

## 97-01-12a

As we continue our worship service this morning, having just reflected on the love of God and its expressions toward us and all of the opportunities that it provides in the hymn, Love Divine, All Loves Excelling. Let's turn now for a scripture reading to Deuteronomy chapter 29. Israel at this point is about to cross the Jordan and enter the land of promise after 40 years of wandering.

Moses is addressing the people. He's going to tell them in the course of this speech in chapters 29 and 30 and so forth that he's 120 years old and actually that's 31 too of Deuteronomy that he can no longer go out and come in, meaning he can no longer lead the people. And the Lord had told him he could not cross Jordan.

But this is his farewell speech where he's summing up the history of Israel and giving them an encouragement for their future, both the immediate and long-term future. He has made the pronouncement of blessings and curses that God gave him for Israel. And these in chapter 29 are the words of the covenant which the Lord commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab.

Besides the covenant which he made with them in Horeb. Moses called all Israel and said to them, you have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land. The great trials which your eyes have seen, the signs and those great wonders.

Yet the Lord has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear to this very day. And I have led you 40 years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you and your sandals have not worn out on your feet.

You have not eaten bread nor have you drunk wine or similar drink so that you may know that I am the Lord, your God. And when you came to this place, Sihon king of Heshbon and Og king of Bashan came out against us to battle and we conquered them. We took their land, we gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites, to the Gadites and to the half tribe of Manasseh.

Therefore, keep the words of this covenant and do them that you may prosper in all that you do. All of you stand today before the Lord, your God, your leaders and your tribes and your elders and your officers, all the men of Israel, your little ones and your wives, also the stranger who is in your camp from the one who cuts your wood to the one who draws your water so that you may enter into covenant with the Lord, your God and into his oath, which the Lord, your God makes with you today so that he may establish you today as a people for himself and that he may be God to you just as he has spoken to you and just as he has sworn to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Now, in that short section of 12 or 13 verses, several issues surface that we're going to be looking at this morning.

The first comes up right at the outset when Moses tells them they have seen all that the Lord did

before their eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and the servants, the great trials, the signs, the wonders. And in verse 4, he says, Yet the Lord has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear to this very day. What an interesting thing for Moses to say on this occasion.

What's our fundamental guideline in looking at the Old Testament and the history of Israel? What does the nation of Israel after Egypt represent? They represent believers, don't they? They've come out of Egypt, out of bondage. The Passover lamb has been slain. The blood has protected them from the angel of death.

And they are redeemed. The firstborn of each household was a representative that was spared because of the blood. And it is a teaching model of salvation.

And those who trusted God and put the blood on the doorposts, you know, a lot of people today, they talk about pleading the blood. And there is a sense in which the blood is symbolic of that faith. That's what they represent.

This is 40 years later. They are the people of God. God has spoken to them.

He has led them. He has preserved them. We see the mention of logistical grace in verse 5. Your clothes have not worn out.

Your sandals have not worn out on your feet. They've been fed on manna rather than bread and wine so that they may know that God is the Lord and that He is their God. He has given them protection and deliverance and victory in the face of their enemies.

And they are now exhorted in verse 9 to obedience. This is not an occasion for salvation in the sense of deliverance from the lake of fire, is it? This is a speech made to believers, exhorting them to obedience, to enter into a covenant of obedience with God. We know from verse 1 of chapter 29 that this is a different covenant than the covenant that was given at Horeb.

This is a different covenant than the law of Moses. He says they were going to make the words of this covenant besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb. And what is the exhortation? The exhortation here, as he reviews in the last half of chapter 29, is the surrounding peoples, the pagan nations, worship other gods.

They are idolatrous. And God wants them to be separate and to maintain their standing and their witness, if you will, as the people of God, to be faithful to the things that they heard at Horeb. There's a new challenge facing them now.

They're going to be immersed into a separate culture. God has had them on the road for 40 years. But now they're going to be immersed into a culture and into several cultures that will draw them away from God.

