

## Deuteronomy 30:9-14

Dear People of God and Students of His Word:

Put on your tunic and sandals and join the throng of OT Israelites for the next few moments. We're just east of the Jordan River standing on the hills of Moab overlooking Canaan. For 40 years your people have been wandering through the wilderness desert. Moses, 120 years old, is about to turn over his leadership to Joshua. In a few days or weeks, Moses is going to die on Mt. Nebo, not permitted to cross the Jordan into the Promised Land. Moses speaks, repeating the laws God had given him on Mt. Sinai some 40 years before. At Sinai the Lord had declared, "***I will be your God and you will be my people....Keep these laws I have given you.***" Now Moses encourages his people again to do so -- promising God's blessings to the nation if they did obey God's laws -- and God's wrath if they did not.

This is a turning point in Israel's history. Their leadership was changing; the homeland was changing; their way of life from nomads to settlers was changing. But one thing didn't change: God's Word. Moses made this clear: They were still God's chosen people and they still had God's Word. He says, "**The Word is Very Near You.** This truth is (1) *An encouragement to be faithful*, and (2) *A reminder that brings comfort.*

### 1

The great "Law-giver," Moses, says to the Israelites, "***What I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach....No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart so you may obey it.***"

Moses knew his people very well. He knew there would be times in the future when the Israelites would throw up their hands in frustration and say, "*We can't do this! Keeping all these laws is too hard!*" And actually, they were right. It is hard. In fact, it's impossible! You and I totally understand, too, because we can't keep God's laws either. When we use the law as a **mirror**, it shows how filthy and sinful we are. We compare our lives, our mouths, our attitudes with what God says in the Bible -- and we are a complete mess, a real train wreck.

But Moses encourages his fellow believers: "***It is not too difficult for you or beyond your reach. 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?" 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?"...No, the word is very near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart.***" What an important reminder for all us. The Bible's essence isn't *rocket science*. It is simple enough even for little children to understand its basic messages -- the Law and the Gospel. I am a sinner, yes. But I am also a forgiven sinner by the grace of God and through the life and death of the Savior! The Law: Do and Don't Do! The Gospel: Everything done by Christ!

I know we don't always realize it, but how blessed we are to have "***The Word of God very near us.***" We have it in our homes, church, and school. It is still the most printed and sold book in the world. But sometimes it's what we have right before us that we take for granted the most. And, unfortunately, sometimes we even become **afraid** of the Bible because maybe we've never really studied it or we've forgotten how to use it over the years. But think about that a moment. If you get a new TV, do you just let it sit there because you can't figure out the remote? No, you read the instructions or YouTube it and learn how to use it.

A guy bought a new car. For some reason he never took the time to learn how to operate the jack. One cold, rainy night he had a flat tire and it took him 45 minutes in the driving rain to change the tire. The wise counsel of God's Word really needs to be part of our daily lives -- so we are prepared when emergencies/flat tires of life arise. And as we all know very well, they do arise.

There are often things we regret in life -- things we've done or said that we wish we could take back. I've yet to find a Christian who has regretted getting to know God's Word better. You will never look back on life and say, "*I wish I would have spent less time hearing and learning God's Word.*"

2

Moses' statement: "***The Word is very near you,***" is not only an encouragement to be faithful to the accessible Word, but is also a reminder that God's Word brings us great comfort. Trials arise, temptations entice, storms blow in, grief drags us down -- but the Word is there reminding us that there is always light at the end of the dark tunnel. We always have a future that is much brighter than the menacing challenges and issues of the present day.

There are some fellow members that I wish could come and speak to you today about this truth. Unfortunately, they are shut in. They can't be here because they can't get here because they are too weak or fragile or immobile. Some of them can't even use their Bible's anymore because they can't even pick them up, and if they can, they aren't able to read or see the words. However, they do have the Word near to them. They have studied and learned it throughout the course of their lives. Oh, they might not be able to quote passage after passage verbatim from the Bible. Who can? But...they have the truths and principles of God Word that have been burned deeply into their hearts and minds over the years always at their fingertips.

My grandfather lost many of his physical abilities near the end of his life. A once big, strong, strapping farmer was a physical shell of what he had been. His mind faltered as well. But the Word was still near him -- in German. What he had learned even as child from God's Word was still there -- in German. The Lord was still reassuring him of his eternal love -- in German. That's what was there deep in his brain. God works in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform!

The Bible is a book of great comfort. From beginning to end, Jesus is the heart and center -- Jesus, the One who forgives our sins, gives us unity with the Father, and guarantees heaven to come away from the relentless troubles of this failing world.

During WWII a serviceman wrote a letter to his parents from Guadalcanal. In his letter he said, "***Write back, Mom and Dad, and tell me who is winning.***" The Marine was so involved in his own daily battles that he couldn't see the bigger picture. He wanted to be assured that it was all worth it.

Spiritually speaking, the Word, the Bible, gives us that bigger picture -- the picture of Christ's grand victory for us over Satan, sin, and even the final enemy: death. As we are apt to dwell on our own individual trials and disappointments, the Bible opens up to us the big, beautiful picture of the One who has overcome them all for us all.

Moses says, "***The Word is very near you.***" Since by God's grace that is true, may he also help us to be faithful to that Word and fill our hearts with the comfort and peace that surpasses all understanding until we are in the Promised Land.

Amen.