

OpenTheo

Deuteronomy 29 - 30



Deuteronomy - Steve Gregg

Steve Gregg discusses the covenant between God and the Israelites in Deuteronomy 29-30, warning them of the consequences of not keeping their obligations. He emphasizes the importance of obeying God and the danger of falling into bitterness and idolatry. Gregg also touches on the concept of grace and the idea that while some things may remain secret, God will provide for his people if they choose to trust and follow him.

Transcript

We left off last time having covered chapters 27 and 28, and we come to chapter 29 now. Chapter 28, as you may recall, was a litany of curses for the most part. There were some blessings in the first 14 verses, but about three quarters or four fifths of the chapter was simply a listing of the disasters and the horrible consequences that would come upon Israel if they would depart from God.

Sadly, that's exactly what they did, and maybe even a little more sadly, Moses was informed by God beforehand that that would do so. I mean, imagine being essentially at the end of your life, having led these people, laid down your life for them as Moses has. And then God tells you, by the way, after you're dead, they're going to just go off and everything you've done will be gone.

They're going to all play the harlot with other gods. And that's what God told Moses. And so Moses went to his death without any real knowledge of the afterlife, probably.

I mean, if he had any knowledge of the afterlife, it's never recorded that he had any such knowledge. You know, a man in those days would come to the end of his life, and then he'd just look forward to expiring, and they didn't know what was on the other side. All he knew is that he was being deprived of the right to go into the Promised Land, and the people he had served were all going to, not maybe that generation, but a generation shortly afterward would depart from his principles, and it would be almost as if he had never been there.

And so that could seem very depressing, but Moses actually seemed very resigned to God. He's been a model leader in almost all respects. He had one time that he stepped

out of line.

To our minds, it would seem that it was very much provoked on the part of the circumstances, and apart from that one flaw, we don't know of any imperfections in the man. And yet he was a humble man, and he served thanklessly, really, in a very difficult position of leadership, and died without really any assurance that the fruits of his labors would be permanent. But, of course, we now know that what he may not have known, and that is that he is alive again in the presence of God.

As God had spoken to him at the burning bush and said, I'm the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, men who had died in history, but who are still living before God. As Jesus said, so Moses, though dead, now lives too. We're not yet to his death, but we will be by the end of this day's classes.

And in Chapter 29 and 30, we have sort of a renewal of the covenant. Now, it actually says it's a covenant that he's making with them on that day, and some people have thought that Moses was making a new covenant separate from the old one. I'm not sure why they would think so.

I mean, the wording does sound like he's making a covenant that day with them, but it seems most reasonable to assume that he's just renewing the covenant that God made at Sinai, but now with a new generation who were children at the time the covenant was made originally. Some scholars try to indicate there's a brand new covenant here. He's making kind of changing the old, but there's nothing in this talk in chapters 29 and 30 that really represents a departure from the other covenant.

It's just that he speaks at the beginning as if this is like a new thing he's doing. He's creating a new covenant with them, but I think it's simply new in the sense that it's the old one renewed to a new generation. It says these are the words of the covenant which Yahweh commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab.

Now, the first covenant was made at Mount Sinai, and he's making this covenant in Moab where they are, of course, camped ready to cross the Jordan in a few days time. Besides the covenant which he made with them in Horeb, and see that's what the wording confuses people. This covenant that he made at Moab is besides the covenant that he made at Horeb.

If anything, it certainly is not a new covenant like that which Christ made, which replaced and rendered obsolete the old covenant. It would be in addition to it, perhaps perhaps we could say an addendum or an appendix to it or something, but it really I don't really see the changes anything about the old covenant. Now, Moses called all Israel and said to them, you have seen all that Yahweh did before your eyes in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh and all his servants.

And to all his land, the great trials which your eyes have seen the signs and those great wonders. Yet Yahweh has not yet given you a heart to perceive and eyes to see and ears to hear to this very day. Now, this statement is interesting because although they have seen the wonders, Moses is convinced that they don't really see or hear as they should.

They don't have eyes to see or ears to hear. Remember, Jesus commonly said he has ears to hear. Let him hear.

And obviously, everyone in his audience had ears sticking out on both sides of their heads. They all had ears, but some of them had ears to hear and some did not. He's obviously talking about something other than just the audible sounds registering on the inner ear and transferring to the brain.

He's talking about hearing with a deeper level hearing with the heart. Spiritual ears to hear spiritual truth. And when Jesus said he has ears to hear, let him hear.

It was often after he'd given some kind of a rather mysterious thing or had given some parable. It was not self-explanatory and indicated that there were some there who would hear and understand that. And some would not.