And this is a covenant to keep the first covenant. It's a covenant to pursue the Lord their God with

all their heart. And he talks about the consequences, that if they be drawn away and succumb to these temptations, he says in verse 18, so that there may not be among you man or woman or family or tribe whose heart turns away today from the Lord our God to go and serve the gods of these nations.

This is the specific covenant that they're making. Now, it was a part of the Mosaic law, wasn't it? Thou shall have no other gods before me. Don't make any graven image and so on.

But this is a covenant that they make as they stand on the brink of this fulfillment of promise of God. And he says the whole purpose of this is so that there may not be among them any man or woman or family or tribe who turns away their heart from the Lord their God. And even when he hears the consequences, the words of this curse in verse 19, so it may not happen when he hears the words of this curse that he blesses himself in his heart saying, I shall have peace even though I follow the dictates of my heart, as though the drunkard could be included with the sober.

What a fascinating statement that the drunkard could be included with the sober. What is he talking about? The sober are going to be included in something that the drunkard is going to be left out of. And of course, that's just a metaphor for the obedient versus the disobedient.

Those who are faithful to God as believers versus those who are disobedient and unfaithful to God as believers. There's something in store for the faithful. There's something in store for the obedient.

And he says, don't hear these things and say, well, that doesn't apply to me as though the disobedient could be included with the obedient. That's not going to happen. The Lord will not spare him, he says in verse 20, for the anger of the Lord and his jealousy will burn against that man.

And every curse that is written in this book will settle on him and the Lord will blot his name out from under heaven. We touched on this blotting out of the name in some of our previous studies, and that's not restricted to whether or not someone gets sent to the lake of fire. In fact, in most cases where we talk about names not being blotted out as in Revelation chapter two and three, it has to do with the book of reward, the book of blessing or the book of the living.

Are you going to continue your physical existence on this earth? And that's the primary reference to this here. The curses of this book are physical in nature. They're loss of blessing, loss of provision, loss of prosperity, loss of security, loss of peace, and in some cases, loss of life.

And your name is blotted out from under heaven, meaning you are no longer counted among the living. The Lord will separate him from the tribes of Israel for adversity according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law so that the coming generation rises up and says, boy, look at the devastation surrounding that person. It's like Sodom and Gomorrah, Adma and Zeboim in verse 23 there, which the Lord overthrew in his anger and wrath.

You're going to fall into the same wrath that God put on the pagans and the unbelievers in Sodom and Gomorrah. The nations will say, why has the Lord done this to this land? What does the heat of this great anger mean? Then the people will say, because they have forsaken the covenant of the Lord God. They have been disobedient.

You can't forsake something unless you started out with it, right? You can't forsake a person unless you started out in some sort of relationship. I can't take somebody named Alice Peavy someplace in Wisconsin and say, well, I've forsaken Alice Peavy. I don't know anybody by that name.

I have no relationship. You forsake something that you started with. And to forsake the covenant is something only a believer can do.

This great wrath and anger are on believers who are disobedient. They have forsaken the covenant of the Lord, which he made with them when he brought them out of Egypt. They went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods that they did not know and that he had not given them.

The anger of the Lord was aroused to bring on it every curse that is written in this book. The Lord uprooted them from their land in anger, in wrath and in great indignation and cast them into another land as it is this day. The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but those which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law, that we may be obedient.

The words of the law were guidelines for believers. It was the believer's way of life. Look at chapter 30.

It shall come to pass when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God drives you, and you return to the Lord your God and obey his voice according to all that I command you today, you and your children with all your heart and with all your soul, that the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity. Have compassion on you, gather you again from all the nations where the Lord your God has scattered you. If any of you are driven to the farthest parts under heaven, from there the Lord your God will gather you and from there he will bring you.

Then the Lord your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. And the Lord your God, pay close attention to verse six, the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul that you may live.

