

Shaped by Love

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[0 : 00] We're going to spend a couple of minutes looking at that passage in Deuteronomy 4. Let's first remind ourselves of the story behind the passage. So this is Moses' farewell speech.

The Israelites have escaped slavery in Egypt, and they're just about to enter the Promised Land. They just have to cross this river, and it's right there. Just before entering, Moses gathers them all up, and he preaches three sermons.

And then he dies, and that generation enters the Promised Land. So the Scripture we're looking at tonight comes right at the end of the very first sermon.

So the question I want to begin with is this. Why did Moses have to preach these sermons? And it's because the Israelites weren't entering an empty land.

They weren't homesteading, right? There were already people there. There were cities there, and there were cultures there. And there were some pagan religions that were really, really saucy, very attractive to people.

[1 : 03] So Moses is like he's pulling them aside. He's pulling his crew aside, and he's saying, Look, when we get there, it's going to be crazy. This is a crazy place.

And your two great temptations are going to be to forget. To forget, number one. And number two, to worship other idols.

To forget and to worship idols. To forget what God has done for you. And to run off to these other kind of sexier religions. So that's why Moses preaches these sermons.

So now, that's the background. Let's jump into it. The first sermon. The summary at the end of this first sermon. We'll take a look. Deuteronomy 4, 32 to 40.

And it's quite elegant, actually, how Moses begins this summary. He asks them a couple of rhetorical questions. The first one in verse 32. Since the day that God created people, asked from one end of heaven to the other, whether such a great thing as this has ever happened or was ever heard of.

[2 : 11] So Moses is saying, Remember the incredible things that God has done for you. And then he gets really, and then he gets specific. He sort of drills down on that.

Like, remember what specifically. And he tells them in verses 33 to 34. He says, again, rhetorical questions. Did any people ever hear the voice of a God speaking out of the midst of a fire, as you have heard, and still live?

Or has any God ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation by trial, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand, and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror, all of which the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes?

So these rhetorical questions, Moses is reminding his people of their history with God, what God has uniquely done for them, what God has uniquely done for them.

And there are two big things he reminds them of. First, the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. Mount Sinai, that's the fire, the fire bit, God speaking through a fire.

[3 : 21] And secondly, the exodus from Egypt. That's the taking the nation from another nation bit. But you can summarize these two big points by saying, Moses basically says, remember these two things.

God speaks, and God saves. God speaks, and God saves. He says, remember, remember. And why remember them? Well, look at verse 35 there.

To you, it was shown that you might know that the Lord is God. There is no other besides him. This means that, you know, these things happened.

So you would know there is one God, and he is in a class of his own. And these are great things to remember, not just for the people hearing them now, but today, great things for us to remember

when we're tempted to trust and hope in anything other than God.

Now, just for a minute, let's dig into these two things that Moses calls us to remember. God speaks, and God saves. So firstly, we'll start with God speaks.

[4 : 28] So we live in a very spiritually foggy city in Vancouver, and it's just, it's so wonderful to be reminded here that God is not an impersonal entity, that he has a voice, that he speaks, and he spoke to his people on Mount Sinai, and he speaks to us now through his word.

And he spoke most succinctly and most beautifully through his son Jesus, who the Bible and John calls the word. I want to, I want to, I really wanted to remind you of that because for some of you, you might say, you might say, listen, I've just never really had a real personal sort of intimate experience with God.

Folks, you have, you have. Every time you hear the word of God, you are hearing God, God speak to you.

Every time you open the Bible, you're hearing God speak to you. You're having a personal, intimate experience with God. God is not silent.

He is not a dark mystery. He doesn't leave us guessing about life. He has spoken in human words that you can get a hold of. God is more personal than you probably realize.

[6 : 06] And that is, I mean, that is a tremendous thing to consider. And sometimes we take it for granted. There's a great story in the Bible. So it's about 1000 BC and the Queen of Sheba travels thousands and thousands of miles through deserts just to ask King Solomon some questions, to hear the wisdom of God.

It's just wild. It's a great story. Folks, we're such a privileged people. Our God speaks. He speaks and we can hear it. We can understand it.

Our God speaks. Moses reminds them. And he saves. Verse 34. Has any God ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation?

Moses tells him to consider the miraculous thing he did for his people. He rescued this enslaved nation out of another nation.

Earlier in verse 20, we didn't read it, but let me read it to you. It says here, The Lord has taken you and brought you out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt to be a people of his own inheritance, as you are this day.