And Moses says at this point, Israel has not ears to hear. They are not among those that would really take to heart those things. And what's more remarkable, he says it.

Yahweh has not yet given you eyes to see and ears to hear, which is in a heart to perceive. It almost puts it on God. This would be a very good Calvinist text because the Calvinist believe that it's God alone who opens a person's eyes and who opens their heart to receive the truth.

And I would agree. I'm not a Calvinist, but I would agree that it is God who has to open your eyes, who has to convict the heart. Where I would differ from Calvinism is that they would say that God goes all the way and he's the one who decides what decision you make about those things.

I believe God has to reveal his truth to people at a deeper level than the natural eye and ear hears. Once it has been revealed, of course, the person has the option of what they will do with that information and therefore they might choose to rebel against it. But at the same time, I mean, Judas, for example, Judas was among those that God opened his eyes.

We know because Jesus said to the twelve, it is to you, it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to the others is not giving. He was speaking to twelve. Judas was among them.

And yet Judas, who heard the mysteries of the kingdom of God, even had them explained privately by Jesus. He obviously rebelled against what he knew. It's possible for people to

have their ears and eyes opened and have a heart or a mind able to perceive what is being said and still to rebel against it.

But Moses saying that has not even been the case with them. They still don't see. They still don't hear.

They're still dull. And we have to assume, therefore, that there is a time in a person's life if they are to be saved, that God has to illuminate them. And this is pretty common Christian doctrine.

Both Calvinists and Armenians believe that that Jesus said, no one can come to me unless the father who sent me draws him. The question of whether that drawing is irresistible or not is where the Calvinists would differ from the Armenian. But both agree that God has to do the drawing.

God has to open the eyes. When Peter said, you are the Christ, the son of the living God, Caesarea Philippi, Jesus said, Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood did not reveal this to you. But my father in heaven, he knew that Peter was seeing at a deeper level than some might.

And it was because the father had revealed it to him. And unless the father reveals Jesus, unless the father reveals himself, unless the father reveals the truth, the spiritual truth of the word of God, the kingdom of God, it can't be seen. And so obviously, people say, well, can you pray for someone to be saved since they have free will? Obviously, how can God answer that prayer distinctly? We can certainly pray that God will give them eyes to see and ears to hear and a heart to understand, a heart to perceive.

After God's done that, I think the ball is in their court. They may or may not come to Christ, but they will not, certainly, if they don't have eyes to see and ears to hear. God has to awaken the understanding to recognize the gospel, to recognize Christ for who he is.

And thus we can pray that God will do that. Moses said that has not yet happened to these people. And it's hard to say whether it ever did to the nation as a whole.

There were times of revival, but those times of revival were short-lived and not very broad in their changes that they made in the lives of the people. So it may be that it wasn't until Jesus himself came that some were given ears to hear and eyes to see. And when Jesus said, he that has ears to hear, let him hear, he may have been speaking of a phenomenon that he knew was happening to some, but he didn't know who.

But God was at this time changing hearts and opening, giving them hearts to perceive. But in Moses' day, even after 40 years of leading them and teaching them, Moses could tell they weren't getting it. It wasn't in their hearts yet.

The light had not gone on for them. And he says, and I have led you 40 years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you and your sandals have not worn out on your feet.

And I mentioned when we encountered this statement or a similar statement earlier that it's not obvious, although it may seem obvious at first glance, that Moses is saying something about supernatural cloth and supernatural leather, which no matter how much it rubs against the ground or against the body or how much wear and tear it takes, the second law of thermodynamics has no effect on it. No molecules are rubbed off. It doesn't get thinner.

It doesn't get weaker. It doesn't wear out. If that's the supernatural thing that happened.

Well, God can certainly do that. Although the statement could simply mean that God has provided for you sufficiently that you've never had your clothes or your shoes wear out on your feet or on your body. I mean, I can say this.

My shoes in the past 40 years anyway, have never worn out either. But that doesn't mean that they are miraculously preserved is that before they wear out, I get new ones. God has provided sufficient replacement.

Same thing with most of my clothes, although I now do wear clothes that have worn out pretty much, but that's my choice. I can get new clothes any time I want to. And God had provided for them sufficiently so that the shoes, they never had to wear worn out shoes.

They never had to wear worn out clothes that God provided for them, though they were in a desert, though there were no shops, though there was no way that they got in work and earn money and supply for themselves. God had provided that they would never be walking around on dilapidated shoes and, you know, holes in their clothing and so forth. Because you have not eaten bread, nor have you drunk wine or similar drink, which is very strange in the Middle East to go 40 years without drinking wine, but they didn't have any vineyards.

They were drinking water from a rock and they're eating manna off the ground that God would provide. They didn't eat any real food like bread. I mean, ordinary food or wine, which is the normal staple for most people in the world.