Now, if you look at that verse six and you look back at verse four of chapter 29, we're talking about an action that God does in the heart. So I plant that as a seed of curiosity in your mind as

we resume our study in Romans this morning. We'll be coming back and resolving that little riddle this morning because this is what Paul is going to refer to here as we move into Romans chapter 11 this morning.

You know where we are in Romans. You know the tone and the theme of the book. You know the audience that he's speaking to.

You know the problem that he's addressing. It is a Christian life problem. It is a misapprehension and a false teaching about how believers should live and what pleases God and what results in being declared righteous.

People are still trying to go back and make the mistake that Israel made in the Old Testament, which is to achieve righteousness by doing the works of the law. The works of the law are righteous and they are good, but simply performing them is not enough to be declared righteous. It never was.

Salvation by works is not the issue in this book. There were, it just wasn't a problem in the early days of the church that people thought they could be saved by works. They thought they could be righteous by works.

They thought they could be justified in the sight of God and in the sight of one another by what they did. And this problem went all the way back in Israel, generation after generation of believers in Israel gave varying degrees of superficial obeisance to the law. But it was another matter when God looked at their hearts.

So in chapter 10 of Romans, after having reviewed God's purpose in putting up with Israel all this time, if Israel was so wrong, why did God keep them as his people for 1400 years prior to the time of Christ? This is the question Paul is answering. God has with great patience endured the vessels of wrath that were fitted for ruin. These generations of believers that were disobedient and didn't get it so that he could display his mercy on those who were destined for glory, destined ahead of time for glory, not individually and not in the sense of making it happen without any volition on their part, but destined for glory in the sense that God specified a category.

If you are a believer and if you seek the things of God as your first priority, this is your destiny. You will reflect the glory of Christ. You will share in his inheritance in the future.

So he explains that in chapter nine and he explains what's happening in their present day. The change in the past was that God dealt almost exclusively with Israel. The obedient in Israel, the remnant were blessed and preserved and were the vessels of mercy that God had compassion on and was able to bless.

And those in Israel, believers, who were disobedient were under the curse. And the nation often suffered as a result of the majority of them being disobedient and unfaithful. What shall we say

then in 930? The Gentiles who did not pursue righteousness have attained to it.

God in this age has now said, we're not gonna limit the experiment to the nation of Israel. We're not gonna group all the believers in Israel and just deal with them. Now it's gonna be worldwide.

And this is going to hopefully provoke the people of God, the Jews, the Israelites to jealousy that they've muffed their opportunity. They've missed it. And by shifting over and saying, it doesn't matter if you're Jewish or if you're Greek or whatever your nationality is, there's not gonna be the distraction of, well, I'm an Israelite, so I must be pleasing God.

That's gone now. Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the law. He sums up everything that the law represented.

And so faith in Christ, in a way it's a simplification and in a way it's an amplification of the purpose of God throughout history that in this age, everything that God was trying to teach and demonstrate in the law, as far as heart obedience and faith and love for God from the heart is summed up now in the person of Jesus Christ. He is the end of the law for those who are trusting. And we're going to eliminate the distraction of nationality.

It's not gonna be Jews anymore. Anyone in the human race, any believer who wants to be pleasing to God just has to look to Christ and follow his commands, faith and obedience. The same issues we had in the Old Testament age but in a different set of circumstances.

So what about Israel? In chapter 10, brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved. And that actually sounds like it's a passive verb or something, but it is for salvation, literally from the Greek. My prayer for them is for deliverance, for soterion, is for deliverance.

Israel still represents the realm of believers but they represent as a group, believers who are on the wrong track as far as righteousness before God goes. We're going to see another confirmation of that this morning. He says in verse two, I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge.

They have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge. Turn with me to Acts chapter 22. Acts chapter 22, at least that general vicinity, I think we're actually looking in 21 as well as 22.

