

Waiting for a Prophet

Deuteronomy

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What brings us together tonight is to do a quick survey of the book of Deuteronomy and I realize that what we've done has been very swift through this but the idea is this, I want you to understand and appreciate why we've taken the time to survey books like we have: I really want us as a church, I want you as individuals, to have a sense of the broad sweep of Scripture. I really believe that that is a protection from a lot of the error and a lot of the foolish teaching that will come your way over time. I had a discussion today with a pastor who is overseas and his ministry is being wrecked by somebody who grabbed on to a very obscure theory, a particular point of biblical counseling, and it is on the verge of wrecking his ministry just because somebody made a big issue out of something that is actually pretty small. Well, our protection against that is to have a sense of the sweep of Scripture. When we have a sense of the sweep of Scripture, we are able to put things into context and hold it into perspective so that we are not so easily led astray. And just as a little sense of a biblical justification of this, turn over to the book of Acts for just a moment. There is a passage in the book of Acts 13 that I often think of in this context. When you look at the New Testament figures, they had such a command of the Old Testament that they could summarize huge sweeps of Scripture in just a short amount of time and the Apostle Paul does that in Acts 13 and in the span of about five verses he summarizes everything from Genesis through the book of 2 Samuel. It's quite remarkable, actually, and so I just hold this up as a biblical pattern for you to realize that we should be able to speak our way through big swathes of Scripture and have it be coherent and have a sense of the general direction of redemptive history. Acts 13:16, "Paul stood up, and motioning with his hand said, 'Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen,'" and then watch how he summarizes what we've been studying over the past eight or nine weeks. "'The God of this people Israel chose our fathers,'" there's the book of Genesis right there, "'and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt,'" there's the book of Exodus, "'and with an uplifted arm He led them out from it.'" I should have included that to refer to Exodus. Verse 18, "'For a period of about forty years He put up with them in the wilderness,'" there's the book of Numbers. "'When He had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, He distributed their land as an inheritance - all of which took about four hundred and fifty years,'" so there's the book of Joshua that we haven't even gotten to yet. "'After these things He gave them judges until Samuel the prophet.'"

So Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth and Samuel, first and second, all contained within a period of about four or five verses. That's pretty remarkable and so I just want you to see that while it is important for us to do what we do on Sunday mornings and that's to examine Scripture in detail verse by verse, there's also a biblical pattern of having the whole sense of the sweep of redemptive history in mind in order to have a firm grasp of the totality of the word of God. Stephen's speech in Acts 7, is a more extended version of the same sort of pattern, and so that's why we want to do this. We believe that understanding Scripture in its scope as well as in its depths is our best protection to grow spiritually and also to protect ourselves from those who would either intentionally or unintentionally mislead us. We rest in Scripture and a knowledge of Scripture is what secures us spiritually as the Holy Spirit guards his church as we move through life together.

Well, Deuteronomy stands at the hinge of a major transition in the life of Israel, and you can turn back to Deuteronomy now. The 40 years of wilderness wanderings from the book of Numbers are now over and the nation is about to enter into the Promised Land, and so they've been brought out of Egypt, they've wandered in the wilderness, that first-generation died in the wilderness, and now they are ready to be led into the Promised Land and to become the people of God in a nation with a land that God promised to Abraham several centuries earlier. Now, so there's transition taking place. There is also a leadership transition that is taking place here in the book of Deuteronomy. Moses is about to hand the reins of leadership over to Joshua and we'll see this toward the end of the message. But Moses, after leading the people for decades, is about to be removed from the scene by the hand of God and someone else is going to lead this people now, and so Deuteronomy is the record of the last words that Moses spoke to Israel to prepare them to enter into the Promised Land.

Look at Deuteronomy 1:1 and we're just going to look at a part of this verse and then move quickly on to something else. Deuteronomy 1:1, "These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel across the Jordan in the wilderness." So that just to say that Deuteronomy presents itself as a record of what Moses spoke to the people of Israel before his death.

Look over at chapter 31, verse 1, and, again, we're just looking at mountain peaks here really is all that we have time to do this evening. Deuteronomy 31:1 says this, "So Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel." My only point is that beginning and end, you see Moses speaking to the nation before he passes on. "And he said to them, 'I am a hundred and twenty years old today; I am no longer able to come and go, and the LORD has said to me, "You shall not cross this Jordan." It is the LORD your God who will cross ahead of you; He will destroy these nations before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua is the one who will cross ahead of you, just as the LORD has spoken.'" So as one of the great biblical leaders of all time, Moses is making his final stand; he's making his final speech to the people that he has led for a long period of time, and there's no doubt that it was a time filled with emotion for him. Moses was a passionate man. He killed the Egyptian who was trying to interfere with the Hebrews early on. He himself, the reason he couldn't enter the Promised Land was in Numbers 20, he struck the rock and God told

him merely to speak to it because the people of Israel had rebelled and had made things so difficult for him. He was a passionate man and no doubt as he is self-consciously about to exit the scene, as he is self-consciously handing over the nation that he has led to Joshua, it's no doubt a moment filled with passion and with purpose to him, and what he's doing now is one last time after giving and being the vehicle of so much of God's revelation to them, one last time, Moses is giving God's word to them in light of his impending death, and it's not really so much a time of self-reflection for Moses as it is for him to prepare them for what lies ahead. One of the aspects of truly great leaders is that they think beyond their own situation and how their life is going and how their life and the life of those that they lead interact. They are thinking beyond their own lifetime, getting people ready and preparing them for what comes even after they're gone.

