

# A Heart to Obey – Introduction to Deuteronomy

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*Deuteronomy Series*

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Open your Bibles to the book of Deuteronomy. We begin today with a survey of this great book, the book that Jesus loved.

The book of Deuteronomy was written to a people in transition. The book of Deuteronomy was written just on the front end of a great and mighty operation to enter into the Promised Land. The book of Deuteronomy just like you and I. Here we are, members of a church and we are a people in transition. We have been saved from Egypt. We have seen the works of the Lord. We have observed the goodness of God in the land. We have seen him do miracles. All of us are in this category. And now we are a people in transition. There is still much territory to be reclaimed by the holiness of God. There is much to be learned. There is obedience that has not been achieved and so we are like the people of Israel standing on the east side of the Jordan River beginning a great journey into a pagan land. And like those people that Moses was addressing we, too, are a people in transition and I pray that God would help us to find the great and powerful messages for us that are in this book.

Deuteronomy is one of the most powerful and concentrated statements in the Bible on the importance of the grace of God towards his people, in his delivering help in his call to obedience, in the nature of heart felt obedience, in the practical blessings of that obedience. It is a description of all of those things.

It casts a vision of the fruits of obedience. And I will just have to tell you. When I consider the fruits of obedience that are declared here in Deuteronomy it makes me rejoice because I see many, many fruits of obedience and awakening in our own land. Of course, none of us are satisfied to say all is as it ought to be, but let's at least consider that there are many marvellous blessings of obedience, fruits of obedience that we are seeing today. I am going to give you 10 just at the beginning here because I think when we consider the message of Deuteronomy what we are considering are the blessings of obedience and the curses of disobedience. Well, there is more than that, but that is a gigantic tiller of the message in the book of Deuteronomy.

I am going to give you 10 signs of obedience breaking out in our land. First, people are desiring biblically faithful church life. Isn't that exciting? There really is a resurgence of people who are desiring biblically faithful church life. Why is that happening? I think it

is happening partly because there has been another fruit of obedience and that is the resurgence of expository preaching. That is a second sign of blessing on our land. It is an obedient heart that says, “We will take these word and we will deliver them the best they can without with all of our hearts messing them up.” And so there is a fruit of obedience in the land in which there is an explosion of the practice of biblical preaching in America. It is absolutely astounding. I have been around long enough to know there is definitely movement in this area.

Number three, people are having many children. What about that? I mean the command of Scripture, “Be fruitful and multiply.”<sup>1</sup> There are thousands of people in America who have taken that command and said, “I will do that.” And now there are families, you know, that are like Catholics or something. You know, they are having all kinds of children. This is a sign of obedience. This is a sign of revival. People have taken a word of Scripture and said, “I’ll do that.” What a blessing that is.

Number four, daughters are embracing the biblical vision of womanhood. There has been much progress in the last 10 years, 15 years in this matter and there is a generation of young women who love the biblical vision. They want to grow up and be mothers and homemakers and they want to be Proverbs 31 women. A bunch of them are right here in this room. This is a sign of revival. This is a sign of the blessing of God. This is a fruit of obedience that we are going to find described here in the book of Deuteronomy.

Number five, young men, many of them, are not wasting their youth like they used to. I always love to tell the story. You have heard me say it a thousand times. Several years ago I went to a conference and I had never met so many 14 year olds with business cards in all my life. So there is an uprising of young men who are saying, “I am not going to waste my youth on video games and every other kind of game. I am going to do business until God brings me home.” So there are young men who are not wasting their youth like we always did in years past. It is a sign of revival, brothers and sisters. It is a sign of obedience. It is a fruit and who knows what will happen as we see the fruits of these young men who are growing up and they are not wasting their youth. I am pretty jazzed up about this.

Number six, there is another sign of revival, a sign of obedience, a sign of a humble, trustful heart in our women. There is an upwelling of women who say, “I will not dress like Britney Spears. I will dress like God has told me to dress. I will not dress like the world. I will dress modestly. I will have the eyes of my Lord Jesus Christ being the central function of my womanhood and not my floozy dress.” And there are women all over America who have awakened in the area of modesty. It is a sign. They are obeying God. They are saying, “What does the Bible say about how I should dress? Does God care about how I dress?” Well, he absolutely does. And there are women who are saying, “I will. I will with all my heart try to fulfill what God has said regarding the way that I present myself physically in the world.”

