

The Fatherly Kindness of God

Deuteronomy Series

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Bible Text: Deuteronomy 1:1-18

Preached on: Sunday, November 2, 2008

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Let's seek the Lord's help here now as we open up this great book.

Oh Lord, thank you for giving us these words. Thank you for explaining what you meant in your law through Moses. And, Lord, I pray that you would help us to find ourselves faithful in all these things, that our hearts would burn within us and we would say, "Oh, that we have such a heart in us that we would fear you and always keep all your commandments which you have given to us that it might be well with us and our children forever." In Jesus' name. Amen.

Ok, Deuteronomy chapter one. Here we go. Our first sermon in the sequence of exposition through this book. It is interesting to me to reflect on the fact that at least the way I understand it almost no one or perhaps no one has ever been in a sequential expositional study of the book of Deuteronomy in the Church. So here we are, first out, right out of the gate, all of us in this. We are covering territory that we haven't covered in quite the detail that we are getting ready to cover it. And so that really is a very special blessing.

Let me just make a few comments about this chapter and this section that we are in in Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy, as you remember, is comprised of three different sermons that are given the last month of Moses' life. All of them are delivered on the east side of the Jordan River before the children of Israel enter into the land. And so this morning we are going to be covering just the first 18 verses of the first sermon. The first sermon covers chapters one through four. And so in this first sermon that covers chapters one through four, Moses is outlining the blessings of God. He extols the faithfulness of God. He is recounting his fatherly care towards his people.

Stop just for a moment on that thought. What we will find here is really the story of your life and the story of my life. It is the story of God's faithfulness. It is the story of tumult, reversals, disobedience, judgment. But at the same time it is the story of your life and mine because it is the story of the faithfulness of God.

Think of how often you thought your life was hanging by a thread. Think of all the times that you thought that you were going to get chopped off right at the moment. Think of all the times that fear gripped your heart and you knew there was no way you were going to

make it. Think of all the times that you did something that you shouldn't have done and your heart burns with anguish as a result of it. Well, that is the story that we find here. This is the recounting that Moses does. And do you know what? I pray that it would help us to be a less fearful people than we ever were before. I pray that it would help us to see the fatherly kindness of God, his faithfulness that never ends, his faithfulness that runs year after year, generation after generation. That is the story of this first sermon and really the whole book of Deuteronomy.

In chapter one we learn that throughout all the tumult and the privations, the sleeplessness, the terrors, the privations of the wilderness, the lack of water, the lack of food, in all of that God says what was happening all along the way and it is what his happening to you and I all along the way today. And I pray that God would give us a sense of it. He says, "I carried you. I carried you."

And so this morning as we go through this first sermon, I want us to just continue to see these great themes that we find in this first sermon. Moses will recount the provisions of God and their movements throughout this period of time. And so I really do... somehow if you can, as we read through these various sections that you would also at the same time sort of a have a double, you know, a double though process going on that you are thinking about your own journey, your own life and where it is now and looking back and seeing the faithfulness of God in it and his sovereign hand has led you to the place you are right this very second today and that you would see how God has made you a part of his family, his people and then, how you, as well, and I would apply the law of God to our own lives.

So what I want to do this morning is I want to identify six blessings that Moses recounts in these first 18 verses of this four chapter long speech. These blessings are there in your outline that you have before you. The first is that God gives a sufficient testimony. Secondly, that he provides a genuine relationship with himself. Thirdly, that he provides his people with a providential history. Fourthly, that he gives them a Promised Land. Fifthly, that he gives them a multiplied generation. And he also, lastly, gives them a good government.

Now all that we will see here in this first sermon and, of course, in the entire book of Deuteronomy are all the same things that we see in the Pentateuch. We have just been walking through the Pentateuch and now we are going to slow down and take a year and a half to stay in this book. But what you see in Deuteronomy is the same thing that you see the other testimonies of the Pentateuch. Of course, each book of the Pentateuch has its own focus. But in all of them you see the preparation of a people. God is desiring to prepare a people for his own possession who will walk in his ways. And so we stand here under that same testimony and urging of God.

Secondly, there is the preparation of a land, that God's people understand that there is a blessed land that he has them headed toward. There is provision of worship and then there is the establishment of a government, how to live in love. It is not a government of the people, by the people and for the people. It is a government of God. And so these

things, these four major things are themes that we see all throughout the Pentateuch and, again, you will see them again right here even in these first 18 verses in Deuteronomy.

Now let me give you an outline of these first four chapters. First of all chapters one through three really declare many aspects of the greatness of the gospel of Jesus Christ and they are assumed, really I would just say, under the heading of God's fatherly care toward his people. Moses, first of all, reminds of the great sustaining love that God brings to his people, that it is a personal relationship of love and that it is a covenantal relationship. The gospel is that God makes a covenant with his people. He rescues them from their sins. He shows them how to govern themselves. He carries his people. He calls them to have a relationship with himself and he calls them to obey.