What does it mean to have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge? Because this is the tiebreaker here. If you're kind of coming down halfway on the side of believers and halfway on the side of, well, they have a zeal but they're not really saved. What exactly does that mean? Take a look at Acts.

Let's begin in chapter 21. And verse 17, Luke is writing here. He's accompanying Paul.

When we had come to Jerusalem, the brethren received us gladly. Now, remember Jerusalem.

This is the Jewish church, the oldest church, the church that is headed up by James.

James, the man who managed to trip up Peter. And James, the man who managed to trip up Paul. And this is the occasion where the apostle Paul is going to get tripped up by the orientation that is so difficult for Israel to shake and that James and his men sum up.

On the following day, Paul went in with us to James and with all the elders present there. When he had greeted them, he told in detail those things which God had done among the Gentiles through his ministry. When they heard it, they glorified the Lord.

Now, let me ask you something. James, is he a believer or an unbeliever? He's a believer, wrote an inspired book of scripture. I think we can safely say he's a believer.

They heard about what God had been doing among the Gentiles and they glorified the Lord. That's great. They have an appreciation for it.

They said to him, you see, brother, how many myriads of Jews, and that's the word in Greek, myriads, muries, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed and they are all zealous for the law. This is almost the identical phrase that Paul uses over in Romans chapter 10. They have a zeal for God, but not according to epinosis, not according to full knowledge.

Here are believing Jews in the Jerusalem church who are believers and they are zealous for the law. Well, they're not supposed to be zealous for the law. They're supposed to be zealous for Christ.

They have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs. What then? The assembly must certainly meet for they will hear that you have come. Therefore, do what we tell you.

Take a vow, be purified, show that you're still an observant Jew, that you still believe the law and the keeping of the ordinances of the law reflects righteousness. That's what James wants Paul to do and Paul does this and this is a big misstep in his life and in his ministry and service as an apostle. But notice, who is it that has a zeal for God but not according to knowledge here in Acts? It's Jewish Christians, not Jewish unbelievers, not those that have rejected Jesus Christ.

These are Jews who have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge. Who do you think Paul is talking about over here in Romans 10? I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own righteousness have not submitted to the righteousness of God for Christ is the end of the law for righteousness.

Paul has run into this crowd, hasn't he, in Jerusalem. He's been exposed to them all during the years of his ministry. They believe in Christ but they don't understand the believer's way of life.

They don't understand what constitutes approval from God and they think that you still have to keep the law. That's important because just as we have all the way through Romans, we have to keep seeing the confirmation that we're talking about believers and we're talking about lifestyle choices. We're talking about priorities for believers.

How do we look at ourselves during the day? When we rub elbows with people and anytime you come in contact with someone, there's the opportunity there to sort of see yourself and your circumstances through their eyes. They may make a comment or they may have a look on their face or you just get the idea somehow that maybe they don't approve or that they don't understand or that they think you ought to be doing something differently than you do. And sometimes that raises a question in our minds.

Well, maybe there's something to that. That was the issue for the people in Rome, especially the Gentiles, but even the Jews as well. And that's why Paul is writing this.

And he says, I've got to keep on reminding them throughout the book that Christ is the fulfillment of these things. Yes, the law was good and righteous and holy. And yes, there is a righteousness that pleases God but it doesn't come from works.

And this fixation on what you do instead of what you think and why you do what you do is Israel's problem and it's ignorance. It's a reflection of ignorance. You don't understand what pleases God if that's what you do.

And yet that's what we do today. And we try to, and this is why you see so many Christian endeavors that seek to change people's behavior. Let's get you in a group.

Let's have a group of people and let's have some accountability. Let's have some fellowship and maybe we can work on that bad habit that you have or maybe we can get you to stop doing this thing that everyone acknowledges is a bad thing. Let's use our fellowship to change your behavior in some form or some fashion.