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<sup>1</sup> Genesis 1:22

Number seven, not only are there people who are rejecting the world's dress, there are people who have left families for the Word of God. The gospel divides families and the sad reality is that when the gospel enters into a home and obedience is desired and faithfulness to God's commands begins to be implemented, then there is rejection in the family. And we have many families in America who have rejected family idolatry and they have just done what their father wanted them to do or their brother wanted them to do. But they are doing what God wanted them to do. And that is an exciting thing when people are willing to obey the Word of God in spite of the enormous family pressures. They will say, "There is one King. He is Jesus and I will follow him."

Number eight, there is a slow down in the loss of the next generation. There is a slow down in the loss of the next generation, not everywhere. But definitely I am seeing it in the churches that I am associated with, that I am aware of there is an observable slow down of the loss of the next generation. What we have found in the last 10 years yet we have just discovered that 80 to 90% of the young people in our most conservative churches will never return to church after their freshman year in college. But that is not happening in many churches, but it is happening in many churches that have not been reforming. This is a sign of obedience. God is blessing.

In Deuteronomy you are going to read so many staggering promises for those who would obey God. And those promises are for increase and establishment for ever and ever, that the generations would go on and there would be faithfulness. It is an exciting set of promises. We should just take a breather here and rejoice at what God is doing. There is a slow down in the loss of the next generation. The promises in Deuteronomy are being fulfilled in front of our very eyes and it is absolutely marvelous to watch it.

Next, there is a growing understanding of the sufficiency of Scripture and, of course, this is something that is growing in the land. What does Scripture mean to us in different areas of life? Well, there is a growing understanding of how that applies in church life, in work life, in political life, in every area of life. "What does the Scripture say," is a question that is being asked more, in my view, than in previous years.

So those are 10 signs of revival. People are thinking biblically about and wanting to be faithful in church life. There is a resurgence of expository preaching. Fathers have turned their hearts toward their children. People are having many children. Daughters are embracing the biblical vision of womanhood. Young men are not wasting their life. People are quitting dressing like the world. People have left families for the Word of God. There is the loss of the next generation has been slowed down and there is a growing understanding of the sufficiency of Scripture. That's 10. There are more. Help me make a bigger list. I know there's more than that. Please, after the service help me make a list that is more complete. I would love to see it because I know there is more. God is moving.

Well, here we are in the book of Deuteronomy where the heart of the matter happens to be the blessings of heart felt obedience. I am going to say that is the heart of the matter in the book of Deuteronomy and it leads us to the bread that is true bread. It leads us to

the commands and the testimonies of the Lord that would cause us to have a blessed life before him.

You know, there are many ways that you can live in this world. You know let me liken it to these clever entrepreneurs for a moment. There are clever entrepreneurs who have created a class of material that people affectionately call junk food. And it is a material that you eat and it is disguised, it is actually disguised as food and it is some times called processed food stuff, but it is really not food at all and it doesn't really nourish and it doesn't really satisfy and it doesn't really strengthen and it doesn't really get the job done. It doesn't give the kind of energy that the body would really want.

And Deuteronomy in many ways is an argument against that kind of food, spiritually, that we eat, the kind of ingestions that we maintain. It expresses the kind of food that makes you sick. In Deuteronomy you will find the description of the food that makes you empty, the kind of food that makes you unholy, the kind of food that will destroy your family, the kind of food that will destroy your emotions and sink you down into a spiral of depraved depression.

And the message of Deuteronomy is very simple: Don't eat the pig's slop. Forget the junk food. Eat the food that satisfies. Drink from the well of water that is sweet and that will nourish you and make your body work like it ought to work. Eat the king's food and this food will keep on blessing forever and ever and ever.

So that is a beginning of understanding Deuteronomy. Now let me move to some more introductory comments about this book. First of all, we are coming to the last book of the Pentateuch. If you have an outline here you can follow me as we bounce through these points. We are coming to the last book of the Pentateuch. Remember the Pentateuch is one book composed of five chapters: Genesis, the testimony of the beginnings; Exodus, the testimony of deliverance; Leviticus, the testimony of holiness in worship; Numbers, the testimony of wilderness wanderings. And now we come to Deuteronomy which is the testimony of the blessings of heart felt obedience. Wow.

Isn't it amazing that the Pentateuch ends with this resounding explanation of the beauty of God's ways and the bankruptcy of the devils? And, of course, there are many threatenings. There are some very terrifying things that are said here in this book as we discovered as we read it last Friday night.

Oh, when you get to the end you just are amazed at the strength, the forcefulness, the intensity, the passion that is coming off the page. Well, this is Deuteronomy.