But he says God had provided for them otherwise, so that you might know that I am Yahweh, your God. And when you came to this place, Sion, king of Hezballah and Og, king of Bashan, came out against us to battle and we conquered them. We took their land and gave it as an inheritance to the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half tribe of Manasseh.

Therefore, keep the words of this covenant and do them that you may prosper in all that you do. This is the main theme, apparently, of Deuteronomy is that if they will keep the

covenant, everything will go well. It seems like it shouldn't take supernatural ability here to get that idea through your head.

It's kind of like any parent telling their child that if they do something wrong, they're going to get disciplined. But if they do something right, they're going to get rewarded. Seems like that's not really rocket science.

And yet they weren't getting it. They don't have ears to hear and a heart to perceive it. All of you stand today before the Lord, your God, your leaders and your tribes and your elders and your officers, all the men of Israel, your little ones and your wives.

Also, the stranger who is in your camp from the one who cuts your wood to the one who draws your water, that you may enter into the covenant with the Lord, your God, and into his oath, which the Lord, your God, makes with you. Today, that is, there's nobody absent. No one can claim they didn't hear these charges.

These expectations, these commands, and therefore, from this point on, no one has any excuse for not obeying. It's everyone down to your your lowest servants of your household and your children. They're all here.

They're all involved in making this covenant with us. So that he may establish you today as his people for himself, and then he may be God's to you, just as he has spoken to you and just as he has sworn to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Now, God had made a promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob about their seed.

And Moses says, you guys can be that seed to whom the promises were made. If you're obedient, so you need to keep this covenant so that God can establish you as his people and that God can use you as the ones that are the fulfillment of the promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But what if they didn't keep the covenant? God had to wipe them out.

Couldn't God keep the promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob? Yeah, he could do what he said, what he suggested doing. He could raise up a nation out of Moses. That would still be descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Moses was from those people. But Moses is saying it can be you. You can be the ones.

You can be the seed of those people that God fulfills this to, if you're obedient to him. But it's obvious that in God's dealing with Israel, their role as God's people, their status as the children of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the promise to their status is always conditional on whether they keep the covenant or not. If they don't, then they aren't.

I make this covenant and this oath not with you alone, but also with him who stands here with us today before the Lord, our God, as well as with him who is not here with us today. For, you know that we dwelt in the land of Egypt and that we came through the nations which you passed by and you saw the abominations and their idols which were

among them, wood and stone and silver and gold. This is probably among the Moabites and the Amorites that they conquered so that there may not be among you a man or a woman, a family or tribe whose heart turns away today from the Lord, our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations and that there may not be among you a root bearing bitterness or wormwood means bitterness, so that it may not happen when he hears the words of this curse that he blesses himself in his heart saying, I shall have peace, even though I walk in the imagination of my heart as though the drunkard could be included with the silver.

Now, what is this saying here we have what has become for Christians are rather familiar term the root of bitterness. This is where that term comes from, although in the form that Christians usually use it comes from the book of Hebrews, which is alluding to this passage in Hebrews chapter 12 and verse 15. We are warned to avoid and prevent the rising up of a root of bitterness.

It says in Hebrews 12, 15, looking diligently, let anyone fall short of the grace of God left any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble and by this many become defiled. So I've heard many sermons and teachings that include reference to this root of bitterness, and it would appear to me that when preachers use that commonly today, they're thinking of something different than what I think it's referring to judging from its original occurrence in Deuteronomy, which the right of Hebrews has, of course, as the background for his use of that term. Many people when they hear the root of bitterness, they think of our modern idiom.

We think of bitterness as perhaps something like resentfulness, sort of an attitude of unforgiveness toward people being bitter toward people bitterness. We think of usually, I think we think of bitterness as sort of a hostile, angry, unforgiving, resentful state of heart toward somebody. And maybe you don't think of it that way, but that's the way I usually pick up from preachers.

You got to be careful about a root of bitterness. In fact, a lot of times when people are practicing what they call inner healing, they consider that the problem in your spirit is that you've got a root of bitterness. You need to forgive some people.

Well, I'm certainly all for the idea that we have to forgive people and that resentfulness and unforgiveness is a bad thing, a very bad thing. I just don't know that the right of Hebrews has anything like that in mind when he speaks of a root of bitterness. He said that if a root of bitterness springs up, it will defile many people.

And I've heard preachers say, you see, when you when you feel bitter, when you've got bitterness in your heart toward people, it's going to defile the whole people that you contact and so forth. Well, that is that is sure a fact. That is really a fact that if you're bitter and you speak bitterness, then that's going to turn other people bitter.