Moses is doing that here in the book of Deuteronomy, and if we had taken the time, actually I think we looked at this some; maybe not, maybe I'm just thinking of things that I read on my own privately. When you read some of the accounts of some of the patriarchs, Jacob and Joseph in the book of Genesis, you'll see that as they are about to die, they say, "I'm about to die and here's what God is going to do for you in the time to come." That's the way that we should think as we get further along in life as we perhaps have a few moments of conscious thought to speak to somebody before we pass on, we should be mindful not of the earthly absence that we're going to leave, but we need to prepare them for the time when we are gone. You parents, think about that now. You grandparents, think about that now. That you urge and you exhort those who are coming up after you to follow God, to trust in God, to rest in him, to obey him, because those final words are your last opportunity to influence them in the direction of godliness which is what we all as Christians really care about. Jonathan Edwards said to his family before he died, "Trust in God and all will be well." And you can go through the lives of the saints throughout as they are consciously facing death that they are exhorting people to trust in God and to remember him and to point them and leave them with God-centered thoughts as they are about to exit the world. Well, Moses is doing that under the direction of God at a very crucial stage in the history of Israel.

So the question is: what is it that Moses says to them? How does he prepare them? How does he set the stage for their future history? Well, it's actually for as long a book as it is, it's actually simple, I believe, to summarize this: Moses, in light of his impending death, is motivating the generation that will live on after him to trust and obey God as they enter the Promised Land. That's what he's doing. He is motivating them to trust and obey God as they enter into the Promised Land, and he does this through, he brings a few different tools to his arsenal as he does: he reminds them of their past history; he reminds them of the character of God; he reminds them of the promises of God; he gives them a warning of God that would come upon them for disobedience, and we're going to kind of look at the sweep of things like that.

What I want you to see here is that we're not just looking at something that was said 3,500 years ago. We are doing that and it is important for us to have a grasp of the Bible that we will understand what's happening in the historical context, but what I want you to see tonight, what I want you to be conscious of tonight, what I would have you walk

away from tonight, is the things that would motivate Israel as they enter the Promised Land, are not any different from that which would motivate you in your own Christian life. The character, the principles that Moses draws upon and calls to their mind are the same things that would motivate us today to trust God and to obey him. So this is immensely relevant even though the historical context is much different than what we are facing here this evening. The principles are the same; the principles for a godly life are consistent across the ages. We deal with the word of God, we deal with eternal truth. As we teach the Bible week by week, month by month, year by year as a body as we exhort one another in these things, we're dealing with eternal principles that transcend our lives; that live on even after we're gone; that are true even if we had never been born. We're not worried about trying to interact and give commentary on recent world events. Do you know what? All of that stuff is going to be irrelevant in a couple of years anyway. No one is even going to remember because so many other things are going to happen in the meantime. No, what we want to do, what we want to focus our ministry on, what I look forward to us doing together as a body in this location in Eastern Cincinnati for a long time to come, Lord willing, is that we lay out eternal truth that transcends the culture and the time period in which we live. That is what will live on. That is what will outlive us and we see that what Moses said 3,500 years ago is applicable and motivates us here today.

So with all of that background just to kind of set the stage, what was it that Moses said? First of all, he gives them the revelation of God. The revelation of God by which I mean he shows them the character of God in his final act of speaking to them and leading to them. The nation of God's people needed to know the character of God as they moved forward. As you move forward in an uncertain life, as you move forward in the midst of your difficulties and challenges, what you need is the same thing that Israel needed at that time, you need to be anchored in the character of God. We must know who God is. That defines everything else for us. That is what gives us the certainty that we need to continue on. That was certainly true of Israel as they were about to enter into a land that would bring conflict to them as they dispossessed existing nations of their land.

Well, what did he tell them about God? How did he show them this character of God? Well, first of all, Moses reminds Israel that God is a gracious God who had sustained them in the wilderness. Look at Deuteronomy 1:30. Finally we get into the text. Genesis 1:30 and we're just going to touch on things so quickly and briefly but I think we've already set the justification for doing it that way. Deuteronomy 1:30. Remember, they are going into the land, facing an uncertain future just like some of you are in the very next few days, facing a very uncertain future about what lies ahead. That's what Israel was facing right at this point in their history and in verse 29, Deuteronomy 1:29, Moses said, "I said to you, 'Do not be shocked, nor fear them.'" Talking about the people that they were going to encounter. Verse 30, "'The LORD your God who goes before you will Himself fight on your behalf, just as He did for you in Egypt before your eyes, and in the wilderness where you saw how the LORD your God carried you, just as a man carries his son, in all the way which you have walked until you came to this place.'" That gentle picture of a man carrying his son through a difficult time, Moses says, "People of Israel, men of Israel, here's what I want you to remember: I am about to die. Here's what you

need to remember. I need to say it now because I'm not going to be around to remind you anymore after this." He says, "You remember what happened in your history. You remember that God delivered you from Egypt, brought you through the Red Sea and sustained you through wilderness wanderings for an entire generation. God fed you manna. God provided for you. God led us. God guided us. You need to remember that God did all of that for us just like a father carries his son. Israel, remember that God is gracious. Remember how he has carried you in the past and know that he is not going to change, just as he carried you in the past, so also he will carry you in the future."