[7 : 20] I love that phrase, inheritance. It's such a, it's a really rich word. Inheritance in this context is, it's like a, it's like an extravagant, it's like getting a treasure, right?

That's how God sees us. That's how he's talking about us here. We're like this treasure. We're like this big pile of diamonds or gold, you know, like beautiful and immensely valuable to him.

We, we are God's treasure. We're God's inheritance. And not only that, but he's bound himself to us through a covenant. And the covenant says, I love you.

I have saved you. And, and, and I've got a hold of you and I won't let you go. And for us, this covenant is made rock solid and crystal clear in, in Jesus.

Moses says, remember, remember, you have been saved by a God who thinks you are a treasure.

[8 : 21] Now let's keep moving through the passage. Verses 36 and 37. Look at this. Out of heaven, he let you hear his voice that he may discipline you.

That's a picture of a parent and a child right there, that he might discipline you. And on earth, he let you see his great fire. And you heard his words out of the midst of fire, which again, it's just this great picture.

Fire is beautiful and dangerous. And I think that's a great picture of the word of God. Verse 37. He loved your fathers and he chose their offspring after them. And he brought you out of Egypt with his own presence by his great power.

So again, Moses just reiterates these two big points. God speaks and God saves. But then he follows it up with application, which is great. Super helpful to us.

He follows it up immediately with two sentences that begin with the word, therefore. So he said this and then he goes, therefore, twice. So let's look at them. Verse 39.

[9 : 20] Know therefore today and lay it to your heart that the Lord is God in heaven above and on earth beneath there is no other.

And verse 40. Therefore, you shall keep his statutes and his commandments, which I command you today that it may go well for you and your children after you, and that you may prolong your days in the land that the Lord your God has given you for all time.

Gee, that's just this great stuff, isn't it? So let's look at these two therefors. Therefore, lay it on your heart that the Lord is God in heaven above and on earth.

There's no other. You know, as we go through Deuteronomy, we'll see that the greatest sin in Deuteronomy is idolatry.

It's worshiping other things. Now, for us, we're not making, we're not carving idols. But for us, idolatry is placing our trust and our hope in something other than God.

[10:26] And it's so easy to do, isn't it? It's so easy to do. And folks, God hates it. He hates it because it's dehumanizing and it destroys community. Folks, we were made to put the weight, like the weight of our trust in Him.

And when we do that, all these other things that we put our trust in, it could be power or sex or money or vocation or whatever it is. All those other things can find their appropriate place in our life. That's the first therefore. The second therefore. Therefore, you shall keep His commandments and His statutes. Moses says, because you've heard God's word and because you've experienced His salvation, it should shape every part of your life.

Now, when understood badly, this kind of obedience that Moses talks about, this can just be like a heartless sort of duty.

But that's not the way we should understand it. Obedience works sort of like this. If you love someone, you'll find out what they love, right?

[11:43] You'll find out what they love and you could even present it to them, right? You'll search out what they desire. You'll find out what they desire and you'll find it for them or you'll do it for them.

So I've got a mate who is married to a woman who loves Jane Austen and he spent lots of time and big dollars on finding a really early edition of a Jane Austen novel for her.

So, I mean, that's lovely, right? That's just so lovely. This is a picture. That's a picture of Christian obedience. It's simply, it's not this heartless duty. It's just, it's the natural response to love.

You know, we should be a people who search out what God loves and do those things. You know, just two days ago, I'm looking for, I need a bike, I need a bicycle.

And I found this really great bike on Facebook Marketplace. And it's a very good bike and it was really cheap. And I'm talking to the guy and it just sounded really shady.

[12:44] And I thought, he's stolen this bike and he's trying to move it really fast. And I asked myself, and it was very tempting to take this bike. And I asked myself, would this please God?

Of course, it's not going to please God, me participating in stolen goods. So I walked away. Folks, I'm going to finish up here. For the Israelites, the framework of their faith was Sinai and Exodus. It was God spoke. He spoke to them. He spoke the law and God saves. And we're told in verse 39 to lay these truths on our heart.

It's a great phrase, isn't it? It means get that in your bones, right? Don't forget these things.

Because when you remember them and you meditate on them, it shapes your life.

It shapes what you give your resources to. It shapes what you give your attention to. It shapes the priorities of your life.

[13:56] God speaks. He saves. We see it so clearly and beautifully on the cross. Let that drive how you live.

Now, go be the people of God. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.