Now that is really the message of the first three chapters of this speech. And then the second part is found in chapter four and it shows us the rebellion of mankind, the devastating results of that rebellion. And what we find here in this first sermon is God uses the gospel—chapters one through three—to motivate and sensitize his people so that they would obey his law. You see how that works there? In order that the requirement of the law might be fulfilled in them.

Of course the requirement of the law is fulfilled in Christ. We see the Lord Jesus Christ in these first three chapters. We see God's fatherly care towards his people and then the dangers of rebellion. But also that God's mercy is great and he does atone for the sins of sinners. So that is the basic structure that we have.

Now Moses centers his attention on the blessings of God reflecting his great character of faithfulness and kindness toward us. And so the first element of God's fatherly care has to do with the guidance of his people. He gives his people something. He gives them the gift of revelation and that is found in the first five verses. So if you please look at these first five verses.

The first verse tells us about this principle and that is we learn that it is God who gives words to his people to lead them. He says, "These are the words which Moses spoke to all Israel."¹ God leads his people by his words, not by the neighbors of his people, not by the relatives of his people, but by the words that are found in Scripture. Verbal, propositional revelation is the subject here.

Look at verse three. These words are, "according to all that the LORD had given him as commandments to them."² So the Lord gives words to his people. If the people live out of their hearts, if people live out of the hat bag of their culture they will be astray. And so God gives his people words and so the words and the statements in the Word of God are the blessings that God gives his people so that they would know how to live in this world where every man does what is right in his own eyes.

¹ Deuteronomy 1:1

² Deuteronomy 1:3

And so the message here is that God speaks to his people and God speaks to his people in the form of words. And this is the way it always has been and this is the way it always will be. We find in Hebrews chapter one verses one and two where we read:

God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds.³

God is always speaking to his people through words. And this is the first blessing that Moses identifies here.

And so what we find here is that God is giving his people words to live by. It is the principle of, "Thus saith the Lord." If we would live this life without, "Thus saith the Lord," God forbid because of the dangers and the sufferings that are there, to live without the guidance of God in this world. When men do what is right in their own eyes, culture collapses as we are seeing around us even today.

And so notice in verse five what is written there. Moses began to explain this law. Now this gives us really a key to the entire rest of the book because we are being told here what Moses is doing. He is explaining the law. He is expositing. He is giving, he is breaking things down and he is showing us the practical implications of what the law means. So Moses will tell us what the law says and then he will tell us what it means in detailed form.

He is explaining in detail the applicability of the law. If you ever wanted to know how to apply the law here is an example of it right here. Moses is doing it for the people. He takes the plain statements of the 10 Commandments and then he shows how they are meant to inform every area of life. This is why John Calvin took the 613 commands of Scripture and sorted them under the 10 Commandments because they are expositions of the 10 Commandments. And so we should do the same. We should look at two things. We should look at the law and we should learn what it says. And then look at the world around us in our own hearts and find the ways that it applies to us.

You know, all the cultures of the earth are corrupt and God has given it a cleansing agent. And that cleansing agent includes words so that these words would guide his people.

You know, there never was an era that was pure. There never was a nation that had the right culture. You want to go back to the 19th century? That wasn't a pure culture. You want to go back to the 17th century? That wasn't a pure culture either. There never has been a pure culture. We can't look back and find compelling things that one culture or another might have understood.

But we need to acknowledge this, that the law of God shines its light upon all cultures and also all eras of human history. And so what we find Moses doing is he is explaining,

³ Hebrews 1:1-2

he is explaining the law and what it means in real life and he gives many, many illustrations of it.

It is interesting. If you fast forward almost 1000 years, about 900 years to 586 BC you find Josiah applying Deuteronomy. He opens the lost book of the law and then he finds how his culture has departed so much from it. And then he begins to do the things that are in the law. It is fascinating. Later on in the study we will walk through the very particular ways that Josiah took what was written here and he applied it to the altars, to the worship that was going on, to the shrines, to the prostitution that was going on in the temple, to the calling up of the dead, to the celebration of the Passover and all kinds of things like that. Josiah takes this law and applies it in his own day.

And so Deuteronomy here is written to a people who are caught in a certain era of history, but every person in every era of history always needs the same thing. They need the Words of God. They are people just like us. We are a people in transition. We are a people who have been saved by the grace of Jesus Christ. We have lots of baggage, but what will we do? First of all, we need to recognize that we are a people in transition, that God is sanctifying us, he is taking us to the next place of sanctification.

And so here in the book of Deuteronomy he gives us many, many illustrations, explanations of what the law means in areas of education and culture and family and idolatry and poverty and homelessness and alcoholism and sexuality and jealousy in marriage and all kinds of things like that. He is explaining the law.

By the way, this is exactly what Jesus did. Jesus took the law and he applied it to the times when he was living in. When considering matters of divorce, he quotes Deuteronomy. When considering matters of marriage, he quotes Deuteronomy. When he considers matters of taking care of your aging parents, he quotes Deuteronomy. When he is considering matters of oaths and making oaths, he quotes Deuteronomy. Jesus is applying the law.

