

## The Choice of a New Generation | Deuteronomy

### Don't Forget!

Deuteronomy 6.4—12; 7.6 – 8; 8.11 – 14; 9.4 - 6

10.29.17

<sup>6:4-12</sup> "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! <sup>5</sup> "And you shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. <sup>6</sup> "And these words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart; <sup>7</sup> and you shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. <sup>8</sup> "And you shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. <sup>9</sup> "And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates. <sup>10</sup> "Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, <sup>11</sup> and houses full of all good things which you did not fill, and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you shall eat and be satisfied, <sup>12</sup> then watch yourself, lest you forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

<sup>7:6-8</sup> "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. <sup>7</sup> "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, <sup>8</sup> but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

<sup>8:11-14</sup> "Beware lest you forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; <sup>12</sup> lest, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them, <sup>13</sup> and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, <sup>14</sup> then your heart becomes proud, and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. <sup>15</sup> "He led you through the great and terrible wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water; He brought water for you out of the rock of flint. <sup>16</sup> "In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end. <sup>17</sup> "Otherwise, you may say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.' <sup>18</sup> "But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

<sup>9:4-6</sup> "Do not say in your heart when the LORD your God has driven them out before you, 'Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,' but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is dispossessing them before you. <sup>5</sup> "It is **not for your righteousness** or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God is driving them out before you, in order to confirm the oath which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. <sup>6</sup> "Know, then, it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people.

These readings from Deuteronomy are parts of sermons Moses preached to the New Generation... These are the children of the Exodus Generation... after their parents have died in the wilderness... And they are at Moab (East of the Jordan River) preparing to enter the Land of Promise... It's a task that's humanly impossible for them (fortified cities)... but Moses is teaching them how God will do it and HOW THEY WILL PARTICIPATE.

One of the big themes in the book is memory... the need to remember (25x)... Moses is looking ahead to the future...but he sees FUTURE SUCCESS linked to or even DEPENDENT ON remembering the past.

"Don't forget!" That's the title of today's sermon AND it's a phrase you've probably heard this week...seems like there's always so much to remember ... It's like modern life is so complicated that we just can't keep it together in our heads. "Don't forget!"

When I was previewing this sermon on the Men's Retreat...Friday morning study...talking about how we need computers with lots of memory (RAM) and memory sticks...devices to send us alerts...post-it notes and my phone rang... turns out it was dentist office leaving a voicemail REMINDER of an appointment...

Someone (Lance) said, "Memory is ALMOST the sum total of our entire life..."

Moses is sending these young people into the Land and he wants to prepare them – he's turning the focus to the future...but he also sees that future success depends on memory (25x) – "if you forget the past, you may as well forget the future...Your flourishing in the land will depend on your memory." Moab (where these sermons were delivered is the link between PAST and FUTURE – maybe the key word in the whole book is "TODAY" – 60x)

Why is memory so important? Why do we often remember silly trivia...but forget what really matters? Why is this SO important to God? AND is there anything that we can do to get sanctified recall?

Let's look at the obstacle to memory, the content of memory and HELPS to memory (how to get sanctified recall).

The readings begins with "The Shema" – it's the central creed of Judaism to this very day... it's the pledge of allegiance for the Israelite church. "Hear, O Israel, the LORD is our God, the LORD is ONE and you shall love the LORD your God with all heart, all your soul and all your resources/strength."

And then this call to memory: "THESE WORDS...shall be on your heart...you shall teach them to your children...talk about them...tie them like a sign on your hand and head...write them on your doorposts..."

The spirituality of the Israelites is a receptive type... it's all about reception of "The Word"...listening is of utmost importance, "HEAR, O Israel!" ("receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls". James 1.21)

And that word received...a gift given from the mouth of the One Unique God ...who speaks...that word has to permeate the life of God's people...and it has to be heard in such a way so that it sticks...remember!