We're pretty prone to forget that, aren't we? We forget that the next time we go through these things and the Lord sustains us and then the next big problem comes and we're tempted to think, "Now what are we going to do? I don't know what's going to happen now and maybe this will be the end of me. I don't know." Well, there's no reason for us to think that way is what this passage is telling us, is what it's teaching us. We just remember our history. We remember how God has sustained us until this day and we look to the future and we say, "I not only remember how God has dealt graciously with me in the past, that past informs my confidence about the future that he will be gracious to me in the days and trials to come as well." So just as we are certain about how God was good to us in the past, so also we are certain that he will be good to us in the future. In this case, past performance is a certain predictor of what the future will bring. We may not know how the circumstances unfold, but God will be gracious, God will be faithful because that is who he is; that is how he deals with his people. We just need to remember that and call it to mind.

So Moses says, "You remember that God is gracious and let that serve to motivate you and encourage you and give you resolve as you move into an uncertain future." That's what the leader, Moses, said to them. But he said more. It's not just that God is gracious as he goes over this revelation of the character of God. He reminds them that God is a powerful God who had given them victory over their enemies in the past. They are going into battle. They're going into a land where conflict awaits them. Well, Moses reminds them, "God has given you victory in the past, he's going to do the same thing again in the future."

Look at chapter 2, verse 30. Deuteronomy 2:30. He's reviewing history with them to give them a sense of confidence about the future; a look back at the past faithfulness of God as a means of strengthening confidence in the future faithfulness of God. Beloved, this is how we have to reason with ourselves. This is how we preach to ourselves. This is how we sustain ourselves spiritually, is we think along these lines. We think like this, we look at the past and carry the past into the future.

Deuteronomy 2:30, "But Sihon king of Heshbon was not willing for us to pass through his land; for the LORD your God hardened his spirit and made his heart obstinate, in order to deliver him into your hand, as he is today. The LORD said to me, 'See, I have begun to deliver Sihon and his land over to you. Begin to occupy, that you may possess his land.' Then Sihon with all his people came out to meet us in battle at Jahaz. The LORD our God delivered him over to us, and we defeated him with his sons and all his

people. So we captured all his cities at that time and utterly destroyed the men, women and children of every city. We left no survivor." "Israel, you're going into battle. Remember that you've won battles in the past. Remember how God powerfully overcame your enemies in the past. He's the same God that's leading you now. Go forward with confidence. Go forward in obedience. Go forward with a sure sense of confidence that God is going to continue to give your enemies into your hands." Moses says, "I'm not going to be here to tell you this again so I'm telling you one last time: God is powerful. God is gracious."

Look at chapter 3, verse 1, as he reminds them of another instance of victory. Chapter 3, verse 1, "Then we turned and went up the road to Bashan, and Og, king of Bashan, with all his people came out to meet us in battle at Edrei. But the LORD said to me, 'Do not fear him, for I have delivered him and all his people and his land into your hand; and you shall do to him just as you did to Sihon king of the Amorites, who lived at Heshbon.' So the LORD our God delivered Og also, king of Bashan, with all his people into our hand, and we smote them until no survivor was left." Remembering the victory. Saying, "Yeah, I remember that! Remember that, don't you? You remember how God delivered us there?" "Yeah. Yeah, God delivered us. We won victory by the power of God." Well, Moses says, "Remember that. Remember the grace of God. Remember the power of God as you go forward so that," and this applies to us here tonight, "so that you don't shrink back. So that you don't fall into doubt when challenges come." We're not meant to be fearful, quivering Christians as we look to the future. We should be strong. We should be confident. We should be assured about the purposes of God as we move forward in life because we know him: we know him to be powerful; we know him to be gracious; we know him to care for his children. So we remind ourselves of these things so that we have within us and we project to those around us a sense of confidence that, "I can be secure, I can be confident, I can be trusting, I can be joyful, even in the midst of my uncertain future just ahead of me. I can be confident and joyful in the midst of that because the unseen God reigns over all and I know him by name. Why would I be afraid? Why would I tremble when this God has his hand on me?" Moses reminds them what God has done in the past to strengthen their resolve as they enter into the future battles that God has for them.

But he does more and one of the benefits and I'm so grateful, I say this a lot and it's just because it's true, I really am grateful that so many of you are just faithful to come. These things that I'm about to say become very meaningful to you because you've been here as we've gone through Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. You start to have a sense of the richness and the depth of what Moses is saying that goes beyond just superficially reading it out of context; we have a whole context that informs what we're about to look at. Moses has said, "God is gracious. God is powerful. You go forward in confidence. You be strong and courageous." Well, he reminds them of something else as well: he reminds them of the promises that God made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, which are a further reason that Israel can be certain that God will act in their favor. And the more that you pile these things up, his grace, his power, his promises, the more you realize that it is utterly impossible for any other outcome to await them than success on the battlefield because of who God is, because who God has revealed himself to be.