Of course Jesus is the fulfillment of the law. He is the end, not the stoppage of it, the fulfillment, the end in terms of the fulfillment of it. He brings it all together and shows how it applies. This is why it is for us, as we read it in Deuteronomy, you know, every section takes a bee line to Christ because Christ explains the whole law and that is what Moses is doing. And then Christ continues to do it in his own day.

So Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.⁴ And that should be a great comfort to us because God has given us a fixed authoritative word by which to guide our lives and our hearts. And as he has done with the children of Israel there in 1405 BC he is doing it with us here again at the end of 2008 AD.

And so the first blessing that God brings is a sufficient testimony, a word from heaven to help us live our lives. God is so kind to us. This is why we should feed on it constantly. This is why it should be our meditation when we sit in our houses, when we

⁴ See Hebrews 13:8

walk by the way, when we lie down or when we rise up. God is so kind. I pray that you would just see the kindness of God.

Think of all the ways that God has rescued you through his Word. Think of the times that you had a silly thought in your mind, but you read the Word of God and it turned you away from the foolishness of your own brain and it turned you back. It turned you to the blessings of heaven.

And so God is so kind, his fatherly care is so perfect for us in that he supplies to us his words, his beautiful words, beautiful words, wonderful words, wonderful words of life as we sang this morning.

Well, here is a second element of God's fatherly blessings that Moses recounts and this second one has to do with the closeness of the relationship that God has with his people. He gives them something. He gives his people a genuine, real, heartfelt relationship. We see this really all throughout Deuteronomy. But we see an implication of it in verse six.

Notice that Moses' words, they indicate, they really assume a genuine relationship of grace and mercy between God and man. Verse six we read, "The LORD our God spoke to us in Horeb."⁵ Now God throws no words away in his book. And here we find that this is our God, that he spoke to us, that we are his people, we are the sheep of his pasture.

This is the language of personal relationship. This is the language of grace from God towards his people who draws his people near and says, "Come unto me all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest."⁶ This is the language of relationship and what we find is that this is a covenant of love.

By the way, I see no indication that this was ever a covenant of works. There was never a covenant of works. There only was a covenant of grace through faith. It was the faith of Abraham. Man was never saved by the works of the law. Men often think they can and so they try, but it never worked and it never will work.

But what does work? A heart turned toward God, a heart that says, "Forgive me, for I am a sinner."

And that is what we find here. The covenant of love that we read of here in Deuteronomy is referred to over 200 times in the New Testament and Deuteronomy shows this love of God toward his people and also the response of love of his people towards him.

In Deuteronomy chapter five we learn that God is showing mercy to thousands, to those who love me and keep my commandments.⁷

In chapter six verse five, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart."⁸

⁵ Deuteronomy 1:6

⁶ See Matthew 11:28

⁷ See Deuteronomy 5:10

In Deuteronomy seven, “The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples.”⁹

God’s love for us is not dependent upon our works. It never was. If it was no one ever would have been saved in any period of history. This is the language of relationship and of love. It is the language of a sinner crying out to God saying, “Oh, God. Have mercy on me, a sinner.” It is the language of love in which God says, “I have set my love upon you not because of any thing in you, but because I have elected you from the foundation of the world.”

And so we find this genuine relationship of love running through all of the book of Deuteronomy and we find it first in verse six of the first chapter. And this just means that the book of Deuteronomy, nor any other word of the law was meant to save us, but to show us how to live. And so Moses is assuming the grace of God and he also assimilates the purpose of the law to convict us of our sins and show us how we would govern ourselves in this world.

There is no legalism in Deuteronomy at all. Moses is explaining how the law applies to the situations ahead of them and he is taking the commands and making application of them. But he is not telling anyone how they might be saved.

We know that 600 years before this we learned... in the days of Abraham we learned that man is justified by faith alone. You think God changed it here after Mount Sinai 400 years after? No. He didn’t change it at all. He is just affirming his covenant of grace that he has always had with mankind.

And so this second element of God’s fatherly care is that he provides a relationship with his people that is not based on their works, but it does call them to obedience at the same time.

And then the third element of God’s fatherly blessings towards his people that Moses recounts has to do with, I think, that is something that is so important for us living in the times that we live in and that is that he speaks of his sovereign control over history of the sake of the salvation of his people and for the sake of the communication of his glory in history. He gives them something. God gives his people, as a kind and tender father, he gives them what I am just going to call a providential history. He gives us a history that he is in control of. He is the commander. He is the great architect of history and this is a gift to all of God’s people.

