

Old Testament Survey - Part 22

by Dick Woodward

The book of Deuteronomy emphasizes the importance of obedience to God's laws and the purpose of the word of God to show us how to live.

Duration: 27:40

Scripture: Deuteronomy 1:6-8, Deuteronomy 1:26-27, Deuteronomy 1:35-36, Deuteronomy 1:43, Deuteronomy 4:9, Deuteronomy 5:32, Deuteronomy 6:4-9, Deuteronomy 8:3, Deuteronomy 8:11-14, Deuteronomy 9:6

Topics: "Obedience To God", "Divine Grace"

Description

This sermon delves into the book of Deuteronomy, emphasizing the importance of obeying God's laws and remembering His miracles. It highlights the need to guard against affluence and to understand the concept of grace, where God's blessings are not earned but given out of His love. The sermons of Moses in Deuteronomy serve as exhortations for believers to pass on God's word and values to future generations, emphasizing the significance of obedience and love for God.

Transcript

As we continue our survey of the Old Testament, we come for the second time to the book of Deuteronomy. The book of Deuteronomy, as we said in our first session, is a repetition of the law of God that was given to the people of God through the man of God, Moses, at Mount Sinai. This law of God is repeated with applications in the book of Deuteronomy, and that's where the book gets its name.

In Hebrew, the word Deuteronomy means a restating or a repetition of the law. As we've seen, it's more than a restating or a repetition of the law. It is a statement of the law to the second generation of the people of God.

The first generation died in the wilderness, and this second generation must hear this word before they go into the land of Canaan. The exhortation in the book of Deuteronomy is that the second generation of God's people teach this word to the third generation of God's people, or to their children. As we come to the book of Deuteronomy, again let me remind you of this allegory of salvation that runs through these opening books of the Bible.

In the book of Genesis, again, we see the origins of our salvation, the great source of our salvation, which is God himself. In the book of Genesis, we find the source of our salvation in God, and we find the source of our sin problem in the character of man, in ourselves, in other words. But in the book of Genesis, we

read about the origins and the beginnings of our salvation.

Then in the book of Exodus, we have a great picture of our salvation, as the children of Israel are delivered from the land of Egypt. That picture is our deliverance from sin. They are supposed to go from Egypt across the wilderness, which would have taken them about 11 days, according to the opening statement of Deuteronomy, and go into the land of Canaan, the land that God prepared for them, the land which is called the Promised Land.

The awesome message of the book of Numbers is that they did not do that. They went around in circles for 40 years, and a whole generation died in the wilderness, going around in circles of unbelief. That continues the allegory of salvation for so many people.

Having been delivered from sin, we do not enter into the Promised Land of Christian blessing and Christian living, but rather we go around in circles, and we meet ourselves in the book of Numbers as this allegory of salvation continues. The book of Leviticus, of course, was the book that showed us that we were delivered for a purpose, we are saved for a purpose, and that is to know and worship God. The book of Leviticus tells the person who has been delivered from Egypt, or saved from sin, how to know and worship the God who has saved them.

The book of Deuteronomy, as we said in our first session, is really a book of sermons. The opening statement in the Living Bible paraphrase sounds as if it were one sermon. I rather think it was a collection of sermons that were given over a period of some time by Moses to the people of God as they were camped east of the Jordan River, just about to invade the land of Canaan.

The book of Deuteronomy is a book of great exhortations, great sermons, challenging these people as they are about to enter into Canaan and accomplish and realize and experience the purpose of their salvation. By application, as we continue the allegory of salvation, the book of Deuteronomy is for you and me, if we have been delivered from our spiritual Egypt, if we are tired of going around in circles of unbelief and disillusionment, not really claiming by faith all that God has for us, the purposes of our salvation, if we finally reach the point where we want to possess our spiritual possessions and enter into these spiritual blessings that God has for every believer, then the book of Deuteronomy and all of its exhortations is for us by application. These are the last words of Moses to these people whom he led for so long and loved so much, these people for whom he interceded with God time and time again for their forgiveness and their salvation.

These are his last words to them before they enter into the promised land, and we will find much application in these great sermons of Moses for us if we want to enter the promised land of Christian experience. With that perspective on the book of Deuteronomy, I would like for us to consider some of these great sermons of Moses. Moses was a great preacher.

