

Sermon- July 10, 2016

Deuteronomy 30:9-14

⁹ Then the LORD your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock and the crops of your land. The LORD will again delight in you and make you prosperous, just as he delighted in your ancestors, ¹⁰ if you obey the LORD your God and keep his commands and decrees that are written in this Book of the Law and turn to the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

¹¹ Now what I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. ¹² It is not up in heaven, so that you have to ask, "Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" ¹³ Nor is it beyond the sea, so that you have to ask, "Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?" ¹⁴ No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.

"God is love." You hear it all the time. You see it all the time. In interviews, on Facebook, on billboards, you can't escape the general message of "God is love." What does this exactly mean? Some people may not even know the depths of this phrase when they throw it around. "God doesn't love us." You hear this all the time and see it all the time as well. With stories of terrorism around the world and constant crime right here in Las Vegas people have their minds made up that God doesn't show true love as the Bible says. No matter what people may think or say, God is full of love. It's a deep love that we will never fully grasp here on earth. It's a love that is constant even when we may think it's not there in the face of terror. How can you experience this love of God each and every day of your life? You can continue to turn back to the LORD while at the same time making use of his available Word.

I

Why are we even talking about the love of God this morning? Sermons are meant to expound the text which serves as the basis for a given sermon. Yet, nowhere in this text does Moses even use the word "love." So, where is the love? The love of God is found in his name. The LORD is full of love. This is the capital L-O-R-D. The LORD who is "**the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness.**" (Exodus 34:6) There is a good reason why Moses uses this particular name of God three times in the 6 verses before us this morning. No matter how often anyone might change, the love of the LORD never changes. The love of the LORD is unconditional because no one can earn or deserve it.

The Israelites are often portrayed in the Old Testament for their lack of faithfulness to God who continually took care of them. God brought them out of Egypt, but they complained on their way through the desert to the Promised Land of Canaan. God promised to give them the land of Canaan after their journey, but they failed to trust in God's strength versus the strength of the inhabitants of Canaan. The Israelites struggled with idolatry even as God continued to lead them

through the wilderness. Moses is reminding the Israelites again of the blessings which come from following the loving LORD.

Returning to the LORD brings blessings and prosperity. **“Then the LORD your God will make you most prosperous in all the work of your hands, and in the fruit of your womb, the young of your livestock, and the crops of your land”** Moses says. That’s not to say God rewards his people for something good they have done. Good works earn nothing because good works aren’t anything by themselves. You might hear someone say, “But look at verse 8!” **“You will again obey the LORD and follow all his commands I am giving you today.”** (Deuteronomy 30:8) Verses 8 and 9 together seem to say it’s a cause and effect for becoming prosperous. Because we do something, God gives us in return. Yet, the LORD is the one who is making us prosperous according to his will. Based on his grace, the LORD makes those who turn to him prosperous. Yes, he promises to bless those who turn back to him, but his act of giving is still based on his grace and mercy toward undeserving people.

It’s easy to understand this more when you understand what it truly means to turn back to the LORD. To return to anyone with a true heart is to return to them unconditionally. It’s not turning to someone only when you want them to look favorably toward you. It’s turning to someone all the time because you love them and not wanting anything in return. The motivation to return to God day after day does not come from a heart of greed. It comes from a heart of love toward the LORD which God has given us. **“The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.”** (Deuteronomy 30:6) Those who return to the LORD their God out of love for him and not themselves truly return to him and experience his love as he prospers them.

There are people and places that offer different emotions depending on when you go to them. When you go the bank, it’s not a good feeling when you have to withdraw a lot of money or ask for a sizable loan. On the other side, it’s a fantastic day depositing money after your payday or wedding or graduation. When you go to talk with your parents, it’s not a good feeling knowing that you’ll be yelled out for disobeying them. However, it’s usually a great feeling to see them after a long time away. With God, there is no need for different emotions depending on when you turn back to him. It’s a great feeling every time because you’ll always experience the love of the LORD.

Yet, when do you turn to the LORD? Maybe you’ve woken up some Sunday mornings and thought there wasn’t a need to attend church that day because you already have faith, and you’re just not feeling it. You had enough love and didn’t feel you needed more. Maybe you’ve attended Bible Class or worship at times feeling pretty good for the wrong reasons. We don’t go to Bible Class or worship because God needs us to, but we can have a false sense of pride to feel this way. Have you ever turned to the LORD to experience his love in only ways you felt you wanted? You’re having a rough time in life where everything just isn’t going your way. So, turning back to the LORD will cause the LORD to look favorably upon you, and all your

problems will go away. You and I have to admit that we don't always have the desire in our hearts of needing the love of the LORD. Or, when we feel we need it, we might think we can earn it a bit by trying harder to turn toward him.