You think you are hanging by a thread? You think that the axe is going to come down and cut you off and all of your future will be destroyed? Think again, brothers and sisters. That is not what God does for his people. He cares for them as a father. And, yes, there are threats in the interim. But here is the truth of it. God has covered all of your

⁸ Deuteronomy 6:5

⁹ Deuteronomy 7:7

long term liabilities because he is summing up all things in Christ. And so we should not fear. Why is it that so often in Scripture there is the command, “Fear not”? It is because God is in command of all of history. There isn’t any way that I can peer into the hearts of any of us here today. But I wish I could. I wish I could crawl into every heart and turn the latch that would trip the heart to think God is in command of all things. Therefore I will not fear. Therefore I will have courage. Therefore I will spread the joy of Jesus Christ. Therefore I will smile at my children. Therefore I will be tender to my wife. Therefore I will be patient with my husband. Therefore I will love my boss. Therefore I will pray for my rulers. Therefore I will love my enemies because something has tripped in our hearts and we have said, “Yes, God is in control of history and he is in control of my history. And therefore I shall not fear.”

And I just want to say, “Fear not, brothers and sisters,” because God has given us a providential history.

Now we find this knowledge of this in verses two through five. So look at verses two through five because you see the development of this sense of this providential view of history.

Now in the first five verses of this sermon we learn the date of the sermon, it was on the sabbath day; the reference point to the Exodus, it is in the 40th year in the 11th month on the first day of the month; the place it was preached. It was preached in the plain of Moab, the time it was given before they entered the land. Notice the meticulous dating. Look at verse three. How meticulous can you get?

I mean here is a marker in history. The Word of God is a story about real people in space and time with real experiences and a real God in a real land. It is not a myth at all. It is thoroughly grounded in history. It is not fantasy.

And the emphasis is God’s covenant of love toward his people and here we find that Moses is speaking to the children of Israel in Kadesh Barnea. Mark that place. Mark that place, Kadesh Barnea. Every person here needs to understand the significance of Kadesh Barnea, not only do you need to know how to pronounce it, you need to know where it is and what it symbolizes and what happened there, because what happened there helps us to understand history and not only the history of the world, but the history of your life and my life.

And so Moses is speaking to the children of Israel in Kadesh Barnea and here is where they were 40 years ago. And what happened 40 years ago there at Kadesh Barnea? Fear gripped their hearts because they were terrified at the idea that God’s protections would somehow be withheld from them if they obeyed him. God had commanded they go into the land. They feared going into the land because they feared that they would lose something if they went into the land. That, you and I know well enough, is the reason we don’t obey God. We always fear some other consequence. If we obey this will happen. We project these consequences and really actually think good things don’t normally happen. That’s my experience with myself and my family and other people that I have

known that make decisions based on their fear rather than the commands of God. And there are always reasons that people do not enter into what God has commanded and fear of security, fear over control over your life, fear of losing the status quo, you know, fear of that thread finally breaking and you drop off and everything is bad and now you are bad.

That's what happens in our spirits. We don't obey because we fear something and so here Kadesh Barnea, Kadesh Barnea illustrates the place, it is the strategic stronghold where the forces of the world are at work against us and they are working over time. And Kadesh Barnea is the place of assembling and then leaving and reassembling. It is the place at the edge of the Promise Land where God's people are tempted.

Kadesh means holy and Barnea, desert of wilderness wandering, bar. And so the two of the most important places in the Pentateuch are Sinai and Kadesh Barnea. Those are the two big places. You have to understand both to understand the history of Israel and also the history of your own life.

And so the children of Israel are on the borderline and they can obey God or they cannot obey God. And here Moses is recounting that time when they did not obey God. He is retelling the story of when they came up to the edge and then broke down in fear and went the other way. And we find that Kadesh Barnea is the place of grumbling. How about that? Is there any grumbling? Are you at Kadesh Barnea today? Do you have grumbling in your soul? You are in Kadesh Barnea and is time to get out of Kadesh Barnea and go the direction of the Lord.

It is possible that you also might be at another one of the conditions of Kadesh Barnea and that is fear. Is there fear in your heart? Get out of Kadesh Barnea because fear never leads to any good thing at all.

And so we find that Kadesh Barnea is sort of the staging ground of many tests. It is sort of like every place in life. I think almost every place is like Kadesh Barnea where there is a test and there is a decision point and there is either the blessing of God or 40 years of wandering ahead of you, wandering around. It was an 11 day journey. It took 40 years. That is what happens at Kadesh Barnea.

We come up to a place. We choose to grumble and we wander for 40 more years. We come up to Kadesh Barnea, God calls us to holiness. We go the other way and we wander and we get ourselves beaten up in the wilderness. That is what Kadesh Barnea suggests to us.

Kadesh Barnea was the place where the 12 spies were sent out. Kadesh Barnea was the place where the people grumbled against Moses and Aaron recorded in Numbers 14. Kadesh Barnea was the place where Moses announced that there would be 40 years of wandering as a result of it.

Kadesh Barnea was the place of Korah's rebellion. Do you remember Korah rose up and mounted rebellion and brought apparently hundreds of people to rebel against Moses. That had to...

