

I.N.I.

Eighth Sunday after Pentecost
July 30, 2017
Deut. 30:9-14

In Christ Jesus, who has revealed God's love for mankind both in His person and in His Word,
Dear Fellow Redeemed,

I met an elderly couple this past week who have been attending our Bible Class at the Heritage home. They are Methodist, but are not happy with the Social Gospel and loss of moral teachings that has spread through much of liberal Methodism. In other words empathizing works for Jesus, rather than preaching what Jesus did for us and going along with today's immoral stand on abortion and homosexuality. They spoke highly of using the Word, and only the Word. That was very refreshing to hear. I invited them to come and hear what we have to offer.

That brings up the question. Do we need more than the Bible in our preaching and teaching? The world says emphatically, **YES!** We've got our psychics, our horoscopes, our new age spiritists. We've got our eastern religions and all of the other religions of the world with their "truths." We've got our humanistic philosophies and psychiatrists, our evolutionistic scientists who keep on discovering new things that revise their theories on where we came from and how we got here. We need a lot more than just the Bible!!

Even some in the church would say "yes," we need more than the Bible. We need to interpret it with our reason and explain it and teach it with our enlightened social conscience of diversity.

God says NONSENSE! My Word is all you need!

The words of our text are the final words of Moses to the children of Israel. A new generation has now replaced those who refused to enter the Promised Land 40 years earlier. Moses had watched that new generation arise while the older ones died off in the wilderness. Moses now was at the end of his service to the LORD and was going to hand over the leadership to Joshua, whom God had chosen. Moses addressed the people in order to remind them of the LORD's gracious hand in dealing with them and to renew the covenant with this new generation, who was not around when God made the covenant with their fathers at Mt. Sinai. Moses looks back over the history of God's people. He reminds them of God's grace in calling them from Egypt, providing for them during the wilderness years, and giving them victory over Kings Sihon and Og. He renewed the covenant with the people and encouraged them to **KEEP THE WORDS OF THIS COVENANT, AND DO THEM, THAT YOU MAY PROSPER IN ALL THAT YOU DO.**

Moses looks ahead to the future of this people and on the one hand, extends Gods' blessings to those who faithfully remain in the spiritual relationship of grace which God had created with them, but on the other hand, warns those who would turn away from that covenant that they would bring down God's curses upon themselves.

We have taken some of the words of Moses for our theme this morning:

THE LORD REJOICES OVER YOU!

I: HE DESIRES THAT YOU CLING TO HIS WORD

We read verses 9-10 **THE LORD YOUR GOD WILL MAKE YOU ABOUND IN ALL THE WORK OF YOUR HAND, IN THE FRUIT OF YOUR BODY, IN THE INCREASE OF YOUR LIVESTOCK, AND IN 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 WHICH ARE WRITTEN IN THIS BOOK OF THE LAW, AND IF YOU TURN TO THE LORD YOUR GOD WITH ALL YOUR HEART AND WITH ALL YOUR SOUL.**

Through the words of His covenant the LORD revealed His will to Israel. His words were clear and He commanded them to be kept and obeyed. However, we must be careful not to make the action of God's people the cause of God's blessing so that the Gospel promise of God's grace is turned into a law, into a work that is rewarded. God certainly does promise a warehouse full of blessings for faithfulness. Unfortunately, too many think of faithfulness to God as a means to gain prosperity and earthly blessings or even eternal life in heaven. God works through grace, His

undeserved love, to provide eternal blessings to His people and also to provide other earthly blessings. It is surely not because His people have done anything to deserve them.

The source of these blessings is God. He causes the prosperity here promised. He also causes the action in the hearts of His people. We read in verse 6 of Moses' speech: **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.**

Circumcising the heart means to repent of our sins and then to believe in the forgiveness earned for us by Jesus. But even the power and ability to repent and believe comes from God through His Word. That is why He **DESIRES THAT WE CLING TO HIS WORD.** Without the Word we will not be led to confess our sins and repent, we will not believe, we will not be saved.

God tells us in these words that He responds to our turning to Him. So He turns again to us **TO REJOICE OVER US.** He is happy and filled with joy even as we are told that **THE ANGELS IN HEAVEN REJOICE OVER ONE SINNER WHO REPENTS.** Yes, the Lord promises blessings when His people are obedient and faithful. But the motivation to obey is not in the hope of some reward or earned payment for services rendered. The motivation is God's great grace and love to us in Jesus which moves us to willingly, thankfully love, serve and obey Him in return.

