

Deuteronomy 5:29

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!

Analysis

God's lament 'O that there were such an heart in them' reveals divine desire for genuine inward transformation, not mere external compliance. The Hebrew 'mi-yitten' (who will give/O that) expresses deep longing. God desires 'that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always'—permanent, heartfelt obedience flowing from reverential love. The promise 'that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever' shows obedience brings multi-generational blessing. This verse anticipates the new covenant where God writes law on hearts (Jeremiah 31:33, Ezekiel 36:26-27). Only sovereign grace produces the transformed heart capable of covenant faithfulness.

Historical Context

Despite initial commitment at Sinai, Israel repeatedly violated covenant: golden calf (Exodus 32), rebellion at Kadesh (Numbers 14), Baal worship (Numbers 25), and cyclical apostasy throughout Judges, Kings, and Chronicles. The problem wasn't lack of revelation or external structure but heart corruption requiring regeneration. The prophets repeatedly called for circumcised hearts (Deuteronomy 10:16, Jeremiah 4:4), anticipating new covenant transformation. Only Christ's atonement and Spirit's indwelling produce genuine obedience.

Related Passages

James 2:17 — Faith and works

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Study Questions

1. How does God's desire for 'such an heart' reveal that external compliance without heart transformation doesn't constitute true obedience?
2. In what ways does this verse anticipate the new covenant promise where God Himself creates willing, obedient hearts in His elect (Ezekiel 36:26-27)?

Interlinear Text

מִי	יֵתָּן	וְהָיָה	לִבָּבְךָ	וְהָיָה	לִּי
an	in them	H1961	heart	O that there were such	H0
H4310	H5414		H3824	H2088	
לִירְאָה	אֶת־יְיָ	וְלִשְׁמֹרֵת	אֶת־	כָּל־	מִצְוֹתַי
that they would fear	H853	me and keep	H853	H3605	all my commandments
H3372		H8104			H4687
הָיָה	לִי	וְהָיָה	לִי	וְהָיָה	לִבְנֵיהֶם
always	H4616	that it might be well	H0	with them and with their children	
H3117		H3190		H1121	
לְעֹלָם:					
for ever					
H5769					

Additional Cross-References

Isaiah 48:18 (Word): O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea:

Deuteronomy 11:1 (Word): Therefore thou shalt love the LORD thy God, and keep his charge, and his statutes, and his judgments, and his commandments, alway.

Matthew 23:37 (Parallel theme): O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!

Luke 19:42 (Parallel theme): Saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes.

Deuteronomy 4:40 (Word): Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes, and his commandments, which I command thee this day, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days upon the earth, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, for ever.

Deuteronomy 5:16 (Parallel theme): Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

Revelation 22:14 (Word): Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.

Ephesians 6:3 (Parallel theme): That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth.

2 Corinthians 5:20 (Parallel theme): Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God.

James 1:25 (Word): But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.