Let me give you this book that will change your behavior. Why do people do that? Why is that so current in Christianity today? The reason is because people are measuring the fruit of the Christian life by what you do. And if you can eliminate a bad habit or if you can kind of get someone who's been non-participant in the service in the church and so forth to participate more, well, we'll make him a deacon and that'll wake him up and get him motivated to start helping out and start doing and bearing some fruit.

It's a works-oriented measure. It's a works-oriented evaluation. Paul says that's wrong.

What is the righteousness that comes from faith? And in the center part of chapter 10 here, Paul says the righteousness of faith speaks. You don't have to go far away. You don't have to cross

the sea.

You don't have to fly up into heaven. The word of faith is near you. It's in your mouth and in your heart.

If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus, believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be delivered. And that deliverance in verse nine is the exact same word, it's even the same form that you have in 10.1. Paul's heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is for soterion, for deliverance. Where does deliverance come from? Verse nine, if you confess with your mouth and if you trust in your heart in the resurrection of Christ, you will be delivered.

Now, right away we think, well, boy, that sure sounds like salvation to me. But what are we talking about here? Seeking to establish one's own righteousness. The problem in Israel was never trying to be saved through the works of the law.

All of the Jews assumed themselves to be saved. They assumed themselves to be God's people. They weren't trying to get saved.

They were trying to be declared righteous. They wanted to be blessed by God. They wanted to be looked up to in the eyes of their fellow Israelites.

It was living righteousness. And that was a false system, a false way of thinking, a false tradition, false viewpoint. And they needed to be delivered out of it.

Where in Romans up to this point has Paul mentioned the lake of fire? He hasn't. This is not talking about salvation or fire. They're in danger of ruin.

They're in danger of loss. They will miss their inheritance. They will lose the opportunity to reflect God's glory and to please God.

But salvation is not the issue here. And it's so hard for us when we see these words, deliverance and belief, and we think, well, that's salvation. That's lake of fire salvation.

And it's not. And we've got to retrain our thinking and realize that the context, the verbiage, the Old Testament references, everything in Romans points to lifestyle choices by believers. He's talking here, these that have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.

That's this Acts 21 crowd. They're believers in Christ. They rejoice that the Gentiles are coming to Christ, but they still think you have to keep the law to be righteous.

If this was salvation, the people in Acts 21 would be saying, well, those Gentiles aren't saved. They're not keeping the law. They're all headed for weeping.

They wouldn't be rejoicing. They're rejoicing because they know the Gentiles are saved, but they're unhappy with what Paul teaches, especially Jewish converts, about lifestyle. You're

teaching them they don't have to circumcise their children.

Nobody ever thought circumcising your children was a salvation issue, lake of fire salvation. It's righteousness for believers. And we just, I keep going back over this because we have to constantly refresh our minds to stay on track in Romans, because if you lose sight of what Paul is addressing and who he's talking to and what he's talking about, the book becomes a muddle.

And that's why the commentaries on Romans are always the thickest ones on the New Testament shelves, because people just wrestle with trying to reconcile statements Paul makes with the theology of the rest of the Bible. And the reason is it's always viewed through the lens of lake of fire salvation. And that's not what he's talking about.

And it's never going to make sense viewed in that light. It's not a matter of confessing with your mouth the Lord Jesus to be delivered. Verbal confession has never been and will never be a part of that faith salvation, but it is a part of lifestyle for believers.

And if you deny Christ before men by failing to speak up when the opportunity arises, he will deny us before the Father. It doesn't mean he's going to say, kick that individual into the lake of fire. It means when reward time comes, we're not going to be in line.

We're not going to be there to reflect the glory of Christ. That's what's being talked about. And we're going to see that this morning as we continue our study.

So when you get to verse 14, well, then what was the problem in Israel? If they weren't achieving as believers, righteousness by faith, and they were focused on the law, why was that? Well, we know how faith works. What is faith? Well, he tells us. Faith comes by hearing, hearing by the word of Christ, the word of God in 1017.