By the way, just a parenthesis, a note. This morning Jason read us a psalm, Psalm 84. And did you notice who wrote that psalm? One of the sons of Korah, one of the sons of Korah writing about 400 years later, about 300 years later. The sons of Korah, some of them, had hearts that turned towards God and one of them wrote Psalm 84.

You know, the kindness of God is that it is never over for us. There is always a turning that we can make toward him.

But it was the place of Korah's rebellion. It was a place of Aaron and Miriam's graves. It was the place of Meribah where the people complained against Moses and they had no water and God said to Moses, "Moses, speak to the rock."¹⁰ And Moses apparently had gone through a period of spiritual dullness and unfaithfulness of some kind that we don't really have the detail on, but it was such a kind that Moses was angry. Yes, he was God's appointed leader, but he was angry and instead of speaking to the rock, he struck the rock and God judged him for it and said, "You will not enter this land."

And so Kadesh Barnea is not only the place of Meribah, it is also the place of Moses' grave because he was buried before they entered into the Promised Land.

And now as we learn from this text in front of us, it is the place that was just an 11 mile journey from Mount Sinai and it was the place where Moses died and the people mourned for 30 days.

So this is the third element of God's blessing toward his people is a providential history, ok? He is in control of history and he sees it all and he is managing your history for his won glory.

And so when we get to the place of Kadesh Barnea, let's not fear. Let's not have a history of fearfulness as we go through this life. And then the fourth element of God's fatherly blessings that Moses recounts has to do with something really very wonderful and something that we really don't understand everything about. It is because it is too wonderful for us and it is his provision of the Promised Land. He gives his people something. He gives them something tangible. It is a place of rest. It is the Promised Land.

My current understanding of the Promised Land goes like this. The Promised Land, yes, it is fulfilled in some things tangible, but it is perfectly filled in all things in heaven and so God has given us this, again, a double meaning. He gives us an evidence, a geographical location with borders and physical features and that is the Promised Land. Now I think that one thing that we are being told is that heaven is real. It is just like the Promised Land in some ways, only far, far greater. It is a shadow, yes. It is a picture.

¹⁰ See Numbers 20:8

But it tells us something that is something that is greater out there and that is the Promised Land in heaven.

And so in verses six through eight we read, “The LORD our God spoke to us in Horeb.”¹¹ And that is, of course, Mount Sinai.

....saying: “You have dwelt long enough at this mountain. Turn and take your journey, and go to the mountains of the Amorites, to all the neighboring places in the plain, in the mountains and in the lowland, in the South and on the seacoast, to the land of the Canaanites and to Lebanon, as far as the great river, the River Euphrates. See, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to your fathers—to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—to give to them and their descendants after them.”¹²

So in these verses Moses is recalling God’s call to possess the land. He called them to possess the land 40 years ago. And now they are right back in the same place. And he is calling them to possess the land again.

And there are several things that God is calling his people to do in this land: invade, conquer and occupy. And then to carry out the mission and that is what the Promised Land is all about.

And there is some interesting language in here. Look at verse seven. Moses records the situation and he says it is time to move on. He says, “You have dwelt long enough at this mountain. You have dwelt long enough at this mountain. Turn and take your journey”¹³

Now here what we find is God is changing the geographical location of his people. And this is what God does. He does move us from time to time. And here God is making changes because they have been in one place long enough and he is moving them on. This is one of the wonderful things about life, isn’t it? It is always remarkable to me how God has built in different changes in your life. You know, when you are young, you know, there is that day when you get your driver’s license and everything changes. Then there is that day when you are married and you absolutely can’t believe it. You can’t believe it actually happened. And then you have your first child and a whole new range of love floods in to your soul.

You thought you understood more about love when you married that young lady and then you have children and you think, “Oh, there is more.” And then you have grandchildren and you think, “Oh, there is even more.”

Well where does it end? Well God is constantly moving his people along not only in their natural lives of growing, but he also does it geographically. He moves people

¹¹ Deuteronomy 1:6

¹² Deuteronomy 1:6-8

¹³ Deuteronomy 1:6-7

around. He puts them in cities. He takes them from one place and puts them in another because they have been in one place long enough. And that was what was happening with the children of Israel.

We find that this is both the difficulty and the glory of life. Remember Job who lost everything. He was the most wealthy man in the region and God came and took everything away from him. But we read that the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than at the beginning.

But we know that when God brings changes there is often a tearing and a difficulty in it. And, you know, weeping may endure fro the night, but joy comes in the morning.¹⁴ That is what God does. He moves us from one place to another. And there may be difficulties in the tearing away, but his blessing are always there. He knows what he is doing.

And now he says to the children of Israel, “You have been here long enough, move.”

Now, I don’t know where anybody in this room might be in dealing with this whole principle of... are there significant changes that need to be made in your life? Are there things that you have been hanging on way too long? The people had been hanging around Sinai way too long. And God was moving them on. Is there any thing that you need to move on from?

And this is a divinely ordered change. One of our problems is that we like to change for change’s sake or to get away from something. But God here is ordering this change. And so here we learn that God desires the progress of his people and that there is a mission that they are on.

