

Deuteronomy 5:22-33

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, good morning, everyone. It's good to see you this morning. Can you hear me okay? No. Check one, two. The green light's on.
- Should be working. How about now? You got me? Good. Okay. Great. Hey, we're going to continue our sermon series in Deuteronomy this morning. So would you turn with me to Deuteronomy chapter five? That's page 150 in the Black Pew Bible, if you want to follow along there.
- We're going to look at, in particular this morning, verses 22 through 33. But I want to start by reading just the first few verses of chapter five to set the context for us.
- So Deuteronomy chapter five, page 150, looking in particular at verses 22 through 33, but let's start with verse one. Well, as we turn to God's word, let me say a prayer for us that God would open our hearts and minds to hear from him this morning.
- Let's pray. God, indeed, you are a holy God. Lord, we've sung and we've reflected and we've meditated upon that truth this morning.
- [1 : 0 6] So Lord, it's with wonder and with humility that we come to your word, realizing that it's a great privilege to be able to hear you speak to us therein.
- So God, we come humbly and expectant to hear from you. God, would you send your spirit this morning in deeper measure to open up our minds and our hearts to hear what you are saying to us this morning.
- Father, we ask this in the name of Christ. Amen. So Deuteronomy chapter five, verse one. And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them, hear, O Israel, the statutes and the rules that I speak in your hearing today, and you shall learn them and be careful to do them.
- The Lord our God made a covenant with us in Horeb. Not with our fathers did the Lord make this covenant, but with us who are all of us here alive today. The Lord spoke with you face to face at the mountain out of the midst of the fire.
- While I stood between the Lord and you at that time to declare to you the word of the Lord, for you were afraid because of the fire and you did not go up into the mountain. And then Moses recounts the Ten Commandments, which we looked at last week.
- [2 : 1 5] Picking up in verse 22, these words the Lord spoke to all your assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire, the cloud, and the thick darkness with a loud voice, and he added no more.
- And he wrote on them two tablets of stone and gave them to me. And as soon as you heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, while the mountain was burning with fire, you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders.
- And you said, Behold, the Lord our God has shown us his glory and greatness, and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire. This day we have seen God speak with man, and man still live.

Now therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us. If we hear the voice of the Lord our God any more, we shall die. For who is there of all flesh that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire as we have and has still lived?

Go near and hear all that the Lord our God will say and speak to us all that the Lord our God will speak to you, and we will hear and do it. And the Lord heard your words when you spoke to me.

[3 : 25] And the Lord said to me, I have heard the words of these people which have spoken to you. They are right in all that they have spoken. Oh, that they had such a heart as this always, to fear me and to keep all my commandments, that it might go well with them and with their descendants forever.

Go and say to them, Return to your tents, but you stand here by me, and I will tell you the whole commandment and the statutes and the rules that you shall teach them, that they may do them in the land that I am giving them to possess.

You should be careful, therefore, to do as the Lord your God has commanded you. You shall not turn aside to the right hand or to the left. You shall walk in all the way that the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may go well with you, and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess.

This is God's Word. Well, I wonder if you consider yourself a spiritual person this morning, someone who's open to God, someone who's curious about spiritual things.

If that's you, I'm glad you're here, because our passage actually has a lot to say about what true spirituality is all about. You see, in our text this morning, the Israelites have an experience of God, don't they?

[4 : 45] And the first thing that they realize is that they need a mediator if that relationship is going to continue. And then what does God say? God says, you're right, and I wish you would have that kind of heart forever, because then you would be in awe of me like you should, and you would obey me like you should, and then you would truly flourish.

So this morning, if we were to ask, what kind of heart do we need if we're really going to know and experience true biblical spirituality? The answer from this text would be the kind of heart that knows it needs a mediator.

So with that, our passage answers four questions for us this morning. It answers what is a mediator? Why do we need one?

Where do we find one? And what difference does it make? That's going to structure our talk this morning. So let's dive in first. What is a mediator, biblically speaking?

Verse 5 gives us a great picture. Did you catch it? Moses speaks to Israel and says, I stood between the Lord and you at that time. A mediator is someone who stands in between two parties, right? Not to divide them, but to connect them.

[5 : 58] Look again at verse 27. Israel says to Moses, go near and hear all that the Lord our God will say, and speak to us all that the Lord our God will speak to you, and we will hear it. So there is Moses connecting the two.