It's going to defile many. I will not dispute for a moment that spiritual reality. What I do question is whether that has anything to do with the expression root of bitterness in the Bible.

The root of bitterness is a term that comes from Moses in Deuteronomy chapter 30, 29, excuse me. And he says. If if their hearts turn away from the Lord and goes after and serves the gods of these nations, he says in verse 18, it was that the children of Israel go after idols that that is or will result in or is the result of there being a root of bitterness or root that causes bitterness.

Now, I should point out to you that bitterness in our idiom, like I said, refers to sort of a bitter attitude in the heart. That's how we usually use the word bitterness. Bitterness technically, of course, is a taste.

Certain foods are bitter to the taste. And therefore, when we talk about someone being bitter, you know, they've been made bitter by their trials. They're bitter toward someone else.

We're using a metaphor. We're not really talking about literal bitter taste. That's the literal meaning of the word bitter.

We're talking about something that we've spiritualized and we use metaphorically. It's a common thing to do with with words. We do it all the time.

So did Israel. So did this passage. But the word bitter when it was used metaphorically in the Bible, it usually speaks of calamity.

Or harsh circumstances. The bitterness of their bondage in Egypt is frequently spoken of. It was a bitter bondage, just as when you eat something bitter.

It may set your teeth on edge or it's an unpleasant experience. So certain circumstances in which people find themselves are described as bitter. When the Jews at Passover eat the bitter herbs at the table, they're reminded that that represents the bitterness of the bondage that they had in Egypt.

Bitterness, therefore, speaks of hard times, not necessarily a hard spirit inside that you have toward people. The root that causes bitterness. Bitterness is no doubt here a reference to God bringing judgment upon them as like the bitterness they had in Egypt.

Certainly in chapter 28, he is described the bitter circumstances that they can expect if they don't follow the covenant. It was explained in grueling detail how awful things would be for them. It is no doubt those circumstances that are thought of by this term bitterness.

But what would cause such a thing to happen to them? What would cause that bitterness

to be the result? Well, it's something, an attitude. In the heart, a root cause within them that would lead to those circumstances that are bitter circumstances. What would that be? Well, I think he explains in verse 19.

He says that there may not be in verse 18. There may not be among you a root bearing bitterness or wormwood. And so that it may not happen that when he hears the words of this curse that he that is the one in whom there is a root of bitterness says to himself, I shall have peace, even though I walk in the imagination of my heart.

In other words, I'm unconditionally secure is basically what the root that causes bitterness is. A person who's got a root attitude saying it doesn't matter what I do. It'll go well for me.

I don't have to obey God. The judgments of God are an empty threat. Sure, God says there's a curse on people to do this, but it won't be that way for me.

I'm going to get away with it. I can do whatever I want, walk in the imagination of my heart, but I'll still have peace. Now, that is certainly an attitude that is fostered in some Christian circles.

The idea that no matter how rebellious against God you are, no matter how much you sin, your salvation is there. It's sure you'll have peace, no matter how sinful you become. The idea being that people get the idea that somehow they will escape the judgment of God, even though they do the things that God says brings judgment upon people.

That attitude becomes a root that produces behavior that leads to the bitterness that God has threatened. It is that attitude that I believe is the root that results in bitterness, the bitterness of God's judgment. And I believe the writer of Hebrews has that in mind because he is warning in Hebrews chapter 12 about the impending judgment of God.

He talks about how God is a consuming fire and it's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of living God. And he's warning the people he's writing to of the danger of the judgment that's coming upon Israel at the time that he's writing. And he says, listen, you need to not fail or fall short of the grace of God.

Hebrews 12, 15. Now, the grace of God, you don't want to fall short of the true grace of God. There's sort of a false grace of God that Jude mentions.

That false teachers teach. In Jude, of course, which has only one chapter, Jude 4 says, For certain men have crept in unnoticed who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men who turn the grace of our God into licentiousness. And they deny the lordship of our Lord Jesus Christ.

They deny our only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ. They deny the lordship of Jesus and they turn the grace of God into permission to sin. And I don't suppose you have to

be in Christian circles for very long to encounter that kind of teaching or that kind of attitude that we're saved by grace, which means you can get away with sinning.

Sinning is not going to really be a problem, not going to create problems in your life because of the grace of God. You can get away with it. You can do evil and still have peace.

Because of the grace of God, that's changing the grace of God from what it really is into a false doctrine of what some people call greasy grace, the idea that you can just slide in because of God's unconditional favor, no matter what you do. And that is what Jude identifies as a teaching of false teachers who are denying lordship of Jesus. Now, the writer of Hebrews says he doesn't want people to fall short of the true grace of God.

