

Adam Clarke:

Introduction

Gracious promises are given to the penitent, Deuteronomy 30:1-6. The Lord will circumcise their heart, and put all these curses on their enemies, if they hearken to his voice and keep his testimonies, Deuteronomy 30:7-10. The word is near to them, and easy to be understood, Deuteronomy 30:11-14. Life and death, a blessing and a curse, are set before them; and they are exhorted to love the Lord, obey his voice, and cleave unto him, that they may inherit the land promised to Abraham, Deuteronomy 30:15-20.

Verse 1

When all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse - So fully did God foresee the bad use these people would make of their free agency in resisting the Holy Ghost, that he speaks of their sin and punishment as certain; yet, at the same time, shows how they might turn to himself and live, even while he was pouring out his indignation upon them because of their transgressions.

Verse 3

Gather thee from all the nations - This must refer to a more extensive captivity than that which they suffered in Babylon.

Verse 5

Will bring thee into the land - As this promise refers to a return from a captivity in which they had been scattered among all nations, consequently it is not the Babylonish captivity which is intended; and the repossession of their land must be different from that which was consequent on their return from Chaldea.

Verse 6

God will circumcise thine heart - This promise remains yet to be fulfilled. Their heart, as a people, has never yet been circumcised; nor have the various promises in this chapter been ever yet fulfilled. There remaineth, therefore, a rest for this people of God. Now, as the law, properly speaking, made no provision for the circumcision of the heart, which implies the remission of sins, and purification of the soul from all unrighteousness; and as circumcision itself was only a sign of spiritual good, consequently the promise here refers to the days of the Messiah, and to this all the prophets and all the apostles give witness: "for circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter," Romans 2:29; and the genuine followers of God are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands - by the circumcision of Christ, Colossians 2:11, Colossians 2:12. Hence we see these promises cannot be fulfilled to the Jews but in their embracing the Gospel of Christ. To look, therefore, for their restoration is idle and nugatory, while their obstinacy and unbelief remain.

Verse 11

This commandment - is not hidden - Not too wonderful or difficult for thee to comprehend or perform, as the word *niphleth* implies. Neither is it far off - the word or doctrine of salvation shall be proclaimed in your own land; for He is to be born in Bethlehem of Judah, who is to feed and save Israel; and the Prophet who is to teach them is to be raised up from among their brethren.

Verse 12

It is not in heaven - Shall not be communicated in that way in which the prophets received the living oracles; but the Word shall be made flesh, and dwell among you.

Verse 13

Neither is it beyond the sea - Ye shall not be obliged to travel for it to distant nations, because salvation is of the Jews.

Verse 14

But the word is very nigh unto thee - The doctrine of salvation preached by the apostles; in thy mouth, the promises of redemption made by the prophets forming a part of every Jew's creed; in thy heart - the power to believe with the heart unto righteousness, that the tongue may make confession unto salvation. In this way, it is evident, St. Paul understood these passages; see Romans 10:6-8, etc.

Verse 15

Life and good - Present and future blessings.

Death and evil - Present and future miseries: termed, Deuteronomy 30:19, Life and death, blessing and cursing. And why were these set before them?

- 1. That they might comprehend their import.**
- 2. That they might feel their importance.**
- 3. That they might choose life, and the path of believing, loving obedience, that led to it.**
- 4. That they and their posterity, thus choosing life and refusing evil, might be the favourites of God in time and eternity.**

Were there no such thing as free will in man, who could reconcile these sayings either with sincerity or common sense? God has made the human will free, and there is no power or influence either in heaven, earth, or hell, except the power of God, that can deprive it of its free volitions; of its power to will and nill, to choose and refuse, to act or not act or force it to sin against God. Hence man is accountable for his actions, because they are his; were he necessitated by fate, or sovereign constraint, they could not be his. Hence he is rewardable, hence he is punishable. God, in his creation, willed that the human creature should be free, and he formed his soul accordingly; and the Law and Gospel, the promise and precept, the denunciation of woe and the doctrine of eternal life, are all constructed on this ground; that is, they all necessarily suppose the freedom of the human will: nor could it be will if it were not free, because the principle of freedom or liberty is necessarily implied in the idea of volition. See on the Deuteronomy 5:29 (note).

Verse 20

That thou mayest love the Lord - Without love there can be no obedience.

Obey his voice - Without obedience love is fruitless and dead.

And cleave unto him - Without close attachment and perseverance, temporary love, however sincere and fervent - temporary obedience, however disinterested, energetic, and pure while it lasts - will be ultimately ineffectual. He alone who endures to the end, shall be saved. Reader, how do matters stand between God and thy soul? He cannot persevere in the grace of God whose soul is not yet made a partaker of that grace. Many talk strenuously on the impossibility of falling from grace, who have not yet tasted that the Lord is gracious. How absurd to talk and dispute about the infallibility of arriving safely at the end of a way in which a man has never yet taken one hearty step! It is never among those that have the grace of God, but among those that have it not, that we find an overweening confidence.