

Always Remembering: Always Repenting

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[0 : 00] And now we come to our reading, which once again is in the book of Deuteronomy. Later in the service, Willie will be continuing his series in this book, and we are going to read chapters 9 and 10, which you'll find on page 153 of the Bibles.

Moses is continuing to remind the people of the way the Lord had led them as they stand at the very brink of the Promised Land.

In particular, in these chapters, he's recalling the great events of Sinai, the giving of the law, and sadly, the discreditable episode of the golden calf.

So let's hear the word of God then, chapters 9 and 10, beginning at chapter 9, verse 1. Hear, O Israel, you are to cross over the Jordan today to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, cities great and fortified up to heaven, a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know and of whom you have heard it said.

Who can stand before the sons of Anak? Know therefore today that he who goes over before you as a consuming fire is the Lord your God.

[1 : 22] He will destroy them and subdue them before you. So you shall drive them out and make them perish quickly as the Lord has promised you. Do not say in your heart, after the Lord your God has thrust them out before you, it is because of my righteousness that the Lord has brought me in to possess this land, whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is driving out before you.

Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God is driving them out from before you, that he may confirm the word that the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Know therefore that the Lord your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people.

Remember, and do not forget how you provoked the Lord your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the Lord.

Even at Horeb, you provoked the Lord to wrath, and the Lord was so angry with you that he was ready to destroy you. When I went up to the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant that the Lord made with you, I remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights, and neither ate bread nor drank water.

[2 : 57] And the Lord gave me the two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and on them were all the words that the Lord had spoken with you on the mountain, out of the midst of the fire, on the day of the assembly.

And at the end of forty days and forty nights, the Lord gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant. Then the Lord said to me, Arise, go down quickly from here, for your people whom you have brought from Egypt have acted corruptly.

They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them. They have made themselves a metal image. Furthermore, the Lord said to me, I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stubborn people.

Let me alone that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven, and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than thee. So I turned and came down from the mountain, and the mountain was burning with fire, and the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands.

And I looked, and behold, you had sinned against the Lord your God. You had made yourselves a golden calf. You had turned aside quickly from the way that the Lord had commanded you.

[4 : 12] So I took hold of the two tablets and threw them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes. Then I lay prostrate before the Lord as before forty days and forty nights.

I neither ate bread nor drank water because of all the sin that you had committed in doing what was evil in the sight of the Lord to provoke him to anger.

For I was afraid of the anger and hot this pleasure that the Lord bore against you so that he was ready to destroy you. But the Lord listened to me that time also.

And the Lord was so angry with Aaron that he was ready to destroy him. And I prayed for Aaron at the same time. And I took the sinful thing, the calf that you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it, grinding it very small until it was as fine as dust.

And I threw the dust of it into the brook that ran down from the mountain. At Tabara also, and at Massa, and at Kibroth-Hatavai, you provoked the Lord to wrath.

[5 : 18] And then the Lord sent you from Kadesh Barnea, saying, Go up and take possession of the land that I have given you. Then you rebelled against the commandment of the Lord your God and did not believe him or obey his voice.

You have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you. So I lay prostrate before the Lord for these forty days and forty nights because the Lord said he would destroy you.

And I prayed to the Lord. O Lord God, do not destroy your people and your heritage, whom you have redeemed through your greatness, whom you have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Do not regard the stubbornness of these people or their wickedness or their sin. Bless the land from which you brought us, say.

Because the Lord was not able to bring them into the land that he promised them, and because he hated them, he has brought them out to put them to death in the wilderness. For they are your people and your heritage, whom you brought out by your great power and your outstretched arm.

[6 : 30] That time the Lord said to me, Cut for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to me on the mountain and make an ark of wood, and I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets that you broke, and you shall put them in the ark.

So I made an ark of acacia wood, and cut two tablets of stone like the first, and went up the mountain with the two tablets in my hand. And he wrote on the tablets in the same writing as before, the ten commandments that the Lord has spoken to you on the mountain, out of the midst of the fire, on the day of the assembly.

And the Lord gave them to me. Then I turned and came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark that I had made, and there they are as the Lord commanded me.

The people of Israel journeyed from Beoroth, Ben-E-Yachan, to Moserah. There Aaron died, and there he was buried. And his son Eliezer ministered as priest in his place.

