

“The Words Which Moses Spoke”
Deuteronomy 1:1-5
(Preached at Trinity, April 21, 2024)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. This afternoon we begin the Book of Deuteronomy. Along with the other five books of the Pentateuch, Deuteronomy was written by Moses. The first five books of the Bible or Pentateuch are also referred to as the Books of Moses, also the Torah. Deuteronomy is the fifth.
2. Deuteronomy contains three sermons preached by Moses at the end of his life just prior to Israel entering the Promised Land under the command of Joshua. The name Deuteronomy is derived from a Greek word in the Septuagint sometimes translated “second law.” The Greek word δευτερονόμιον in 17:18 is translated “copy of this law.” Moses is preaching on the Law received on Mount Sinai. It is a renewal of the Sinai Covenant. It is a repetition of the Law revealed in the first four books of the Pentateuch but it is not mere repetition, as if it is somehow superfluous or non-essential. It is the Word of God to be handled with utmost care and received with absolute submission. It is to their great peril for anyone to dismiss or diminish God's Word. This is the great condemnation of fallen man and it is still prevalent today.
3. The Book of Deuteronomy is just as relevant today as it was 3500 years ago. It addresses the Law of God. Most would dismiss this today. We live in an antinomian day. Even among Christians. They hold the Law has no place in the life of a Christian. This is because they fail to understand God's design for the Law.
 - a. It is surely true, no man is saved by keeping the Law.
Galatians 2:16 NAU - "evertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified."
 - b. The Law, however, forever stands as God's standard of righteousness.
4. The Book of Deuteronomy will teach us much. The first three verses tell us the speaker and the audience and the context – the time and place. The places spoken of in **Verse 1** are largely unknown today but we are given clarity in Numbers 35 –
Numbers 35:1 NAU - "Now the LORD spoke to Moses in the plains of Moab by the Jordan *opposite* Jericho."
Moses is delivering his address from the Plains of Moab.
Israel is being called to remember where they stood 40 years before when they were about to enter into Canaan. But they did not enter. Instead, because of their sin they were left to wander forty years in the wilderness. No one standing before Moses at this time were older than 20 when their fathers failed to follow God, but there is covenant solidarity and they are being charged to heed the Word of God.

- A. Moses is preaching to the nation of Israel, reflecting on the past sins of their fathers and admonishing them to avoid the same sins when they enter the Promised Land.
Forty years before they were ready to enter the Land of Promise. They were standing on the bank. They sent in spies and verified the riches of the land. But they did not enter because of their unbelief and distrust of God. Because of the hardness of their heart.
The writer of Hebrews holds them before us as an example and warning.
Hebrews 3:11-14 NAS - "As I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'" ¹² Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God. ¹³ But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is *still* called "Today," lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴ For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end;"
- B. In **Verse 2** Moses reminds them that it was an eleven day journey from Horeb to Kadesh-barnea. Horeb was another name for Mount Sinai. They wandered this 150 mile region for forty years, stumbling over the same ground over and over.
- C. Moses is calling upon them to remember their former sins, but he was also calling them to reflect on the riches of God's blessings upon Israel, blessings that they failed to appreciate and blessings they had forgotten.
- D. Entering the land is the fulfillment of God's Covenant promises, but if they fall into idolatry they will be exiled from the land. It's a motivational sermon pressing them to Covenant faithfulness to the laws given on Mount Sinai forty years before.
5. In **Verse 5** we are told the subject of Moses' first sermon:
"Moses undertook to expound this law"
Israel was about to enter an extended period of conquest. They were going to war against powerful walled cities in Canaan. But Moses wasn't giving them military strategies. He preached to them about their duty to God. He was preaching his words but they were more than his words.
- A. Moses was God's prophet. No one before Moses could compare with him. We read at the end of Deuteronomy:
Deuteronomy 34:10 NAU - "Since that time no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,"
- B. Moses was giving Israel what he had received. He was preaching the Word of God. He felt compelled to preach, not his words but the words God had commanded him to speak. They carried Divine authority.
Deuteronomy 1:3 NAU - "Moses spoke to the children of Israel, according to all that the LORD had commanded him *to give to them*,"
6. The Children of Israel had to be reminded of the necessity of obedience to God's Law. It was true for their generation. It remains true for us as well.
Joshua 1:8 NAU - "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."

The Book of the Law was the Book of Deuteronomy. For us, it is the entirety of God's Word. Deuteronomy is called "second law." It is God's Law repeated because we are often slow to hear.

Matthew Henry wrote: "What God has spoken once we have need to hear twice, to hear many times, and it is well if, after all, it be duly perceived and regarded."¹

7. It was to be read, taught, and obeyed. It was to be incorporated into every part of their life. It was to never be forgotten.