Now here is something that I want us to see. Moses said, “See, I have set the land before you.”¹⁵ This is the blessing of being a Christian. It is to have a God who has a vision for your life and he says, “See, see, that is the kind of life. That is the kind of life I have called you to. See, here is that land over there.”

We are going to the Promised Land. We are not just going to say in this eddy of sameness with our lives. We are moving on. God is a visionary. God has a vision for every person’s life here and he desires to carry us on. You know, are we holding back? Are we like the children of Israel? We are fearful that that change, that that obedience would cut off our future. Well, that’s a lie of the devil because God does move his children on in this life heavenward and every change is for his glory for that purpose.

We see this visionary nature of God all over the place. Remember when God appeared to Abraham. He brought Abraham outside of his tent and he said, “Look, look, look toward heaven and count the stars if you are able to count them,” and he said, “So shall your descendants be.”¹⁶

¹⁴ See Psalm 30:5

¹⁵ Deuteronomy 1:8

¹⁶ See Genesis 15:5

You see, in the same way that Moses stood on the edge of the Promised Land and said, “See, look at that land.” God had already said 600 years before, “See, Abraham, look at the stars. Look at where I am taking you. I am moving you in this direction.”

And so we have a visionary God who takes his people in a direction.

And so he has given us this gift as our Father, this gift of Promised Land. Do you see it? Do you see God’s kind fatherly care toward his people?

Well, Moses doesn’t stop with that. The fifth element of God’s fatherly blessings that Moses recounts has to do with God’s promise keeping in multiplying his people. God gives his people something and that is a gift of multiplication and that is found in verses nine through 11. Look at it with me.

And I spoke to you at that time, saying: ‘I alone am not able to bear you. The LORD your God has multiplied you, and here you are today, as the stars of heaven in multitude.’¹⁷

That’s really just the proclamation that God has kept his promise to Abraham. God is faithful and he says. “May the LORD God of your fathers make you a thousand times more numerous than you are, and bless you as He has promised you!”¹⁸

You know, God’s desire for his people is to multiply them. And they multiply two ways. They multiply through the natural spread of the gospel as sons and daughters of Abraham are born again through the evangelistic efforts of his people and also as people are fruitful and multiply and they have children and they bring them up in the training and the admonition of the Lord. And they send Joey over to that neighborhood and Suzie over to that country and Billy over to that city and there they glorify God and they fill the earth to the glory of God. That is God’s plan, that he would multiply his people in the earth.

This whole thing of population control and zero population growth is nothing but a sinister, dark, satanic principle. It is completely opposite to everything God has said. And so, hey, let me tell you, hey, the global warming crowd and the population control crowd are preaching a satanic message and we need to make that very clear and we have a presidential candidate who is preaching the doctrines of demons every time he gets on national television, every time. And the American people are just blind to it. They are dull.

But God is different. God desires his people to multiply in multitudes. That is God’s desire. And then there is another element. He just keeps going on. The sixth element of God’s fatherly blessings toward his people has to do with his provision of good government. Boy, is that not on our minds now, today? God gives his people something. He gives them the gift of wisdom to govern themselves and to how to conceive of how

¹⁷ Deuteronomy 1:9-10

¹⁸ Deuteronomy 1:11

government should be understood and carried out. And so he gives them good government.

Now Moses starts out this section in verses 12 through 18 by admitting his inability. He says,, “I can’t... I alone am not able to bear this.”¹⁹ And so this is one of the first tests of leadership. Are you willing to trust God and what he says about leadership? That leadership is not primarily conceived of in the heart of God to be a one man deal, but there is a plurality of leaders. And Moses is saying, “I can’t do this alone, but I need more.”

Now, in these verses is revealed a national structure of government and also a principle of government regarding how to choose leaders. We are just getting ready in our nation to choose leaders.

You know, I awoke this morning to the clock radio and what I heard was amazing to me. I heard an ad in which the front running candidate had an ad telling the people that he is going to give them more money than the other guy. That is why you should vote for him. He is going to give you \$1000. The other guy is only going to give you \$250. Vote for me.

Well, how do you choose leaders in the land? And here we find a structure of government. He tells us how to structure a government. He tells us how people should govern themselves. And, you know, how do you manage the household of Israel well? Well, there are various levels. Here we find kind of a national, regional, municipal groupings of people. And it is a republic. And honestly our civil government, the way that our founding fathers conceived of is really patterned after this pattern that is here. You know, people think that we live in a democracy. Well, we were never intended to live in a democracy. A democracy is where people are governed by the values of the people and the votes of the people. And God is not the source of law, but men are the source of law. That is the fatal flaw in all democracies.

Our founding fathers conceived of a republic, a representative republic where people are governed by two things: laws, God’s law and men who are righteous. That is how the government is presented here for the government of Israel. Our founding fathers were looking back into this principle of representative government. And we need to recognize the difference between a republic and a democracy and a republic focuses on qualified representatives of the people and democracies will always fail because they are based on the falleness of the people and the law of the people instead of the law of God.