From there they journeyed to Gudgoda, and from Gudgoda to Jotbatha, a land with brooks of water. At that time, the Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord, to minister to him, and to bless in his name to this day.

- [7 : 54] Therefore Levi has no portion or inheritance with his brothers. The Lord is his inheritance, as the Lord your God said to him. I myself stayed on the mountain as at the first time, forty days and forty nights.

And the Lord listened to me that time also. The Lord was unwilling to destroy you. And the Lord said to me, Arise, go on your journey at the head of the people, that they may go in and possess the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.

And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commending you today for your good.

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

Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart and be no longer stubborn, for the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who is not partial and takes no bribe.

- [9 : 27] He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow and loves the sojourners, giving him food and clothing. Love the sojourner therefore. For you are sojourners in the land of Egypt.

You shall fear the Lord your God. You shall serve him and hold fast to him. And by his name you shall swear. He is your praise.

He is your God who has done for you those great and terrifying things that your eyes have seen. Your fathers went down to Egypt, 70 persons, and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.

Amen. That is the word of the Lord and may he bless it to our hearts, our minds. Well, if you take up your Bible at Deuteronomy chapter 9 and 10, page 153 I think is the page.

And we'll look at that together. Let me ask, how are we to live victorious lives as believers and followers of the Lord? How are we to live so as to fulfill our destiny, the calling that God has upon our life?

- [10 : 45] Jesus constantly tells his followers that they're called to be fruitful. I chose you to go and bear fruit and fruit that should abide is what he told his disciples in the upper room.

God's sovereign call upon our lives is for a purpose and it is a fruitful, victorious purpose. Now we see that right back here in Deuteronomy.

God calls his chosen people to be holy to him, to prevail as holy warriors. That was the message of chapter 7. And in chapter 8, we saw that he taught them to depend utterly on him for their sufficiency in all of these things.

And now here in chapter 9, he sets a great destiny before them. Look at verses 1 and 2. They are to be victorious over nations far greater and mightier than they are, even overcoming the giants.

And the section rounds off in verse 11 of chapter 10 with a similar command. Arise, go in and possess the land that I swore to the fathers to give to them.

- [11 : 54] God is calling his people unmistakably to a destiny of great victories, the victories of true faith. And understanding this call of God upon our lives should indeed encourage us and empower us in our lives.

But it can also ensnare us and endanger us if we don't know, if we don't understand some crucial things about God and about ourselves. And that's why here in this chapter, Moses sets their calling and their destiny before Israel, but he insists that they do know certain things, that they remember critical things.

Look at verse 3. Know therefore today. And again verse 6. Know therefore. And verse 7. Remember and do not forget.

And these are things that are just as important for us to know today as it was for them, which is why the Holy Spirit has preserved these words and they're still in our Bibles. Paul tells us, remember these things in the Old Testament Scriptures, they're written for us who live in this last day in the New Testament age.

So what does God want us to know, to remember, to never forget? Well, if God's people are to fulfill their calling and to reach their true destiny with him, then he's telling us we are to be a people who are always remembering and always repenting.

[13 : 28] Look first at chapter 9, right down to chapter 10, verse 11, because it's one great call to remembrance. Moses is plainly saying that real faith, victorious faith, will be always remembering.

And God's people must know and must remember and never forget three key things according to Moses here. Indeed, according to the whole Bible throughout the Old and the New Testaments. And the first thing Moses points God's people to in verses 1 to 5 is to remember and never forget their powerful ruler.

God is powerfully sovereign. And only because he has purposed and promised a future can any of us really achieve anything at all.

Only because God is on our side. Only because God is for us. Now you know those words well, don't we, from Romans chapter 8. If God is for us, who can be against us?

God is the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth. So to be on his side is to be invincible. I am he and there is none who can deliver from my hand.

[14 : 34] I work and who can turn it back? Says God through the prophet Isaiah. And that's why verses 1 and 2 here can be true for Israel. Victory against all odds, against all giants.

Because of verse 3. And only because of verse 3. Because it's the Lord who is a consuming fire who goes before you to subdue all the enemies. So, and only so, you will drive them out.

Only because of the word of God's promise. Same with chapter 10, verse 11. You'll go in and you'll possess everything before you only because God has promised and purposed that for you.

Only because God, the powerful ruler of Israel and the whole universe is with them and is for them. But you see, there's also great danger in knowing that.