Remember where the true motivation lies to turn back to the LORD to experience his love. Our faith knows how to properly turn back to the LORD. Search your heart which remembers what God's Word says about turning back to him. Turn to the LORD with a humble heart and you will experience the love of the LORD. A humble heart doesn't demand anything from God but trusts in the LORD's promise to make you prosperous by providing what you need. Look at the prodigal son from the gospel this morning. How did he turn? He said to his father, **"Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son."** (Luke 15:21) Now, hear the love of the father. **"The father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.'"** (Luke 15:22) The humble attitude of the son and the unconditional love of the father echo the relationship we have with our Heavenly Father when we turn back to the LORD.

We feel the love of the LORD when we turn back to him because we truly see how we are blessed. The LORD makes us all prosperous in many different ways. Think of an unexpected gift from an anonymous source. Who ultimately prospered you in this way? Think of all the successes you have done in your life whether in your hobbies or in your work. Who gave you the skills to do these things? Think about the tough decisions you've wrestled with. Who guided you along the way? The LORD your God shows you love in all you do. You experience the love of the LORD because you know that without him, you are nothing, but with him, you are everything. The most prosperous way we all experience the love of the LORD is the fact that we are all undeservingly rich through the blood of Jesus. David writes of this in Psalm 103:10, **"He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities."** The love of the LORD is all over your life. It's also all over his Word.

II

There is no riddle to solve to unlock the love of the LORD found in his available Word. God's Word was made available to the people of the Old Testament through the mouths of God's chosen servants. Moses spoke to the people and his words were written down. The people didn't have the excuse of "we didn't know how to experience the love of the LORD." Moses told the people, **"The Word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it."** Because of that, they didn't have to ask one another, **"Who will ascend into heaven to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it? Who will cross the sea to get it and proclaim it to us so we may obey it?"** The LORD was with the Israelites no matter where they went, and wherever the LORD is, his Word is also present. Thankfully for the Israelites, God's Word was near them. If it weren't, they wouldn't have been able to experience the love of the LORD which is all over God's Word. The world today would be in rough shape if God's

Word weren't near all people. God continues to make his Word available so that you can experience the love of the LORD.

Even with his available Word, people think they need to "find" God. They feel a need to live a life of poverty to get rid of everything in order to make room for God to come into their lives. Others will say that they need to become one with God in their minds through yoga or some other type of meditation. Maybe you've heard of someone who tries to get closer to God by climbing a ladder of spiritual success through good works.

Do you try and search for God's love in the wrong places? Does the love of the LORD seem so far away after a big mistake? How can you ever come back to God? "Maybe I'll lie low for a bit and then slowly crawl back to God with simple good works." Do you search for some sort of sign the God still loves you? Do you think he's punishing you until some fortune comes your way?

Don't be fooled! The love of the LORD is not far off! It's in his Word which is readily available for you. Make use of it! Technology is a blessing from God, and God has provided us now with more means by which we can access his Word so we can experience the love of the LORD. Even without a book, you can now read God's Word online or through an app. His Word tells you he's already at one with you through Jesus so you don't have to get away from reality to be at one with him. **"We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation."** (Romans 5:11)

Even if you, or someone you know, has drifted far away from the LORD, the LORD is not far off. As much as anyone might try to escape, the LORD follows with his love. You could travel away from the LORD for 15 years. That doesn't mean it takes 15 years to get back. It takes one believing look at the gospel for someone to experience the love of the LORD even after so many years away from it. That's the beauty of the love of the LORD. It's always present, ready to welcome back the worst of sinners. It welcomes back instantly those who are repentant. Nothing can get in its way. Listen to God's available Word as Paul writes, **"No in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."** (Romans 8:37-39)

Certain experiences stick with you. That's certainly the case for the love of the LORD which is always being showered upon us. Thankfully, this experience isn't just a one-time thing that we need to milk for the rest of our lives. Whenever you turn back to the LORD, you will experience the love of the LORD. Whenever you use God's Word in prayer, in meditation, or in study, you will experience the love of the LORD. When we experience the love of the LORD, we truly see just how prosperous we are. Amen.