Deuteronomy 6:6-9 NAU - "These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. ⁷ 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. ⁸ "You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. ⁹ "You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

- A. It was to be read and affirmed during the Feast of Tabernacles at the end of each Sabbatical Year. This was to stress their permanent obligation to obedience.

Deuteronomy 31:10-11 NAU - "At the end of every seven years, at the time of the year of remission of debts, at the Feast of Booths, ¹¹ when all Israel comes to appear before the LORD your God at the place which He will choose, you shall read this law in front of all Israel in their hearing."

- B. Every king was charged with keeping and observing the Law of God.

Deuteronomy 17:18-20 NAU - "Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. ¹⁹ "It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, ²⁰ that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel."

- C. This is what terrified Josiah years later when a copy of the Book was discovered and knew it had been neglected and disregarded.

2 Kings 22:8 NAU - "Then Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, "I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD." And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan who read it."

2 Kings 22:10-11 NAU - "Moreover, Shaphan the scribe told the king saying, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book." And Shaphan read it in the presence of the king. ¹¹ When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes."

2 Kings 22:13 NAU - "Go, inquire of the LORD for me and the people and all Judah concerning the words of this book that has been found, for great is the wrath of the LORD that burns against us, because our fathers have not listened to the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us."

¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 236.

8. The Law was absolute and was to be obeyed without qualification. But it was to be obeyed with joy. It was not to be seen as a taskmaster but a wonderful display of God's holiness. An often overlooked theme in Deuteronomy is the love between God and His Covenant people.²
Deuteronomy 5:10 NAU - "but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."
Deuteronomy 6:5 NAU - "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."
Deuteronomy 7:7-9 NAU - "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, ⁸ 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. ⁹ "Know therefore that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God, who keeps His covenant and His lovingkindness to a thousandth generation with those who love Him and keep His commandments;"
Deuteronomy 7:12-13 NAU - "Then it shall come about, because you listen to these judgments and keep and do them, that the LORD your God will keep with you His covenant and His lovingkindness which He swore to your forefathers. ¹³ "He will love you and bless you and multiply you"
9. They were God's particular people. A people who had experienced the rich Covenant blessings of God. Moses begins by taking them back to the events of the past to help them feel the weight of the present. In fact, Chapters 1-4 are largely historical. God rescued them from their bondage in Egypt and formed them into a nation. Although they did not yet possess a land, God gave them their constitution on Mount Sinai.
10. Deuteronomy brings together God's promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the history of the exodus, the forty-year wilderness wandering and the Law given at Mount Sinai. It provides a covenant context that stresses God's Covenant faithfulness even in the midst of human Covenant unfaithfulness.
11. The Book of Deuteronomy is largely a Covenant renewal. Israel had forsaken God's Covenant and needed to recommit themselves. God, on the other hand, is always faithful. He cannot lie. He never forgets. God's Covenant was forged in the glories of eternity, when nothing existed but God. It is a covenant bathed in God's everlasting love, a covenant that sets forth the surety of our everlasting life in Christ who has secured it in His own blood.
12. As we begin the Book of Deuteronomy, we have to guard against getting bogged down with this ancient people and their ancient laws presuming it has no relevance to us. Yes, Moses is preaching to God's Covenant people over 3500 years ago. It is infinitely relevant to us. Does God still have a Covenant people? Are they the same Covenant people Moses was addressing? Yes!

² John Reuther, "Of the Law of God," in *A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, ed. Rob Ventura (Ross-shire, Scotland: Mentor, 2022), 356–357.

13. We still have God's Word before us. We still have the duty to press on in Covenant faithfulness and obedience.
 God still charges us with Covenant separation.
2 Corinthians 6:16-18 NAU - "just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. ¹⁷ "Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And do not touch what is unclean; And I will welcome you. ¹⁸ "And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me," Says the Lord Almighty."
14. The Book of Deuteronomy is quoted more than any other in the New Testament—more than 50 times. Jesus quoted from it more than any other Old Testament Book. It was the Book Jesus turned to when battling with Satan during His wilderness temptation. It has great relevance for us.
 As Greg Nichols writes:
 "God's people should walk in gospel obedience precisely because he is the faithful God who keeps covenant with those who love him and keep his commandments. Those who walk in gospel fear receive his instruction, dwell at ease, and see his covenant love and faithfulness. Christians should love one another because God loves them in covenant love. Christians should keep their word because God keeps covenant promises. Christians should imitate the love and faithfulness of our covenant keeping God.
 Oh that he would give Christians greater grace to face every earthly trial with peace and comfort, knowing that we have an inheritance in heaven. His covenant love has reserved this eternal inheritance for us. His covenant faithfulness will bestow it on us when Jesus comes again. Even so come, Lord Jesus."³

³ Nichols, Greg. *Covenant Theology, A Reformed and Baptist Perspective on God's Covenants*. (Birmingham: Solid Ground Christian Books (2011), pages 296, 299.