And the great enemy of this kind of listening...the great obstacle to remembering in THESE passages is the re-writing of history. If you're looking back and you revise history...you are NOT receiving the gift...it will NOT stick to you...you are forgetting.

There's a silly little joke: "Hey, where you been?"

"I just flew in from Chicago."

"Just flew in from Chicago? Your arms must be tired!"

"Obviously...I mean...the plane did the flying." (Obviously)

But this was NOT so obvious to the Israelites or to us...when it comes to God. We want to make it about US... "Then it shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which YOU did not build, and houses full of all good things which YOU did not fill, and carved wells which YOU did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which YOU did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied, then watch yourself, that you do not forget the LORD who brought YOU from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. (6.10-12)

And that's repeated one way or another in all these four readings... God carries you...and somehow you give yourself the credit....Look at CH 7, v. 7: "The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers..." (end quote) Your being chosen and rescued by God was NOT because you were impressive to Him.

Third reading, "(beware) lest when you have eaten and are satisfied...in good houses...lots of livestock (the ancient equivalent to investments – early version of a portfolio)...and you have great success... beware lest your heart becomes proud and you forget the LORD..." Here, again, it's revisionist history...an absurd re-write. YOU didn't flap your arms to get here from Chicago...the plane did the work!

A few verses later (17), "Otherwise, you may say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.' But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth..."

And in the last paragraph where Moses looks ahead, he says, (9.4) “When you have FUTURE success in the Land...DO NOT SAY, ‘Because of MY righteousness the LORD has brought me to have this land... It is NOT for YOUR righteousness or the uprightness of your heart...”

Why do we say things like, “Well, God knows my heart...” And what? That brings us solace? We find some comfort in that?...

If God were to reward me...right now for what’s in my heart...I’d be in deep trouble! It was the same with the ancient Israelites. And God goes on to say, “When you kick out those bad people...whose cities are just cauldrons of barbaric violence and twisted weirdness...and when you fight against them and win – don’t say, “Yay! The good guys beat the bad guys!”

No... it’s the bad guys beating the bad guys...The only reason you're not sacrificing YOUR children on pagan altars like they are...is because I’m keeping you from it...I made a promise to your ancestor Abraham...and I will keep My promise...because of who I AM...

And that brings us to the content of memory... if the great obstacle is revisionism (re-writing history from a skewed perspective) then what ARE we to remember?

And the basic answer...the strings that Moses plucks again and again, the chord is made up of three notes – who God IS...what God has done...and what that says about YOU (2x)

Who God is? God is ONE...He is unique (not very unique – have you been thinking of that?) – God is ONE and ONLY...He is the one and only Supreme Being who speaks...He gives the creative word (“Let there be light...”) “There is NO OTHER GOD!”...see this is a sermon on the First and Second Commandments as we saw them last week...NO IDOLS!

Second, what has this unique God done? Answer: He has entered into human history...and chosen a people...the people of Abraham. He plans to bless this people NOT because they're better than any other people – THEY'RE NOT! But because He wants to give...to grace...to demonstrate the favorite aspect of His person – He wants to show love and grace...so He saves this nation...makes an oath.

And...as in the beginning, God promised that the “seed of the woman” would crush the head of our enemy... in the fullness of time (Gal 4.4) He brought the seed of the woman from the ranks of His favored nation.

A Jewish virgin gives birth to a Son...the seed of the woman ...the seed of Abraham...and in Him, in Jesus Christ, the promised descendant of Abraham (from the womb of Mary)...in Jesus Christ all the families of earth will be blessed. He will bring about a New and Universal Exodus...this descendant of Abraham will save a people for His own possession from every tribe nation,

tongue and people... Jesus Christ, seed of Abraham will do it...and has done it! He paid the price for all who receive the Word, the Good News!

So WHO God is...and WHAT God has done...and the third note in this chord of what we are to remember is WHAT DOES THIS ALL SAY ABOUT YOU...if you receive the Word/Gospel in this receptive spiritual approach...what does it say about you/us?

