

Deuteronomy 26

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[0 : 00] For a little while, seeking the Lord's enabling, I would like us to turn to our reading in Deuteronomy, chapter 26. Deuteronomy, chapter 26, and before we do so, if we may bow for a word of prayer.

We would ask of thee, O Lord, our God, that as we turn to thy word, that we would do so in a spirit of dependence and acceptance, in a spirit of thankfulness unto the God of grace, the God of mercy, the God of love and of hope.

And in doing so also, O Lord, we pray that thou wouldst feed our souls, give us a constant appetite for the things of thy truth. Grant, O Lord, that all these things of which we read would be laid upon our hearts indelibly, and that in every walk and every conversation that we have in life's journey, the word of God would be our watchword, that the word of God would be a lamp to our feet and a light unto our path, that the word of God would teach us the way, the truth, and the life.

So guide us, we pray thee, and all we ask is in Jesus' name. Amen. In Deuteronomy, chapter 26, and if I might read there at verse 5 again, And thou shalt speak and say before the Lord thy God, Assyrian ready to perish, Sorry, I'm reading from the authorized version here, if you don't mind.

Assyrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there with a few, and became there with a nation great, mighty, and populous.

[1 : 52] And the Egyptians evilly entreated us and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage. And when we cried unto the Lord our God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression.

And the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness and with signs and with wonders. And he had brought us into this place, and had given us this land, even a land flowing with milk and honey, and so on.

I'm sure we are all very familiar with the story of Jesus' meeting with Nicodemus, and how that story presented to Nicodemus, a message, a statement, a statement of fact, a statement of opportunity, that I'm sure Nicodemus never ever anticipated, he would have left Christ, having heard.

And that statement was, you remember the very familiar words of John 3.16, For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever liveth and believeth in him, should never perish, but have everlasting life.

God so loved the world. Every page in Scripture is strewn with the concept of the love of God.

[3 : 27] Even in those pages in which you will not even find the word love mentioned, at the word, yet, underneath it all, it is the love of God.

And every soul in this building this morning knows and understands that love of God, if their hearts are united and knit to the Lord Jesus Christ. I'm not speaking to aliens, I'm not speaking to anyone that doesn't understand of what I'm saying.

You know the love of God in your life, in your experience, because he has transferred you from darkness to light. He brought you out of that pit of sin, of misery, and he has liberated you.

You can understand, to a great measure, I'm sure as well, how the children of Israel would have appreciated the concept of the love of God.

Because, as has often been said before, what you have in the Old Testament with regard to the account of Israel's redemption out of Egypt, brought into the Promised Land, is almost typical of that which we experience in the Christian faith, in receiving the Lord Jesus Christ.

[4 : 49] That's what I would like to do for a little time, but I hope it's not stretching Scripture at all. I think what everything that the children of Israel, at least to one level anyway, went through in that experience, in that deliverance, finds its apex, a good experience in mine, in Christ Jesus.

As I said, this passage doesn't even contain the word, the love of God. And yet it is there. It's deeply embedded in everything that God does.

When God, when we are told through the lips of Christ that God so loved the world, every statement, every utterance of both the Old and the New Testament rings truly with the love of God.

The first thing that I want to consider with you in this passage is the fact of love giving. Because that's what it's all about. It's God giving.

God sent his Son into the world. Now, when we think of that, that every sinner here that knows the grace of God, as it is written out to us in the beginning of this chapter itself, it shall be when thou art come into the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance and possesseth it, and dwellest therein, that thou shalt take the first of all the fruits of the earth.

[6 : 16] God has given to Israel. God has given in all her provision, he has given in abundance. So often we underestimate what God's purpose and plan is for each and every one of us, and in that plan is the giving of God.

God in Christ gave to us an inestimable gift. We cannot even begin to suggest what the value of that gift is.

But more especially, for the children of Israel, this gift of this land, and every gift that went along with it in the journey to that promised land, every single gift that Israel had experienced and received, was not because she was better than any other people of the world.

The word of God reminds us of that. You are not better than anybody else, are you? At least not by nature, you are not. God didn't look upon the children of Israel and say, ah, I'll choose you because you do this and you do that and you do the next thing.

