

Message #39**Deuteronomy 31:1-13**

I was walking down our driveway this week and I saw a beautiful butterfly. I just stopped to watch it. It had beautiful wings and beautiful color. It was so graceful. What saddened me was the fact that most butterflies only live 3-4 weeks. In fact, one type only lives 24 hours. But in their short lifetime, they bring so much beauty to our world. One person said when it comes to butterflies “a butterfly does not count months, it counts moments.”

When it comes to people of God, in all reality, it is the same. Life is like a vapor. It is here for a few years and then gone. It doesn't matter who the person is, that is the way it works. That is the way it was for Moses, as God said to Moses in Deuteronomy 31:14 “Behold, the time for you to die is near.”

Make no mistake about this fact; Moses was a great man of God. He had been used by God in more ways than any other finite human ever had been used or ever will be used. But “all great things must come to an end.” Even the best of God's men come to the time when they leave. It was now Moses' turn. He had come to the end of his incredible life and in the next chapters of Deuteronomy, he gives Israel and us his final words.

When we analyze the next verses and chapters, what we see is this:

MOSES' FINAL MESSAGE TO THE PEOPLE IS I AM GOING TO DIE SO YOU NEED TO TRUST GOD AND TAKE GOD'S WORD VERY SERIOUSLY BY HEARING IT AND OBEYING IT AND FOLLOWING JOSHUA.

When a great man of God dies, you do not get him back. You don't replace a Luther or Calvin. You do not replace a Moody or Spurgeon. You don't replace a Scofield or Chafer or Miles. At best you follow their example and go on.

In the Bible there is no greater man than Moses. The things God did with Moses, He did not do with any other man who ever existed, including the Apostles. But it was time for him to die. We are all sinners and death is a penalty for sin and if the Lord tarries, we will all have our moment.

Verse 1 opens with the fact that Moses spoke to “all Israel.” Later he will mention that the leaders are to gather the men, women and children and strangers to hear the word of God (**v. 12**). Last Friday was my spiritual birthday. God saved me on June 10, 1976. So spiritually speaking, I have been in Christ for 46 years. For the past 46 years I have been pouring through the Scriptures asking God to grant me wisdom to understand it. I have not been able to find any hint of children's church. All the people, men, women and children, were expected to go to the place of worship and hear the word of God. You see that right here. Moses spoke to “all Israel.”

Also notice he did not sing a song, he spoke God's word. This is what people need to hear. People need to gather together and they need to hear the word of God. That is what Moses promoted, that is what Paul promoted and that is what Jesus promoted.

COMMUNICATION POINT #1 – Moses addresses all the people. **31:2-6**

There are nine opening statements that Moses makes to the people.

Statement #1 - Moses was 120 years old when he spoke to these people. **31:2a**

It may have been his actual birthday because he says, “I am 120 years old today.” The fact that he is 120 will be brought up again in Deuteronomy 34:7, when it is repeated as the time he died.

Moses’ life had been incredible. We could break it down down into three main 40 year segments.

- 1) He spent 40 years in Egypt as an Egyptian;
- 2) He spent 40 years in Midian as a shepherd;
- 3) He spent 40 years as Israel’s leader.

What an amazing life. What a career. But no matter how great the man or how great the career, eventually it comes to an end.

Statement #2 - Moses was not able to go out and come in. **31:2b**

We learn in Deuteronomy 34:7 that he still had his eyesight and he still had his vigor. We also know from Deuteronomy 32:49-50 that God told Moses to climb up a mountain to die and he still had strength to do it. So even though he was 120, he did not look to be frail and feeble. He certainly was not bedridden.

But he didn’t have the same stamina to be able to lead the people anymore. When you are God’s leader, there is tremendous pressure and it does take its toll. Moses could not do it anymore.

Statement #3 - God told Moses he would not enter the Promised Land. **31:2c**

In Numbers 20:12, God told Moses he would not bring Israel into the land. The reason was he struck the rock twice instead of speaking to the rock as God had told him. We learn from I Corinthians 10:4 that he had actually defaced Jesus Christ. The rock was going to miraculously supply living water to Israel and no sinful human would be responsible for it. So God told Moses that he would not enter the land.

This had been the goal and dream of Moses ever since he went to Egypt to get Israel. His whole goal was to take them to the land. But when Moses had that one lapse and demeaned Jesus Christ, it cost him.

Men of God and teachers of God’s word will be held to a higher standard than the average church goer. James said in James 3:1 that teachers will receive a stricter judgment. Moses would not enter the Promised Land.

Statement #4 - God is the One who will cross the Jordan with you and defeat enemies. **31:3a**

Notice that once again Moses brings out the fact that God is “the LORD (Jehovah) your God (Elohim).” The sovereign covenant God of Israel, the sovereign creator God of all things is your Personal God and He will cross ahead of you.

What God’s people need to realize is that going forward, when a great man of God is gone, depends on God. Moses had been the only leader they had ever known but it was time for him to die and he wanted them to know God will go before you and you need to follow Him and His word. **God will never let His people down if they love His word and follow Him.**

Don’t ever forget this fact; God will never let you down. Politicians will let you down. Religions and Religious leaders will let you down. You will let yourself down. Your health will let you down. Your friends and finances will let you down, but not God. Understand His word and follow Him. He is the key to victory over enemies.

Statement #5 - Joshua is the one who will lead you because God has spoken it. **31:3b**

This is important. Moses is publicly telling the people Joshua will lead and this is not just Moses’ opinion, but the LORD had spoken this.