He doesn't want people to fall short of grace. But what is real grace? Well, we know that Paul believed that real grace leads to holy living. And in fact, grace teaches us to live a holy life.

You probably know the passage I'm alluding to in Titus chapter two and verse eleven and twelve. In Titus two, eleven and twelve, Paul said, The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that we are saved by the grace of God. Now, that's a great deal of grace, but what is real grace? Well, we know that Paul believed that real grace leads to holy living.

And in fact, grace teaches us to live a holy life. You probably know the passage I'm alluding to in Titus chapter two and verse eleven and twelve. In Titus two, eleven and twelve, Paul said, The grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that we are saved by the grace of God.

Now, that's a great deal of grace, but what is real grace? So the grace has appeared and the grace teaches us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present age. That's what grace teaches Christians. True grace teaches you to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts.

True grace teaches you to live soberly and righteously and godly in this present age. If you have that grace, you will not begin to think, well, I can just go about doing evil and no harm will come to me. A false view of grace will lead people to think that, but not a biblical view of grace.

And so the writer of Hebrews says, I don't want you to come short of grace, the real grace of God. And I don't want you to make the mistake of having this root attitude that Israel was warned against. That leads to bitterness.

It's a root of bitterness that leads to defilement of name when you have this attitude, when you teach people and when you assume, I can live in sin and we're going to be saved by grace anyway. Well, the grace of God is sufficient to cover all sin. That is, all

repented of sin.

Not all sins that are excused and continue to be lived in. The grace of God doesn't just automatically cover you as you live in rebellion against God. And that thought that it does is that root in the heart that Moses said was a danger.

It could lead to those bitter circumstances, the bitter bondage and the bitter punishments that God had threatened them with. Now, back to Deuteronomy, verse 20, the Lord would not spare him. That is, that man who has this attitude and who acts according to it.

For then the anger of the Lord and his jealousy would burn against that man and every curse that is written in this book would settle on him. And the Lord would not blot out his name from under heaven, which probably means that not only the man, but all his descendants who carry on his name would also be eliminated by God's judgment. And that man's memory and name would be gone from the earth.

And the Lord would separate him from all the tribes of Israel for adversity, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law. Now, it sounds like what it's saying here is that the curses and the blessings of the previous chapter were sort of corporate national things. The whole nation, if they obey God, will be set above all the nations of the earth.

The nation, if they rebel against God, will be led into captivity and brought under other nations. But now he seems to be saying that even if the nation as a whole does not rebel against God, if an individual has this idea. This whole paragraph began with an individual mentioned in verse 18, so that there may not be among you a man or a woman or a family or tribe.

But it mainly talks as if it's a man who keeps saying him, him, him, him, him. And basically saying, if a man thinks he can violate these things, even if the whole nation doesn't come under God's judgment, God will separate that man from the rest of Israel and bring all these curses upon him. So these curses can be brought individually on a rebel, even if the nation as a whole is in obedience.

But the original threats are, of course, on the nation as a whole. Verse 22, so that the coming generation of your children who rise up after you and the foreigner who comes from far land would say when they see the plagues of that land and the sickness which the Lord has laid on it, the whole land is brimstone, salt and burning. That is no doubt an allusion to Sodom, which, of course, which is mentioned later in this verse, Sodom and Gomorrah.

And it's saying it's not really literally true that when God brought his judgment on Israel that it was really covered with fire and brimstone. That is how Sodom and Gomorrah

came to their end and the destruction of Israel under rebellion against God is likened in principle to and therefore in terms descriptive of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. But we have to understand that's the poetic way that the Old Testament often speaks.

In fact, if you would turn to Isaiah chapter one, you'll find that God actually refers to Israel as Sodom and because of the judgment that they're going to experience, but more probably because of their wickedness. But verse nine, Isaiah one nine says, Unless the Lord of hosts have left us a very small remnant, we would have become like Sodom and we would have been made like Gomorrah. What it means is we would have been 100 percent wiped out like they were if God hadn't spared a few of us.

Then verse 10 says, Hear the word of the Lord, you rulers of Sodom, give ear to the law of your God, you people of Gomorrah. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices to me, says the Lord. He goes on.

He's not talking to Sodom and Gomorrah. They were extinct centuries earlier. He's talking to Israel and Judah and he's calling Sodom and Gomorrah and he's saying their judgment can resemble that of Sodom and Gomorrah too.

And that's the language of Deuteronomy, 29, 23, where it's describing the judgment that would come on Israel. It's not being literal, but it's using languages similar to and reminiscent of the judgment on Sodom and Gomorrah. And by the way, the same language is used in the New Testament about the lake of fire, this place of fire and brimstone, just like what Sodom and Gomorrah experience.

