, more than health, more than life. Psalm 63,3 The steadfast love of the Lord is better than life.

What an amazing word. Don't you love the Bible? So, that's the beauty. I said verse 6 is not about justifying the bride while she's ungodly.

It's about beautifying the bride by making her one who finds God to be her treasure. To be more precious to her than anything. That's what's happening in verse 6. So, let's stay right here because I haven't gotten to the issue yet.

How is this the goal of the universe? Those are big words. So, we're here at verse 9 and 10 again. Let me collapse the two verses.

The Lord will take delight in you. I'm there at the end of verse 9. The Lord will take delight in you when you turn to the Lord. That is, when you love the Lord.

That is, when you delight in the Lord. Treasure the Lord. Find the Lord to be supremely precious.

The Lord delights in your finding Him to be your delight. That's the end of all creation. God has done everything in creation and redemption for that.

God has communicated so much of His glory, so much of Himself, that by the miracle of grace, that's verse 6, by the miracle of grace, we see Him and love Him as supremely beautiful and satisfied. So that God now looks on us with delight. Because nothing reflects His own glory and His own worth like our delight in Him.

Loving Him. God enjoys our enjoyment of God. Forever.

That's the goal of the universe. To create a people who would be first justified as ungodly ones through faith and union with Jesus, and then beautified by having hearts of stone taken out or hearts circumcised so that their hearts find Jesus to be supremely valuable, supremely precious and satisfying, on which He then forever looks with joy. And it's all of grace.

Free, sovereign grace. Raising the spiritually dead. Giving sight to the blind eyes.

Giving hearing to deaf ears. From Him and through Him and to Him are all these things. To Him be glory forever.

Which leads to this climactic, stunning statement in verses 11 to 14. You with me? We've got two more brief verses to look at. I mean, units.

This one and one more. We'll close with it. Verses 11 to 14.

Yes, Moses could say, I did say back in chapter 29 that you don't have hearts, don't have eyes, don't have ears to love God. Yes, I said that. And you don't.

And yes, I said that God's going to have you. He's going to have a people. He's going to beautify her and He's going to delight in her.

Yes, He will. And to that end, you've got to keep the covenant. You've got to love Him.

And you can't. Or can you? Verse 11. This commandment that I command you today, namely to keep this weird covenant.

This commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you. Neither is it far off. It's not in heaven that you should say, who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us that we might hear it and do it.

Neither is it beyond the sea that you should say, well, who would go over the sea? We can't get over the sea to bring it to us that we may hear it and do it. But the Word is very near you. It is in your mouth and it is in your heart that you can do it.

With man, it is impossible. You are dead. But with God, when He puts the Word in your mouth and in your heart, not on tablets of stone, not on parchments, in your heart, you will love the Lord your God.

You will love the Lord your God. Not just you can't, you will love the Lord your God. And if you needed any encouragement, as we close, if you need any encouragement that Jesus, by His blood, bought that power, bought that ability, bought that circumcised heart, bought that miracle of grace.

If you needed any encouragement, wouldn't it be nice if Paul, or somebody like that, had quoted those four verses and told us what they meant? Well, he did. So I'm going to read them to you. And I'm not adding anything.

Paul added what's added. All right? And he added it to interpret. Okay, here we go.

This is Romans 10, verses 6 through 8. Do not say in your heart, who will ascend to heaven? That is, to bring Christ down. Or, who will descend into the abyss? That is, to bring Christ up from the dead. What does it say? The word is near you, in your mouth, and in your heart.

That is, the word of faith that we proclaim. In other words, this covenant of chapter 29 and 30 is not too hard for you. Because God sent Christ to secure it.

Absolutely for His people. He secured, bought, guaranteed, made certain, both the divine promises and the human response. That's the point of chapter 30, verses 6 and 29.

He bought the miracle for you. Christ came down from heaven. Christ came up from the grave, so that this is doable.

Because by the Holy Spirit poured out, in consequence of that bloodshed, your heart is taken out and a new heart is put in. The ultimate aim of creation and redemption. Guaranteed by the blood of Jesus.

He calls it the blood of the covenant. Chapter 22, verse 20 of Luke. The blood of the covenant.

At the cost of His life, Christ bought the beautification of His bride. And her beauty is her delight in Him. That's what I've argued in Deuteronomy 30.

Now here it is one more time. Ephesians chapter 5, verses 25 to 27. We so often read this in relationship to marriage, which it is of course, that the wonder of what it says about Christ and the church goes by a little too fast.

So let's take it as the consummation of the purpose of creation. Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her. Verse 26, that He might sanctify her, that is beautify her.

Verse 27, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor. That's the goal of creation. Everything was designed that the Son might purchase a bride beautified in splendor for Himself to the

honor of His Father in the power of the blood-bought spirit.

On behalf of His Father, Christ came to create a beautiful bride out of a hard-hearted rebel people, you and me. This blood-bought, beautified bride will be God's delight forever. I mean, what else does it mean when He said, I want her to be beautiful when she comes to me.

Why? I enjoy beauty. She's going to be my joy forever. That's what it is about all these thousands of years.

And her splendor will be her delight in Him. And so it will be forever. So I close back to Deuteronomy 30.

I'm going to close where chapter 30 closes, middle of verse 19. Chapter 30, verse 19, middle of the verse. Choose life, women, that you and your offspring may live loving the Lord your God, obeying His voice, holding fast to Him for He is your life.

It's not too hard for you. It is only as hard as it is to enjoy what is supremely enjoyable. Look to Him as your greatest treasure, and He will do it.

Father, do it. Do it now in this room. Grant that women who have labored under the illusion that to love you is to work would lay down that error and see you as all satisfying.

See you as their supreme treasure and their greatest delight. Just see you and be changed. Do it, I pray.

We can't. We know we can't. We can't do it at the beginning.

We can't keep it happening. We are so utterly, radically, deeply dependent on your grace and your spirit every moment of our lives to wake up believers and lovers in the morning that we despair of any other source of hope. Do this miracle, I pray, as these women go to the four winds.

May the aroma of Christ be spread, I ask in Jesus' name.

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