And that's where he's moving now in his argument. We're still addressing the failure of Israel. Why has God shifted the parameters of the problem around? Why do we have the church age now and we're not in the age of Israel anymore? Why has Israel been set aside in God's plan? Well, they didn't understand righteousness by faith.

And even now in the church age, they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. What's their problem? Is it, it's faithlessness. Read the book of Hebrews.

The promises of God were not mixed with faith in those that heard it in the Old Testament and continues right up to the present time. Well, how come faith wasn't happening? In chapter 10, verse 14, Paul is going to talk about where did this, what's the source of this problem? Why did Israel, why have Jewish Christians continued to fail in this regard? The Jewish Christians are emulating the mistakes that their forefathers made. Why did faith not happen? Well, what are the steps in faith? You've got to trust God.

That's what faith is. How can you believe? How can you call? How can you verbally confess, which is an expression of obedience, expression of having God as your first priority and the things of Christ as your first priority. Confessing with the mouth, that's the goal in this age.

How can that happen if you haven't trusted? You can't be confessing with your mouth until you've trusted in your heart. Your actions have to be a result of faith. And that's the thing Paul is hammering on, isn't it? Your actions have to be a result of faith.

Your confession with the mouth has to be after you've believed in your heart. I trust that God will preserve me as I make this declaration for Christ and I stand before this Roman tribunal. I'm going to identify myself as a Christian and let the chips fall where they may.

Well, I can't do that out of some misguided desire to be a hero. I have to do it because I really trust God and put my life in God's hands. So how shall they call on him in whom they have not trusted? Okay, let's follow the steps of faith and find out where was the breakdown in Israel.

Why is it Jewish Christians are failing? Okay, they have to trust. Okay, how shall they trust if they haven't heard? They've got to hear something to trust in. We know that faith has an object.

The object is the word of God. Somebody has to put it out there. How shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they be sent? God has to initiate communication with believers and he does it through individuals that have a communication gift.

Those people have to be putting out the word. You have to hear it, you have to trust it and then the result is obedience. So like in reverse order, we're getting the sequence of events from God to us that results in obedience.

You've got to believe before you can call. You've got to hear before you can believe. Somebody has to preach before you can hear and in order to preach, someone has to be sent.

How shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written. Now, this is a bad place for a verse break here in verse 15. I think a new verse ought to start right after the question mark.

How shall they preach unless they are sent? Because now he's going to give the answer to these questions. It is written, how beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things. This is an Old Testament passage.

So what was the problem historically in Israel? Was it that nobody was preaching, that no one was sent? Not at all. Isaiah says, there are people out there with these beautiful feet preaching the gospel of peace, bringing the glad tidings of good things. Israel has had preachers.

God has sent prophets. God had sent the writers of the Old Testament scriptures and they had that. So that wasn't the problem.

Verse 16, he says, the preachers were out there, but people did not obey that good news. Isaiah says, Lord, who has believed our report? Isaiah is one of these beautiful feet gospel preachers, isn't he? He was there. He preached it.

He said, we're out, we've been sent. Read the first part of Isaiah. Isaiah knew his commission from God.

And he went out and preached. And he says, Lord, I don't see anybody believing. I don't see anybody responding to this message.

So you see the flow of thought here. Paul is nailing down where the failure was. And he's demonstrating that it wasn't God's failure because God sent messengers.

Those messengers faithfully communicated, but people did not obey the gospel. They didn't believe the gospel. So then in verse 17, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.

But I say, have they not heard? Yes, they have heard. The sound has gone forth to all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. Well, did Israel not know? Did they not understand? Did they not comprehend? Moses says, I will provoke you to jealousy by those who are not a nation.

I will move you to anger by a foolish nation. Isaiah is very bold and says, I was found by those who did not seek me. I was made manifest to those who did not ask for me.