Look at Deuteronomy 4:31, Moses says, "The LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you," here it is, "nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them." That's a shorthand reference to invoke in their memory the promises that God made to Abraham that we spent time studying back a few weeks ago; that God was going to give Abraham a great nation; that he was going to give him a land; that he was going to give him descendents that would be more numerous than the stars. And so Moses is telling them that, "You are living out in your generation, you are living out the manifestation of God's faithfulness to his promises that he made seven centuries ago. God is not going to forget those promises. It is impossible to think that as you cross over into the Promised Land and begin to engage the battles, it's impossible to think that God would abandon those promises now. He made them 700 years ago," speaking from Moses's perspective, 6-700 years ago. "He made them 6-700 years ago, you know these from the Scriptures. They have been handed down to us through the generations. Now you are the people who are going to see the manifestation of God delivering on his promises." So what can they do but say, "Let's go!" He's winding them up and sending them off into orbit, so to speak.

Look at verse 37 of chapter 4, "Because He loved your fathers," their ancestors. What ancestors? Tracing back to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. "Therefore He chose their descendants after them. And He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power, driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in and to give you their land for an inheritance, as it is today. Know therefore today, and take it to your heart." Enough of the doubting. Enough of the uncertainty. Enough of the questionings. "Take it to your heart," Moses says, "that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other. So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time."

Remember the promises made to the fathers. We read the passage in Deuteronomy 6 where Moses made reference, look at Deuteronomy 6:10 just to tie this together again. Deuteronomy 6:10, "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," just again invoking those promises. And what we can see now because we've studied together is that that is a shorthand reference to something that was expounded at great length in the book of Genesis and which had multiple affirmations to it. This is invoking a whole period of God's covenant with Abraham and they say, "Oh yeah, that covenant is still in force. God's promise is still good." And that becomes the foundation upon which they stand with courage.

Moses reminds Israel further that God is holy. Look at Deuteronomy 4:24. Lest they were tempted to take this lightly, Moses strengthens them from another direction. Deuteronomy 4:24, "The LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God." Verse 35, "To you it was shown that you might know that the LORD, He is God; there is no other besides Him. Out of the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you; and on earth

He let you see His great fire, and you heard His words from the midst of the fire. Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them. And He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power." Power. Holiness. Faithfulness. Graciousness. And Moses in his final act of speaking to this nation, just lifts up before them this ever mushrooming great view of God, this high magnificent sense of who God is and says, "You are his people therefore go into the land and conquer. You're not going in your own strength. You're not fighting a human battle. Remember who God is. We have this long history behind us. Remember who God is and go in and do what you are supposed to do."

One last thing that he reminds them of: he reminds them of what we could call the jealousy of God, that God will not tolerate unfaithfulness in his people. Chapter 6, verse 13, "You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name. You shall not follow other gods, any of the gods of the peoples who surround you, for the LORD your God in the midst of you is a jealous God; otherwise the anger of the LORD your God will be kindled against you, and He will wipe you off the face of the earth." So we take this God seriously. We remember his faithfulness and Moses has prepared them saying, "You are the people of God. What God? This God and this is what he commands you to go and to do."

So Moses has cast this high view of God as he prepares to depart and whether the day comes for us to depart sooner rather than later, we have it in our minds, we're mindful of the fact that when the time of our departure comes, we've lived a life, what we trust is faithfulness and then when the time comes for us to depart and we're giving our last words to the people who come behind us, we want to fill their minds with this last thing; our last words are sometimes what's often most remembered. Well, what we want our mouth to be filled with is, "You remember God. You remember his holiness. You remember his faithfulness. You remember his grace. For us today on this side of the cross, you remember the Lord Jesus Christ crucified and risen for your sins." And we're just mindful, we're just motivated, we care to pass that on and transmit it to the next generation with our lives and then when the time comes for us to depart, we put an exclamation point on the end. And those that love us, those that are close to us at that time, see us in our final hour trusting God just like we said we did all the way beforehand. It is a noble thing to be a Christian. It is a noble thing to stand for God and that transcends every other affection in life, and that motivates our thinking and our passions and our affections, even in that dying hour like it did Moses.

So against that backdrop of God's character, Moses spends a lot of time in Deuteronomy explaining to Israel what is going to be required of them in this covenant relationship and so we're going to look at the requirements of God. We've looked at the revelation of God by which we mean who is this God that is calling them into the Promised Land, now we're going to look at the requirements of God, what does God require of his people as they enter this new land. And these things that we're going to see, I believe, will help us reinforce the sense and protect us against a false view of the Old Testament that it was just about cold legalistic obedience. That is such a wrong view of the Old Testament, that the only way someone could seriously propose that is by not having read the Old

Testament at all and just characterizing something that they are not familiar with in order to mischaracterize who God is because they've got another agenda that's driving what they're saying, and to say that the God of the Old Testament was just a God of wrath and the God of the New Testament is just a God of love and to pit the Old Testament against the New Testament is a total travesty of handling the precious word of God. Well, what we see here in this next section will help us not fall into that pool of error and drown in it. I don't know where that little metaphor came from but we go with it when it comes to mind, I guess.