The themes in Deuteronomy also are the themes of the other books of the Pentateuch, that there is a preparation of the people of God. That is one theme of the Pentateuch. It is also the theme of Deuteronomy. There is the preparation of the land, the Promised Land. The Promised Land is a physical place and it is also symbolic of heaven and the glories of heaven. There is the provision of worship. God provides ways for his people to worship. We have seen how he has done that in Exodus and Leviticus and we will see it even

further here in Deuteronomy. And then there is the establishment of a government, how to live in love. How would we govern ourselves? It is not a government of the people, by the people and for the people, it is a government of the Lord by the Lord and for the Lord.

And this government is the government of God. One of the striking qualities of our day today is nobody wants to be governed and yet it is a people who do not want to be governed by God will find themselves with curses and bruises and sorrows as they walk on this earth.

But the themes that run through the Pentateuch also run through Deuteronomy and, again, I would say the blessings of heart felt obedience are exposed and what we find is the call of God as he says, “Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear me and always keep all of my commandments that it may be well with them and with their children forever”<sup>2</sup> as we read in Deuteronomy 5:29.

So we just talked about the Pentateuch and Deuteronomy fit [?].

Now the title Deuteronomy. What a strange name that is. It means a copy of the law. It is a recitation of the law. It is a summary and it is an exposition of the law. And the name comes from chapter 17 verse 18 where the ruler will write himself a copy of this law in the book and he shall read it all the days of his life.<sup>3</sup> So it is a copy of the law that is meant to be read by God’s people particularly his civil magistrates, those who would lead.

Imagine if we had civil magistrates who would write out the law of God by hand and take the months that it would require to do that. And then they would read it every day and they would implement it every day. Think of rulers like that. Pray that God would give us rulers like that. Only vote for rulers who have their hearts in that direction. And so we come to the title, a duplicate, a copy of God’s law, sort of a second law.

And the setting. The setting is the last month of Moses’ life. There is very little movement here in Deuteronomy and the first five verses in Deuteronomy if you will look with me there we learn the date of the sermon. It was on the sabbath day. We learn the place it was preached. It was preached in the plain of Moab. And the time was given. It was before they entered into the land. The people of Israel had just defeated Sihon, King Sihon of the Amorites and Og, King of Bashan. And they are now there on the east side of the Jordan River if you can picture them. And they are ready to go into the Promised Land. These are the last words of Moses before the people of Israel enter the Promised Land. They are headed into pagan territory. How shall they live when they go? Moses will tell them. And so that is the setting.

The content and the structure is also important to understand. The content and the structure really is built around three sermons. Moses delivers three sermons in this book

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<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 5:29

<sup>3</sup> See Deuteronomy 17:18-19

and the message is obedience and the blessings of it and the cursings of it. You know, I think one of the things that occurs to me as I have been reading the book of Deuteronomy is this. People don't change. The people that were standing on the east side of the Jordan River are no different than you and I. We, too, are a people in transition. We are a people who are... who have problems and areas of unholiness and bad patterns. We, too, are a people who have rejected God in many ways in many years of our lives. But God loves his people and God desires to lead his people by the hand and to carry them.

How does he lead them? He leads them by his commands. He leads them by his ordinances and his statutes and his judgments. This is how God leads his people. And so here in the content and the structure of the book of Deuteronomy we see that Moses is addressing people just like they are people today. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to day and forever.<sup>4</sup>

And there are many things that we could say about the content and the structure. It has been observed by scholars that the format of Deuteronomy follows the format of treaties of that day, treaties between kings. A stronger ruler, the suzerain, provides protection over the weaker and that the logic and the format, the very outline of Deuteronomy seems to follow these treaties between a greater king and those who are under him. And so it is a covenant. It is a way that the king relates with his people and directs his people.

The message includes overwhelmingly a testimony of the doctrine of God. The name God appears around 200 times and God speaks. He calls his people to hear. He calls his people to teach the things that he has spoken. He calls those hearers to follow and to keep and to preserve by not adding or subtracting from the law. And this responsibility to keep and teach doesn't just stay with the leaders of thousands and hundreds and tens. It is pushed down to every father. It is given to fathers through family education. And when you read Deuteronomy you will notice that God is constantly commanding fathers to be teachers. He does it in four verse nine and 10. Go ahead and turn there, 4:9-10.

He says"

Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren, especially concerning the day you stood before the LORD your God in Horeb.<sup>5</sup>

And then in chapter six he repeats the same thing. He says:

And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when

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<sup>4</sup> See Hebrews 13:8

<sup>5</sup> Deuteronomy 4:9-10

you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.<sup>6</sup>

And then he repeats it again in chapter 11 verse 19. He says:

You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.<sup>7</sup>

So he repeats this principle of instruction, of teaching, of education. Deuteronomy contains a very distinct doctrine of education in how children should be educated. Do you believe what the Bible says about education of children? Please do. It is very specific. And that means that you fathers are given the responsibility to teach your children all the time.