Did he choose Israel because Israel was more amenable? The history of Israel tells us the very opposite. In fact, it would seem, and this has always got to be a watchword for our fellows, it would seem that the more that God gave, it seemed that there was this contradiction.

[7 : 54] The more that Israel went against God. He could ply Israel with all the blessings that any people could ever have needed. And yet Israel would rebel, she would backslide.

You of all the people of the world, he said, have I loved. Not because Israel was better, I'm sure there were times in which if you and I were the ones that were the custodians of that great mass of people, we would have dumped them long ago because of their unbelief and their godlessness.

But not so, God. No. You of all the people of the earth, I have loved. It wasn't Israel's goodness that attracted God.

Neither is it you or my goodness that has attracted God to us. We who were dead and trespasses and sins, then he goes to these words you find, you remember, in Romans in chapter 5, these very important words.

Romans chapter 5, verse 8. But God, we are told, commends his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

[9 : 19] While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. There was nothing in us that was commendable to God. We were, as scripture reminds us, we were full of wounds and putrefying sores.

No soundness within us. From the very head to the sole of the feet. Wounds, bruises, putrefying sores. That's the description. All have sinned and have come short of the glory of God.

Why then should God have looked upon Israel? Why then should God have looked upon any one of us seeing that we were undeserving of the least of his mercies?

Even when we were sinners. If I'm speaking to someone today that is still in that category without grace, think about it.

because God still loves. He continues to love. Even the unlovable. There is no one. And I'm sure that many of us here could give a description of ourselves that would certainly in no wise in any way be attracted to God.

[10 : 37] And there are other people still like that today. Maybe even in this building. Known to God, maybe not known to us. Not in everything. We don't know your unbelief.

We don't know your godlessness. We don't know your waywardness. We don't know your sinnership. All that we do know is if you're outside of Christ, you are in a desperate situation.

You're in poverty. God loves the unlovable. He continues to love the unlovable.

And if you are challenging God even today, if anyone here is challenging God and saying, ah, but I've done this and I've done that, I've done the next thing, I'm beyond the pale. You are not.

You are not beyond the pale. The demonstration of God's love to the children of Israel is surely a near mark and a watermark for that itself. Then there is something else that we find in this passage that speaks so eloquently of the love of God.

[11 : 47] You and I might have been about our daily lives for years, doing our own thing, walking away in the wilderness, working away at whatever it was, as one poet wrote it, carving at some ivory ornaments, the act worshipping itself.

That's head huge. And that's what like it is for many people. The very act worshipping itself. that's the way that many people are. You were going about your business and you still are without a real consideration to the grace of God upon your heart.

But God looked. God saw you where you were. What was it for Saul of Tarsus? Was Saul waiting for that light to come from heaven to arrest him on the road to Damascus?

Was he looking around every corner to see if he could find this Jesus? Yes. In a sense, to persecute everything and everything that was representative of Christ.

But never for one moment did he ever think that he would be confronted with Christ. Never for one moment did he think that this Jesus would in any way look upon him.

[13 : 08] Was that the way it was for the children of Israel too? When they were in their bondage in Egypt, when their taskmasters were heavy upon them, what light was it for them?

It was desperate. In a physical sense it was desperate, but it was also effected in the spiritual realm as well. Israel was in a state of bitterness and oppression.

oppression. God saw the oppression and God set about doing something about it. There was something of course that God noticed in the oppression.

There was weeping, there was wailing, there was crying. These people were in bitterness through the hard bondage that Egypt was laying upon it.

And what bondage? You and I, we don't know anything about that kind of bondage, but we do know another one. Israel was crying in that state of bondage and God looked upon her.

[14 : 25] Be thankful to God, every one of you. If today you can say that he has redeemed you with his everlasting love, that he ever, ever looked upon you at all, that he looked upon every sad expression of fallen humanity, that he should have done that.

God looked upon all their toil and all their anguish. What did he see? Pain, suffering.

He's still seen it. Oh, it's a different maybe kind of bondage. But at the end of the day, it's the same effect. The bondage into which people find themselves outside of Christ.

It's beyond the ability of man to redeem from. No one can redeem us from that bondage. Who can save his brother?

We would love every one of us to be able to save our brothers and our sisters and everyone with whom we come in contact. We would love to be able to go out there every single day and everyone we speak to that does not know Christ, share with them the things of Christ and make them believe that we know we can't.