And so Moses here in this section, again, he calls back to another time, just like he has been... remember he is recalling now. He is taking the things of the past, bringing them forward and saying, “Now, let’s go froward in the ways of the Lord.”

¹⁹ See Deuteronomy 1:9

“At that time...”²⁰ Ok, do you see that term, “At that time”?²¹ He is referring back to Exodus 18 where the burden became too great. Jethro came to Moses and said, “You can’t do this,” and made a suggestion. And it was that suggestion that formed the structure of the godly government of the people. And so here we find that Moses is calling them back to this principle of government.

And, you know, God gives gifts to his people to help them understand how to find good leaders and those gifts are in the principles, in the words that he has shown us for how we should choose our leaders. God is so kind to show us how to choose leaders.

Notice in this passage that the people choose their own leaders, that they are known. And, you know, hey, it really matters what kind of government you have. I have a cousin who lived in the Soviet Union for several years and I got an email from him and he said, you know, “I hope the rest of the American people understand that 200 years of capitalism is about ready to be overthrown.” He says, “I hope that they understand that this is nothing different than the Soviet Union that I lived in several years ago.”

You know, my son David and I were in Romania interviewing a pastor there who was a believer during the Communist era. And in this interview he said the most amazing words. He said, “What most Americans don’t understand is that they are thoroughly socialist in their thinking. The only difference between American Capitalism and the Socialism of Ceausescu who was the despot in Romania is that the American form of Capitalism or Socialism is really... it is just a glitzy form of it, but the thoughts are all the same. You are headed to a Socialistic government,” is what he said.

And we are. And we have candidates today who are presenting socialistic principles to our people and they are gobbling them up and soaking them in and becoming like them and they are going to elect a socialistic government. My cousin said, you know, “Here is what is going to happen. We are going to end up the same kind of health care that we had in the Soviet Union.” He said, “We are going to find that the United Nations is going to control America. We are going to find that hate crime legislation is going ramp up and, you know, pastors will be imprisoned for preaching the Word of God.” He said, “Your children will no longer be yours anymore. They will belong to the state just like it was in Russia when I was there.” He said, you know, “These people are desiring to get rid of babies just like they did in Soviet Russia and they will want to get rid of cars and cows and be headed for zero population growth on the excuse of global warming.” He said, “Welcome to the new world order of centralized control of values and money of which you will have neither.” He says, “Oh, if you want to know where you are headed, just look at the Soviet Union when the wall fell. That’s what you get and that’s what America is headed for.”

Well, I hope he is wrong, but if you ever want... he ended his letter with this. He said if you ever wanted to visit a third world country, just wait a few years. It is coming to you.

²⁰ Deuteronomy 1:9

²¹ Ibid.

And, you know, it really matters what kind of government that you have. It matters what kind of men you elect to office. It really matters. And here Moses makes that very clear. And there are a number of qualifications that he gives. Let's go through them.

Look in verse 13. He says, "Choose wise, understanding, and knowledgeable men."²²

Let's start off with gender qualifications. They are men, ok? Everywhere in the Old Testament where qualifications for leaders is suggested they are males. We see the same pattern in the New Testament for leaders in the New Testament.

You know, you say, "There is no command in Scripture that they should all be men."

No, but every time they are mentioned it is men, males. The same thing in the New Testament. Every time that elders are mentioned they are always men. That is why we don't believe in women elders. It is not because there is a command against female elders. It is just that every single time the office is spoken of it is spoken of as men. And so the first qualification has to do with gender. God has established order and authority.

He said, "God is the head of Christ, Christ is the head of man. Man is the head of woman."²³ That is the creation order. You can't mess with the order. You can't wake up in the morning and say, "Oh, I think I will put man ahead of Christ. Oh, no, no, no. Let's put woman ahead of man." No. It is a fixed order. It is not for us to change the positions that God has established for order and authority in the world.

And so, first of all, there are gender qualifications. They are males. Remember, too, there are character qualifications. They are "wise, understanding, and knowledgeable."²⁴ Notice those three things: wise, understanding and knowledgeable. These are the kinds of people we should be voting for. And if they are not that way, then we should not give them our blessing.

Number three. There are relational qualifications. Verse 15. "So I took the heads of your tribes."²⁵ They were from the tribes. In other words they were leaders that were from among themselves, people who knew one another and so there is this knowledge of the character of the people.

And then there are other qualifications. And, by the way, these qualifications are very consistent with what God says in all of the Scripture about different qualifications. Let's take a different category, the qualifications for elders and deacons are very, very similar. They are all about character, very little about skill, but very much about character. And this is the heart of God in the matter whether it is elders and the government of the local church or the government in the nation, God desires pretty much generally the same kind

²² Deuteronomy 1:13

²³ See 1 Corinthians 11:3

²⁴ Deuteronomy 1:13

²⁵ Deuteronomy 1:15

of people. The qualifications aren't exact and they are not the same things, but they have the same heartbeat to them regarding character.