The requirements of God. What we're going to see here is what Moses says, in light of who God is and what you are called to do, here's what God wants from you as a response, and what he lays forth before them is the kind of wholehearted devotion to God that we associate with New Testament Christianity; the sense of a total handing over of our affections, our loyalties, the love of our heart to this God who owns us. This is the same thing that Moses is saying to Israel and it's going to be quite obvious to you.

What does God require? Well, we read it earlier. Look at Deuteronomy 6:4 in light of what we said and being mindful of what Moses is doing here as he prepares them to enter the Promised Land. He says, "Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one!" Okay, good enough. "What does that mean for me?" someone might say. "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might." When Jesus was asked what was the greatest commandment of the law, this is what he pointed to in Matthew 22:37. Jesus just said, "This summarizes what the greatest commandment is, Israel, love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." 1,500 years later, Jesus says, "That's the same great commandment today. That's what God requires from his people today. It's the demand that goes out on the world that they would respond to him. The obligation, the demand, the law on their heart has not changed. This God is worthy of all of our heart worship, all of our heart affections, all of the strength of our passions as long as we live." That's how great he is and who could argue against that in what Moses has said even leading up to this point? A gracious, faithful, powerful, holy, jealous God who makes promises to his people and keeps them. How could we respond to a God like that except, "Oh, Lord, here I am. Lord, I give myself away. It is all that I can do," in the words of the hymn writer.

So Moses is laying before Israel what God requires from them. Look at verse 6, "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. 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." This is supposed to so fill your thinking, so fill your affections, so fill what you talk about, that it just comes naturally out in the course of life. God calls for a complete response from the heart of love and obedience. Obviously, beloved, obviously he wasn't calling them to simply comply in a rote mechanical way with the system of sacrifices that had been laid out in Leviticus. Obviously. It transcended just going through the motions and you and I understand today that being a Christian means so much more than just going through the motions of having a little quiet time day by day or being at church on Sunday. It's good to do those things. It's good to be faithful to those things, but that's not an exhaustive

response to the God of our salvation. An exhaustive response, the kind of response of which God is worthy, is one that captivates our soul and our affections in every waking moment that we have.

That's what he's worthy of. That's what he requires. That's what he calls us to, and the fact that we fall short of that, the fact that we get distracted and indifferent, doesn't mean that the standard should be lowered and we pull down the greatness of God to meet our capacity to respond to it in a way that we find comfortable and convenient. It means that we go to this gracious God and say, "God, you're worthy of all my affections. I give it all to you. I realize that I fall short. Be gracious to me even as I seek to love you and am conscious of falling short as I do because, God, nothing matters to me, nothing has a priority on my heart that is higher than you."

Whatever else you might say about the music of that long departed Christian contemporary singer, Keith Green, I appreciate one of the lines in his song where he's speaking to his fiancée before their wedding day and he said, "As I told her when we wed, I'd rather be found dead than to love her more than the one who saved my soul." I love the passion that's wrapped up in that that says, "I love my earthly family, I love my earthly bride, but nothing compares to loving Christ who saved my soul." We can love each other, we can love our families, we can love all of that, but no one that we see on this earth died and shed his blood for our souls and therefore no one has claim on our affections like the Lord Jesus Christ does. And when that's clear in your mind, then all of your other human relationships start to fall into place and you hold them a little bit more loosely, a little more graciously perhaps, and you're not expecting people to meet the affections, the deepest affections of your heart because you understand that the one who meets the affections of your heart in an ultimate sense is and only could be the Lord Jesus Christ. Love him with all of your heart, soul, strength and mind. Earthly relationships, even just being mindful of a funeral this morning, doing a funeral this morning, they all come to an end eventually. We love these people, we love each other, but we hold it loosely. We realize that here we have no lasting city, but when it comes to the Lord Jesus Christ, there we have an anchor; there we latch our affections; there we never let go; there it is always clear in our mind that, "I love no one or no thing more than the Lord Jesus Christ." You love him that way, don't you?

That's the call. That's the call. And when you start to think about it this way, you realize how empty and repulsive, I'll just be transparent and use a word like repulsive. We might as well be real with each other, right? We're all friends. The idea that it would be a satisfactory response to Christ to pray a one-time prayer and go on living your life as if it made no difference and expect God to bless that kind of selfish life with a one time prayer injected in it and say, "That will get me to heaven," what on earth is that? You mean to tell me that you think you can give a five second prayer that somebody puts the words in your mouth and go on living like you've never been affected by it before and call that an acceptable response to the Lord Jesus Christ who said, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength and with all of your mind. And oh, by the way, love your neighbor like yourself"? There's no spiritual reality to that and it's utterly, it makes absolutely no difference that that might be the

majority report of American evangelism about what saving faith looks like. It doesn't matter unless that kind of response to God leads into a life that is directed toward loving him completely, there is no reason to think that anything real happened. Lips flapped for a few moments but nothing spiritual happened because the conversion that God produces in the heart brings about a life that is oriented toward loving him. He lays claim on people and then he gives them affections that they would love him like this. Imperfectly in this life, we understand that, marred by sin, marred by our failures, we understand that, but the deepest passion of the truly redeemed heart is the glory of Christ, the glory of God, and nothing else matters by comparison. Love him with all of your heart, soul, strength, and mind because he's worthy. How else could you respond?