A mediator stands between for the purpose of bringing together two parties who are separated or distant. We actually see the concept again in verses 30 and 31. God says to Moses, go and say to them, that is Israel, return to your tents, but you stand here by me.

Do you see the distance that's implied there? Stand here by me and I will tell you the whole commandment and the statutes and rules that you will teach them. So there's this gap between two parties that needs to be filled.

There's a gulf that needs to be crossed. And that's what a mediator does. Brings connection between the two. Now, sometimes that gap can be a cultural gap or a linguistic gap or an intellectual gap that a mediator fills, right?

Some time ago, my wife and I were in Italy, and we had spent six or seven days really going hard, visiting as many cities as we could. We went to Rome and then to Florence and then to Venice. And then after a week of doing the all-out sort of flat-out tourist thing, we took an overnight train from Venice to Rome, which that's another story for another time.

[7 : 10] Remind me to tell you that story. We took this overnight train to Rome and finally we landed in the town of Orvieto, where we were just going to relax for four or five days. It's a small little town, an hour north of Rome, off the beaten path.

We were there just to chill out. Well, we get to Orvieto, and I am in desperate need of a shave. A week of intense travel.

Of course I didn't shave. I was too busy being Rick Steves, right? Out there with my guidebook, seeing as much as I could. But I was looking pretty gross, so it was time to clean up. And lo and behold, in my backpack, I didn't have any shaving cream.

So no worries, we'll just go to the drugstore, right? We'll just go to the drugstore and we'll pick some up. So we go to the little store and we just can't find it on the shelves. Ah, no worries, we'll just ask the store attendant, right?

She looks young, she probably speaks English. Like all the other young people, all the other young Italians we've run into in the big city, she'll probably speak English. So we go, we ask for shaving cream, and we get the dreaded blank stare.

[8 : 14] She doesn't speak English. Oh, no. Now, okay, so Beth knows a little bit of Italian. But come on, she doesn't know the word for shaving cream, right? So we rifle through our little dictionary, nothing.

We can't find the word for shaving cream. So we found the word for cream or for foam or something like that. And we start patting our faces and using this word. Some Italian word that I'm sure has nothing to do with men's shaving cream.

And the young lady's looking at us like, I have no idea what you're talking about. So she calls over an older woman who's working there. And they try to do their best to make sense of our ridiculousness, but it's no use.

Here we are, pretty funky from a week of travel, miming out shaving motions, and saying some Italian word that could mean cake frosting for all we know. And at that point, we realize that this profound gap exists between us and these kind store attendants.

We couldn't feel more deeply the linguistic gap that stood between us. Maybe they were thinking there was an intellectual gap, too. I don't know. But at that point, we would have loved to have had a mediator, right?

[9 : 25] We would have loved to have a translator who could have stood between us and brought some kind of reasonable connection to bridge this gap. Well, the lights finally went on for them, and they realized what it was we were talking about.

And I don't think the word was anywhere close for shaving cream to what we were using. But thankfully, I was able to get some at last, and we had a good time. But you see, the point is that the gap between us, in this instance, was just a natural one.

We needed someone to mediate because some natural distance was involved. In this case, we just were from different parts of the world, and we spoke different languages. But it's not always a natural gap that mediators fill, is it?

Often, it's what we might call a moral gap. This is how we often use the word mediator. When two parties aren't just at a distance, but when they're estranged, when some kind of wrong has been done, a third party is called upon to communicate between them and to perhaps even bring resolution and reconciliation.

to their conflict. When I was in high school, we had something called peer mediators. When two students were at each other, I don't know, one of them stole the other's girlfriend or kicked their lunch money or something ridiculous like that, we'd have to sit down.

[10 : 41] You know, we'd sit down with a fellow student who was trained in helping them to work things out. It was someone they could trust because it was one of their own. It was a fellow student. But it was also someone who had the skills to help them communicate, even though there was some kind of wrong that had broken down their relationship.

So you see, whether the gap is natural or moral, we see in our day-to-day lives, don't we, the need for mediators all the time. Someone who can stand between, someone who can bridge our separation.

But do you think about the idea of needing a mediator to get to God? I know that's not a very popular idea.

Most spiritualities on offer today will show you a technique or a method for tuning into the divine yourself, something you can do for yourself to get in touch with God.

We don't like to think that I need a third party to have a relationship with God. Why can't I just go to God on my own, right? I'll connect with God my own way.

