

March 15th, 2020
Preparing For The Promised Land
Deuteronomy 1, 4, 5, 6

Sermon Summary

This message looks at some of the preparations the Hebrew people needed to make in order to enter the Promised Land. Moses gave them very extensive and detailed instructions along with a history lesson and refresher course of the commands God had given them. Moses did this in order to help them understand the things that would be required for a successful transition to the Promised Land. There are four main points to this message with each point divided up into sub-points for clarity. It should become evident how each point relates to our present day lives. There are selected verses from chapters 1, 4, 5 and 6. Chapter 5 is not in the reading plan, but only three verses are used from this chapter. Scriptures from the reading are as follows and are in order of use: Deuteronomy 1:24-33, 4:5-8, 4:35-39, 4:23-31, 4:40, 5:27-29, 6:1-9. The four points are as follows:

1. Preparation for the Promised Land required learning from the past!
2. Preparing for the Promised Land required the people to understand “whose we are makes us who we are!”
3. Preparation for the Promised Land required an awareness of vulnerabilities!
4. Preparation for the Promised Land required the people remember their part of the covenant agreement!

Full Sermon Notes Intro and Prayer

Good morning everyone! I know these are difficult, different, and trying times, but we know God has a way of working all things together for our good! Not all things are good, but God works in and through all things to bring about good! I was sent an email from a missionary couple who live with their three children in Italy and I thought what they said was spot on. As you know Italy has been affected in a very traumatic fashion by this virus. Here's a part of what they said...

“We fervently seek to do our part in slowing the spread of this virus. Not because we are driven by fear, but by love, for the good of the whole community - for those who are weak, for the medical personnel who are being stretched beyond what they ever imagined, for every person who is and will suffer because of this particular outbreak. I am invited to joyfully give up my rights to my usual routines and privileges, and I am invited to not complain. The result? I feel an even deeper connection, and greater love for this culture and these people with whom I am sharing my life.”

What an awesome insight! He must have watched Andrew's sermon from last week!! Let's pray and ask God to teach us not only through the message today, but through these world-wide events and our response as the Body of Christ. Let's pray...

“Father God, we cry out to You and ask You to hear our cries for mercy and for healing for those who have been affected by this new illness that seems to be spreading. We pray also for those who are suffering with other sicknesses and difficulties in life! We lift up government leaders around the world and ask that You give them wisdom in their response. Please help people understand there are a lot of unknowns and it would be irresponsible to simply ignore and do nothing. But again, we pray for wisdom in the steps taken so that there will be as minimal collateral damage to other areas of life as possible. Please be with our healthcare workers and first responders as they will be on the front lines helping. Please be with our elderly populations who are most at risk. You know how much we need their individual and collective wisdom! Now, for the message today, there is so much to learn from our study of Old Testament history! There’s things we don’t understand, but so much more that we can understand and glean from the lessons their lives teach us! Hide me behind the Cross and let Your Precious Holy Spirit teach through me today! Thank You for hearing this prayer and I pray in the Sweet Name of Jesus, and I pray believing, Amen!

Last week Andrew did an awesome job of sharing the Word with us. So many have told me how his message had such an impact on their lives! Andrew gave us good insights on the situation the Hebrew people found themselves in after being delivered from Egyptian slavery. It seemed no matter what God did for them, they were not satisfied and slipped into a life of complaining and grumbling. Along with their complaining came a lack of trusting God’s promises to give them the Promised Land. This led to a 40 year sojourn in the desert and a whole generation, with few exceptions, was prevented from entering into the Promised Land. However, God had made a covenant promise with Abraham concerning his descendants and God was not going to brake His promise! Regardless of the consistent rebellion of the people, God still loved them and was determined to see at least a remnant make it to the Promised Land in order to keep His eternal purposes alive. In your readings for this coming week you’re going to see how Moses began to prepare the people for the Promised Land. In the first few chapters of Deuteronomy Moses reminds them of their past in hopes they would learn valuable lessons that would help them when they got to the Promised Land. Today we’re going to look at four requirements for preparation to enter the Promised Land. First we see that...

1. Preparation for the Promised Land required learning from the past!

Moses brings up the past, not to condemn the people for past mistakes, but to help them learn from their past, especially their mistakes! This is done many times so we do not repeat the same mistakes. I woke up in the middle of the night thinking about this...

“If we don’t learn from the past we’re bound to repeat it’s mistakes in the future!”

a. Learning from the wrongs the people had done!

In the first few chapters of Deuteronomy Moses reminds the new generation of Israelites who were about to enter the promised land of the mistakes the previous generation. One example was when God had told the Israelites to leave Horeb and enter the

promised land. They wanted to send spies into the land first. Moses allowed this, but here's what happened...

Deu 1:24 They left and went up into the hill country, and came to the Valley of Eshcol and explored it.

Deu 1:25 Taking with them some of the fruit of the land, they brought it down to us and reported, "It is a good land that the LORD our God is giving us."

Deu 1:26 But you were unwilling to go up; you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God.

Deu 1:27 You grumbled in your tents and said, "The LORD hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us.