If we could travel back in time and stand before the foot of the cross and see him bearing the awful weight of sin on our behalf, if we could somehow hear his majestic sinless voice praying for us at the time, "Father, forgive them for they don't know what they're doing," except he wouldn't have been able to move his hand across because it was held tight by the nails. We read his words in Scripture, if we had seen it with our eyes to somehow reinforce it, although Scripture is sufficient, I'm just painting a picture for you, when we understand what it means that Christ suffered for us, that Christ left the glories of heaven and became a man in order to offer his life for us, if that means, if we have any understanding of that, if we have any appreciation of the significance of that, then it is so obvious that love like that demands my life, my soul, my all.

We see it more clearly today than Israel could have seen it as Moses was presenting it to them in light of their own history. We have so much more to go on and, beloved, the whole reason that we do everything that we do in Truth Community Church, is that we want you to love Christ in that spirit. Everything falls under that one banner. That's why we teach, that's why we pray, that's why we gather together, it's for the glory of Christ and that we might be made more progressively into and conformed to his image. And I praise God that there are scores of you here tonight who want that too. That's why it's such a joy for us to come together, isn't it? We're united in purpose, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. That's why we exist. It's simple.

So, turn over to Deuteronomy 10 as Moses lays forth the response that God requires. Deuteronomy 10:12 and what I want you to see from this passage and from what we're looking at in this second point here, the requirements of God, is that God delivered Israel so that they would be his people; so that they would love him and respond to him and represent him to the world; that their whole man, their inner being would be engaged. This is what he is worthy of. Deuteronomy 10:12, "Now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the LORD'S commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?" What does he require except a wholehearted response?

Verse 16 of chapter 10. There is a call to repentance here. He says, "So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer." I rather suspect that in a room of this size with this many people in it that there is a small handful of you who need to hear these words,

circumcise your heart; stiffen your neck no longer; lay down the battle against God; lay down your stubborn rebellion, your stubborn refusal; lay down this pretend game of spirituality that you're playing. Stop. No longer. And respond to him in the way that is appropriate and fitting for a God like this. Verse 17, "For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe. He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing. So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name."

You know, when we get to heaven, somehow in a way that I won't pretend to understand or to be able to replicate for you, but somehow the focus and the consuming atmosphere of heaven is going to be gathered around, centered around, giving that kind of glory to God, and without distraction from internal sin or a hostile world, just gathered together with perfected saints throughout the ages, we're going to focus on the glory of God and ascribe to him the glory that is due to his name, and that's going to be great to be there and to be a part of that. Can you hear the thundering trumpets of heaven? "He is the God of gods. He is the Lord of lords. He is the great, the mighty, the awesome God." That's going to be awesome. That's going to be magnificent to be a part of that, to share in that great spirit of worship. We get a little foretaste of it here on earth so why not just condition our hearts toward those affections now and just kind of prepare ourselves for what is yet to come so that there is the smallest difference possible between our life now and that ultimate eternal worship. Why don't we just get on with the game right now and make that what we love with all of our hearts.

Moses is preparing Israel saying, "This is what God requires of you. He wants your whole man." The Gospel message to those of you who are not Christians, it's the same kind of message. Jesus says, "If anyone wants to come after me, let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow after me." You want to come after Christ? Understand that you're laying your life down; that you no longer love yourself first; that you are no longer mostly concerned with what affects you; that Christ says, "Come to me, I will give you eternal life, but the price that you pay is yourself." And in a saving response to Christ, you simply say, "Here I am, Lord Jesus. I hand myself over to you. I trust in you. I thank you for shedding your blood to save me from my sin. I give myself over to you without reservation. You henceforth will be my Lord gladly and without reservation, without qualification. Take me and make me your own." Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind. The message is consistent, Old Testament to New Testament to Gospel call. This is what God requires. So we as a people, we as God's people, Israel was called to hold him in the highest reverence with the deepest sense of devotion and with the sense of abiding respect for him that issues in life obedience. Only that kind of complete heart response would be worthy of his character and all that he had done on their behalf. That's what God required. We can understand it because that's the spirit of the New Testament as well.

Well, what would be the outcome of this relationship as time continues to get away? It's frightening to think I'm only halfway through my notes and we're an hour into this

message. You can do the math on what that means for our evening together, can't you? What would be the outcome of this relationship? Well, point 3: we're going to see the results from God. The results from God. You say, "That doesn't make any sense." I say, "I know, but it alliterates with the prior 2 points." The results from God. What happens based on Israel's response then is the question? And what Moses does and later on in the book of Deuteronomy after what we've seen so far, is Moses sets before them the promise of blessing or curse depending on their response to him.