I frankly believe the greatest preaching has already been preached, and it's in the scripture. I believe preachers would do well to realize that and simply exposit or exegete or teach these great sermons that have already been preached. Some of the greatest sermons in the Bible are in the book of Deuteronomy, because they were preached by this man named Moses.

The first one that I would like to observe as we survey the book of Deuteronomy is in the opening chapters of the book. It's really a great resume of Hebrew history, given from the perspective of Moses through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Hebrew history is quite a subject.

When we finish this book of Deuteronomy, the last of the five law books, we'll begin a study of the history books of the Old Testament. We'll begin to study Hebrew history. Hebrew history is quite a subject.

It's a vast subject. It's one of the most difficult courses you take if you go to seminary or to Bible college. Hebrew history is summarized for us several times in the scripture.

Stephen preached his great sermon in Acts 7. He gave us a tremendous summary, a very brief, concise overview of Hebrew history. Here in the opening chapters of Deuteronomy, Moses sums up Hebrew history up to the point where he lived. If you read that resume of Moses, his overview of Hebrew history up to the point of his life and experience, I believe you'll discover what was important from the standpoint of Moses and the inspiration of the Holy Spirit about that period of Hebrew history.

It's very important to read these brief resumes of Hebrew history, because they'll give you good focus on Hebrew history, showing you what really is important in a particular period of Hebrew history. The important thing that he gleans from this resume of history is how God dealt with him and how God dealt with them through their experience of life. That's a very important observation to make in these opening statements of Moses, which are a resume of Hebrew history.

There is a strong exhortation all the way through the book of Deuteronomy to obey the laws of God. You'll find that in this historical resume or summary, that when they obeyed God's laws, God blessed them. When they did not obey God's laws, they were under the curse of God.

He points that out and then exhorts them to obey the word of God. This exhortation to obedience is found all the way through the book of Deuteronomy. One of the key words in the book of Deuteronomy is obey.

Another of the key words in the book of Deuteronomy is love. You would think that in this part of the Old Testament, love would not be a theme, but it is. Love is mentioned many times in this book, especially our exhortation from Moses to love God with all of our heart.

That's a theme in this book. Another great discourse of Moses follows that, and this is also in the early part of the book up through chapter 4, which is an exhortation to obey the word of God and to never forget the things that he did for them. The big point in those opening three chapters and that historical résumé was, remember how God worked in your experience.

Remember the miracles he performed. So the exhortation in chapter 4 in this beautiful sermon is, may his miracles have a deep and permanent effect upon your lives, and may you tell your children about these miracles. Then there is the great exhortation to beware lest they break their contract with God.

I like that Living Bible paraphrase there of the word covenant. A covenant is really a contract between God and his people, and the terms of that contract are spelled out. If the people do not keep the terms of the contract, there is no contract.

God is not responsible to bless them if they are not obedient. This is a great warning. Never break your contract with God.

In the Living Bible paraphrase, here is Moses at his best. This is your wonderful thought for the day. Jehovah is God, both in heaven and down here upon the earth, and there is no other God but him.

You must obey his laws. I like that, this is your wonderful thought for the day. That kind of gives us the impression these sermons, plural, were preached on successive days.

Perhaps that was his sermon on a particular day. Now, in chapter 5 you have a definitive chapter in the book of Deuteronomy, because chapter 5 is a repetition of the Ten Commandments, and that's really what the book is all about, a restating, a repetition of the law. When these commandments are repeated here, compare the statement of the commandments back in the book of Exodus with this restatement of the commandments in Deuteronomy chapter 5. You'll notice some applications here that are not found back there in Exodus chapter 20.

Again, the exhortation is, O that they would always have such a heart for me, wanting to obey my commandments! Then all would go well with them in the future and with their children throughout all generations. So Moses told the people, and here is the great exhortation of Deuteronomy, You must obey all the commandments of the Lord your God, following his directions in every detail, going the whole way he has laid out for you. Only then will you live long and prosperous lives.

That's the great message of the book of Deuteronomy. You must go all the way with God and do everything that God lays out for you according to his will for your life. That's the key to the blessing of God, obedience.