Deu 1:28 Where can we go? Our brothers have made us lose heart. They say, 'The people are stronger and taller than we are; the cities are large, with walls up to the sky. We even saw the Anakites there.'"

B. Learning from the good God had done!

Moses also brings up the past to remind the people of God's miraculous work in their lives, but how quickly we can forget previous blessings! Listen...

Deu 1:29 Then I said to you, "Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them.

Deu 1:30 The LORD your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes,

Deu 1:31 and in the desert. There you saw how the LORD your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place."

Deu 1:32 In spite of this, you did not trust in the LORD your God,

Deu 1:33 who went ahead of you on your journey, in fire by night and in a cloud by day, to search out places for you to camp and to show you the way you should go.

So Moses is reminding the people to learn from their past mistakes and to remember God's past miraculous works!

This is sort of confession and testimony combined! We admit our past wrong doing and our present struggles, but we also testify how God got us through the past, forgave us for past mistakes and gives us the ability to live for Him in the present!

Moses then reminds the Hebrew people what really made them different from the surrounding nations. We find this when we realize

2. Preparing for the Promised Land required the people to understand "whose we are makes us who we are!"

Moses points out to Hebrew people the source of their wisdom, their understanding, and where their greatest strength was found! Listen to his words in chapter 4...

a. The God of the Hebrew people is a principled God

Deu 4:5 See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the LORD my God commanded me, so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it.
Deu 4:6 Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."

b. The God of the Hebrew people is a personal God!

Deu 4:7 What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him?
Deu 4:8 And what other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?

How powerful is that? Very! The God of the Hebrews was not a God who could not be spoken to! He was not a God who could not hear! He was not a God who didn't care for His people! Listen...

Isa 43:1 But now, this is what the LORD says-- he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.
Isa 43:2 When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze.
Isa 43:3 For I am the LORD, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior; I give Egypt for your ransom, Cush and Seba in your stead.

c. The God of the Hebrew people is a peculiar God!

Wait before you get offended! Let's look at the definition of peculiar according to the Webster Dictionary...

Peculiar - 1. characteristic of only one person, group, or thing: distinctive
2. different from the usual or normal

The God of the Hebrews, Yahweh God, God almighty was unlike any of the other so-called gods of the surrounding cultures and nations! Those gods were idols created by man, the God of the Hebrews was and is the God who creates! That's why Moses said the following...

Deu 4:35 You were shown these things so that you might know that the LORD is God; besides him there is no other.
Deu 4:36 From heaven he made you hear his voice to discipline you. On earth he showed you his great fire, and you heard his words from out of the fire.
Deu 4:37 Because he loved your forefathers and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his Presence and his great strength,

Deu 4:38 to drive out before you nations greater and stronger than you and to bring you into their land to give it to you for your inheritance, as it is today.

Deu 4:39 Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other.

We'll see next week why this was so important in the Promised Land but this also leads us to the next very important truth Moses wanted those getting ready to enter the land to understand...

3. Preparation for the Promised Land required an awareness of vulnerabilities!

Moses is not trying to set the people up for failure, or discourage them, but he gives them a very clear warning.

a. A Warning

Deu 4:23 Be careful not to forget the covenant of the LORD your God that he made with you; do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the LORD your God has forbidden.

Deu 4:24 For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

Deu 4:25 After you have had children and grandchildren and have lived in the land a long time--if you then become corrupt and make any kind of idol, doing evil in the eyes of the LORD your God and provoking him to anger,

Deu 4:26 I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you this day that you will quickly perish from the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess. You will not live there long but will certainly be destroyed.

Deu 4:27 The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and only a few of you will survive among the nations to which the LORD will drive you.

Deu 4:28 There you will worship man-made gods of wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or eat or smell.

So Moses then lets them know if they do not heed his warning once they are in the promised land there will be consequences! Folks we have to understand that truth! Even if you are a believer, if you allow sin to take a hold in your life, there will be consequences! And yet, there is...

b. A Remedy

Moses lets them know if they will admit and confess their wrong doing they can get back on track. Listen to his words in Deuteronomy 4:29ff...

Deu 4:29 But if from there you seek the LORD your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Deu 4:30 When you are in distress and all these things have happened to you, then in later days you will return to the LORD your God and obey him.

Deu 4:31 For the LORD your God is a merciful God; he will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your forefathers, which he confirmed to them by oath.

There's that if/then covenant formula again! If we sin but seek God's forgiveness and return to a life of obedience, God will respond with mercy and grace. But Moses is trying to warn the people to realize they were by nature sinners and weakened by that nature. They needed desperately to walk with that awareness, but also to walk in dependence upon God's power, presence, provision, protection, peace, and pardon! Doing so would prepare them to live in the Promised Land!

c. A Prevention

Deu 4:40 Keep his decrees and commands, which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the LORD your God gives you for all time.

There is the option to obey! What a novel idea, right! Just do what God has asked you to do in the first place! Trust that His ways are best! Realize that temptation to disobey is always there, but think about the ramifications for your self, for your children and for your grandchildren!

Paul the Apostle, in the New Testament had something to say about this as well. It reminds us of Andrews message last week...