But to Israel, he says, all day long, I have stretched out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people. So the problem in Israel was not a failure on God's part. The breakdown in faith came after the messengers were sent, after the messengers preached, after the word was heard, it wasn't believed and it wasn't obeyed.

Those last two steps didn't happen in Israel and these were believers. And that's where it broke down. Now, if you turn back with me to where we began this morning in Deuteronomy chapter 29, we're going to find an answer to a puzzle.

I don't know if this has been a question in your mind, but it certainly has been in my mind. Here's Israel back at the beginning, back when the future is before them and they have the opportunity after learning the lessons of the 40 years of wandering to go into the land and to fulfill God's positive calling for them. Moses called them together in 29 too and says, you have seen all that the Lord did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants, to all his land.

What does this mean? Look at what God did at the point of deliverance from bondage. In the spiritual sense, look at what God has done in salvation. You've seen his deliverance, you've acknowledged him, you've trusted him and you've been delivered and you remember the power of that and the grace of it and the wonder of it.

The great trials which your eyes have seen, the signs and the great wonders, yet the Lord has not given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear even to this very day. Now, we have to ask ourselves something here. Are the reformed theologian types right that God basically chooses certain ones and he gives them eyes to see and ears to hear and they're able to obey and be faithful and if he doesn't give you the eyes to see and the ears to hear, there's just no way.

You know, there's no way you're going to be able to express faith in the word and fulfill these commands because you can't perceive it, you can't understand it. And Moses tells the Israelites here, after the 40 years of wandering, as they stand on the Jordan's banks ready to go across, you've seen all these things for 40 years and God has not given you these eyes to see and a heart to perceive or ears to hear to this very day. And this tells us something.

In the Old Testament economy, in the age of Israel, the fact of your salvation did not automatically give believers eyes to see, ears to hear, and a heart to perceive. To have understanding of the plan of God and the purpose of God, to be able to discern what God meant when He gave a prophecy or when He put out truth, that wasn't an automatic thing. Here are people who have been Israelites, who have been out of Egypt for 40 years now.

They're the children of their parents who had been slaves in Egypt and they've been delivered from bondage. Many of them were the children who were protected by the blood of the Passover lamb. They're out there and they're the ones Moses says over and over, this is the Lord, your God.

He's not the potentially your God, He is their God. He has claimed them. He's just given the words of a covenant to them.

God doesn't enter into a covenant with unbelievers. This is a covenant with believers, but He says, God has not given you believers, eyes to see, ears to hear, or a heart to perceive. So the question is, well, if that doesn't come at the point of salvation, how does it come? How do you get this ability to perceive? Well, if you recall, as we browsed through chapter 29 and went into chapter 30, if you're disobedient and you depart and you serve these other gods and God sends you into bondage and into slavery and captivity, chapter 30, it shall come to pass when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse I've set before you, and you call them to mind among the nations where the Lord, your God drives you because you've been disobedient and you return to the Lord, your God and obey His voice.

This is where we need to start paying attention. What is the attitude that's reflected in Deuteronomy 32? You return to the Lord, your God. Notice this is a return, not an initial approach.

They were with God, they left, and now they're coming back. You return to the Lord, your God. You obey His voice according to all that I command you today, you and your children, with all

your heart and with all your soul.

If you want an interesting exercise, this is most easily done if you've got a little Bible program on a computer where you can do a concordance search on a phrase. In the Old Testament scriptures, especially in the law of Moses, look for that phrase, all your heart and all your soul. Because many times you have this construction right here in Deuteronomy 32.

You need to obey all that I command you today with all your heart and with all your soul. It's not just you need to obey. It needs to be obedience from the heart.

It needs to be obedience from the soul. Israel latched onto the first part. Okay, I need to obey.

But as a nation, they never really latched onto the second part with all your heart and with all your soul. That's where they missed the boat. It was obedience, but not from faith.

They had a zeal, but not according to knowledge. They didn't understand that it wasn't the obedience God was looking for. It was the faith.

