

Time To Move On

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[0 : 00] 1 and reading from verse 6. Deuteronomy 1 at verse 6. The Lord our God said to us in Horeb, You have stayed long enough at this mountain.

Turn and take your journey and go to the hill country of the Amorites and to all their neighbors in the Arabah, in the hill country and in the lowland and the Negev and by the sea coast, the land of the Canaanites and Lebanon, as far as the great river, the river Euphrates.

See, I have set the land before you. Go in and take possession of the land that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, to give to them and to their offspring after them.

I have a book in my study. I haven't read it all. I'll just dip into it now and again. It's called The Penguin Book of Great Speeches and it contains speeches from some of the really famous orators in history, people like Winston Churchill, John F. Kennedy, others like that, mostly political figures down through the years.

There are excerpts from their speeches and of course whether you think a speech is a great speech or not, in many respects that's a very subjective thing. But the greatest speeches in history have been speeches that really moved people, especially moved them to take important action.

[1 : 31] That's really essentially how we look at a speech and say, well, that was a very important speech because it led to such and such an action on the part of people that actually took account of what the speaker was saying.

Deuteronomy is largely comprised of three great speeches by Moses. When you look through Deuteronomy, which was written, which was set at the time the people were just on the plains of Moab, ready to enter into the land of Canaan, the land that God had promised them, much of Deuteronomy is a recap or a retelling or a reminding to the people, a recalling of what the Lord had done and how he had brought them on this journey and the things that had happened to them on the journey since they left Egypt, especially since they left Mount Sinai and made their way through to the plains of Moab where they were now then ready to enter into the promised land.

So much of the book is really about the speeches of Moses in recalling God's great works of redemption that the people had come to know.

And here in verses six to eight, Moses recalls how the Lord had said to them when everything at Mount Horeb, that's Mount Sinai, when everything that God had planned to take place there had actually been accomplished, when he was finished with all that he wanted to do, at Mount Sinai for them in the giving of the law and all that that revelation meant for them.

Then God said, now it's time to move on. It's time to actually take the next step in your journey, the next stage in the journey. That's what he's saying. The Lord God, our God said to us in Horeb, you have stayed long enough at this mountain.

[3 : 25] In other words, that incident, that period that they spent at Mount Sinai had done its work. God had accomplished all that he had intended through that time that they spent at Mount Horeb.

And now it's time to leave Sinai. That's really our first point. God is, Moses is reminding them how God had said, it's time now to leave Horeb, looking back over these years.

Now, Sinai was a very significant stop. And the time that they spent there was time that they, as a people, would never forget. And a time that they were reminded of so frequently because the giving of the law, not just the Ten Commandments, but the other laws and regulations that were built around these, as you find them set out there in the book of Exodus, you can see that that was such a formative stage in the people's experience and the people's relationship with God and in the people's understanding of who they were and what they were in the world set to do by God to be his people.

And that significant stop really was something that not only the Old Testament, but the New Testament, often in the writings of the New Testament, refers back to what happened on Mount Sinai.

It is one of the most significant events in the history of God's people down through the centuries and millennia even. So it was a significant stop, a significant time for them because it was part really of what formed them ultimately into being the covenant people of God.

[4 : 58] It was such a significant stage in their development. But although it was such a significant stage, once it had done its work, once it was actually, once it had reached the completion of that stage, then they had to move on.

They couldn't stay at Mount Sinai any longer than God had intended, any longer for that work that was done at Mount Sinai to have been completed. Once it was, they then must move on.

Now that's what life is like for ourselves. This is really, in a sense, an image or a picture for us of our own lives in the world as well because our lives as Christians is made up of stage, just like everybody's life is, but we're thinking of it from a Christian perspective.

Our life as Christian is made up of various stages and experience, stages in terms of events. It's not just simply a day after day sequence that we have to think of.

We have to think as day after day goes by, as the time goes by, within that time span of life, and a whole series of stages in our experience, a whole series of stages in events that happen to us and the providence of God.