[11 : 50] But in our passage this morning, everyone involved is saying just the opposite. We need a mediator. In verse 27, the people cry out for a mediator.

You go for us, they say. And in verse 5, at the beginning of the passage, Moses implies that they needed one. And perhaps most striking of all, in verse 29, God himself says that they need one.

He says, I've heard the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They're right. They're right. Which God doesn't often say about what the Israelites are thinking or speaking in the Old Testament.

So it's worth paying attention. This passage is like a triple chorus of voices all singing the same tune in unison. We need a mediator.

Have you ever thought that perhaps this is why your attempts to connect with God have been fruitless?

[12 : 55] Perhaps this is why you're still so spiritually thirsty. Perhaps this is why spiritually you feel like you're still out in the cold and shivering.

Perhaps this is why spiritually you feel so empty and substanceless and void. Perhaps you've been trying to find God on your own when in fact you need a mediator.

But of course this begs the question of why, doesn't it? We've seen what a mediator is and now we have to ask why in the world do we need one? Well, let's read again verses 22 through 26.

These words the Lord spoke to all your assembly at the mountain out of the midst of the fire. And the cloud and the thick darkness with a loud voice. And he added no more and he wrote them on tablets of stone and gave them to me.

And as soon as you heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness while the mountain was burning with fire, you came near to me, all the heads of your tribes and your elders. And you said, behold, the Lord our God has shown us his glory and his greatness.

[14 : 04] And we've heard his voice out of the midst of the fire. This day we've seen God speak with man and man still live. Now therefore, why should we die? For this great fire will consume us.

If we hear the voice of the Lord our God anymore, we shall die. For who is there of all flesh that has heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire as we have and has still lived?

Friends, Israel got what so many of us think we want. An experience of God. A glimpse of his glory and greatness. The voice of God literally speaking to them.

They got it. And what effect does it have on them? It has none of the effects that we think we'll get by being spiritual or religious, does it?

Are they more centered spiritually and existentially? Does it provide great relaxation and stress relief? Do they come away empowered and self-actualized?

[15 : 12] Not at all. Instead, they're utterly undone. It has shaken them to the core of who they are.

And the only thought that they can form into a sentence after this experience with God is, We should have died. You see, friends, God is utterly holy.

There is a gap between us and God that cannot be bridged on our own. And to show us this, God chooses to reveal himself at Sinai with the fire and the cloud and the thick darkness and with a loud voice.

What's been your experience with fire? Many of us have only experienced fires of the campground variety, I think. The kind you make in your backyard in a circle of rocks.

Yeah? But how many of us have personally seen what fire can do when it's unleashed? You know, we read in the 17th century that during the great fire of London, it destroyed over 13,000 homes in the city.

[16 : 24] Just an amazing percentage of the population completely displaced because of this fire. And even today, you pick up the newspaper and you read about wildfires that are just tearing across the western United States, just devouring acre upon acre upon acre of earth.

Friends, God in his holiness is like a great fire. And there are at least two things that fire communicates about God's holiness.

You see, on the one hand, fire is without a form. Think about it. What's the shape of fire? It doesn't really have one, does it? It's always growing and moving and changing and you can't pin it down and you can't contain it.

In the same way, God isn't someone that we can define or limit or manage by an idol or by an image or even by a mental picture. To say that God is holy is to say that God is utterly set apart from the world he's created.

That in his being he is infinitely far above us. That he can't be pinned down or fixed by an image that we think we can cast up.

[17 : 39] You see, like fire, God doesn't have a form. But in addition to that, fire is consuming, isn't it? Fire doesn't coexist with other things, at least in a friendly way.

It swallows them. It breaks them down. It turns them to ash and dust. The first thing that you tell children is not to play with matches. To stay away from the stove because it's hot and it will burn them.

God in his holiness is like a consuming fire. Not just in that his being is infinitely above ours, but that in his righteousness he is infinitely perfect as well.

God's holiness is such that any impure thing would be utterly consumed in his presence. And at Mount Sinai, God reveals himself in a fire that's large enough to swallow a mountain.

And that's bright enough to make the sky turn black. And Israelites knew that for them to stay for long in God's presence was risking disaster.

[18 : 53] For this great fire will consume us, they say. You see, we need a mediator because God is a great fire who would consume us if we were to draw near.

But it wasn't just the fire that unsettled the Israelites, was it? It was also God's voice. We're told in verse 22 that this voice was loud or mighty.