I heard a Christian leader on the radio recently declare that the Bible says nothing about how often parents need to be with their children when they teach them. That is absolutely false. The Bible says it three times right here in the book of Deuteronomy. He was using this to justify his life that is completely away from his family.

Well, the Word of God is to be read and then finally the Word of God is sung. Toward the end of the book when you get to chapter 31 there is this song. So throughout the content and the structure, the message is the same. It is a consistent message.

“Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!”<sup>8</sup> That is what you find in the structure and the content of the book.

And then you also notice the theology of salvation that exists here. The grace of God is here. The first four chapters of the book make it clear that God’s people are chosen. And they are not God’s people because of their righteousness. They are not God’s people because they made the right sacrifices at the right time. No, absolutely not. They were not chosen because of their size in chapter seven verse seven, not because of their power in chapter eight verse 17, only because he loved them, chapter nine verse four.

Our politeness, our amiability, our reputation gets us nowhere with God. All is of grace and the book of Deuteronomy makes that very, very clear. We are beggars. We are poor. We are naked. We are blind. Just like those people are in the wilderness, so are we today with out the Lord Jesus Christ, without a circumcised heart, which is talked about in this book as well. Salvation comes to those who receive the grace of God.

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<sup>6</sup> Deuteronomy 6:6-7

<sup>7</sup> Deuteronomy 11:19-20

<sup>8</sup> Deuteronomy 5:29

Now, there are people who claim that the Old Testament is about rules and the New Testament is about relationship. The people who say that are preaching a false gospel. That is not true. Just read the Old Testament. You will know that that is not true. The grace of God is on every page. The Lord Jesus Christ is on every page of the Old Testament.

We need to understand that the grace of God is being communicated here at the same time that the blessings of obedience are communicated. So throughout the content of the theology of salvation rings that consistent message.

“Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!”<sup>9</sup> That is the heart of the salvation message that is in Deuteronomy. And it is a salvation that comes as a result of the heart turned toward God.

You will notice that the term heart is scattered all through—we will talk about that later—this book.

And then next we see that there is a broad range of issues that are covered in this book. Every imaginable human problem is laid out on the table here. Honestly, you know, very difficult human problems, personality problems, problems of sexuality, responsibility in the community, poverty, homelessness, death, alcoholism, drug abuse, honesty in business, management of money, welfare, personal hygiene, marriage, sexuality, conservation, care of the elderly, human rights, child abuse, injustice, dangers of the occult, the safety of your house. So many issues are brought up here. And so there’s just a broad, broad range of subjects here.

You know, in the first four chapters there is a tremendous amount to learn about leadership, about what is faithful leadership, humble leadership, shared leadership. You find a testimony on so many areas here in this book. It is very broad in its range. And in all of the issues that are brought to the surface they all breathe this same breath, the blessings of heart felt obedience to the Lord.

And so in the range of all these subjects that are brought out, the consistent message is, “Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!”<sup>10</sup>

And so then we see the pulse of this. Now I use the term “the pulse” of Deuteronomy because it is a very dramatic narrative. It really is. Moses is with the children of Israel on the east side of the Jordan, just before they cross. And while they are there verse five in chapter one says. “Moses began to explain this law.”<sup>11</sup> Imagine that. Moses is doing exposition on the law. He is taking the heart of God and he is casting it across dozens and dozens of subjects, but he is doing exposition on the law and the passion in the book

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<sup>9</sup> Deuteronomy 5:29

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Deuteronomy 1:5



to me just seems to build in intensity as you get to the end, the pleadings, the appeals, the threatenings that you find particularly in the last few chapters is staggering. The passion rises. The tone indicates a really high stakes situation. The words are terrifying. But the narrative is constantly pulsating the blessings of heart felt obedience.

Throughout the book there is this consistent message. “Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!”<sup>12</sup>

And then there are some fascinating people to meet here. Of course Miriam and Aaron have now died. You don’t meet them here except they are alluded to in the first four chapters when Moses tells the story of the children of Israel in the wilderness.

But so the characters are the children of Israel, ok, and the first generation is referred to in one through four. But then after that the message is to the second generation after those who had died who had been delivered from Egypt.

You meet the giants, ok. Now you meet the Anakim and my favorites the Zamzummim. Oh, yes, children, you just know who the Zamzummim are in the book of Deuteronomy. They are very significant.

You must also click on King Sihon. Israel wanted to pass through. They came to him in peace. They delivered a message of peace. God hardened Sihon’s heart and he attacked them and he got his tail whipped and the children of Israel beat them.