Whether that's supposed to be literal or not, is one of those things that theologians have debated. It seems to me very likely that it's not necessarily literal anymore than this is. Israel's judgment was in principle like the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah, but not in fact.

There was no fire from heaven. There was no actual brimstone. Those are the things that rain down from heaven on Sodom and Gomorrah.

And so also the judgment of the lost is spoken of in those terms in Revelation. But to say that it's like this in principle, it's like the judgment of Sodom and Gomorrah. It may not be in detail or in fact like it.

But verse 23 says the whole land is brimstone, salt and burning. It is not stone, nor does it bear, nor does any grass grow there like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admon, Zebulun, the other cities of the plain, which the Lord overthrew in his anger and his wrath. All nations would say, why has the Lord done so to this land? What does the heat of this great anger mean? Then men would say in answer to that question, because they have forsaken the covenant of Yahweh, the God of their fathers, which he made

with them when he brought them out of the land of Egypt.

For they went and served other gods and worshiped them. God that they did not know and that they had not. He had not given them.

Then the anger of Yahweh was aroused against this land to bring on it every curse that is written in this book. And Yahweh uprooted them from their land in anger and wrath and in great indignation and cast them into another land as it is this day. Now, those are quotations.

Moses is not saying that as it is this day, they're in another land. He's projecting forward to a time after Israel has rebelled and encamped on their land and the curses of chapter 28 have come upon them. That people, when they see the devastation of their land, will say, wow, what happened to these people? Why is this land so ruined like this? And the answer that will be given is that which we just read.

And so the picture is of someone giving the right answer at a time after Israel has gone into captivity. That's why they're scattered them to foreign lands as it is this day. And then we have verse 29, which almost stands out like an unrelated.

Topic, I mean, verse 29 would make a great sermon just all by itself. But how it relates to what's gone before is very interesting question to consider. Verse 29 says the secret things belong to the Lord, our God.

But those things which are revealed belong to us and to our children forever that we may do all the words of this law. Now, this is a great verse for simply teaching us to be content with things that we can't know. There are things that God has not chosen to reveal.

And the older I get, the more I realize how many of those there are. The reason it takes time to figure out that there's a lot of things like that is because over the years, Christians have not been content to have ignorance about things that God has said nothing about. And therefore, they filled the gaps in with their imagination.

And so we have a lot of traditional teachings that when you go to church and hear teaching, you'll hear all kinds of answers given. What did Jesus do in those three days between his death and his resurrection? Those kinds of things, things that the Bible doesn't answer, but which we want to know answers to. We really want to know those things.

What's the final disposition of those who die and are lost and condemned at the judgment seat of Christ? How did you know what's their ultimate punishment? We want to know the Bible doesn't give a clear answer. It almost seems like conflicting answers in different passages. And what it does answer is in figurative terms and so forth.

I want to know. And so what happens is where we don't we're not satisfied to be ignorant. Men before us have filled in the answers from their imagination or from their best shot from what little information is available.

Whereas this verse teaches us that we should just be content with the fact that there are some things God hasn't chosen to tell us. They're secret things. They belong to him.

Why should we intrude into them? Why should we feel that we have to figure them out if God hasn't made it clear himself? He has made some things clear, and the things he has made clear are what he wants us to do and how he wants us to live. That's what it says. There are secret things that God has not chosen to let us in on.

But how to live is not one of those secret things. The things he has revealed are a different category. We do know those.

We can know those. We must know those. And they are given to us so we might live and walk according to all the words of this law.

The idea here is, and this is the sermon that could be made from this verse by itself as a standalone, is that, you know, there comes a time when we have to be mature enough to say, there's some things I don't know and I'll probably never know. More or less, almost all the mysterious things that have been matters of confusion to the church over the years, and we're not pleased to be confused or undecided, so we want to know. We want to figure it out.

But I believe that you can eventually come to a place where you say, well, there's some things we just don't know, can't know, and therefore must not need to know. God certainly would be wise enough to be aware of what we need to know, what he thinks we need to know. Those are the things we can assume he's taught us and explained.

And what has he explained? Well, mostly, at least in Moses' time, simply the laws. What God had revealed to us and our children that we might do all the words of this law. Now, the meaning of this statement in its context might simply be very similar to what God said later on to them when he said that this commandment that I give you is not too mysterious for you.

And in chapter 30, verse 11, he says, this commandment, which I command you to say, it's not too mysterious for you. It's not far off. He says, you're not going to go far away to get here.

Not going to cross the ocean or go up into heaven to get it. God brought it to you. And it's another way of saying there may be indeed things too mysterious for you.

The secret things that God has not revealed. They're his and his to know and ours to maybe someday know. But there are things that God has brought right to our doorstep.