I imagine the Israelites standing before Mount Sinai and trembling before the fire and the cloud and the thick darkness. I mean, imagine East Rock or Sleeping Giant with a pillar of fire just blazing down on top of it.

But then comes the voice of God. Like a thousand trains barreling through their chest and rattling their bones.

The voice of God. Have you ever heard something so loud, so intense, so strong that you literally feel it inside of you?

[19 : 55] Sound has the capacity to do that, doesn't it? God's voice rocked the Israelites from the inside out. And it was really the voice that ultimately struck fear in their hearts, wasn't it?

If we hear the voice of the Lord, our God, anymore, we shall die. They hear God's voice and they know that they need a mediator because they can't stand hearing it.

So what kind of gap is this between us and God? Is it merely a natural one?

After all, God is God and we're just finite humans, right? Is it just the distinction between creature and creator that causes us to need a mediator? Is that all the fire and the voice are meant to tell us?

No. That's not what the problem truly is. Because, you see, when humans were first created, we're told that God walked with Adam in the cool of the garden. God was God and Adam was a finite human and yet they needed no mediator in that state.

[21 : 01] You see, friends, we were created to commune with God. Though God is infinitely above us, we were made in his image with the God-given capacity to relate to him.

You see, our problem, this gap between us and God, is not merely what we might call a natural one. That's not why we need a mediator. The problem is a relational one.

It's a moral one. The problem is our sin. We've turned away from God and rebelled against him. And because of sin, our approach to God is like approaching a consuming fire.

I think our idea of God is too small. Even within the church. It's too cute. It's too neat. It's too packaged. It's too pristine. It's too easy.

We speak of God and we think about God with so much flippancy and so much ease. We talk about seeing God and we talk about the glory of God and we talk about getting in touch with God.

[22 : 10] Friends, would your God utterly unmake you with just the sound of his voice? Would his mere speaking shatter your pretensions and pride and undo you on the spot?

The living God would. The creator. The holy one. The one who appeared in fire and cloud and thick darkness.

The true God. You know, this is the case whenever someone gets a real experience of God in the Bible. The holiness of God rattles them to their bones and they're completely undone.

The prophet Isaiah, nearly 700 years after the Sinai experience, has the same experience. He says, In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up.

And the train of his robe filled the temple. And above him stood the seraphim and each had six wings. And with two he covered his face. And with two he covered his feet. And with two he flew. And one called to the other and said, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts.

[23 : 15] The whole earth is full of his glory. And the foundations of the thresholds of the temple shook at the voice of him who called. And the house was filled with smoke.

And I said, Woe is me, for I am lost. For I am a man of unclean lips. And I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.

For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts. Friends, we need a mediator because God is holy and we are sinful.

And that gap is so great that our good works are no help here. No amount of moral living could quench the fire. Imagine Israel throwing buckets of water onto the fire of Sinai.

Would it make any difference? And spiritual practices, as good as they are, they can't help either. They can't get to the heart of the problem, you see.

[24 : 19] They can't get to the problem of our sin, of our moral condition before God. And so we need a mediator. Someone who will stand between us, sinful people and a holy God, to connect us and to reconcile us and to bridge this great gulf that stands between us.

And that raises our third question. We've seen what a mediator is and why we need one. But where do we find one?

The Israelites, of course, turn to Moses. They say, Moses, you go. You go between us and bring God's word to us. And so he goes.

Moses mediates God's word, in particular God's law, to Israel. And if you wonder why Moses himself doesn't die when he hears God's word, it's because God appoints Moses for the task.

In his mercy, God allows Moses to fill this role. Remember verse 31. It's not just the people who ask Moses to be their mediator. It's God himself who chooses him for that role. And so Moses mediates the law to Israel.

[25 : 31] And for the time being, they're safe. They have the law. They're in awe of God's glory and greatness. They have proper reverence for God due to the encounter at Sinai. But the book of Deuteronomy leaves us asking a question, doesn't it?

Is that sufficient? Is Moses' mediation enough? Think about what God spoke to the Israelites that day. The Ten Commandments.

The Ten Words, as the Hebrew Bible so often puts it. Israel trembled because God's voice was so loud and penetrating. But it's not just how God spoke, but what God spoke that should make us tremble.

Who of us keeps the whole law? Who of us keeps even the Ten Commandments? Who of us keeps even but one of them when we understand them in their depth? You see, Moses' act of mediation at Sinai points us to the need for an even greater mediator.