[15 : 46] We are called upon to witness. I'm not saying we must not do that. We are called upon to witness. But it is frustrating, isn't it?

Do you know that frustration? you have got family, loved ones who know not Christ and all you would wish is that they would cry out to Jesus because they are in bondage.

They are in bondage to sin. They are slaves to sin and all forms of unrighteousness. I don't have to speak about these things. You know them yourselves.

They splash across your screens and television. They are evidence in the marketplace. They are evidence in every street in a city like this and every town and every village. We know what sin has done and what it has continued to do.

God looks. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.

[16 : 54] No deliverance from this world. No deliverance from sin. The physical deliverance of Egypt, of children of Israel out of Egypt.

That was one thing. I'll come back to that in a moment or two. But the deliverance of the sinner out of the hand of the power of the evil one, that will take a miracle.

miracle. And every single soul in this building who knows Christ knows that miracle. That takes me on to what you remember we find in Ephesians.

Of all the things that we were before we came to faith in Christ. Let me go to Ephesians just for a moment or two because I think it is important for us to link into that.

Ephesians chapter 2. This is what we are told. And you have he quickened, he says, who were dead in trespasses and sins, where in time past you walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now works in the children of disobedience.

[18 : 11] Remember that? And that ought to be a spirit to every one of us, where you and I have come from and where they still are. They are still outside of Christ, they are without hope, that we have been brought in.

The spirit that now works in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation in time past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature the children of wrath, even of others, but God.

There's a link, but God. God who is rich in mercy. What a God we have.

Appreciate the love of God as he has come and as he has looked upon you, and he saw you in your sin. And what else did he see there that he responded to?

I said already, there was the great cry. When we cried unto the Lord God of our fathers, the Lord heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression, and the Lord brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

[19 : 30] God, is anyone crying today for deliverance? Is there someone here who doesn't know Christ, who doesn't know salvation in Jesus?

Are you crying from the depth of your anguish? You're disturbed in your mind and your heart. You don't know where to turn. or you're in church in the Lord's day.

That is a good thing and it's a good thing to be there. But you can be in this building. You can be face to face with the Lord Jesus Christ, as many people were in Christ's day, and still be very far from the kingdom.

That's what it was of the scribe, wasn't it? Oh, you knew everything. You might have even had a prize in Sunday school. you might have great ability in understanding biblical knowledge, biblical teaching.

And yet, Jesus is saying to you, you're not far from the kingdom, you're very close to the kingdom, you're under the power of the word of God, and yet you are not in the kingdom.

[20 : 50] Why? Why? You have no sense of need, that's why. Oh, you know you want a change in your life, but you don't have a sense of need of Christ.

And until you come to that position of a sense of need of God and of Christ in your life, these people, while they were in Egypt, they cried to God. Was this something that just happened after many years of oppression and suffering?

Maybe it was. Maybe part of the reason for being in that state was because they had neglected God. But one thing is sure, whatever it was with Egypt, with the children in Egypt, we know what it is with us.

If you're cast down, if you're overwhelmed, if this world is the great burden of your heart and of your soul, of everything that you are, then you have a need, and the need will only be met.

Not in some new idea, not in some new development in your life, not in some great change in your life, I mean socially speaking, but a spiritual change.

[22 : 05] And who is going to give us that spiritual change? None but God. God's deliverance. He brought them forth out of Egypt.

And do you notice how he does it? he does it with a mighty hand. A mighty hand. Never ever think for one moment that if the hand of God comes upon you in a resting, that it is something minimal.

It's not. It's mighty. It's powerful. It's miraculous. miraculous. Because what God had done for the children of Israel was miraculous and a demonstration of great power.

If that's the case, and I believe it to be, how much more powerful is the demonstration of the love of God in the life of a sinner redeemed.

See what God did for Israel. We are told that with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with great terribleness and with signs and with wonders, he brought them out.

[23 : 24] And that's what he has done. Look at the reverberations in the soul of Saul of Tarshish. Lord, what will I have with me to do? Is he shaking there before Christ?

The Christ that he hated? The Christ whose church he sought to destroy? Hear what he is doing. Finding himself before that Jesus, Saul of Tarshish, waiting.