Deuteronomy 28, which is a very lengthy, important passage of Scripture. We're just going to touch on it ever so lightly. Deuteronomy 28:1, and basically what Moses is saying is that if you respond in faith and obedience, God will bless you. If you sin and disbelieve, God will bring curses upon you. Let's just take a couple of passages as representative samples. Deuteronomy 28. You can read the whole chapter later if this engages your thoughts and affections. We'll just hit even lesser highlights than what I had planned on.

Deuteronomy 28:1, "Now it shall be," remember, Moses is still talking to Israel, "Now it shall be, if you diligently obey the LORD your God, being careful to do all His commandments which I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. All these blessings will come upon you and overtake you if you obey the LORD your God." Then he just expands on what those blessings are through verses 3 through 14. Focus on verse 7, "The LORD shall cause your enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you; they will come out against you one way and will flee before you seven ways. The LORD will command the blessing upon you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to, and He will bless you in the land which the LORD your God gives you." That's the promise of God, the promise of blessing upon this nation if they would only respond in faith and obedience.

By contrast, the curses of unbelief are horrific by comparison. Verse 15, "But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you," to whit, not that the word "to whit" is there, but it's a cool word in English and so "to whit," meaning, "here's what follows," verse 16, "Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country. Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl." Look at verse 24, "The LORD will make the rain of your land powder and dust; from heaven it shall come down on you until you are destroyed. The LORD shall cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you will go out one way against them, but you will flee seven ways before them, and you will be an example of terror to all the kingdoms of the earth. Your carcasses will be food to all birds of the sky and to the beasts of the earth, and there will be no one to frighten them away from you." It's really vivid, isn't it? Verse 45, "So all these curses shall come on you and pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you would not obey the LORD your God by keeping His commandments and His statutes which He commanded you. They shall become a sign and a wonder on you and your descendants forever."

Now, just going through the sweep of the rest of Old Testament history and God's dealing with the nation of Israel, that follows that pattern to a "T." When they had good kings who led them in the ways of the law of the Lord, they experienced blessing, they experienced revival. When the predominate majority of kings led them into evil which they were glad to engage in and to engage in the pagan gods and pagan religion around them, life was miserable. And do you know what? No one could say that God hadn't told them in advance. God laid this out before them in advance and said, "Listen to me, I will bless you for obedience, I will curse you for disobedience." The cause of their fall was not in God; it was not his fault, it was the sin of their own wicked hearts that led them astray and they bore the consequences accordingly.

Moses calls them to obedience as he increasingly comes to the end of his words upon them. Look at chapter 30, verse 19. The magnitude of the weight of these words is the same today when the Gospel is proclaimed. The same sense of a defining eternal result comes from the way that you respond to the Lord Jesus Christ. Make no doubt about it, that those of you who have received Christ, who have trusted him and submitted your life to him, blessing abundant beyond all that you could ask or think awaits you in this life and certainly in the life to come. Those of you that have hardened your heart, understand that the weight of guilt and judgment and cursing that awaits you if you don't repent is on your own head; that you bear the responsibility because you have been warned from God's word that to reject him is to call curses down on your own head. And if you are mindful that you've simply been playing games with God and you haven't been taking the Gospel seriously, maybe this is an opportunity for true repentance for you for the first time.

Look at what Moses says in Deuteronomy 30:19, "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him." Moses says, "All of creation is a witness to your response to this moment. I have laid it all out before you. Here's the blessing for obedience and belief. Here's the curses for sin and disobedience. You should choose life because it will not go well for you if you don't." Sadly, as you know from reading the Old Testament, Israel failed. Over the course of generations, the first generation responded and went in and conquered the land but there was a gradual decline as unbelief took root, and God told Moses in advance that it would be that way. Look at Deuteronomy 31:16, "The LORD said to Moses, 'Behold, you are about to lie down with your fathers.'" Moses, it's time to go. "'This people will arise and play the harlot with the strange gods of the land, into the midst of which they are going, and will forsake Me and break My covenant which I have made with them. Then My anger will be kindled against them in that day, and I will forsake them and hide My face from them, and they will be consumed, and many evils and troubles will come upon them; so that they will say in that day, "Is it not because our God is not among us that these evils have come upon us?" But I will surely hide My face in that day because of all the evil which they will do, for they will turn to other gods.'"

When Moses had finished speaking to Israel, the end of Deuteronomy gives us somewhat of a sense of closure. He sees the land from a distance and then the Lord takes him home. Look at Deuteronomy 34. There is such a majesty to this passage in light of who Moses was and the miracles that were done at his hand and that through him the books of Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy were given to us and we still have them today. "Moses went up," chapter 34, verse 1, "Moses went up from the plains of Moab to Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, which is opposite Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land, Gilead as far as Dan, and all Naphtali and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah as far as the western sea, and the Negev and the plain in the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. Then the LORD said to him," and we're bringing our study of the Pentateuch to a close here almost and we have a sense of the magnificence of what's being said here in verse 4 because we've taken the time to look at Scripture together. "Then the LORD said to him, 'This is the land which I swore to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, saying, 'I will give it to your descendants.''" Now he speaks to Moses, "'I have let you see it with your eyes, but you shall not go over there.' So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And He buried him in the valley in the land of Moab, opposite Beth-peor; but no man knows his burial place to this day." Moses saw the land and the Lord took him. Joshua picks up the mantle so that he can lead the people to victory in the sixth book of the Bible that follows. Look at verse 9, "Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses." The mantle has been passed. Moses is dead, long live Joshua, as it were.