We merely stand under God's grace and await whatever blessings He chooses to shower upon us, whether those blessings be great or small, physically good or bad. So we see that the Lord **REJOICES IN US AND DESIRES THAT WE CLING TO HIS WORD.** But how can we do that, isn't that too hard for us?

That brings us to the second point:

HE HAS PLANTED HIS WORD IN YOUR HEARTS.

We read verses 11-14 **FOR THIS COMMANDMENT WHICH I COMMAND YOU TODAY, IT IS NOT TOO MYSTERIOUS FOR YOU, NOR IS IT FAR OFF. IT IS NOT IN HEAVEN, THAT YOU SHOULD SAY, WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN FOR US AND BRING IT TO US, THAT WE MAY HEAR IT AND DO IT? NOR IS IT BEYOND THE SEA, THAT YOU SHOULD SAY, WHO WILL GO OVER THE SEA FOR US AND BRING IT TO US, THAT WE MAY HEAR IT AND DO IT? BUT THE WORD IS VERY NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART, THAT YOU MAY DO IT.**

In the last verse of cha. 29 Moses said: **THE SECRET THINGS BELONG TO THE LORD OUR GOD, BUT THOSE THINGS WHICH ARE REVEALED BELONG TO US AND TO OUR CHILDREN FOREVER, THAT WE MAY DO ALL THE WORDS OF THIS LAW.**

Moses through inspiration of the Holy Spirit carefully recorded all the words God directed him to write. These written words penetrated the hearts of God's people and lived within them. Through that Word, whether spoken or written, God finds a way to enter the human heart and inscribe His truth there. The Lord works through the Word by the Holy Spirit to bring about repentance in the heart, to create faith in all that Jesus has done for us and to produce fruits of faith, that is, works of faithful obedience. The ability to fulfill the commands of God comes through His Word.

Moses understood the human heart—that is the sinful, human heart that tries to find a way to God and to eternity different from God's way. The human way is always the way of the law. We must do something for God. We must do something to earn God's love and acceptance.

God's people were to understand and believe that their relationship with the LORD was not something that had to be earned or achieved by some great effort on their part: like ascending into heaven or crossing the sea. Nor is the truth of God to be found in the study of the universe or in tropical lands across the ocean. The simple Word that God gave to His people by inspiration of the Holy Spirit through the prophets provided them with everything they needed.

Years later the Apostle Paul quoted these words with some added comments in his letter to the Romans 10:6-8 **BUT THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF FAITH SPEAKS IN THIS WAY, DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN? (THAT IS, TO BRING CHRIST DOWN FROM ABOVE) OR, WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS? (THAT IS, TO BRING CHRIST UP FROM THE DEAD). BUT WHAT DOES IT SAY? THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, EVEN IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART (THAT IS, THE WORD OF FAITH WHICH WE PREACH):**

God provides righteousness, peace, joy and forgiveness through His Son, our Savior, which we read about in God's revealed Word. The Good News that we are declared right with God by grace alone through faith in Jesus wasn't a distant, secret message. The Savior makes His forgiveness available wherever people hear, read, study and learn the Word of God. God hasn't kept His Word a secret, it is all around us and when we hear and read it, it is in our hearts.

Abandoning the Word however means that we abandon the Lord Jesus who has come down to this earth to suffer, die, rise again and ascend into heaven.

God's Word clearly tells us that our salvation is complete! It's all done! The Word of God announces and gives us God's grace; it does not demand an effort on man's part to earn grace.

Moses, at the end of his ministry, wanted God's people to remember these essential things. Remain faithful to the Lord **BY CLINGING TO HIS WORD**. Even though Moses would not be present any longer as their leader, God would continue to be with them with His Word in their midst to turn them to Him with all their heart and soul. Moses is here presenting the Lord like the father in the parable of the Prodigal Son. The father ran to meet his son with joy and rejoicing. So also, the Lord turns in joy to receive us wayward, repentant sons and daughters everyday.

THE LORD REJOICES OVER US and always stands ready to receive us repentant sinners. No matter where we go and no matter how far away from the Lord we journey, the road back is a short trip through His Word. In the Word the Lord embraces every sinner with forgiveness and empowers each one to live a life of obedience through faith.

May that be our joy as we ever

CLING TO HIS WORD THAT HAS BEEN PLANTED IN OUR HEARTS.

Amen.