There are truths that God has revealed plainly. We don't have to go to heaven to bring them down across the sea to bring over. We can't excuse ourselves from obedience by saying, well, this is too mysterious.

I got the mind of God is too inaccessible. No, it isn't. The parts he wants you to know he's made very accessible.

And that is perhaps the idea. Also, in verse twenty nine, I sometimes wondered about Deuteronomy twenty nine, twenty nine, because it falls at the end of a very disturbing picture of Israel being scattered throughout the nations under the judgment of God. And it kind of leaves the question unanswered.

Well, what about after that? Will they ever come back to God? And of course, there's been speculation about that as well. The narrative kind of leaves off with them being scattered and judged. And the question obviously would arise, well, is that the end for them? Is there anything more? Will they ever come back to God? And in answer, I would say that's a secret.

God knows the secret things belong to God. We don't have to speculate about things God hasn't really told us, but we do know what we're supposed to do right now. It's a little bit like when in the end of the Gospel of John in chapter twenty one, Peter and Jesus are having a conversation as they walk along the beach.

And Peter is told by Jesus, you know, well, when you're old, they're going to take you where you don't want to go. They'll bind you, you'll stretch your hands out. And he's basically telling Peter he's going to be crucified.

And Peter looks over his shoulder and sees John nearby and says, what about him, Lord? What's he going to do? And Jesus said, if it's my will that he remains until I come, what is that to you? You go and follow me. You do what I tell you to do. Don't worry about what's going to happen to other people or what, you know, what the future holds.

What the future holds that God knows that. That's what the future holds. That's God's knowledge.

That's God's to know. That's the secret things that aren't made known to us. But you don't have to worry about those.

What is that to you? You follow me. You do what I tell you to do and don't be too distracted by questions that are just matters of curiosity, which God has not made clear. I find that many Christians get distracted by theological questions that are really merely just matters of curiosity.

They're not urgent. They're not practical. They're just matters of curiosity.

I think I've mentioned that people ask me sometimes, what's the most frequent question you get asked on the air? And I think the question I get most frequently asked on the air is, who are the sons of God in the Nephilim in chapter six of Genesis? I don't know why that's the most frequently asked question, because I can't imagine how anything about it would have any practical implications to me or you or why it wouldn't matter for me to know. I don't mind knowing if the Bible makes it clear. I don't mind searching it out and finding out.

But if it's not easily known, I don't know why it should interest me very much. And yet it's fascinating to other people. Some of these people never grow very much spiritually in their obedience to God, but they certainly do want to master the mysteries of curiosity.

And that is not what that's not the right balance for the Christian. And I think that's what verse 29 suggests. Now, verse 30.

Now, it shall come to pass when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you and you call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God drives you and you return to the Lord. Now, this may seem to answer your question. Will they come back to the Lord? He talks about when you do, when you do, when you do.

But you need to understand that all of this is what it's all qualified at the end of verse 10. The last line of our sentences, if you turn to the Lord, your God with all your heart, all your soul. This is an if certainly if you do, then there will be restoration.

And if and when you do, this is what you can expect. He says in verse two, and you turn, return to the Lord, your God and obey his voice. According to all that I command you today, you and your children with all your heart, with all your soul.

That your way, your God will bring you back from captivity and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where the Lord, your God has scattered you. If any of you are driven out to the farthest parts under heaven from their Yahweh, your God will gather you and from there he will bring you. Then Yahweh, your God will bring you to this land, which your father's possessed and you shall possess it.

He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. And the Lord, your God, will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, apparently to give you that heart to perceive in the eyes to see and hear that were denied them up to this point. To love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, that you may live.

Also, the Lord, your God, will put all these curses on your enemies and on those who hate you, who persecuted you. And you will again obey the voice of the Lord and do all his commandments, which I command you today. The Lord, your God, will make you abound in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your body, meaning children, in the

increase of your livestock and in the produce of your land for good.

For Yahweh will again rejoice over you for good as he rejoiced over your father. Remember back in chapter 28, verse 63, when talking about God bringing the curses upon them for their disobedience in 2863, he said, it shall be that just as the Lord rejoiced over you to do you good and multiply you. So the Lord will rejoice over you to destroy you and to bring you to nothing.

But now he says, if you truly repent with all your heart and all your soul, the Lord will again rejoice over you for good. In 30, verse 9, as he rejoiced over your fathers. But there's this if here in verse 10, if you obey the voice of the Lord, your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes, which are written in the book of the law.

And if you turn to the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul. Now, he's saying that they could be brought back to their land under the terms of the old covenant. And we know he's talking about under the terms of the old covenant, because he says, if you obey all the words written in the book of this law, this law was the stipulations of the covenant made at Sinai.