One who will not just bring us God's law, but bring us God's grace. One who can bring us not just God's word of command, but God's word of forgiveness. In fact, in Deuteronomy itself, Moses himself says that God will send another prophet, another mediator to the people, and that they should listen to him.

[26 : 51] But where do we find a mediator like that? When we turn to the New Testament, the Gospel writers tell us about another mountain.

And on this mountain, there's another cloud. And out of this cloud, the voice of God speaks yet again. And the disciples on that mountain are again terrified, and they don't know what to say.

But this time, the word that God speaks isn't the word of his law, but it's the word of his Son. On the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus reveals his true glory to his disciples.

His appearance becomes radiant white, and God says, This is my beloved Son. Listen to him. You see, the parallels with Sinai are unmistakable, aren't they?

God is saying that the new mediator has come. But from the Mount of Transfiguration, Jesus doesn't issue another law, does he? Rather, he goes forth to Jerusalem.

[27 : 53] He goes to Mount Zion, where he's arrested by the authorities, and betrayed by his friends, and falsely accused in court, and sentenced to be executed on a cross.

And outside the walls of Jerusalem, Jesus is taken atop another hill. And there on Mount Calvary, he's crucified. And when he dies, that same darkness of God falls across the sky.

You see, at the cross, Jesus is becoming the mediator of a new covenant, as we read in Hebrews. The law was given through Moses, the Gospel of John says.

Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. On the cross, Jesus is bearing that fire of God's wrath for everyone who would ever repent of their sin and trust in him.

And you see, Jesus is uniquely qualified to do this because he's no mere human like Moses, but he's fully human and fully God. And being fully human, he can stand in our place and truly represent us.

[29 : 01] And being fully God, he can provide the infinite satisfaction that our sins need. You see, in Jesus, friends, we have the mediator that we need.

The one who can truly bridge that great divide and stand between us and God. The one who went to the cross for our sin. The one who rose from the dead and now lives at the Father's right hand forever, interceding and mediating for us.

Always standing up for those who place their trust in him. And that's what each of us must do. We've already seen that our good works are of no use.

But it's no use either trusting in someone else other than Christ, is it? You know, the fact that your parents are Christians does not make you one. They cannot mediate for you.

And the fact that you might have a human priest or a great pastor or three pastors will be of no avail for you.

[30 : 06] They cannot mediate for you. Perhaps you even pray to Mary or to the saints, hoping that they'll get you favor with God. But they too are not a fit mediator.

The New Testament says there's one God and one mediator between God and man. The man Jesus Christ. We must come to Christ and when we do, we find the perfect and sufficient mediator we need.

if you're not a Christian here this morning and if, or maybe you are a Christian and this thought of needing a mediator is new to you, you might be wondering, how do I make Christ my mediator?

What do I do? I see the gap between God's holiness and my sin and I feel the disconnect and my heart even trembles when I think about facing God and His consuming fire on my own.

How do I receive what Christ has to offer? Friends, the answer is as simple as it is profound. Repentance and faith.

[31 : 19] In other words, admit that your sins are great before God and believe that Christ has died for your sins and risen again to give you new life and place your trust in Him.

It's ultimately a transaction of a heart, you see. Our passage this morning tells us as much in verse 29. God says, oh, that they had such a heart as this, always.

If your heart is moved this morning, then pray to God and ask Christ to be your mediator. There aren't any magic words to say. There isn't a series of religious rituals to undergo.

Just speak to God from your heart. And if He's calling you, do it now. Trust Christ as your Savior and give your life to Him as your Lord.

And God promises that anyone who comes to Him will surely be received and receive all the benefits that Christ has to give. And if God is speaking to you this morning, don't refuse.

[32 : 27] The passage we read earlier from the book of Hebrews compared Israel before Sinai to us before Christ. And if the stakes were high for Israel before Sinai, how much greater are they for us now that Jesus, the mediator, the new covenant has come?

Then God shook one mountain, but now, the writer says, God will shake the whole earth. Then Israel was promised an eternal kingdom, but now we're promised, sorry, Israel was promised an earthly kingdom, but now we're promised an eternal kingdom.

Then the covenant was ratified with the blood of animal sacrifices, but now it's secured through the death of God's own Son. So God is calling you and respond without delay.