You are also going to meet Og of Bashan. Look at 3:11 and you will see Og of Bashan. Now, how many of you have ever seen a bed that is 13½ long. Og of Bashan was so big that he needed a bed 13½ feet long and six feet wide. He was gigantic. And he slept on this gigantic iron bed, Og of Bashan. Yes, indeed. God does deal with him in his own way. Even those who seem to be big are really not very big at all before almighty God.

With every person you meet in Deuteronomy the heart beat continues to pulsate. It is the declaration of the blessings of God through a heart felt obedience.

And then there are some key verses. Well, we have been quoting one of those key verses, 5:29. I really believe that 5:29 capsulized the message that is consistently given in the book of Deuteronomy. Now this isn’t the only one. There are dozens. It really is amazing to me to study this book because there are dozens of message that in two or three lines summarize everything in the book. Well, 5:29 is one of them. And let’s just say it together. Repeat... Just say it with me.

“Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Deuteronomy 5:29

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

That, brothers and sisters, summarizes this book. Let's say it again.

Deuteronomy 5:29: "Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!"<sup>14</sup>

Notice the tenderness of this appeal. "Oh, that they had such a heart..."<sup>15</sup> There is tremendous passion and emotion invested in these words here. And then what is his focus? It is a two fold focus: the heart and obedience. And he speaks of the result of the heart felt obedience and that is that thing would be well with your children forever. Do you really believe that? I hope that you believe that. I hope that you believe that your obedience to God will secure, that it will be well with your children forever. This is a tremendous promise.

And then another key text is in chapter 10 verses 12 through 16. Please turn there, chapter 10 verses 12 through 16.

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good? Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD your God, also the earth with all that is in it. The LORD delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day. Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.<sup>16</sup>

These two verses, really, are very precious to us because they do collect up all the themes and bring them together in a very tight phrase. Isn't God kind to do that for us? He has given us a book that is not simple in one way. But in another way it is very, very simple. The Word of God is near. It is in our mouth and we can understand what he is meaning. You can understand the meaning of this book by its many summary statements.

Then not only are there key verses, there are some key words that appear regularly in this book. You can often determine what some of the great messages are in any book of Scripture by looking at the words that are repeated or have a high count. It is not the only way, but it is helpful to notice the words that God uses.

God strategically throws now words away. If he puts a lot of words of one kind in a text it is because he desires them to be there. He desires them to be repeated. He desires them to be read over and over again and known. And so here are some of them.

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Deuteronomy 10:12-16

The word “heart.” The word “heart” is mentioned over 40 times in the book. He says in 4:9, “Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart.”<sup>17</sup>

In Deuteronomy 5:29, “Oh, that they had such a heart in them.”<sup>18</sup>

In 6:5, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart.”<sup>19</sup>

The word “heart” comes over and over again.

Obey. The term “obey” is here over 20 times.

Jesus says, “If you love me you will keep my commandments.”<sup>20</sup>

You know, there is this idea that godliness is some vague feeling. It is a feeling you get when you are standing singing a song or it is a feeling you get about God. And that is not primarily godliness. Godliness is not just an attitude that you might have. Godliness is connected with specific behaviors. Godliness is connected to the way that you live, the way that you talk, the way that you dress, what you do with everything that God has put in your hands. Godliness is not just a feeling. Godliness is something that you do and that is why James says, “Don’t be hearers of the Word and not doers, but be doers of the word.”<sup>21</sup>

And if you are just a hearer of the Word and not a doer, you are just deceiving yourself. You are a faker who is self deluded. And so the term “obey” appears many times.

The term “careful” appears over 20 times. “Therefore be careful to observe them.”<sup>22</sup>

The term “careful” is almost in the same sentence with obedience to the law. So a carefulness or sort of a humility that is not rash, but humble, but desiring to know the will of the Lord.

This was really the heart beat of the Puritan era. They desired to know what was pleasing to the Lord. And they hoped to carry it out in every area of life.

The term “abomination” appears 14 times. Now, this was not the most popular word, “abomination.” It appears around 14 times. It is an interesting study to document the things that are connected with abomination. And we will do that when we go through the book. We don’t have time to speak of all the things that the book of Deuteronomy calls an abomination.

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<sup>17</sup> Deuteronomy 4:9

<sup>18</sup> Deuteronomy 5:29

<sup>19</sup> Deuteronomy 6:5

<sup>20</sup> See John 14:15

<sup>21</sup> See James 1:22

<sup>22</sup> Deuteronomy 4:6

Here is one in 7:25. “You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire; you shall not covet the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it is an abomination to the LORD your God.”<sup>23</sup> So the wealth of the wicked when you desire, that is an abomination.