[6 : 12] Some of these events might stretch out over many weeks or even months. Some of them may just be momentary for a day or even a few hours, but they're all significant. They are all within God's plan for your life and for our life, for our life as a people, as a congregation indeed as well.

And I think of the way, for example, the main stages, I'm sure of your experience, the stage that you look back over before you came to know the Lord, the stage by which you lived your life without being under, consciously and willingly under the direction of Jesus in submission to him.

But that stage came to an end when God came into your life, when he turned you around, when he gave you to see that you needed Christ, that you needed to be under his direction, that you needed to trust in him, that you needed his forgiveness, that you needed to live under his own governorship from then on.

That was the stage of your spiritual journey beginning. And since then, it doesn't matter how long you've been on that journey or how short a time you've been on that journey, there were various stages that you can look back over, stages in which you experienced things that really tested you, stages by which, just like the people of Israel, you came across certain types of opposition that you had to contend with and overcome.

Stage where you came from believing in Christ and progressing in that way to then, as we've done last Lord's Day, to come forward to confess him openly.

[7 : 45] That is another stage in our experience, another stage on the journey through to our homeland in heaven. You've got that as another significant stage, and a significant stage that has its own contribution to the development of our spiritual life.

So here is a reminder to us that all of these stages, some of these stops have significance more than others. You know, sometimes we might feel that the stage we're at feels very comfortable to us.

And perhaps we don't really want to move on from there very readily. I suppose I can speak from a personal point of view in that respect. I'm happy to say that previous congregations that I served as a minister were very happy times.

Moving from these congregations, from Easterbride to Garibust, from Garibust to Stornoway, they were not easy. They were not easy because we were very content there. They were not easy because we'd seen the work of God, thankfully, taking place over the years we spent there.

But the time came when God said, you have stayed long enough at this mountain. There was no blinding flash of light to say, that's demonstrating to you that this is now the end of this part of the journey.

[9 : 04] You have to move on. But God gives you that conviction inwardly. God tells you in your inner soul that you can't just stay at certain places that feel comfortable.

And I'm sure that's how it is with regard to open profession of the Lord in our lives. We need to come out from keeping that semi-hidden, at least as it were, in order to actually come and take the

next step.

We're so thrilled, really, on the Lord's Day that people came for the first time to take that step. And it's not just that they take the step so that improves and hopefully develops their own spiritual life. It's a wonderful blessing for us who've been through that stage ourselves. As we look back on it, what is a greater thrill and to see people coming to know the Lord and then coming to confess that they know the Lord and come openly and professing to join the Lord's people in the world. All of these are stages and all of them, to a certain extent, are for a period and we then need to move on.

[10:09] And of course, the ultimate in that is when we come to the end stage of life itself. And when the Lord makes it clear to us this world is not our home, we can't actually stay in this world, even though at times we would perhaps think it's quite comfortable where we are.

We love the people we're with and they love us, but we know that time is coming when the next stage, the final stage, has to be entered and when God will take us home.

So all of these stages and at each of these stages, important stages as they are, now God is saying, you have stayed long enough at this mountain. Time to move on. Time to make further progress towards your destination.

And so tonight, as you look at your own life, is that not how it is? You have all of these experiences to look back on and you can see where your life, where your life took a pause, if you like, for a time. What it was God was teaching you through that. Maybe there were times of illness or even serious illness. And however long that stage lasted, it had its own effect on your thoughts and on your outlook.

[11:22] But the time came, thankfully, when you moved on from that, when God blessed that to you and you were able to say, well, in some way or other, with the psalmist, it was good for me that I was afflicted, that I might learn your statutes, that I might know more of you, Lord, even through such difficulties or trials.

So you have all of these stages. And here is God saying, it's time now to take your journey and to leave this mountain and go on in your journey. And every day, it's really something like that for us as well.

And it's a good idea, I think, to say to myself and you to say to yourself, each day that dawns, well, Lord, this is whatever is in this day is another stage in my journey.

Help me to see that it's important for me to move on, to progress, to grow and to gain from what I've experienced up to now. So the second thing that Moses reminds them of is how you have a description here of the road to Canaan.