Of course, if you have questions, ask. I'll be around after the service. Maybe you came with a Christian friend this morning, ask them, seek this out. Don't let it go by.

But there's one last question I want us to consider, and then we'll close. We've seen what a mediator is and why we need one and where to find one, but finally, what difference does it make?

[33 : 40] When we come to God through Christ, when we trust Him as our mediator, what difference does it make? Well, you see, for Israel, having Moses as their mediator meant they could know God's word, right?

And meant they could have true and reliable communication from God. But more than that, through God's word, they could have intimate communion with God. Not just God's words, but they could live a life with and before God.

That's part of what's going on at the end of chapter 5. It's a way of sort of sealing Moses' authority as a good and true mediator, as the God-selected mediator. He's the one who's bringing God's very word to Israel.

And that's why at the end in verse 32, it says, be careful to do what God commands you. It's not ultimately what Moses commands, but what God is saying through Moses. And that means because of Moses' mediation, Israel could walk in all the way that God had commanded them.

Did you catch that at the end of our passage? They could walk with God. They could please Him. They could resemble Him. They could experience the joy of living God's way and God's world.

[34 : 50] And friends, if that was true of Moses' mediation, how much more true is it now that Christ, our greater mediator, has come? Now that Jesus has reconciled us to God, we can truly walk with Him and we can have intimate and daily communion with Him.

And very practically, that changes two things. First of all, it changes how we pray to God. Over and over, the New Testament tells us that in Christ, we can approach God with confidence.

Not because God's holiness has changed and not because we've cleaned up our acts, but because we have a perfect mediator. You see, prayer utterly changes in Christ.

We can now speak to God as our Father and we can abide in Him. Christian, do you realize what a great privilege this is to be able to speak to God with the liberty and the freedom with which a child speaks to their loving parent?

So remember God's holiness at Sinai when you pray and then remember that Christ has allowed you open and free access to that burning heart of God. Isn't that the depth of spirituality that you're seeking?

[36 : 07] to be able to commune with God freely, to know that He hears your prayers, to sense in prayer His love and His acceptance, not to minimize the majesty and holiness of God, but to approach God in His very holiness and to behold Him in His glory as being for you.

That is what we have in Christ, brothers and sisters. But it doesn't just change how we pray.

It changes why we obey. No longer do we obey God out of drudgery or out of mere duty, but we obey out of delight in this God who has sent His Son to mediate for us.

Obedience flows freely from knowing Christ as your mediator. You've been reconciled to God and your heart fills with love and thanksgiving to this God who sent His Son for you.

Christians, I wonder if obedience has become stale and dull for you. Does living for God no longer excite you like it once did?

[37 : 23] Then this morning, remember what a great mediator you have. Listen to what Moses says in verse 33. You shall walk in all the way that the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live and that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land that you shall possess.

Now you see under the old covenant this triple promise of vitality and prosperity and longevity, they were physical and they were temporal promises and they were conditional on Israel's obedience.

If Israel obeyed, then they would stay secure in the promised land. But you see under the new covenant, under Christ, these promises are no longer temporal or physical but they're spiritual and they're eternal.

It's not about land anymore or stuff but it's about God himself. He is our life. He is our dwelling place. And having these blessings is no longer conditional on our obedience but on Christ's perfect obedience.

In other words, he's won all of these things for us and given them to us freely in Christ, freely for us in faith. So you see, now when we obey, we're walking in the reality of that rich life that God in Christ has won for us.

[38 : 50] We're living out of the new being that God has ushered us into because we have a mediator in Christ. To be sure, there are no promises of material comfort in the new covenant.

There are no promises that things will go well for you temporally in this life. But you can have the assurance that no matter what comes, no matter what loss, no matter what affliction you face, you have what deep down matters most, a life with God.

And you obey because you know that Christ, our mediator, makes that possible and nothing can take it away. You obey because in God is where your heart finds its deepest satisfaction and delight.

So what difference does having this mediator make? It makes all the difference really. We've just started scratching the surface but we could go on and on. It changes how we pray, it changes why we obey, it changes everything.

It gives us a whole new perspective on being God's people in God's world. It changes why we obey.

[40 : 13] And you see, one of the first steps of obedience that we take when we become a Christian is to obey Christ's command to be baptized.

Christ. This morning you'll notice we've got the baptismal tank up here. We've got the joy of baptizing Rob Buttermore. Where's Rob?