And then there are stewardship qualifications and this probably has to do with gifts and abilities. "Leaders of thousands, leaders of hundreds, leaders of fifties, leaders of tens, and officers for your tribes."²⁶

So there are different amounts of people that are under certain jurisdictions and some are in charge of large realms and some are in charge of smaller realms and, you know, maybe it goes like this. He who is faithful in little is given much and perhaps that is just faithfulness that you see one who is faithful and he is given more and more and more responsibility.

It is interesting to me that you find that God gives leadership to men quite liberally. I mean look at this. It is almost as if he gives every man leadership in some way. For one thing if you are married you have headship, you have accountability, you have a realm of your home to govern. God makes every man a leader in that sense. Even a single man, a single man is given the responsibility to take dominion and to govern the things that God has put in his hands. God gives leadership to everybody. He doesn't just reserve it for the priests or those who have some sort of special, you know, position. He makes every man a leader. He makes the single man the governor of the dominion mandate that he has given him. He makes the husband and father the governor of his family and he is charged to govern his family well. He is to manage his household well.

And then he gives leaders of 50s and hundreds and thousands and this is the wisdom of God. He invests in men leadership. Every single man is a leader in some way. And God doesn't just segment leaders and the qualifications and qualities of leaders to a certain, you know, priestly class. He spreads it all out and makes every man a leader in some realm. And I think that is a wonderful thing. Of course God is wise in all that he does, but he would make a man to be a leader.

Now, I don't know exactly, you know, who, who... what you have, young men, even you little young men who have dominion over the things that God has put in your hands, but begin to lead and govern the things that God has put in your hands early, early on. And then when you become a husband and father you will better know how to govern your family. And then if God has you to govern a church as a deacon or an elder in some way then you will be better equipped. Start early in the government that God has given to you by a sovereign hand.

Now there are so many things that we could say here. You know, what we see here it is a vision of faithful leadership. Moses is speaking the Word of God. It is a vision of humble leadership where he says, "The burdens are too heavy for me. They need to be spread out."

²⁶ Deuteronomy 1:15

It is a vision of shared leadership where various tribes and legal advisors and judges are brought to the table. There is a management organization of this brilliance here that is portrayed. There is principled leadership that we find here. There is representative leadership that is found here.

And then there is detailed instruction for the judges. You see that in verses 16 through 18.

“Hear the cases between your brethren.”²⁷ In other words, listen to all the cases. Don’t just concentrate on the wealthy and the powerful. Hear all men and don’t have the fear of man. Have no partiality. Hear the great men and the small men and if the case is too difficult then bring it up to Moses himself.

And so God is so kind to provide good government for his people.

You know, God often speaks his will to the people in government.

This week our family was reading Jeremiah 22 and the Word of the Lord comes to the king of Judah through Jeremiah and Jeremiah repeats these same principles that are right here to the king that Moses spoke in Kadesh Barnea. It is absolutely remarkable. And you could read about it in Jeremiah 23 where the prophet says, “Do no wrong, judge justly.”²⁸ All the things that we have read here in this section.

God is very consistent in his leading of his people.

And so God has indicated what kind of organization he desires. He has indicated what kind of gender he desires in leadership. He has indicated what kind of character qualities that he desires and that are needed and he indicated what kind of service the government should provide: counsel to people who are having practical problems in their lives.

The government isn’t to do everything. It is only to do a very few things.

The government of Israel is a foretaste of the government of Christ. The kings of the earth have responsibilities to govern with justice and love and all of these are summarized in Christ. The order and the authority that is pictured here in Deuteronomy it is all fulfilled in Christ. And all you have to do to know that is to go to Jeremiah 23 in which the prophet says in this same context as he is speaking to the ruler. He says,

Behold, the days are coming...that I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.²⁹

²⁷ Deuteronomy 1:16

²⁸ See Jeremiah 22:3

²⁹ Jeremiah 23:5-6

And Christ fulfills all of the commands for the selection of civil magistrates. He is the perfect civil magistrate. He is the Lord our Righteousness.

And so here we find ourselves back at the cross of Christ, the righteousness of Christ given to a repentant sinner. Men cannot be righteous enough by their good deeds, but he has given them a righteous governor, the Lord Jesus Christ who says, "Take my yoke upon you for I am gentle and humble of heart and you shall find rest for your souls."³⁰

God has provided so many blessings in his fatherly care toward us. He has given us a sufficient testimony. He has given us his words. He has given us a genuine relationship. He had given us a providential history. He has given us a Promised Land and a multiplied generation. And he has also given us a good government that is summarized in the love and the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ himself who has become the fulfillment of the law in our hearts.

Would you pray with me?

Lord, we thank you for this amazing set of verses that covers so many areas of life. I pray, Lord, that we would love these words as we continue to consider them in the days to come and that Jesus Christ would be honored and glorified in all of them. Amen.

³⁰ See Matthew 11:29