And if they come back to the Lord and are true to the old covenant, then things go well for them. But that's only true as long as the old covenant existed. We know that the coming of a new covenant changed everything and made the old covenant obsolete.

They can't now go back to the old covenant and make claims to the promises associated with that because that covenant has been essentially replaced. There's a new covenant. It doesn't contain all the same things, not even all the same promises.

There are heavenly and eternal promises, but there are not promises to real estate. And so this was true. These promises were true up until Jesus came and made a new covenant and, in fact, did come true to some extent because God did drive them into captivity in Babylon.

And he did bring some of them back. But we don't see that the whole nation was ever brought back. There's not the prediction that it will be.

There is the conditional promise that it can be. And we saw that in history, we saw that Israel went into Babylon for 70 years and afterwards, some of them returned to the Lord and God brought those some back to the land. But it was not a wholesale turning to God from all the people of Israel, and therefore it was never a wholesale return.

Verse 11, for this commandment, which I command you today, it is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven that you should say who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it. Nor is it beyond the sea that you should say who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it.

But the word is very near to you in your mouth and in your heart that you may do it. Now, we in our introduction to Deuteronomy, I mentioned these verses in the way that Paul used them in Romans 10. He kind of innovated an application to them with reference to the gospel or what he called the righteousness of faith.

There he spoke as if he substituted the words of this law for Jesus himself. He said we don't have to go up to heaven and bring down Jesus. We don't have to go down to the abyss and bring him up from the grave.

That's corresponding to they don't have to go up to heaven and bring down the law so that it will be accessible for them to do it. They don't have to cross the ocean like some nations would have to. A pagan nation might have to cross the sea to go to Israel to find the laws of God.

Israel didn't have to cross any seas. It came right to their doorstep. So what he's saying is you don't have any excuse.

You can't say, well, we'd love to keep the law of God. If just one of us could go up in heaven, bring it down. But obviously we can't.

So we can't be expected to keep it. God says, wait, I brought it to you. If you even a foreigner in another nation, you might say, well, we can't keep the law of God because we don't have anyone to cross the sea and bring it to us.

Well, Paul says, you know, I mean, Moses, you don't have that excuse. You don't have to cross any oceans. It came to your land, not to another land.

You have no excuse. It's right here in front of your eyes. It's right in your mouth and in your heart.

So you may do it. And Paul makes the same lesson about Jesus, really, to the Jews. God has brought Jesus down from heaven.

We don't have to. He's made it easy. He's even brought Jesus up from the grave.

No one has to do that in order to have access to him. God has done all that. Now, verse 15.

See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. These are the choices. And I command you today to love Yahweh, your God, to walk in his ways and to keep his commandments, his statutes and his judgments, that you may live and multiply.

And Yahweh, your God, will bless you in the land that you go to possess. But if your heart turns away so that you do not hear and are drawn away and worship other gods and serve them. I announced to you today that you shall surely perish.

You shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over Jordan to go in and possess. I call heaven and earth as witness today against you that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing. Therefore, choose life that both you and your descendants may live.

He's calling witnesses. Heaven and earth are now witnessing. I'm giving you fair warning.

You have no excuses. You can choose life. It is available to you.

If you die, it will be your own stubborn, foolish choice. That you may love the Lord, your God, that you may obey his voice and that you may cling to him. For he is your life.

Like Jesus said that he is the vine and we're the branch and we have to cling to him, we have to abide in him because he is our life. That's where our eternal life comes from. From Christ himself.

We draw upon him. But he has to be clung to. You have to abide in him.

You can't just let go of him and still have that life. And the length of your days. And that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to give them.

Well, at this point, we need to take a break. And the topic changes. Also, this chapter is twenty nine and thirty are kind of a unit.

It would appear of sorts where he has again reinforced the obligations of Israel to keep the covenant and given them fair warning. It's somewhat less detailed than in the previous chapters, but fair warning that it's going to go very, very badly for them if they rebel. And with all the warnings you get in Deuteronomy, one wonders how could anyone not take it seriously? And yet, you know, Christians and non-Christians alike have been guilty of forgetting God and having that root of bitterness in their heart, thinking I can get away with my sinfulness.

I can get away with rebellion against God. I won't call it rebellion against God. I'll just call it doing my own thing.

But this rebellion against God, I can do it and get away with it and it'll still go well for me. And that is what they thought. Obviously, they thought that these warnings were nothing.

And they're pretty strong, emphatic warnings, but they just thought they were nothing. And so they ignored them. And all these things, of course, did come upon them.

Well, we take a break now and we only have a few chapters left to finish out the book.