There he is. Rob is going to come up and tell us his story of coming to faith in Christ. And having considered this morning God's holiness and our sin and Christ our perfect mediator, it's so fitting that we have someone today who's going to come and who's going to testify about the work of grace that God's done in his life in Christ.

Let me say just a few words about what baptism is all about. You see, baptism is the way to say publicly and corporately that we have taken Jesus as our mediator.

At its heart, baptism is a symbolic action that proclaims the gospel. baptism. You see, when we go under the water and come back up again, it's a symbol of Jesus' atoning death and his resurrection.

[41 : 31] It's a symbol of the washing away of our sins. It's a symbol that we've come to new life in him. Now, to be clear, baptism does not save you. When Rob gets in this tank and gets wet, that's not somehow making him a Christian.

faith in Christ is what saves. But baptism, you see, gives public expression to a believer's faith in Christ. And it gives assurance to a Christian's faith in Christ.

You see, when we're baptized, it's as if God is saying, as surely as your body is washed by this water, so all your sins are washed away through faith in Christ.

It's a beautiful image, is it not? baptism is also for all of us, to see and to encourage, to be encouraged, if we are believers.

And if you're not a Christian here this morning, think of this act that we're about to do as an invitation. Think of it as an invitation to consider the amazing love of God, who would send his son to make us new through his death and through his resurrection.

[42 : 42] So this is baptism in all of its multifaceted glory. And Rob, why don't you come up now and share with us your story.

Morning, church. It's I want to come before everybody and share the work that God has done in my life thus far. I want to start with sharing something I wish I heard early and often in my life.

This is Pastor D.A. Carson explaining the Bible in 221 words. He says, God is the sovereign, transcendent, and personal God who had made the universe, including us, his image bearers.

Our misery lies and our rebellion, our alienation from God, which despite his forbearance attracts his implicable wrath. But God precisely because love is of the very essence of his character takes the initiative and prepared for the coming of his own son by raising up a people who by covenantal stipulations, temple worship, systems of sacrifice, and of priesthood, by kings and by prophets, are taught something of what God is planning and what he expects.

In the fullness of time, his son comes and takes on human nature. He comes not in the first instance to judge but to save. He dies the death of his people, rises from the grave, and in returning to his heavenly father, bequeaths the Holy Spirit as down payment and guarantee of the ultimate gift he has secured for them.

[44 : 13] An eternity of bliss in the presence of God himself, in a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness. The only alternative is to be shut out from the presence of God forever, in the torments of hell.

What men and women must do before it is too late is repent and trust Christ. The alternative is to dissipate the gospel. If you noticed, you didn't hear my name in this once.

Not even once. I want my testimony I'm about to share with you to be the same way. I want you to hear the work of God in my life, not the work of Rob. Only God could transform my life in the way he has done for me, and by no other means would it be possible to stand before you all today.

I do it because it is a rock solid truth. This truth is as real as this pulpit right before me, and it changed my life. I grew up in a loving family in Waterford, Connecticut.

Went to catechism, kindergarten, run through fifth grade, received my first communion. I remember a few Palm Sundays, Easter's, Christmases, but not much else religious. I think I was too young to fully wrap my head around a sovereign God.

[45 : 18] When I was 19, I worked in the mall where a guy named Jeff, he was a watch and jewelry repairman in a booth across from my store. We had a few chats, he started to talk to me about God. He was a great guy, explained the gospel to me, but my heart really shrugged it off.

It sounded like he had a pretty great way to live, and that worked for him, but I figured my way of life was working for me just as well. God placed a few others in my life that preached his good word to me, but my heart was stoned, it just didn't sink in.

Jesus says in Matthew 9, 12, and 13, says, On hearing this, Jesus said, It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. Go and learn what this means. I desire mercy, not sacrifice.

For I have not come to call the righteous, but the sinners. He was calling for me. It took until the age of 23 for me to realize my life wasn't righteous. I was a sinner, and I needed what God had to offer. Around September 2010, I started dating a Christian, and looking back now, I don't know what she was thinking.

I can see so many times when she should have walked away or, better yet, ran away, but she stayed. For some strange reason, she hung around and started to show me the life of a Christian. I started going to church with her, listening to her pray, and even dabbled in some Christian reading.

[46 : 29] Life was great. So great, I decided to make the relationship the center of my world. My family, my job, my running, it still mattered, but this relationship was king. Wouldn't you believe it?