It was the all your heart and all your soul part that God was looking for. What does God require of you but to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? That's what God was wanting. The obedience is going to be an expression of that all your heart and all your soul.

And time and time again, as you read through Deuteronomy, you will see these things linked. It's very rare that you'll see obedience that isn't qualified by with all your heart and with all your soul. Watch for it as we go through 30.

But notice what he says here. If you return and if you obey with all your heart and with all your soul, the Lord your God will bring you back from captivity. He will have compassion on you.

He will gather you again from the nations. No matter how far away you're scattered, He will bring you back. And look at verse six.

And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul that you may live. If you seek God, He will give you a circumcised heart. If you are chastened by His chastening, if you receive the rebuke and the correction that comes from this discipline because you've strayed and you return, you turn to God, it's like the prodigal son.

All he does is say, I will go back to my father's household. And the picture there that Jesus gives, which by the way is a parable to Old Testament saints in the Old Testament age, the prodigal son, he goes out and he reaps the consequences of his self-centeredness and his disobedience. And he says, I will return to my father.

That's the only good thought he has. I will return. And you see all the things that the father does

for that returning son.

That's this promise. That parable is a reflection of this principle. If you return, I will do these things for you.

I will restore you. I will heal you. And I will circumcise your heart.

If you turn to me, I will give you the ability to perceive and to understand. Circumcision is a picture of cutting away that which is useless. The circumcised foreskin is compared in the New Testament to the flesh, to the body of death.

And the fact that the Israelites were circumcised was a picture of the fact that they had been cleansed, that they were saved, and they don't want to go back and be uncircumcised. And so circumcision of the heart is cleansing. Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean.

Wash me and I shall be whiter than snow. It's cleansing. It's the ability to perceive, the ability to have this heart to understand.

Turn with me to Isaiah. Well, before we do that, let me point out one other thing here in Deuteronomy 30. We saw in verse six that the Lord will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants.

Verse seven, the Lord your God will put all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you and who persecuted you. And look at verse eight, and you will again obey the voice of the Lord and do all his commandments which I command you today. The Lord your God will make you abound in all the work of your hand and the fruit of your body and the increase of your livestock and the produce of your land for good.

For the Lord will again rejoice over you for good as he rejoiced over your fathers. If you obey the voice of the Lord your God to keep his commandments and his statutes. Now look at verse 10.

Here's another example of what I was talking about. If you obey, keep his commandments and his statutes written in the book of the law. And if you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, you can't do one without the other.

And look at verse 11. This commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. This is starting to sound familiar, isn't it? Paul has just quoted this in Romans.

It is not in heaven that you should say who will ascend and bring it to us that we may hear and do it, nor is it beyond the sea that you should say who will go over to the sea for us and bring it to us that we may hear it and do it. The word is very near you in your mouth and in your heart that you may do it. See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil.

Who has he set this before? Believers. In that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to

walk in his ways and to keep his commandments, his statutes and his judgments that you may live and multiply. And the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess.

But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear and are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them, I announce to you today that you shall surely perish. You will go to ruin. You shall not prolong your days in the land.

I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore, choose life that both you and your descendants may live. Now, when you look at 29 and 30, does Moses say, pray to God that he may give you a circumcised heart? Not at all.

He gives them the means of having a circumcised heart. He says up to this point, God hasn't given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear. But if you do these things, he will.

You're about to enter the test. You're about to cross over into the land and you're going to be faced with, are you going to serve God or are you going to serve the gods of the land? Are you going to be immersed in the culture and follow the goals of the culture? Or are you going to follow the covenant that God made with you at Horeb and that God makes with you today? If you keep God as your first priority, he will give you perception and understanding. And we're going to see after we come back from the break that God also talks specifically about the eyes and the ears and the heart when people turn away from him.

Let's pause now and take our break. When we come back, we'll conclude this thought and move into Romans chapter 11.