There is something important to see from this. Moses was God’s key man through whom God had done so much. Now he, himself, is putting his stamp of approval on Joshua. In many instances, when a key leader or minister leaves, they want to leave him out of the loop. They want to try and go forward on their own without consulting the one guy with whom God did so much.

Paul was very careful in his selection of people to follow him. He took the lead in selecting men who not only would travel with him, but also be involved in his churches.

Statement #6 - God will destroy all your enemies as you have seen Him do already. **31:4-5a**

Those two victories that these people had seen over Sihon and Og and the Amorites were critical victories to their present status. We saw those stories back in Deuteronomy 2-3. Those were intimidating military powers with giants and God dropped them and gave Israel the land. Moses says remember that. When you go forward and face Canaanite enemies, you can trust God to give you victory. He has done it before and He will do it again. Stay faithful.

Statement #7 - You shall obey and do all of the commandments I have given you. **31:5b**

It all comes to down to this. The responsibility of God’s people is to obey God’s word. Know and obey God’s word. We need to stay focused on that objective and leave the rest to God.

Statement #8 - You are to be strong and courageous. **31:6a**

Being strong and courageous was not due to them. It was due to their relationship with God. When we are seeking to know and understand and obey God's word, we will be the strongest and most courageous we can ever be because we know we are right with God. Obedience leads to strength and courage.

Statement #9 - You are not to be afraid or tremble. **31:6b**

God does not want His people spending their lives as a bunch of cowards. Now there are three reasons why you are to be strong and courageous and not be afraid and tremble. These three reasons can take the fear out of any child of God:

(Reason #1) - The LORD your God goes with you. **31:6c**

(Reason #2) - The LORD your God will not fail you. **31:6d**

(Reason #3) - The LORD your God will not forsake you. **31:6e**

God knows every struggle. God knows every sorrow. God knows every setback. God knows every sickness. God knows every stress. God knows every sin.

When His people are focused on knowing and obeying God's word, they can know for certain that God is with us; God will not fail us and God will not forsake us.

This is not just an Old Testament fact. Hebrews 13:5-6 says God Himself says to His people, "I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you, so that we confidently say, 'the LORD is my helper, I will not be afraid, and what will man do to me?'" Then in verse 8 we read "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever."

COMMUNICATION POINT #2 – Moses addresses Joshua in the presence of all the people.
31:7-8

God leads His people according to His word, but He uses some man to help keep that focus. This is the way He has designed it. Joshua had depended on Moses for years. He had been with Moses and had seen what God had done with him and now it was about to be his turn. Moses brought Joshua before all the people to charge him and to put his stamp of approval on him.

He publicly gives Joshua three main messages and six main promises:

Message #1 - Be strong and courageous. **31:7a**

A good leader must be strong and courageous. A good guide must lead. God does not want His leaders to be wimpy or whiny. He wants His leaders to be strong and courageous.

Message #2 - You shall go with these people because God has commanded it. **31:7b**

Joshua's job and responsibility was to go with these people. Joshua was not some politician who had manipulated his way into this position. This was God's doing.

Message #3 - You shall give these people the Promised Land as their inheritance. **31:7c**

Moses says it will be your job to take them into the Promised Land. This is their Promised inheritance and you are to give it to them. There is actually a critical theological point that is made right here.

Moses represents the law and it cannot take anyone into the Promised Land or to Heaven. Joshua represents Yeshua who is the Savior who can take one into the Promised Land and Heaven.

(Promise #1) - The LORD is the One who will go before you. **31:8a**

Spurgeon said that every believer needs to grasp this point whether one is involved in a great work or great warfare. Our God goes before us.

(Promise #2) - The LORD is the One who will be with you. **31:8b**

God doesn't just go before us and leave us in the dust; but He is with us.

(Promise #3) - The LORD will not fail you. **31:8c**

God will never fail His people who turn to Him, trust Him and obey Him. We will find ourselves in war; but God will take care of most of it and He will never fail us.

(Promise #4) - The LORD will not forsake you. **31:8d**

God never forsakes His people no matter what they face.

(Promise #5) - Do not fear. **31:8e**

The fact that we can know God is with us is what prompts us not to fear.

(Promise #6) - Do not be dismayed. **31:8f**

When we find ourselves perplexed, remember God is right there with us in the midst of it.

COMMUNICATION POINT #3 – Moses wrote the Law and gave it to the priests and elders.
31:9

Why bring this point up? God wants His people to realize the importance of the written word of God. God's word is written. God's written word needs to be protected and studied and publicly read and obeyed. Leaders have a responsibility to see to it that this is done.

COMMUNICATION POINT #4 – Every seven years the priests are to read this to all the people in the place of God. **31:10-13**

God says every seven years you leaders gather all the people together, including the men, women and children, and you read the entire law to them (**v. 12**).

They need to “hear” the word, “learn” the word, “fear God” and obey the word.

This is the problem we have today. God's word has not been taken seriously. People go to church and hear all kinds of stuff.

Many ministers and religious leaders have failed to systematically teach the Bible and, as a result, there is no fear of God and no passion to obey the word of God.

It doesn't matter what the denomination; it doesn't matter what the location or the color of people's skin. Religious leaders have failed them. They have not gathered the people together and systematically taught Deuteronomy. They have not gathered them together and taken them through Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. They have wasted people's time and they will be held accountable.

Life is short. Wise are those who count moments, especially moments at church.

The O.T. law will never take you into the Promised Land. You will not get to Heaven by your works or your attempt to keep the O.T. law. There is one way in, Jesus Christ. Believe on Him and He will take you all the way to Heaven.