I preached when I was down at the communion time, from the story of the Philippian jailer. Oh, the jail had shaken.

The gates had broken asunder. But there was no greater shaking than was found in the soul of that man. He had been asleep. But boy, when God said to work upon him, like his heart and his soul, he was shaking.

Break the stony heart. That's what we need, isn't it? Do we not need God to come and awaken us out of our lethargy and transform us and make us new creatures in Christ Jesus?

[24 : 40] The power of God that is unleashed, don't minimize it for one moment. Taking a soul out of darkness into light is a miracle.

And it's mighty working in its power. You know, the longer that you grow in grace, the longer you are in grace, and the more that you grow in understanding of these things, the more that you realize, and the more that you are overwhelmed.

If the people that watch Jesus performing great miracles, performing a miracle, for example, upon that man you remember that was among the tomes who had the legion upon him, if that miracle, in the change of that man, had the impression it had upon the people, they marveled.

Even the disciples marveled at what is this man, who is this man, that even the wind and the sea obey him. If those who are witnesses of the demonstration of God's power, are amazed and astonished and standing back in great awe and wonderment, what about those upon whom that great miracle has been performed?

It's tremendous. It's above everything you could ever begin to imagine. Have you an event in your life? An astronomical event in your life?

[26 : 23] A something that happened in your life that is above everything else? Maybe you have. But if I can put it this way without being too careless in my language, if you haven't got Christ, you ain't seen nothing yet.

You haven't experienced anything yet of the love of God in the deliverance of a soul, because that's great, that's stupendous, that is multitudinous, that's miraculous.

Think of every adjective you can to describe the power of God in delivering you as a soul from sin and from death.

something else here, and I know I can see my time's gone, and I could probably need some more time to do this, but we'll have to close it up shortly. There's something else that I want us to think about, and that is where you are at at this moment.

There is no doubt for the children of Israel, they got what God had promised. It was the promised land. The land flowing with milk and honey.

[27 : 36] put that in terminology that a believer in Christ, having been brought out of darkness, out of the pit of unbelief, what is that to you?

How would you describe it? The children of Israel, this is the land flowing with milk and honey. This is what God has promised. How would you describe what you have in Christ, where you are now?

How would you describe it? He loved me. He gave himself for me. There is nothing in this world, I warrant you, that is compatible to the love of God in Christ Jesus in your soul.

Nothing to compare it. And if you haven't got it, seek it. Because as long as you're in that priceless state, you will have no rest for your soul.

you will have no place of rest. You will just be a wanderer, wandering up and down this world, not knowing what new idea will tantalize you.

[28 : 47] You'll still be a stranger to God and to grace. But the last thing, and I'm having to rush through this, the last thing I want to mention, I want to take you to verses 13 to 19, just for a moment or two.

Given everything that God has done for us, given the fact that God has looked upon us, he saw us in all our pain, the very fact that God had given to us all these privileges and blessings, the deliverance that he has given to us, what then?

There is responsibility, of course there is. Not a price, not in the sense that the world ring would understand a price, ah, somebody's always got their price, you get nothing for nothing in this world, but your salvation, you haven't paid a penny for.

But there is responsibility, and that responsibility is set out for us in these words, and I'm only going to touch them just for a moment. Then thou shalt say before the Lord thy God, I brought away the hallowed thing out of my house, and also have given them unto the levites, and unto the strangers, and the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments.

In other words, I am seeking, by the grace of God, the ability that God gives to me, look at it, I haven't time to go through it just now, verses 13 to 19, and you will see there the obligation that is set before us, love the love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and thy neighbor, as thyself.

[30 : 21] That's the essence of what has been stated in verses 13 to 19. The fact that we have received the love of God, that love commands within each and every one of us, a response of obedience, and never ever seek in any way to underestimate what God is commanding here, because after all, we had plenty who were commanding us in the days of darkness and unbelief, now we have won, God alone, and if we do everything to the glory of God, everything below that will fit in, that it must pray primarily to the glory of God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I started off by saying that in this passage, there is not mention the name of the love of God, and yet I hope I have been able to suggest that even some measure that this passage is full of the love of God.

Where would you get anyone in this world that would do what our God has done for all the nations of the world, for all the peoples, even for you and for me.

May he bless his word. Let us pray. Thank you.