And in 22:5 you might be surprised at this, that women who wear men’s clothing that is called an abomination. How is that? It is placed right in the same phraseology as idolatry. “A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman’s garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the LORD your God.”<sup>24</sup> How flagrantly this is rejected in our culture today, even in our Christian culture. And it is no joke when a woman dresses like a man or when a man dresses like a woman. And we find people on television pretending to be women. It is an abomination. It is not a joke. My personal opinion is those things should not be in the category of humor for us at all. These things are an abomination.

But we live in a culture where, you know, it doesn’t matter how you dress. A girl can dress like a man and it means nothing. Well, that really is something that God calls an abomination.

And then next, just by way of introduction, my last point here in just giving us some of the broad spectrum themes that are here in the book. Christ loved the book of Deuteronomy.

When he devil was tempting Christ for 40 days it is recorded in Matthew chapter four Jesus rejects the temptation of turning stones into bread and he quotes Deuteronomy 8:3 and he says, “Man shall not live by bread alone.”<sup>25</sup>

And then, next, Jesus rejects the temptation to jump from the temple and to be amazing and to find, you know, great fame at his dramatic acts, you know, in the human sphere. And he rejects this and he quotes Deuteronomy 6:16 and he says, “You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted Him in Massah.”<sup>26</sup>

And then Jesus rejects the temptation to worship Satan by quoting Deuteronomy 6:13 which says, “You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him.”<sup>27</sup>

Jesus loved to quote the book of Deuteronomy. Jesus quotes the book of Deuteronomy more than any other Old Testament book.

When teaching about family life Jesus quotes Deuteronomy and uses it to explain how human traditions have been waging war against God’s commands regarding family life.

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<sup>23</sup> Deuteronomy 7:25

<sup>24</sup> Deuteronomy 22:5

<sup>25</sup> Matthew 4:4

<sup>26</sup> Deuteronomy 6:16

<sup>27</sup> Deuteronomy 6:13

And he is talking about the situation where children aren't taking care of their parents in their old age because they are giving all their money to the temple. And Jesus quotes Deuteronomy to say that your traditions have overwhelmed your love and your traditions have caused you to disobey the commandment of God.

He said, "You nicely set aside the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition."<sup>28</sup> Jesus uses Deuteronomy to prove what family life ought to be like and how in that culture, in that church there were many family destroying things going on that had their root in disobedience to God because they loved their traditions more.

When teaching on oaths in Matthew 5:33 Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 23:22. When teaching about how hard it is for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven in Matthew 19 Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 5:16 and speaks of the dangers of riches.

Well, Jesus loves to quote the book of Deuteronomy. When teaching about genuine love for God in Mark chapter 12 verses 28 to 34 Jesus quotes Deuteronomy 6:4.

Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.<sup>29</sup>

And he uses that in Mark 12 when one of the scribes wanted to trap him and he uses this to explain what is the greatest commandment.

You know, I have had many people say to me, "You know, Scott, the commands of Deuteronomy six do not apply to the Church today. They apply to Israel."

Oh, really? Well, what does the greatest commandment do, nothing? Do we just take the few words out of what Jesus quotes? No. The whole shema was loved by the Lord Jesus Christ. He promotes it. To say that that is something of a different ear is absolutely incomprehensible. You can make no sense of the greatest commandment if you take that position.

When teaching about the resurrection in Matthew 22 Jesus quotes Deuteronomy as well.

Now let me just say something here about some of the very disturbing sections that are in Deuteronomy. There are some very, very, very disturbing things that are said in Deuteronomy. There is capital punishment for murderers and for witches and for idolaters and for rebellious sons and there are more categories. But now here is what I really want us to consider very carefully. The Old Testament might make us uncomfortable, but it never made Jesus Christ uncomfortable. The Old Testament often makes us uncomfortable, doesn't it? It grates against the way that we think about how

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<sup>28</sup> See Mark 7:9

<sup>29</sup> Deuteronomy 6:4-6

things should be. But the Old Testament never made Jesus Christ uncomfortable. He loved to quote it and he loved to quote even many of the hard sayings that were there.

We should really pause at that. It is... I think it is a dangerous thing for us to have negative things to say about something that Jesus Christ has said. Every word of the Bible is a word of Jesus Christ. And if we have something negative to say about it, we must acknowledge that it is because of our depravity, because we don't have the heart of God. And I say this as one who has many times been disturbed. And whenever I am disturbed I need to be reminded that Jesus Christ was never uncomfortable with the things that he said in the Old Testament.