In our first session, we spent quite some time on perhaps the greatest discourse of Moses here in Deuteronomy, the discourse in chapter 6, which is the basic Jewish confession of faith. It's called the Shema by the Hebrew rabbis because of the word for hear in Hebrew. This great exhortation begins with the words, Hear, O Israel.

Since the word in Hebrew for hear is Shema, that's what they called this great sermon of Moses. This is considered by the rabbis to be perhaps the greatest thing Moses ever said. We saw that the purpose of this exhortation was to tell the second generation of the people of God to pass on to the third generation of the people of God their values and the word of God.

This is spelled out, and we looked at it in detail in our first session, as an educational process, what we call today Christian education, or the education of Christians, especially when we think of our own children. We find our basis for that, what we call Christian education, in this beautiful sermon of Moses. It's a process of education based, we said in our first session, upon revelation.

It's based upon the word of God. That's what you teach your children, that's what their education should be based upon, the absolute word of an absolute God. It's based upon the fact that the responsibility for the education of the children is given by God to the parents, and it's based upon the fact that they are to have, these parents, a relationship with the children they're teaching.

There's no way you can obey this great sermon of Moses and nurture your children to become adults who love God and obey God's word without having a relationship with them. He spells it out. When they get up in the morning, when they sit in the house, when they go out into the way, when they lie down at night, he says especially to the fathers, you teach those children.

As we said in our first session, if every time a child hears about God, he hears it from a woman, is it any wonder he's going to grow up to become an adult who thinks that religion is for women and children, because he never heard about religion unless it was from a woman. He never heard a father teach him

these things. Perhaps the most important part of that beautiful formula or process for education is the fourth foundation upon which it rests, what we call reality in our first session.

What children need more than anything else is a model. The thing that probably turns more people off where God and his word are concerned is people teaching the word of God to their children, perhaps, who do not have reality in their lives. People teaching the word of God to whom these things are not real, people who have no experience of God and no experience really of his word, teaching the word of God, that builds up calluses, I believe, in the lives of children.

It doesn't turn them on for God, it turns them off. So the great emphasis in that sermon of Moses is you parents must have reality yourselves. These words must dwell in your hearts.

The purpose of this educational process, again, is to produce adults who will love God with all their being and obey and serve God with all their being. There simply is no way you're going to produce adults like that in your home if you do not show those children a model. The model is the message.

That's a very important part of this educational process. Now this great sermon is followed in chapter 8 in Deuteronomy with a tremendous sermon of Moses. These are great sermons Moses is preaching.

This is a sermon, again, about the word of God and the importance of obeying the word of God, but there's an added insight here. This is a great discourse in chapter 8, verses 1 through 14, on the word of God and how we learn the word of God. You must obey all the commandments I give you today.

That will be repeated so many times in this book. But now as you get into this exhortation about the word of God, notice this. Do you remember how the Lord led you through the wilderness, humbling you and testing you to find out how you would respond and whether or not you would really obey him? Yes, he humbled you by letting you go hungry and then feeding you with manna, a food previously unknown to you and your ancestors.

He did this to help you realize that food isn't everything and that real life comes by obeying every command of God. In the King James translation it's like this. He did all these things in order to make you know that man does not live by bread alone.

Man lives by obeying every word that has ever come from the throne of God. I believe this passage, which goes on and says other things, like when you've eaten your fill and God has blessed you and you've come into the land and you're possessing the land, this is the time to be careful, beware that in your plenty you don't forget the Lord your God, but when you have become full and prosperous and have built fine homes to live in, and when your flocks and herds have become very large and your silver and gold have multiplied, that is the time to watch out. That you don't become proud and forget the Lord your God who brought you out of your slavery in the land of Egypt.

This great sermon, Deuteronomy 8, verses 1-14, is telling us, first of all, the purposes of the word of God. This is so important to our understanding of the word of God. God gave us and God gives us his word because he wants us to know how to live.

God is not some kind of a sadist who is sitting up there making up all these rules to see how miserable he can make us all. All the word of God and all the law of God was born in the heart of God's love for man, man's well-being. That's what's on the heart of God as God gives man his word.

God knows what life is all about. God created life, and God knows how we can have a fulfilled life. Jesus came saying, I am come that they might have life and have it more abundantly.

How do you get this abundant life? If you really want to get it all and you don't want to be cheated or miss anything, the scripture says here, come to the word of God. Because if you really want to live, you come to God's word and you obey every word that God has ever spoken and you'll get it all. You will really live.

This means that the word of God is all about life. This also means that if you want to understand the word of God, there are two ways you can study the word of God. First of all, you can study the word of God, just like we're doing here.

You can even go to a professional school, a seminary, a Bible college, and you can major in the Bible. You can study the word of God. But according to this insight into the word of God in Deuteronomy 8, that's not the only way to study the word of God.

In fact, that isn't even adequate. If the word of God is all about life, then another way to get insight into the word of God is to study life. I believe the word of God gives us insight into life, and life gives us insight into the word of God.

So the more you know about the word of God, the more you understand life, and the more you understand life, the more you know about the word of God or understand the word of God. That means that if you really want to understand the word of God, you don't just go into a monastic kind of an environment and insulate yourself against the world or isolate yourself from the world, but rather you go out there where life is really being lived, and out there where life is really going on, that's where you'll come to understand the word of God. You see, this is what Moses is saying to them in this great exhortation about the word that God gave them through him.

When did God teach you that word, and how did God teach you that word? It wasn't when you just went up on a mountain and read the word of God or went to the tent of worship or had the priest instruct you. That isn't really where God taught you the word of God. It was out there when he let you go hungry, and then you had to turn to him and realize that he was the source of your sustenance, and so he fed you supernaturally.

It was through that wilderness wandering and through that hard experience that he made you know that man doesn't live by bread alone or just by gratifying or satisfying his desires and his needs. Man lives by obeying every word that God has given him. They didn't learn the word of God in a seminary, and they didn't even learn it in a sanctuary.

They learned it in the experience of life. When I was training for the ministry and studying the scripture, I had been studying about four years and I had a very difficult summer, one of the hardest summers of my life. I was 3,000 miles from home, and I was injured on a construction job, and I became ill, and a family took me in, and a very godly woman who was the mother of that household said to me one day when I was really depressed, she said, Dick, you've been studying the word of God for four years, but I've been living it for 40 years, and she said, I know a whole lot more about the Bible than you do, let me tell you, and boy, she really gave me some insight into the scripture I didn't get in Bible school, and she didn't get it in Bible school either.

She got it in life. That's where you learn the word of God. That's where you should expect to learn the word of God, since the purpose of the word of God is to show us how to live.

Now, I believe another observation that we should make about this passage is this great exhortation to guard ourselves against affluence. The Apostle Paul made a statement in his writings, he said, I know how to abound and I know how to be abased. That's a great challenge.

I wonder, do you know how to be abased? Do you know how to live when you're in one of the ringers of life, when you're in one of those difficult places of life, one of those difficult periods of life? Do you know how to live when you're being abased like that? Paul said, I have learned the secret of being content no matter what my circumstances are. He could be chained to the wall of a dungeon, like the manor-time prison in Rome, and he could say, I know how to live like this. I know how to be abased.

But he could also say, I know how to abound. I sometimes think it's a greater challenge to know how to abound than it is to know how to be abased. I heard a great Christian leader, in my opinion, Charles Colson, say to his prison fellowship staff, about a hundred men and their wives who worked with him in the prisons at their annual staff retreat, he said, pray for me because, he said, I'm beginning to abound.

I'm beginning to abound in the spiritual world. We're reaching the point in our ministry where we're beginning to abound, we're beginning to receive acclamation, and people are really beginning to respond to the vision God has given us. I get standing ovations.

Maybe I'll be speaking to 2,500 people at a prayer breakfast and they'll give me a standing ovation. He said, you know, the last time around I did not abound well. When I was in the White House and I was abounding, he said, I did not abound well.

He said, now I'm starting to abound in this new life God has given me, and he said, I'm frightened. He said, I wonder if I really know how to abound. He said, pray for me that God will keep me humble and that I will know how to abound.

Have you ever thought of that as being a challenge? Well, that's part of this great exhortation about learning the word of God. He says to them, how did you learn the word of God? It was in the crucible of God's chastening. When you were having to eat the banquet of consequences that resulted from your disobedience to the word of God, that's how you learned that the word of God was the key to life.

Now, he said, when you're out of the crucible, never forget the lessons you learned when you were in the crucible of God's chastisement. When you get to the place where you're abounding, don't forget, he says, that's the time to watch out, that's the time to beware. Let him that thinketh he stand take heed lest he fall.

It's an interesting observation by a Church historian, Kenneth Scott Latourette, that if the Church of Jesus Christ gets the job done, if the Church of Jesus Christ evangelizes the world in these times of prosperity, it will be the first time it's ever happened in the history of God's people. God's people don't get the job done when they're prosperous, when they're affluent. The tendency is for them to become stale and apostate when they're affluent and prosperous.

God's people really seem to get the job done when they're in the crucible. The Church of Jesus Christ was born in persecution. It was born in the hostile soil of the Roman Empire.

In a period of 300 years, there were ten great waves of persecution that went out against the Church. The Church has never been as virile, it's never been as strong, it's never been as alive as it was then. I think we need to remember that, and remember the great challenge of Moses.

Know how to be abased and know how to abound. When you're abounding, don't you forget. Notice how often the prophets and apostles will say, remember, remember.

I will stir up your pure mind by putting you in remembrance. Don't ever forget God when you're abounding. Now there's another great sermon that follows this one, and you'll just find one great sermon after another in the Book of Deuteronomy.

It's a sermon on the grace of God. Moses says to them, when God has taken you into the promised land and he's conquered your enemies, then when the Lord has done this for you, don't say to yourselves, the Lord has helped us because we're so good. No, he said, it's not because you're so good, it's because of the wickedness of those other nations that he's doing it.

It's not at all because you are such fine, upright people. I say it again, he said, it's only because of the wickedness of these other nations and because of his promises to your ancestors, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that he will do these things for you. I say it yet again.

This is the fourth time, I think he wants to make sure we get this. Jehovah, your God, is not giving you this good land because you're good, because you're not good. You are a wicked, stubborn people.

Very subtle, isn't it, the way he puts that to them. Here's a beautiful concept in the scripture. It's the concept of grace, the grace of God.

The grace of God means the favor and blessing of God, even in the form of the charisma or power of God, in whatever form it comes. It's the favor and blessing of God upon us. That does not come upon us because we're so good, or because we merit it or attain it or achieve it.

We must never forget that. Just when we think we've learned this, we haven't really learned it. One Saturday night, I completely lost my temper years ago as a pastor of a large church.

About 2 o'clock in the morning, one of my children didn't come in like they should have come in. In fact, I had to go get them and bring them in at 2 o'clock in the morning, and I got so angry I just lost my temper completely. You don't think preachers ever do that.

But at 2 o'clock on a Sunday morning, I lost it. Just a few hours later, it was 11 o'clock on a Sunday morning, and I was in front of a huge congregation. I sat there in the platform and I said to God, I'm sorry about this, but you're out of business today, because I lost it earlier this morning, and you can't do anything today.

I said, I'm sorry about that, but I blew it, and you can't work. That morning, our text happened to be a passage that I had never really appreciated before. It was where Jesus taught the parable about the Pharisee and the publican.

I had never noticed that he taught that parable to those who trusted in themselves that they were righteous. I had never noticed that before. As I read the scripture that morning, responsive with my congregation, it's as if the Lord said to me, you're trusting in the fact that you're righteous.

That's why you think I was in business last week and the week before, because you had a good week. Now you've had a bad week and I'm out of business. Well, you don't understand grace, Preacher.

That's what he was really saying to me. So I went ahead and preached anyway, and I couldn't believe the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon that service that day. Just when you think you've learned what grace means, perhaps you haven't really learned it.

This passage says, it's not because you're good, it's because God is good. It's because God loves you. That's why he blesses you.

That's what the word grace means, and that's a tremendous exhortation on grace found there in the 9th chapter of the book of Deuteronomy.

Video: <https://sermonindex2.b-cdn.net/XjVJqOuiBwU.mp4>

Source: <https://sermonindex.net/speakers/dick-woodward/old-testament-survey-part-22/>

Grow in Your Walk with Christ

Listen and read messages that will stir your heart for Christ and point you to deeper repentance and devotion.

- 50,000+ Sermons from speakers past and present
- 3,900+ Classic Christian Books freely readable online
- 1,200+ Bible Translations and Commentaries
- Over 450k forum posts — Join our vibrant online Christian forum

www.sermonindex.net