Well, it means that (second reading, v. 6) “you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for His own possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.” And the New Testament applies this verse (1 Peter 2.9-10) to everyone, Jew AND Gentile who believes in Jesus Christ – you are holy, chosen, set apart, claimed by God... A N D...as the bottom line in today’s reading says, “You are also a stubborn people...” Holy, chosen, belonging to God...and still deeply messed up...

And THAT is the content we are to remember...it’s the trifocal lens through which we view the world and God and ourselves and everything – God is ONE (unique) – God has chosen and saved a people through the Seed (Gal 3.16) and that means WE who receive this testimony, this news, this WORD – we are holy (because Jesus Christ’s obedient life is credited TO us...and our guilt was charged to Him) We are declared holy...and... we... are... stubborn.

Now let me end with a few ways this can all translate into sanctified recall for us... If we can’t remember the important stuff...if we’re prone to stubbornly re-write history (as if WE somehow qualified for God’s love and other people don’t) then how can our memory be saved...and how can we THINK as the holy people God has declared us to be?

Some helps for Sanctified Recall.

1) We have to learn to live in tension. Two seemingly contradictory things are BOTH true...and we have to live in the tension. We are chosen/holy/loved by God AND we are a stubborn people. The Reformers (this IS Reformation Day 500!) and Luther called this “Simul Justus et Peccator” – simultaneously righteous in the sight of God AND ALSO sinners.

We are indeed...the apple of God’s eye...loved like a perfect Father loves...cherishes...adores His own children...chosen...adopted...seen as perfect... AND terrible messed up...we do bad things...think bad thoughts...say destructive words...leave our obligations undone... God is not content to leave us here...He will bring us (like the Exodus Generation) into the wilderness...to test us...so we can discover what’s in us...and run to our gracious Father for help and change... God is always making these wonderful forays into the dark continent of my soul to claim and conquer new ground... someday it’ll all be holy... but meantime – we live in the tension: holy/stubborn!

And there are other tensions – the Land is ours by promise...and yet it's not ours...it has to be claimed.

We are passive in this...God carried us like a jet plane and yet we are also working hard in our daily callings – He chose us unilaterally and now invites us to walk with Him...to work out our salvation with fear and trembling (all our might) always knowing that ALL is grace...God is at work in us to give us the will and the energy to do His will...That's another tension that helps us to know sanctified recall...and move us forward. Active Passivity...resting in grace...animated by the Spirit to love, work and give.

Second, be in a word-rich environment. Colossians 3.16 “Let the word of Christ dwell among you richly.” Be deeply involved in a Church that gets this.

I think these images of literally tying the word to our foreheads and hands sort of misses the point but to be so immersed in the Good News that it comes to us in all our pursuits...when we work...travel...relax (“sit down”) ...Sing about it...memorize it... KNOW THAT YOU NEED THIS to keep your memory right.

Third, pass it on ...to the next generation...let every person who receives...also want to give...teach it to your children and grandchildren.

Fourth, give up comparing. Anytime you think that you're better than anyone else...yank the chain of your heart and see that self-righteousness is the deadly enemy of True Spirituality. Listen to your complaints – oftentimes that's exactly where pride and self-righteousness are hiding...only grace received by repentant faith can root it out.

Last, worship. As we saw last week, corporate worship where we rehearse the works of God and sing and confess the truth...that's often the environment where our memory comes back – we hear the words: “this do in remembrance of Me”.

We need each other...if you're NOT a part of a Church that teaches the Gospel...Come on in!

There's a cumulative effect in joining with others – you don't feel it in one week or two...but after it becomes a practice...I think you'll see this gathering as a powerful aid to sanctified recall...you simply can't do it on your own...sanctified recall requires the celebration of God's grace and the reception of the Word with others.... We anticipate that great day together!