

Heart matters

*And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.
Deuteronomy 30:6*

This chapter is another demonstration of God's amazing grace. After multiple chapters of delineating warnings concerning the curses connected with variations of disobedience and hypocrisy and the blessings associated with knowing, loving, and obeying the Lord, God knows that the Israelites will inevitably choose the way of cursing. Yet in this chapter He still provides the remedy of repentance to restoration. The key to the remedy is the work of God within the heart of man. The concept of heart circumcision is a common theme in the law and the prophets, and it is directly stated here, as in Deuteronomy 10:16 and Jeremiah 4:4. However, in these other two passages, the people of Israel are commanded to circumcise their hearts, whereas in our text the heart circumcision is performed by the Lord. In this context, the Lord's action is His work in response to the people's heart of repentance and returning to the Lord from the nations where they will be driven by their pursuit of the cursed ways. Their return is characterized in verse two as being with all their heart and soul. Thus, in the application of the metaphor, we see the two-fold work of the Spirit of God upon the heart. First, He draws the heart to repentance, yet even in repentance no one can make his own heart clean (Proverbs 20:9). So then in His mercy He replaces the heart of the repentant with a circumcised one (Ezekiel 36:26) that loves the Lord thy God.

The apostle Paul echoes this truth in Romans 2:29 as he addresses the Roman Jews. This was not a new concept introduced by the apostle, but the consistent truth of scripture, now applied to both Jew and Gentile in his systematic explanation of the only way of justification before the righteous and holy God. He later laments his nation's ignorant zeal in going about to establish their own righteousness, instead of submitting themselves to the righteousness of God, which must be implanted by Him through faith in the finished work of Christ (Romans 10:1-4). The old must be discarded as all things become new (II Corinthians 5:17). The promise of our text and its fulfillment through faith in Christ is the only way for a person to be able to love the Lord with all of our heart and soul through a new and living way. Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift!