

Deuteronomy 9-10 • Hear O Israel

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We're continuing our study through the Book of Deuteronomy, which is a series of messages that Moses brought to the people of Israel just prior to them going into the land of promise. Moses didn't get to go in there with them, and for very specific reasons. Joshua was the man who was then to take Israel into the land of promise, but Moses had one final job before he was going to actually die.

The Lord told him, after you do this, you're going to go up on the mountain. I'll let you look at the land from up there, and then you're going to die. He said, you will be gathered to your people, which was the term that they would use to describe physical death. (Deuteronomy 32:48–50) And so this is the message that Moses gave to remind the nation of Israel about the covenant God had given to them and to exhort them to follow the covenant.

Now, I'm going to just remind you one more time, as we get into this, going into the promised land is a picture of our walk with Jesus Christ. And you and I are called by God to walk out His promises. And that is exactly what the nation of Israel is showing us here. They'd been given a promise from God that they could go in there, be strong enough in the Lord to conquer the peoples that were living in the land, to dispossess those nations, and then to take over the land.

They weren't strong enough physically to do it. And they knew it. And God knew it. And God would even tell them, these nations are stronger and mightier than you, He would say, which doesn't sound like much of a pep talk, except when you are reminding people that I am giving you the power to do this.

And that's the same thing God is telling you and I in our Christian walk. All the things that you and I come up against, all the sin that sits in front of our face constantly, you and I aren't strong enough to confront that sin, in and of ourselves. You try to do it in the flesh, you're going down in flames. And then there's Satan and the temptations that he brings into our life.

Listen, you and I aren't strong enough to deal with Satan in and of ourselves. He's been doing what he's been doing a long time. He's a very powerful being, and only through the strength of God can you and I face him and deal with the spiritual warfare that is required to get beyond his temptations.

Yes, Satan is already a defeated foe, but he hasn't conceded defeat yet. So he's still able to throw up a lot of pretty convincing and powerful roadblocks in our path.

And then there's the world and all the things that draw us in to the world. So you've got the flesh, you've got Satan, you've got the world. These things are coming at you and I all the time.

Now, here's the promise that God gave you and I. He says that in Christ, we've been given everything that we need for life and godliness. Everything. That's the promise. (2 Peter 1:3) God is basically saying to you, no matter what you face, no matter what temptations, no matter what challenges, no matter what hardships you face, I'm there. I'm with you. I'll see you through.

We hear that with our ears. The question is, does it penetrate our heart of faith? And do we begin to lay hold of what we hear and say, I believe it?

I want you to notice how chapter 9 begins. He begins by saying, "*Hear, O Israel...*" Now, this is the fifth time so far that Moses has begun a section with those words, "*Hear, O Israel...*" (ESV)

In fact, it's interesting about Deuteronomy. The word *hear*—what we do with our ears—is used over 50 times in the book of Deuteronomy. Why? Because again, Deuteronomy and the entrance of Israel into the promised land is a picture of what you and I are called to do, which is walk out the promises of God by faith. Right?

And how do we live? We live by faith. How does faith come? Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God.

So what does God say to you and I? Listen! Hear, O My people! When you come to church on a Wednesday night, you come on a Sunday, when you're even just reading the Bible yourself, you have to be listening to the Holy Spirit. He's saying to you, listen. Hear what I'm saying.

Jesus would say during His ministry, let him who has ears to hear, hear, (Matthew 11:15) and in the Book of Revelation, we hear that over and over again: Let him who has ears hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches. (Revelation 2:7)

He's saying, hear, listen. Because we hear with our ears, and we put it into that part of our heart that operates on faith, and we trust God with what we've heard. Why? Because His Word is true. Right?

I could make you a promise—very possible I even have—and I can go back on that promise very easily. Not because I want to, but just because I'm not in control of circumstances. I remember I hated to do that with my children when they were little kids. We're going to go to Boise this Monday. That was my day off. We would always take the kids and we'd go do something fun. Well, on rare

occasions, something would come up and we couldn't go. Something just—I couldn't control those circumstances. The promise that I made to my kids, I had to go back on.

Understand something, people. God cannot go back on His promises. It is not possible. It's not possible.

So when God says to you—promising in His Word—I have given you everything you need for life and godliness—life on the one hand is just the continuation of living. Godliness, on the other hand, is Christlikeness. In other words, the ability to conquer sin, the ability to conquer the flesh, Satan, and the world. I've given you everything you need.

Here's the question. We hear that, but do we combine it with faith?

And that is exactly why Moses, over and over again in this book, is saying, *"Hear, O Israel."* Listen! Because I'm going to tell you what God has promised you, but it is your responsibility to combine it with faith. Are you going to believe?

It's not the person who hears that's going to make the difference. Right? We have to begin to put it into practice in our lives. We have to believe and not have a heart of unbelief.

Do you know it's possible to come to church for years—maybe even all your life—and never believe, and never activate faith? It's possible to sit and hear the Word of God week after week, your entire life, and never believe.

He says here in verse 1, *"Hear, O Israel: you are to cross over the Jordan today, to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, cities great and fortified up to heaven, "*

Obviously, that's hyperbole, but it's meant to convey the idea that these are cities that are incredibly well-defended. I mean, they've got unscalable walls. In fact, the very first city that they met when they went into the promised land was that very idea.

He goes on in verse 2 to say, *"a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know, and of whom you have heard it said, 'Who can stand before the sons of Anak?'"*

The people had heard that kind of a proverb spoken because the Anakim had a reputation of being very large people—giants, if you will—as well as being incredibly fierce warriors.

And so they adopted a parable that they would say whenever they were facing a challenging or insurmountable situation, and they would say, well, as they say, who can stand before the sons of Anak? It was something that people would use to describe an insurmountable challenge. Right?

Well, guess what? They're coming up before the real thing here in the land of promise. You are going to come up against giants, he's saying, and they are fierce.

But listen to what God says in verse 3. This is vitally important: *“Know therefore today that he who goes over before you as a consuming fire is the Lord your God. (And what does it say about Him? What does He go on to say?) He will destroy them and subdue them before you. (And then look what they do) So you shall drive them out and make them perish quickly, as the Lord your God has promised you.”*

Oh, that verse right there—verse 3—is just so full of important things for you and I to see. First of all, I want you to notice who's going to do the job. He tells them—He just gets done telling them—okay, you guys are going over into a land. The people are stronger than you. They're mightier than you. They've got bigger guns, bigger weapons. They've got more power than you do. And not only that, but you're going to get over there, across the river, and you're going to meet up with the Anakim.

Nobody had to explain to these people about the Anakim. Oh my. And they are big and tall and fierce. But then Moses says this: I want you to know something, and I want you to know it in your heart. And what he means by that is, I want you to accept this by faith, okay? That the one who goes before you as a consuming fire—in other words, the one who is going to, and he's not talking about a literal fire, he's talking about the one who's going to go ahead of you like a consuming fire—is none other than the Lord your God.

And he goes on to say: *“He will destroy and subdue them...”* Did you catch that? Who's going to do the destroying and the subduing? God! Moses makes it very clear—God's going to do it.

Now, what does it go on to say that they're going to do? What do the people then have to do? It's the end of verse 3: *“So you shall drive them out and make them perish quickly, as the LORD has promised you.”*

Remember, people—this is a picture. This is a picture of my walk with Jesus. It's a picture of your walk with Jesus. Because we're walking into the land of promise, just like they were. Ours is a different—it's not a physical land. Theirs was a physical land of promise. Ours is a spiritual land of promise. We've been given spiritual promises, not physical ones, okay? God never said, I've given

you the United States of America. Never said that. But He has told us, I give you all of these wonderful promises in Christ.

And we're looking at a picture of how we walk in victory against the things that challenge us in this life. Again: the flesh, Satan, and the world.

Well, guess what? God is telling us right here: I do the destroying, and you guys are going to drive them out. You drive these things out.

And this is an important thing that we see—is the relationship that we have with God related to these things. In other words, when you face the flesh, when you face temptations, when you face Satan head-on or one of his minions, or you're facing just this onslaught of the world that is trying to draw you, suck you into living that kind of a lifestyle—you need to understand this: it is God's power that we rely on to conquer these things, to kill them, to destroy them. But you also have a responsibility.

I want to show you this in a series of passages, and I'm going to put these on the screen for you. The first is from Colossians chapter 2:

Colossians 2:13-15 (ESV)

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by cancelling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame by triumphing over them in him.

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Alright, what did I just read for you? I just read for you a passage that says that He basically did all of the work of releasing you from the power of sin in your life. Alright? It says you were dead, in fact. That's what Paul writes to the Colossians: “...you...were dead in your trespasses...” right? And “...in the uncircumcision of your flesh...”

And then, first of all, God made you alive. That's the first thing He did. He forgave you all of your sins. He cancelled the debt that stood against you with all of its legal demands.

Notice—do you see what I'm getting at here? He—you didn't have to do any of this stuff. He did all of it. Right?

Then he goes on and says: Then “*He disarmed the rulers and authorities...*” He's talking about the spiritual rulers and authorities—meaning Satan. He disarmed Satan, putting him to open shame by triumphing over him on the cross.

Well, that's the starter right there. That's where it begins when you and I talk about victory. When you and I talk about living the victorious Christian life—it starts there. It starts with: Jesus has already won the battle. Jesus is the victor. And you and I need to enter into that victory.

Then we go on to the next passage from Colossians 2:11. Let me read this to you:

Colossians 2:11 (ESV)

In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh, by the circumcision of Christ.

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Alright? Interesting passage there: “*In him also you* (you also, he says), *were...*” And he's using an Old Testament idea of circumcision, which is a cutting away of the flesh. So in Him, you've also had the flesh literally cut away—in Christ—which is the putting off of the body of the flesh.

And when he refers to flesh here, he's talking about sinful nature. He's not talking about physical flesh. Whereas in the Old Testament idea of circumcision, it's talking physical flesh, but in the spiritual New Testament idea—it's the sinful nature.

Wow. Do you see everything that He's done for you? See everything He's done for me? All the power and stuff that goes into it? What's left for you and I to do? He's done all the work. Oh, but there's more. Now we go to Ephesians 4:21. Look what this says:

Ephesians 4:21-24 (ESV)

...you have heard about Him and were taught in him...to put off your old self, which belongs to the former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires...and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

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desires...and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

This is what we're talking about here. We're talking about driving out the foe. See, He's conquered the foe. He's conquered the flesh. The flesh is your foe. Satan is your foe. The world is your foe. He conquered those things. He took the stinger out. He took the power out of those things to dominate you.

But now you've got to go in there by faith, and you've got to drive out the enemy. And what Paul likens that—or the idea there in that passage in Ephesians—is that you and I have to put off the flesh and put on Christ. We put off the old man, which is being corrupted in its evil desires, and we put on the new man. It's just like clothing, right? It's like taking off the old.

Here's the deal: in Christ, you and I have the power to take off the flesh—to take off the old sinful man. We didn't have that before Jesus. Now we do. I can put off the old Paul. I have that ability now—in Jesus, through His power, right?

Before I came to Jesus and surrendered my life to Him and called out to Him, I had not the power to put off the old man. I was a slave to the old man. And so were you. But then we came to Jesus. We came to Him. His Spirit filled us, empowers us, enables us. He releases us from that bondage, from those—the legal requirements of the law and the power of the flesh and all that. And suddenly, now we have this freedom.

Boy, to hear me talk, you'd think that we would be sinless, wouldn't you? It's like, well, Pastor Paul, if it's all as incredible as you're saying, why do I keep sinning?

Well, it's—can we put the passage up one more time from Ephesians? Again, Paul says,

Ephesians 4:21-24 (ESV)

...you have heard about Him and were taught in him...to put off your old self, which belongs to the former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires...and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

“...you have heard about Him and were taught in him... to put off your old self,...” Well, guess what? Sometimes we don't. Sometimes I'm faced with a temptation or a situation, and instead of putting off the old self, I put on the old self. Because, you see, I am free to do that. I'm free to put on the old, creepy, cruddy, corrupted me if I want to. Somebody cuts me off in traffic or yells at me

or gets angry and gets in my face or whatever—I can put on the old self and respond just like he's responding to me. Right? I can choose. And so can you.

It's like the Israelites. God was going to go through, and He was going to take care of all these people. But if they didn't go in and subdue those nations, guess what? Now you're going to be living with the enemy, right there in your own camp. And that is actually what happened. The Israelites did not completely clear out the land. They ended up having to live with some of the people. I say have to. They just were unable to clear the land, to subdue the enemy—even though God promised, I'll go before you. I'll give you the power.

So you see, we're not going to do it perfectly. Oh, aren't you glad for God's forgiveness? When we mess up, aren't you glad that we come to God and we just say, Lord, forgive me for my inability to put on Christ at all times, because there are many times I don't put on Christ. I put Paul—the old Paul—back on, and I act like just a total dip switch. I mean, just do and say dumb things that I know I shouldn't do and say and respond in poor ways that are in keeping with the ways of the world—not the ways of Christ.

Look at verse 4. He says, *"Do not say in your heart, after the LORD your God has thrust them out before you, 'It is because of my righteousness that the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,' whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out before you."*

Do you remember we talked about this last week? Why did God say to Israel, you get the land, they don't? I mean, they lived there. They were living there. They'd been living there for a long time. Why was God allowing Israel to dispossess these nations of their land? Well, He says it right here—because of their wickedness. They refused over hundreds of years to respond to the Lord, to repent of their wickedness. And now God was using Israel as their—as His spanking spoon, literally His arm of judgment.

What can that do to somebody when you realize you're the arm of God's judgment? Well, it must mean that I'm better than they are, right? That's what comes up. And that crops up in our head: I'm better. I'm getting this, so I'm better.

What does God say in verse 4? He says, listen, don't ever allow your heart to say to itself, well, I guess it's because of my righteousness, and that's why God's been doing all these wonderful things for me.

Look at verse 5. He says, no, it is *"Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations the LORD your God is driving them out from*

before you, and that he may confirm the word that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.”

Why are the Israelites getting the land? Two reasons: one, the wickedness of the people who live there now; two, God made a promise. And God keeps His promise—always. Right? Can't go the other way. So He wanted them to remember.

He goes on, verse 6: *“Know, therefore, that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness (Boy, it feels like He needs to say it again.), for you are a stubborn people.”*

Your Bible may say stiff-necked. I actually like stiff-necks. I mean, stubborn means the exact same thing, but doesn't stiff-necked just—I mean, it doesn't just say it. Like, you can say to somebody, oh, you're stubborn, but it just doesn't say—it just doesn't mean as much as when you go, man, you are really stiff-necked. Yeah. I don't know. It just has this ring to it. He says, that's what's really going on with you guys. You're stubborn.

He says, now *“⁷ Remember and do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD.⁸ Even at Horeb you provoked the LORD...”*

He says, *“Even at Horeb...”* Why? What happened at Horeb? That's the same as Mount Sinai. Remember what happened there? This is where God revealed Himself in the mountain—smoking, flaming mountain, shaking, trumpet blast—and the people heard the voice of God echoing from the mountain, giving them the 10 Commandments. And then, within 40 days of that, they were building a golden calf and worshipping that calf. And they were having a big, fat sex-pot party—within 40 days. That's what was going on.

He says, *“⁸ Even at Horeb (you guys—you did this) you provoked the LORD to wrath, and the LORD was so angry with you that he was ready to destroy you.”*

All right, let's stop for just a moment and ask the question: What is Moses doing? This is something that's very unpopular today, which is reminding people about their mistakes. So, exactly what is Moses trying to do? Is he trying to get them to feel bad? Are you trying to make us unhappy, Moses? No. What Moses is trying to do is he's trying to keep them from spiritual pride. And spiritual pride is usually the result of either poor or selective memory about the past.

I read the writings of the apostle Paul as he talks about his past. He talks about his apostleship, and he says, I was the last of the apostles. And he says, I came

into the thing in an abnormal kind of a way. He literally referred to himself as being abnormally born into his apostleship. He said, I don't deserve to be an apostle. I was a wicked, evil man. I was bent on destroying this church and anybody who called on the name of Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:8-9)

He clearly and openly talked about his past life—not to draw people into a place of, oh, poor you, or something like that—but to continually understand the depth of God's grace.

Paul believed that for God to use him as a man—the very man who was bent on destroying the church—was an act of God's grace. In fact, it was a testimony of God's grace. And it's important that you and I remember how much grace has been shown to us, because it keeps us from spiritual pride.

I got a note from a guy just—this, I think it was just yesterday—from the UK. And he was sharing with me in a note how he'd been going out with a guy and witnessing—doing some street witnessing—and they'd been doing it for some time. But over a period of time, he said, this guy never ever said anything good to the people. All he did is just condemn them. He had nothing but bad things to say to people.

And this guy was writing me, and he says, I really feel like I need to separate myself from this fellow because he's not really, truly giving them the gospel. All he's doing is condemning them and saying, you're sinners, you're going to hell, and stuff like that.

Well, if you don't ever get around to telling people how you can avoid hell and be with the Lord forever and how you can have your sins forgiven, that's a problem. You're not giving people the good news.

And this guy wasn't doing that. And he was telling me how this guy was constantly criticizing not only the people, but him—the guy who was writing me—criticizing him for things that he himself was even doing. And so he finally, a few weeks ago, he called it quits and said, what, you go your way, I'm going to go mine.

And he was telling me just how much peace he had after separating from this guy, who I believe was just really caught up into spiritual pride, because spiritual pride is that thing that gets us thinking that it's all about me and I got this thing dialed in and you obviously don't. Sort of a thing. And they've forgotten where they came from. They've forgotten what they got saved from.

Spiritual pride wells up in us when we stop understanding that if it weren't for God saving me, I'm lost, right? I am as lost as the day is long, and there was nothing I could do to save myself or to change my condition. Listen, every

human being in the world is born with the default destination of hell. Every human being.

Heaven is not your default destination. You have to receive Christ in order for that destination to change. But when we remember that—right?—when we remember, and we saw a couple of those verses from the New Testament where Paul talked about you were dead in your trespasses and sins, man...we've got to remember that, you guys. I was dead apart from Christ. Gone. Hopeless. That's going to keep us from spiritual pride, right?

So he goes on to remind them of things from the past that probably they wanted to forget, but it's important that they remember.

Verse 9: *“When I went up the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant that the LORD made with you, I remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water.¹⁰ And the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and on them were all the words that the LORD had spoken with you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly.¹¹ And at the end of forty days and forty nights the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant.¹² Then the LORD said to me, ‘Arise, go down quickly from here, for your people whom you have brought from Egypt have acted corruptly. They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them; they have made themselves a metal image.’*

¹³ *“Furthermore, the LORD said to me, ‘I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stubborn people.¹⁴ Let me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven. And I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they.’”*

Did you ever—did you ever notice that that happened? God gave Moses an offer that I don't know if we would have refused. He said, listen, here's what I'm going to do: I'm going to destroy these people and I'm going to start over with you. I'm going to start over with you. I'll just take your children and we'll start over. We'll make a new nation. And these guys can just die in the desert because they are so rebellious. So wicked. And he's—Moses is going to tell you here a little bit later on what he said to the Lord.

“¹⁵ So I turned and came down from the mountain, and the mountain was burning with fire. And the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands.¹⁶ And I looked, and behold, you had sinned against the LORD your God. You had made yourselves a golden calf. You had turned aside quickly from the way that the LORD had commanded you.¹⁷ So I took hold of the two tablets and threw them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes. (That was meant to

symbolize that they had already broken the covenant that God had made with them) ¹⁸ *Then I lay prostrate before the LORD as before, forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all the sin that you had committed, in doing what was evil in the sight of the LORD to provoke him to anger.* ¹⁹ *For I was afraid (look at this) of the anger and hot displeasure that the LORD bore against you, so that he was ready to destroy you. But the LORD listened to me that time also.* ²⁰ *And the LORD was so angry with Aaron that he was ready to destroy him. And I prayed for Aaron also at the same time.”*

Remember that lame excuse Aaron gave Moses when Moses came down the mountain and said, where in the world did this calf come from? Man, I don't know, Moses. The people just gave me their jewelry, and I threw it in the pot, and out came this calf. And it was just—it was ridiculous. God wanted to destroy Aaron, and Moses interceded for him.

He says in verse 21: *“Then I took the sinful thing, the calf that you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it, grinding it very small, until it was as fine as dust. And I threw the dust of it into the brook that ran down from the mountain.* (He doesn't say it here, but what we also know is that he made the people drink it. Yuck)

²² *“At Taberah also, and at Massah and at Kibroth-hattaavah you provoked the LORD to wrath.* ²³ *And when the LORD sent you from Kadesh-barnea, saying, ‘Go up and take possession of the land that I have given you,’ then you rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God and did not believe him or obey his voice.”*

Did you catch that? *“...you...did not believe Him...”* I'm going to say it one more time. *“...you...did not believe Him...”* What was their problem? Unbelief. It was an unbelief issue.

²⁴ *You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you.* (Now he's going to tell them how he interceded for them.) ²⁵ *“So I lay prostrate before the LORD for these forty days and forty nights, because the LORD had said he would destroy you.* ²⁶ *And I prayed to the LORD, ‘O Lord GOD, do not destroy your people and your heritage, whom you have redeemed (through the greatness, excuse me) through your greatness, whom you have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand.* ²⁷ *Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (In other words, remember the promise you made to them) Do not regard the stubbornness of this people, or their wickedness or their sin,* ²⁸ *lest the land from which you brought us say, (now he's talking about the Egyptians) “Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land that he promised them, and because he hated them (He's saying what they would say.), he has brought them out to put them to death in the wilderness.”* ²⁹ *For they are your*

people and your heritage, whom you brought out by your great power and by your outstretched arm. ’’

What's Moses doing here in this intercession? He's reminding them how he came before the Lord on their behalf by saying, Lord, what people are going to say. What the Egyptians are going to say—what your testimony is going to be around them—it'll be ruined. You destroyed the Egyptian army incredibly. I mean, it was amazing. And all those plagues you brought upon the Egyptians—nobody's ever seen that, ever. You showed such love to your people.

Now, you're going to just bring them out in the wilderness and kill them all? Imagine what the Egyptians are going to say. He wasn't powerful enough. God wasn't strong enough. He wasn't able. I guess God wasn't able.

People love to say that today, especially when they're talking about the difficulties and the sufferings of this life. They'll say, well, I've considered all the things that people suffer in this life, and I have concluded, God may be completely loving, but He's not powerful enough to really change the course of our lives or to change or deliver us from the suffering that we endure. He's just—He's not able. He probably wishes He could.

And there are—I mean, I'm telling you—years and years ago, a rabbi came out and wrote a book about that, and his conclusion in the book was: God loves people, but He's not strong enough. He's just not able. He can't stop the suffering of mankind. And that's been a very popular refrain.

Moses is even prevailing upon the Lord with this same idea—that this testimony is going to become warped among these other people, saying, hey, look what their God wasn't able to do. He couldn't even sustain them. He couldn't even—He had to—He killed them. Took them out in the wilderness and killed them. Great God.

Deuteronomy 10. We're going to do this kind of quickly. *“At that time the LORD said to me, ‘Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to me on the mountain and make an ark of wood. (That's the ark of the covenant.)² And I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets that you broke, and you shall put them in the ark.’³ So I made an ark of acacia wood, and cut two tablets of stone like the first, and went up the mountain with the two tablets in my hand.⁴ And he wrote on the tablets, in the same writing as before, the Ten Commandments that the LORD had spoken to you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly. And the LORD gave them to me.⁵ Then I turned and came down from the mountain and put the tablets in the ark that I had made. And there they are, as the LORD commanded me.”*

And now you'll notice that in some of your Bibles, verses 6 through 9 are in parentheses. There weren't such things as parentheses in the Hebrew. Those are put in there by the English translators to let you know that these verses were probably added by someone else—maybe Joshua, we don't know—to give us a little background on the travels of the people.

And it says, *“⁶ The people of Israel journeyed from Beeroth Bene-jaakan to Moserah. There Aaron died, and there he was buried. And his son Eleazar ministered as priest in his place. ⁷ From there they journeyed to Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land with brooks of water. ⁸ At that time the LORD set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the LORD to stand before the LORD to minister to him and to bless in his name, to this day. (And that is why we're given this information we've received many times before) ⁹ Therefore Levi has no portion or inheritance with his brothers (meaning in the land. No property.). The LORD is his inheritance, as the LORD your God said to him.)*

¹⁰ “I myself stayed on the mountain, as at the first time, forty days and forty nights, and the LORD listened to me that time also. The LORD was unwilling to destroy you. ¹¹ And the LORD said to me, ‘Arise, go on your journey at the head of the people, so that they may go in and possess the land, which I swore to their fathers to give them.’”

Now look at verse 12 and 13. Very important. *“And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³ and to keep the commandments and statutes of the LORD, which I am commanding you today for your good?”*

Notice—he says, what does the Lord require of you? There's five things: Fear. Fear the Lord, which means to understand that we stand before God. To walk with Him—walk in all of His ways. Thirdly, to love Him. Next, to serve Him. And then finally, to keep His commandments. None of these are new, but they're all very important.

“Behold (verse 14), to the LORD your God belong heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in it. ¹⁵ Yet the LORD set his heart in love on your fathers and chose their offspring after them, you above all peoples, as you are this day.”

This is really an amazing statement. Verses 14 and 15. Moses is saying, even though the Lord is great and He owns everything— the whole, the heavens and the earth belong to Him— He's a great God. And yet He still chose to love you.

He chose to set His heart on you. And Moses, you can almost hear that, like, I don't really get why, but He did. He chose you. And that's a picture of the fact that we've been chosen by God. In light of that, what's the proper response of the people of God?

Look at verse 16: *“Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no longer stubborn.”*

Now, stop there. Circumcision, physically, was the covenant sign that God had given to Israel, beginning with Abraham and his family, passed it on to Isaac and his family, to Jacob and his family, and that was the covenant sign of God—that God established with them. Strange covenant sign, but it was a picture. And God shows them now the spiritual implications of this picture. What is it? I'm not telling you to circumcise yourself physically. I'm telling you to circumcise your heart spiritually, meaning cut away the flesh and be no longer stubborn.

By the way, God is showing here, too, that stubbornness is a fruit of the flesh, or the byproduct of the flesh. Sometimes we like to explain it away in our children—oh, he has a very strong character. Yeah, that's called stubbornness, and it's a byproduct of the flesh.

Verse 17: *“For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God, who is not partial and takes no bribe. ¹⁸ He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing.”*

In other words, what is Moses doing? He's telling them, this is the character of the God to whom you belong. First of all, He's the Lord of all lords. He's the God of all gods. He's the great and mighty awesome God. He can't be bribed so as to change His mind.

Oh, and by the way, He's a God of justice, but He's also a God of great compassion. He brings compassion to the fatherless and the widow. The fatherless and the widow was a big deal in that culture. They literally had no ability to sustain themselves in that culture. When a man in the household died, if there wasn't another male relative who would take those people in, it was up to the compassion of the community. And if the community didn't offer any compassion, many times people started to starve to death. That was just—it was—it's just the way things were.

So what is Moses saying here? Your God is a God of compassion. He loves and takes care of the fatherless and the widow. He even loves the sojourner. What is a sojourner? It's a traveler—somebody who's just passing through. He gives them food, gives them clothing.

What is the point that Moses is making? He's saying this is what God is like. Do likewise. Do likewise. The more time you spend with God, the more you're likely to emulate His character. The more time you spend with the world, the more you're going to emulate the world's character. We just— we become like the people we hang with the most. And so if the people you're hanging with are always talking about homeless people— yeah, those stinky homeless people, they're always begging for stuff. I'm not going to give them any of my hard-earned money, or whatever like that— that's probably the attitude you're going to adopt.

Moses is making it clear: that's not God's attitude. God is a God of compassion. And so he's saying, do likewise. At verse 19: “*Love the sojourner, therefore...*” Why? You guys were sojourners once in the land of Egypt. Remember how you guys were mistreated? Wasn't very fun, was it? Don't mistreat the sojourner in your nation.

Here's what you need to do: “²⁰... *fear the LORD your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him, and by his name you shall swear.* ²¹ *He is your praise* (meaning He should be the object of your praise.). *He is your God, who has done for you these great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen.*”

Don't forget this. He says in verse 22, you guys went down to Egypt seventy people... And of course that wasn't the people that he's talking to, because that was 400 years— 440 years earlier. He says, “*Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons, and now (look at you) the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.*”

Look what God has done. God has overseen the nation of Israel. What's fascinating about that? God's not done overseeing the nation of Israel. That's the crazy thing. It's been a long time since then. He's still not done watching over Israel.

You say, well, pastor Paul, how do you know that? I know it because no other nation on the face of the earth has lost their national identity, lost their homeland, lost their ability to live in their own land, and then come back from it— been regathered. There have been lots of nations that have lost their homeland and lost their identity. And what happened to all of them? They just interspersed into the rest of culture, the various cultures around the world. Not the Jews. And not only that, but God brought them back. It is a miracle. It is a flat-out miracle what God has done in the nation of Israel.