

Near To The Word

"But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in you heart, that you may observe it."

Deuteronomy 30:14

One excuse people offer for not obeying the gospel or not being a strong Christian is that the commandments of God are "too hard." They feel overwhelmed by what the Lord requires of His children. In order to "be excused" from the hardships and difficulties of a Christian life, people say, "God wants too much." In order to "be excused" from adapting and changing their lives to be pleasing to the Lord, people claim that God is too strict and unsympathetic.

If anyone had the right to complain about difficult commandments, it would probably be the Israelites. In the five books of the Law (Genesis-Deuteronomy), there were over six hundred laws given to the Israelites. Assessing the probable impact this would have on the Israelites, Moses said, *"For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach"* (Deuteronomy 30:11).

After Moses went through the Law of God a second time, this reassuring phrase must have served to encourage the people of God. The reason they could live up to those standards was that the word resided in their mouth and in their hearts. They did not have to go up into heaven or cross the sea in order to hear the word. Because of this close relationship, they could serve God acceptably. Moses had just finished telling the children of Israel that some things were known only to God (29:29), but the commands of His voice (30:8) were written down for all to read (30:10).

Moses' words also point out a conclusion that is echoed throughout the Old and New Testaments. Samuel told Saul in 1 Samuel 15:22, *"Has the Lord as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams."* Complete obedience is of the utmost concern to God.

Would God have provided man with commands which he could not have followed? That seems very unreasonable. God wants us to be able to do His will and come into fellowship with Him. *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;)"*

That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ (1 John 1:1-3).

Paul uses Deuteronomy 30:11-14 in Romans 10:8-10 to draw a marvelous parallel. He said, *"But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation."* He is applying the same truth to the gospel. He said that if a man will take the gospel into his heart and on his lips, he will be saved. This salvation is based upon the clear admission that Jesus is Lord. The combination of what man does with his heart (believe) and his mouth (confess) results in our salvation.

Brethren, we should never say that the commandments of God are "too hard." Paul said in Romans 10:11, *"Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed."* The Lord abounds in riches for all who call (or obey) upon the name of the Lord. Is this not enough to convince us to accept what God has in mind? Is this not enough to provoke us to follow the Lord, no matter how difficult the journey?

Unfortunately, few people are compelled to be righteous. Jesus said, *"Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it"* (Matthew 7:13-14). It is our prayer that you will *"obey the Lord to keep His commandments"* (Deuteronomy 30:10). If not, you will find yourself in a place of everlasting punishment!

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