January 4, 2011, the relationship ended. She stuck around for as long as possible, but she made the right call. She made the right call as God told her to drop me and go back to him.

I didn't take it well the first night. I attempted to sleep, but it didn't happen. I remember around 1 a.m., I started to drive, didn't know where I was going or what I planned to do.

I remember looking at the clock in my car, it said 1.16 a.m., and I was in the middle of the Gold Star Bridge in Groton. I got out, I climbed the rail, looked over the edge, and I saw concrete, or I saw water, and I thought that this might not get the job done.

So I walked back to my car, pushed the clutch in, rolled back about 100 feet, and then I looked down and saw concrete, climbed the rail, and I sat half on the side of life, half on the side of death, on the skinny rail, and I chickened out.

[47 : 43] I drove home. I grew up with this great life, never wanting anything, and yet I tried to end everything and commit suicide. I struggled with so many questions for a while, depression and being alone, and was not things I was good at.

But I am forever thankful for that time in my life, like a giant rainstorm that ruins a picnic but produces life. The life it produced was worth it, and I can say very confidently, after that, for some reason, I kept going back to church, a few weeks on my own, maybe because I thought I could fix things between the girl and I, but ultimately it fixed God and I.

Through an almost unexplainable series of events, a guy from my high school saw my very recognizable last name, Watermore, on somebody's phone. Somehow we all ended up talking about coming to the Trinity on March 9th, 2011.

We came. I remember sitting through the service. Ian was preaching through Isaiah, and I had a paperback New Testament, and I was searching through, searching through. I couldn't find Isaiah.

Isaiah. I was a lost man. I was still lost. After the service, my brother in Christ, Josh, he invited me to a Bible study.

[48 : 57] I said yes, probably more so to hang out than for spiritual growth, but I showed up nonetheless. Went through a chapter in John, and it grabbed my heart, and I sent out for a loop. I sat silently, humming songs I didn't know, listened to wise, godly men.

I tried to leave quietly, but Jordan called my name. In his hand, he held the Bible. They noticed I couldn't find the Old Testament in my New Testament Bible on Sunday. Go figure. So Jordan was giving me his old study Bible with his name on it, which someone had given to him.

Same Bible I have today. My face lit up with a smile, and I said thanks a million times. I walked to my car, silently crying. I called the old girlfriend, thanked her for introducing me to the guys.

God won his victory over me that night. I believe God sent his son, Christ, to save sinners, that I was a sinner, that I needed Christ's death to pay my debt.

I came before God with nothing in my life at my lowest point, and he said, welcome to the family. It was literally that simple. God offered me everything. I obey God because he has shown me grace and mercy.

[50 : 03] I don't obey God to receive grace and mercy. It hasn't been roses and rainbows since that night. Many of my closest friends think I joined a cult. They don't like to change my behaviors, and this has led to some distance.

It's been tough to deal with, but I have God. As Greg preached last week, we cannot enter a relationship with God by obeying the Ten Commandments. Trust me, I didn't obey them. There was no fix in myself before God chose to adopt me.

I was not doing anything in the eyes of God that would make him say, well done, good and faithful servant, like he does in Matthew 25, 25, 21. But it was on his time and through his love that he chose me. I thought I had an understanding of love before God showed me his.

I watched all the chick flicks, went to all the Nicholas Sparks movies with the girlfriends before that. But I believe it was when I became arrogant in my idea of love that God chose to tear me down and show me his love, not to ridicule me, but for the glory of himself.

Without hitting this low point, I wouldn't understand what John Mark Macmillan meant when he said, if grace is an ocean, we're all sinking. In his song, How He Loves Us. It's the same way some people will pick and choose to read only the feel-good parts of the Bible.

[51 : 13] If you don't have a grasp of what a life devoted, what a life not devoted to God is, or what wrath our sins deserve, you can't understand the true depth and amazing grace we've been given through the death of Jesus on the cross.

Let me end with this. Isaiah 53, 5 says it all. But he was pierced for our transgressions. He was crushed for our iniquities. The punishment that has brought us peace upon him, and by his wounds we were healed.

The blood that was spilled covers all my sins. When Jesus conquered death through his resurrection, victory was won for all those who are sons and daughters of God. I know and I believe this now with every inch of my soul. This morning I come before God and you all and want to respond to God's work done in my life and pronounce that I am a follower of Christ.

God has given us baptism, a great way to publicly announce that you have turned from your old life and decided to follow God. Thank you everyone.