1 Cor 10:10 And do not grumble, as some of them did--and were killed by the destroying angel.

1 Cor 10:11 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come.

1 Cor 10:12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

1 Cor 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

1 Cor 10:14 Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry.

Believe it or not, but verse 12 is my life verse! Not real glamorous is it?

1 Cor 10:12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!

You see, I know if I don't keep my eyes on Jesus and walk with Him each and every day, I could get stupid and fall into temptation! If we get prideful and think we've got it together and would never do this or that, it's almost like baiting Satan, picking a fight. In fact Scripture warns us of the following...

Prov 16:18 Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.

And James had this to say...

James 4:6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

James 4:7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

James 4:8 Come near to God and he will come near to you...

I just love that last part! It's the covenant formula in James. If you come near to God, then He will come near to you! He loves you and is already right there just waiting for you to accept His love, grace and mercy! And what does God ask in return? Well that takes us to the forth requirement...

4. Preparation for the Promised Land required the people remember their part of the covenant agreement!

a. The Hebrew people had made some pretty big promises to God!

Moses then gives this next generation of Hebrews who were preparing to enter the Promised Land a little history lesson from the previous generation. I know Chapter 5 is not a part of your reading, but I want to share with you just three verses as a bridge to this last point in Chapter 6. Moses reminds his hearers of what their parents and grandparents had once promised to God. They had said this to Moses...

Deu 5:27 "Go near and listen to all that the LORD our God says. Then tell us whatever the LORD our God tells you. We will listen and obey."

You might remember what happened back in our reading in Exodus. Moses does exactly what they asked him to do...

Exo 24:7 Then he (Moses) took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, "We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey."

How many times had the people promised God they would do everything He commanded them to do! They made a covenant! They promised! They broke their promises time and time again. Moses then shares what God had said to him in response to the grand commitment the Hebrew people had made back in the day, and it reveals the very heart of God in this matter. Moses says...

b. God wanted the people to do more than make a promise!

Deu 5:28 The LORD heard you when you spoke to me and the LORD said to me, "I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good.

Deu 5:29 Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!

God desired so much for the people to love Him from the heart. In fact, years later in Isaiah God would reiterate His desire for worship from the heart...

Isa 29:13 The Lord says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men.

Jesus would later say...

John 4:23 Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.

John 4:24 God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth."

Sometimes people think God is egotistical to desire worship in the first place. Those people do not understand the concept of worship! Worship is the way a human being loves God! Worship is the way we connect with the lover of our soul! Worship is not just singing on Sunday morning, but loving God with whatever gifts and talents you have! Worship is admiring the handiwork of God in His amazing creation! Worship is talking to God in prayer and letting God talk to you through His Word and by way of His Holy Spirit's leadership. Worship is seeking to live as Jesus lived by letting Jesus be the Lord of your life every moment of every day! Worship is serving others as if you were serving God Himself!

Love is an action. Love is a verb! To love God is to walk in His ways, to keep His commandments, to do His commandments, to heed His voice, to serve Him, to keep the covenant agreement of love! All of these are aspects of the people's covenant agreement with God. God's desire was that the people do these things from the heart! His desire was that they not only give lip service, but service from the heart. What would be the secret power for the people to be able to do these things from the heart? In preparation for entering the Promised Land, Moses gives the answer in what became a foundation for the Jewish faith and would become essential to the Christian faith as well. Moses spells out God's desire for a personal relationship with the people and the blueprint for that personal relationship! A portion of what I'm about to read to you, verses 6-9, is known to the Jewish people as the Shema! Some Jewish people include this as a part of their prayers twice a day. What I am about to read to you was so important that Jesus quoted part of it and it is recorded in three of the four Gospels. Moses said...

Deu 6:1 These are the commands, decrees and laws the LORD your God directed me to teach you to observe in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to possess,

Deu 6:2 so that you, your children and their children after them may fear the LORD your God as long as you live by keeping all his decrees and commands that I give you, and so that you may enjoy long life.

Deu 6:3 Hear, O Israel, and be careful to obey so that it may go well with you and that you may increase greatly in a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, promised you.

Deu 6:4 Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

Deu 6:5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.

Deu 6:6 These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts.

Deu 6:7 Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Deu 6:8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads.

Deu 6:9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

So in preparation for the Promised Land, the Hebrews were to love the LORD their God with all their heart, soul and strength! God's commandments were to be upon their hearts and they were to teach them to their children at every opportunity! According to John D. W. Watts, "Orthodox Jews have also taken the injunctions of vv. 8-9 literally. They wear copies of these verses in little boxes on their foreheads and wrists during prayers and call them phylacteries. They place parchment fragments with these verses inscribed on them in little metal boxes called mezuzahs by their doors.

What would this kind of commitment look like for a Christian who desires to live in the spiritual promised land of God's will for their life? What does loving the LORD with all our heart, soul and strength look like for a follower of Jesus Christ? I'll close with Paul's words in Colossians 3: 12-17. I think they paint a pretty good picture...

Col 3:12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Col 3:13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Col 3:14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

Col 3:15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

Col 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

Col 3:17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Let's pray!