And we know that in Joshua, the book of Joshua, they take possession of the land but, you know, despite that success of the next generation, there is still this sense of despair as Deuteronomy closes. There is a sense, this is kind of somber, it's kind of sad that even a man like Moses didn't enter into the Promised Land because he himself had failed. He died and we know the subsequent history that Israel was going to do, what happened in subsequent history is that Israel did exactly what God said they would do, they turned away and they suffered horrific judgment as a consequence to the point that in the days of Jeremiah, the women were eating their own children. And there's just a sense of, "Oh, this is so heavy," and you're left at the end of Deuteronomy, you're left wanting something more. You're left wanting someone more. You read through Deuteronomy and you say, "I want a prophet who actually delivers." And tucked away in the middle of Deuteronomy is the best hope of all.

Look at Deuteronomy 18. This is so cool! We're ending on a high note. Deuteronomy 18:15, in the midst of all of this discussion of the revelation of God about his character, the requirements of God, a wholehearted response of obedience, the results that come from responding to him, either blessing or cursing, and God saying, "They are going to fail, Moses." In the middle here is a ringing word of hope. Deuteronomy 18:15, Moses tells Israel, "The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him." Moses has told them in the middle of this extended dying discourse, as it were, "God is going to bring a prophet to you.

Listen to him." So while the curses and the blessings reverberate in the mind, there is this great national hope, there is a coming prophet to whom you shall listen."

Beloved, Jesus Christ is that prophet. The totality of what Deuteronomy lays out is fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. Look over at the book of Acts 3. Jesus Christ is that prophet. Jesus Christ would not disappoint. Jesus Christ would not fail. Acts 3, I want you to see this in its fulfillment as we come to a close. Acts 3, beginning in verse 18, as Peter is preaching. Acts 3:18, "the things which God announced beforehand by the mouth of all the prophets, that His Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom heaven must receive until the period of restoration of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time." Stay with me here. Christ, the Lord Jesus, the center of the four Gospels, the one proclaimed in Acts and explained in the epistles, he is that prophet. Christ, Jesus Christ, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God incarnate is the prophet that God swore to his people 1,500 years earlier in the book of Deuteronomy, 3,500 years as we sit here today earlier. He's the prophet that God swore to bring to the Jews and now the promise is given to us all.

Look at verse 22 and see the connection, "Moses said, 'The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet like me from your brethren; to Him you shall give heed to everything He says to you. And it will be that every soul that does not heed that prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people. And likewise, all the prophets who have spoken, from Samuel and his successors onward, also announced these days.'" Verse 26, "For you first, God raised up His Servant and sent Him to bless you by turning every one of you from your wicked ways." I'm wrapping it up right now. It's hard to stop. Moses held out blessing and cursing to Israel and said, "Look for the prophet to come." Peter says, "Jesus Christ is that prophet," and in like manner, the Gospel holds out blessing and cursing to men today. Repent and receive Christ and you will certainly receive times of refreshing and blessing. Refuse and reject Christ, and your soul will certainly be utterly destroyed.

Are you secure in Christ? Do you know him today or have you stubbornly refused him? Beloved, beloved, for those of us that have believed, untold blessing that has only begun the initial sounds that will reverberate in our ears throughout all of eternity. For those of you that are rejecting him, refusing him, "I'm not listening," take heed of the warning. Let tonight be the time of your salvation. Don't trifle with the warnings and the blessings of God. Come to Christ, the true prophet, and enter into the blessing that God promises to those who receive him.

Let's bow together in prayer.

Blessing awaits you. Christian, blessing awaits you. God is faithful. God is gracious. God is powerful. God is good. Unbelieving friend, unbelieving loved one, blessing can await you too. It's not too late. You do not have to die in your sins. The arms of Christ are open wide and extended to you today. He says, "The one who comes to me, I will by no means

turn away." Come to that blessing. Come to Christ and enter into that joy with the rest of us as we anticipate the blessing of God in eternity yet to come.

Our Father, we are grateful to you for the wonder of your grace, the majesty of your word which points us to the majesty of your great character. We love you, Father, with all of our hearts. We realize that we say that with stammering lips and an imperfect life that backs it up but, Father, with Peter we say, "Lord, you know all things. You know that we love you." So Father, with a heart collectively and individually filled with love for you and your word and for our Lord Jesus Christ, we close this study, this brief survey of the Pentateuch, of the Torah. We thank you for the foundation that you laid for the Bible 3,500 years ago, and we thank you that we enter into the blessings that you promised first to Abraham 4,000 years ago. We are in the stream of divine redemptive history. Your purposes are being carried out without fail. You are strong and mighty to accomplish your perfect will, and when all of creation is wrapped up and finished with its unfolding history, all voices will proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of the Father. All the redeemed will say, "Surely, Lord God, you have done all things well." We honor you for these things in the name of Christ. Amen.

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