There was the emphasis on leaving Sinai, but he says, turn and take your journey. This, of course, was God at that time speaking through Moses, turn and take your journey and go to the hill country and so on and see, he says, I have set the land before you.

[12:42] Go in and take possession of the land. And it's a marvelous combination there if you, these middle words in between are not unimportant, but if you take verse six there and verse eight together, the Lord our God said to us, you have stayed long enough on this mountain, turn and take your journey, go in and take possession of the land.

That's the ultimate goal. That is why he's moving them on. That's why they cannot stay at Mount Sinai. That's not going to be the resting place. They're going to learn much there, but it's for the journey ahead of them.

And they have to maintain in their sight the final destination that God has for them. Now, Canaan was not just a few odd miles away.

It's going to be a long journey for them and an arduous journey for them. And not only was it arduous in terms of physical travel, it was arduous too, because they would have to contend with certain enemies and opposition that they met on the way.

Now, it's not long since we gave some time to study Ephesians chapter six, the passage dealing with the armor of God and how we need that armor because we're going to and are constantly in conflict to some degree or other with the evil one.

[14:01] We are not actually, as that passage reminded us, we don't wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual darkness that's in this world, the principalities of darkness.

That's why we need the armor of God because we're on a journey. And as we're on a journey, so we confront those who are standing against us, that those forces, those opponents of God and of

his kingdom.

And you know all about that already yourselves. You've felt that opposition. You've come to know that opposition. And so it's not an easy terrain in many ways, but yet notice here how it says in verse 8c, I have set the land before you.

Go in and take possession of the land. Now remember, this is God speaking. This is Moses' reminder to the people of what God said when they were at Mount Sinai these 40 years before now. What a wonderful emphasis that is. He's saying, I have set the land before you. This is God. And he's not hiding from them the fact that they're going to meet with enemies. They're going to have to contend with these enemies along this route until they come to the plains of Moab as they're now in. [15:18] And even when they come to the land of Canaan, they're going to meet opposition there that they have to overcome. But God is saying to them, yes, that's all in place. I'm not hiding that from you. But over and above that, I'm telling you, I have set the land before you.

It's your land. It belongs to you. I have given it to you. I have set it. You see, there's the emphasis from God for us today. Every single thing that belongs to God's inheritance that he has promised us, this inheritance that awaits us in heaven, maybe it feels that it's still a long journey.

We don't know. It might be a few hours. It might be a few days. It might be many years. It doesn't matter what meets with us on that journey, what variety of opposition you'll meet on that journey. But always keep in mind these words of God. I have set the land before you. Nothing is going to stop you entering. Nothing is going to prevent you obtaining that inheritance.

It's there because God has set it. And whatever God has in his providence for us, as he did for the Israelites on their way through the wilderness, whatever experiences they had, none of them were designed to stop them actually coming into their inheritance.

[16:33] Because that's what ultimately they did. As a people, they came to settle in the land of promise. Whatever God has for you and for me, whatever rigors we may meet, they're always outweighed by the certainty of God's plan, the certainty of God's purpose and provision and his power, and of the way that he has already set the land, the inheritance of heaven for his people.

So that's the first thing God's provision for them. He has already set out the land. It's actually secure. It's secure because they were going to meet with these giants.

Remember, this is why they took such fright when the report came back from the spies who had gone in to spy out the land, as you find in the book of Numbers. And although the spies had reported it's a really, really good land and the Lord is able to actually take us through, most of the people were terrified and they rebelled and they said, we're not going to, we're not going to do that. And so that's what led to the times that they had to wander in the desert until finally they reached this land of Canaan. But God has already done this for us as well.

How has God secured the land of heaven for us? Well, he's done it through a pioneer. Hebrews, the letter to the Hebrews uses that word for Jesus.

[18:17] And that word is used for Jesus just to teach us that the way that we have to travel has already been travelled by him. The opposition that we face has already been faced and overcome by him.

After all, the devil for which, against which we need this armour that's mentioned in Ephesians 6 that's specified there, that devil met with Jesus and Jesus dismissed him.