And so Jesus is quoting Deuteronomy all over the place. So does Peter in his sermon in Acts chapter three. So does the apostle Paul. We have already reviewed some of those that he quoted in the book of Romans to describe salvation. But Jesus is constantly quoting Deuteronomy and so is the apostle Paul and so is Peter.

So these first items here, you know, that we just reviewed that Deuteronomy sits in the Pentateuch. It has a particular setting. There is a diverse content. Its pulse is very dramatic. There are many verses and key words to understand and also we need to understand Christ's disposition towards Deuteronomy.

And then now let's sort of look at the outline of the book here. First of all, we come across Moses' first speech. And that first speech goes from chapter one to chapter four. It all hangs together. And Moses is reviewing the journey from Mount Sinai where the law was given to their present location. And he recites the love of God all through this. He speaks of the kindness of God toward his people over and over again in this section. He says, "I carried you." In chapter one he makes it very clear. "In all of your wilderness wanderings, in the midst of all of your fears, all of the privations that happened, you need to know that I was carrying you all the way as a father carries his son." That is really the summary of these wilderness wanderings that Moses speaks about.

He recites what happened with the rock and the water, the manna and the quail, how God delivered them from all of their enemies. And he also speaks of the dangers of adding and subtracting from the law of God. And he says in 4:37 that he loved their fathers. He loved their fathers. He loved their fathers that were disobedient. He loved their fathers who were fearful and he still loves his people who are fearful and who have sins. And he has made atonement for all of our sins through the blood of Jesus Christ. He has made us righteous in the midst of our unrighteousness. And that is the message of the first four chapters.

And then the second speech begins in chapter five. And there is an explanation of the heart of God on many matters. Chapter five begins with the 10 Commandments. When we get to this section we are going to spend one Sunday on each one of the commandments. And he begins with, "Hear, oh Israel," which we hear a number of times. And in this section, in this second speech we find the 10 Commandments. We find the Shema, we find instructions regarding relationships with pagan people. We hear about

what it means to be very careful in our obedience. We hear about the blessings and the curses. He said, “Behold,” in chapter 11 verse 26:

Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God.<sup>30</sup>

And so throughout this second sermon, this second speech are laws about worship, about false prophets, about tithing, about personal cleanliness, about various feasts and laws, about idolaters and the treatment of the Levites, avoiding the abominations of pagans, cities of refuge, what to do about landmarks, what to do about witnesses, false witness and true witnesses. What are the rules of bringing witnesses? How do you convict someone of a crime by using witnesses?

Conduct in war, various social laws regarding innocent blood, women who are captured in war time, inheritance, caring for the property of your brother like not turning your head when you see your brother’s animal, you know, going off and being lost. No, you take care of your brother. You help him.

Laws concerning androgyny and cross dressing, laws concerning new houses and new marriages, sowing and vineyards and plowing and holiness, separation in the instruction of mixed fabrics and fringes and things like that, various laws about sanitation and prostitution and sodomy. Laws about interest and debt are brought through here. Laws about eating from the vineyard or the field of another person.

Well, so in this second speech there are lots of different categories that are addressed. The heart of God is communicated in every one of them. We may not understand everything about them, but we must know this, that God is sending us a message about his disposition about different things.

And then the last speech begins in chapter 27 and goes to the end. Moses starts out with their duties upon entering the land. And, of course, you might imagine what he would say. “Keep all the commandments which I command you today. Keep all the commandments that I command you. Don’t set any of them aside.” And then he gives them specific things that they should do when they get on the other side.

And then he speaks in chapter 28—one of the most important passages, especially for new believers to understand—and that is the blessings of obedience and then the cursings that come from disobedience.

I had the privilege of reading these things early on in my Christian life and I really believed from the beginning that God’s ways were pleasant ways and that the devil’s ways were poisonous. I just always believed that as a believer. I know that with all of us, even though we might understand that, that God still desires to wean us from the things

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<sup>30</sup> Deuteronomy 11:26-28

that would cause curses to happen to us. We are in a life long journey in that. But when there is obedience there is blessing. When there is disobedience there is cursing. Nobody beats the system, nobody. And that is what chapter 28 is all about.

The covenant is repeated in chapter 30 and he makes these very dramatic statements that you have life and death before you. What is on the table regarding your obedience to God? Life and death. That is what is on the table. It is very, very, very strong language that we find here that Moses uses.

And then in the third speech it is like the second. He says it just continues to breath the blessings of heartfelt obedience. Throughout the third speech we find the same themes running, a lot of different categories and thoughts that are presented. But they all have the same summary.

“Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!”<sup>31</sup>

And then, finally, in the very last section we read of the end of Moses life and the change of leadership. Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. And he must pass the mantel of leadership to Joshua. And he tells him to be strong and courageous and to go into the land and he tells him, “The Lord will be with you, Joshua. The Lord will go before you. He will not leave you or forsake you neither fear nor be dismayed.”<sup>32</sup> What a wonderful thing to hear from your mentor. “Do not be afraid.”

It is remarkable to look through the Bible and read how many times God tells his people, “Do not be afraid.” And he tells that same thing to Joshua. He says the same thing to you and I today. We are people in transition. Don’t be afraid. God has given us guidance in his Word. Follow the commands. Keep all of his laws and his commandments and he will bless you and know that the heart of God toward these people in transition is just like the heart of God toward us here today.

“Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!”<sup>33</sup>

So there you have it. There is the book of Deuteronomy, much more to say about it and we will have about a year and a half to walk through these things in detail. But let me just give a couple of words of application.

I think the applications that I would like to focus on this morning for us, for we the people in transition, for we the people who are standing on the edge of the great Canaanite and pagan cities, we who have sinned in our past, we who have not always sown the right seeds, we who are a sinful people in need of the grace of Jesus Christ, but we are the people of God and we are loved by God. That is the fist thing I want us to

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<sup>31</sup> Deuteronomy 5:29

<sup>32</sup> See Deuteronomy 31:6-8

<sup>33</sup> Deuteronomy 5:29



remember, that God does love his people. He makes a covenant with them. He promises that he will carry them into that land. He will fulfill all his promises toward you.

I don't know what fears you have today. Everybody has a different set, I know. I know I have my own. But here is what we need to know. God has always been faithful to his people and he will be faithful to you. So know that that is his part. And your part and my part is to carefully obey all that he has given us to do regardless of what the pagans do, regardless of what our families do, regardless of what makes us prosperous, regardless of what makes us popular, regardless of what would give us a place at the table. So often we sell off the blessings for a place at the table.

So remember the love of God. Don't sell off the blessings.

I also would like to have us consider this way of application, that... and really it is as much a prayer as anything else for us as we study this. And that is this. That I pray that God would give us sort of a heightened sense of the importance of obedience. We live in a lawless land. We think like lawless people. Many of us were educated in lawlessness, to think lawlessly. I was. But God desires to make a people after his own name. God desires a people for his own possession. God desires a holy people that are distinct from the rest of the nations. You will not talk like, dress like, live like, work like, you will not be like the nations of the world. I pray that God would give us a heightened appreciation for that and that we would, in all humility, stand before God with hearts that desire obedience. And then that we would also continue to have a heightened sense of the blessings of obedience.

The truth is what Moses is saying here is that the all of the enjoyments that your hearts desire are found in obedience to God's law. You know, people are looking for love in all the wrong places. They are looking for happiness in the places that it doesn't exist. But there is a place that it does exist. All of the pleasures of the kingdom of heaven are yours when you seek him and obey him. And that we would just have a heightened sense of the pleasures of God.

I pray that this year would be a year of a harvest of enjoyment, that we would reap a harvest of pleasure in the pleasures that God would give, that we would be found the happiest people ever, that we would... that if you would take a happiness test this morning that that happiness factor would be nothing compared to the happiness factor in 30 days and 60 days and 90 days, that the happiness of the kingdom of heaven, the joys of obedience and the long term effects would affect us and we would be the happiest people that ever met because of the blessings of the kingdom of heaven.

Moses says that there is happiness there and I pray that God would really give us a rip roaring enjoyment of all that he has given us because his ways truly are pleasant ways. If anyone is kicking against the goads, if anyone's heart is astray, please let me call you back this morning. Come back. You are going to eat the pig slop. You have got the junk food on your breath. No. Begin. Drink the water of life. Take the bread that always satisfies. No. Turn back, you young sister or brother, if your hear is hard toward the

Lord, turn back, turn back. The blessings are there. And yet if you don't turn back you will find yourself as empty as anybody ever was. And that food you will find has been junk food and it has caused your soul to be hungry.

And I pray that God would just give us more joy in this time together as we seek him.

And so I think it is appropriate for us to say it again, to ring out this great summary of Deuteronomy in Deuteronomy chapter 5:29.

Let's say it all together.

“Oh, that they had such a heart in them that they would fear Me and always keep all My commandments, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!”<sup>34</sup>

And all of God's people said, “Amen.”

Now if you have read the book of Deuteronomy, you know that we got that practice out of the book of Deuteronomy.

Ok. Let's pray.

*Oh Lord, now to you, you alone who is able to keep us from stumbling and to present us faultless before the presence of your glory with exceeding joy to God our Savior who alone is wise be glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and forever. Amen.*

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<sup>34</sup> Ibid.