Jesus overcame him. Jesus has him on his leash. So that's why already that pioneer has gone ahead of us.

He is the captain of our salvation, the author of our salvation. Different translations, but these words are actually, they mean that pioneer who has gone before us.

He has pioneered the way, he has opened the way. Just like you would find in the old days of the explorers coming to a jungle that had never been traversed before and they would make their way and hack their way very often through dense jungle so that those then that were following could follow that route that they had opened up.

[19:24] This is what Jesus has done. He has opened up for us what Hebrews calls a new and living way into the presence of God. And that is why as we ourselves meet with opposition we can say God has already laid this land out.

Yes, there will be foes. Yes, there will be opposition. Yes, there will be difficulties. Yes, you'll have to wrestle against the movements of your own heart, of your own inner sinfulness at times.

What the Bible, what Romans, what Paul, to Romans and other writings of Paul speaks about as the flesh. the flesh warring against the spirit and the spirit against the flesh.

That's an internal warfare that goes on within our souls. And, you know, it's a great, it's a great mark, it's a great evidence of God having already done a good work in you if you're conscious of that warfare, if it's a concern to you.

Because let's face it, people who live their lives without any obedience to God or without any concern to live a life that's pleasing to God, they're not really at all aware or certainly not willing to confess that this is in any way important, the tensions within their own minds, within their hearts.

[20 : 42] But you as Christians, you know that that tension, that that warfare is a war between good and evil. It's a war between sin and the Lord, between your own desire to push on and other influences are trying to keep you back.

So, as God is saying this to us, he's saying, I've already laid out the land and he's actually now saying, go in and take possession of it. Every day for us as Christians, we had a wonderful time of communion on the Lord's Day.

But now as we emerge from that, as we still think of the blessing that that entailed, he had us God saying to us, well, that was wonderful but you can't stay there, you can't stay at the Lord's Table, good though it is.

You have to use what you learned from the Lord's Table, what you experienced at that time of blessing and bring it with you into the next day and into the next stage and build on it.

And one of the reasons we're here tonight is to do that because that's what we try to do at our midweek meetings is to get more in-depth teaching from the Bible that will apply to ourselves as Christians progressing on in our Christian life and making our way on in the journey.

[21 : 56] Go in and take possession of it. And not only had God laid out the land but also you can see how God's faithfulness was a great guarantee of their success.

Why do I say that? How do you find that coming across in the passage? Well, you can see how Moses there at that time or God through Moses in verse 8 the final part of it there take possession of that land that the Lord swore to your fathers to Abraham to Isaac and to Jacob to give to them and to their offspring after them.

See, Moses or God through Moses was pointing the people back in history to what they knew had happened in the case of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob their ancestors these people who had come into covenant with God by the grace of God who had been given these great promises by God that their descendants would come and inherit this land this would be their inheritance and there they are under Moses' leadership now on the plains of Moab about to enter the land that God had promised all these hundreds of years before to Abraham to Isaac and to Jacob.

In other words they can say with certainty our God God is faithful. You know that faithfulness is one of the great attributes of God.

God can't change his faithfulness. His faithfulness remains and is a constant in his very being. He cannot but be faithful to his promises to his people.

[23 : 39] He cannot but be faithful to himself to everything that he himself is and says and promises to his people.

And again when you go to the promises of God as Paul said in writing to Corinthians that the promises of God were secure in Christ Jesus.

Why are the promises of God sure to us? Not only because God has actually faithfulness as a mark of his character but because Jesus died to secure them.

They are yes and amen in Jesus Christ. In other words Paul was really saying in effect if everything that Christ has achieved can suddenly or at some point or other dissipate and no longer hold its value then the promises of God can crumble.

they can come to nothing. Of course that's never going to happen. It is our source of confidence and our source of joy tonight as we come from a time at the Lord's table as we come now to take further steps into the journey that leads us home.

[24 : 56] We take with us the faithfulness of God. We've seen his work you've seen it in your life you've already experienced his faithfulness up to this very moment in your life. He's never let you go he's never let you out of his sight he's instructed you through his word he's given you the companionship of fellow believers on the journey he's reaffirmed more than once to you the validity of his promises in a world where promises really dissipate so easily not so with this hold on to the fact that God is himself faithful he has proved himself to be true and faithful one of the great name

places it's interesting always isn't it to go and I'll finish with this to go into the Bible and look at the names of places that were significant in the experience of some of God's people Bethel for example and in chapter 22 of

Genesis and verse 14 well you remember there the incident the famous incident where God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac and there was there was Abraham ready to do that very thing just ready to take the life of his son in obedience to God having laid out the sacrifice the wood and and his son as the sacrifice and you remember that Isaac had asked his father on the way up the mountain here's the wood and here's the fire but where is the lamb for a burnt offering and the wonderful famous memorable reply of Abraham my son God will himself provide a lamb or God will find provide a lamb for himself and he did at Calvary the lamb of God the son of God our savior the Lord

Jesus Christ but in chapter 22 there of Genesis verse 14 we find the name that Abraham gave to the place Abraham took the ram that was caught in a thicket and offered it up instead of his son so Abraham called the name of that place the Lord will provide the Lord will provide that was the name he gave to that specific place and so every time we associate the Lord with fulfilling his promises we can take that with us because these words can be translated that name of the place God will see to it God will see to it God will provide God will see to it how are we going to maintain our progress in this life well it's not that we don't have our own work to do we need to continue believing and trusting continue using our

Bibles continue using our gatherings our worship services our means of grace continue as God enables us to progress in every way in which we have a contribution to make but ultimately our progress is not based upon that itself though it's not without that it's that God will see to it it doesn't matter who you face tomorrow what things there may come into your providence tomorrow what tests there may be what it may feel like to you what questions what doubts may enter into your mind never forget this as you make your way step by step on this journey as you meet with the sons of Anak as it were these giants in the spiritual world how are you going to overcome them where are you going to get the strength to progress God will see to it God will provide and you can see as you look back out over your life tonight isn't that what has been your experience up to now that God has provided and isn't the fact that God has provided in your past isn't that itself a springboard to saying that God will continue to provide in your future time to leave

Sinai time to take the road to Canaan time to set the destination before us every day we live and time at all times every day to say God will see to it God will provide let's pray Almighty God we thank you for the encouragement that we receive from your word and we thank you especially oh Lord as we think of the various issues in our lives from day to day the things that we didn't expect the things that hurt us and cause us pain things that sometimes threaten to crush our spirit Lord our God we give thanks that you have gone before us that you have overcome all enmity and all opposition so that your people can safely follow you and that we can safely say since you have gone successfully before us and since you promise us Lord that you will see to it that we progress on the way we thank you tonight for the confidence that this brings and for the way that you turn us away from depending upon ourselves to looking for your strength to be made perfect in our weakness bless your word to us we pray once again and those that we commend to you already mentioned for prayer this evening we pray that you grant your healing touch to be with all those that we bring before you who are ill and receiving treatment and going through operation at this time [31 : 09] Lord we commit them to you we pray too for our world we pray that in regard to this dangerous escalating situation oh Lord in Ukraine that you would be pleased to intervene but you would be pleased to give the leaders of the world the necessary way with all and the wisdom and indeed the courage as well to take steps that will be short of war successful in achieving an outcome that would preserve peace and order in our world we ask Lord that you would help us in all of this to cry out to you and help us though we live at such a great distance geographically from these events Lord help us to use the privilege you have given us to pray for all people to pray for all nations to pray for all in our world that they might come under the lordship of Christ and to acknowledge you as their king and to place themselves and their people under your care oh Lord hear us we pray and pardon our sin for Jesus sake amen now a final praise this evening is in psalm 68 that's in the scottish psalter psalm 68 page 302 and verses 7 to 10 oh god what time thou didst go forth before thy people's face and when through the great wilderness thy glorious marching was then at god's presence shook the earth then drops from heaven fell ■ letCu land as