That's why between verses 1 to 3 of chapter 9 and verse 11 of chapter 10, we have such a long litany of warnings to God's people not to misunderstand his sovereignty.

[15 : 39] Not to dare to think that because they are gods that somehow God is theirs in the sense of being beholden to them regardless of their attitude, regardless of their actions.

No, says Moses. God is on your side as you walk in the path he has put before you. But there's great danger in misunderstanding what that really means and what it doesn't mean.

Verse 4, look, don't say in your heart, it's because of my righteousness that God has brought me into this promised land and because of the wickedness of the nations that the Lord is driving them out.

I think it's best to read that whole section there in the quotation marks because it's expressing an attitude of moral superiority, isn't it? We're in the right and those people are in the wrong and so God is with us and will be blessing us and punishing them.

That's a very easy attitude to have, isn't it? In fact, it's the natural attitude of our human hearts. We all think that we're in the right and others are in the wrong and so God, well, if there is a God, God will naturally be for us and against them.

[16 : 47] That's how we think, isn't it, as human beings? And Moses says, don't think like that to Israel. It's not because of your righteousness. Just as in chapter 8, verse 17, remember, he said, it's not because of your power and intelligence and might that you become wealthy.

It's God who's given you these things. No, God has chosen you. He is sovereign and he is going to do all kinds of marvelous wonders for you, but do not misunderstand that.

Don't get crazy ideas about yourselves when God does all these things for you. There is absolutely no room at all for pride if you really understand the sovereign election of God.

Now, that's so important because people can caricature this whole doctrine of election and of God's sovereignty to mean the very opposite to what the Bible teaches it really does mean.

As though it could mean that God's people could take pride in being among his elect and therefore superior and different to those reprobates. No, no, no.

[17 : 54] You only need to read Paul's letter to the Romans where he spells it out so clearly just to see how utterly wrong-headed that is. If this gospel of God's sovereign grace, he says there, if it's true as the whole Old Testament, the law even teaches it's true, what becomes then of boasting, says Paul?

It is excluded utterly because it's all down to God's unmerited sovereign grace and you've received it just in empty hands, humble faith and trust in the mercy of God towards you.

It is not because of works but because of God's call, he says in Romans chapter 9. It depends not on human will and exertion but on God who has mercy.

Paul could not be clearer and neither could Moses be here. Look at verse 5. It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you are going in to possess the land.

There is no doubt, is there? Well, why is it then? Well, second half of verse 5. Yes, it is because of the terrible wickedness of the Canaanite nations that God is judging them and driving them out.

[19 : 11] And, look, it is also because of the promise of God to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. In other words, what he's saying is the Canaanites, yes, they do deserve their judgment but the converse is not true.

you inherit this land through the sheer grace and the sovereign promise of God. It is not that you deserve what they don't deserve.

You have no more right or claim to it than they do. But God, who is rich in mercy because of the great love with which he has loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses and sins because this God is their sovereign God and he chose to promise to give this land to Abraham's seed.

That is why you will be victorious. He said, not any other reason at all because the God who is powerfully sovereign chose to be merciful to you who deserve no mercy.

It's clear, isn't it? The thing is, you see, we find it much easier to say that we believe that than to really act as though we did believe it.

[20 : 28] That must be so, wouldn't it? Because if we really acted on that, we would be the most humble people in all the earth and so would the Israelites have been. But they're not.

And so, you see, in order to help God's people see that all their future, all their victories are only because of their powerful ruler, Moses now forces them to face up to this relentless litany about their own character even as God's own people.

Because, you see, people of real faith, people of victorious faith will be always remembering and never forgetting also their perpetual rebellion and rebelliousness.

look at verses 6 to 24. They're painful verses. We are perpetually sinful. That's the message. God's own people, although they're chosen by Him, are habitual, hardened sinners.

And that's despite. It's despite what we are that God has chosen us. Not because of what we are. That's why this chapter is so, so long.

[21 : 39] Because God is saying we need to remember not only His powerful sovereignty but our perverse and perpetual sinfulness. Not just what He's done for us in all His bounty, but what we have done against Him in all our badness.

That's what we've got to remember. You see what that means? It means that God thinks it's really important for His people to be reminded constantly that we are habitual and hardened sinners.

sinners. And what He goes through here is certainly not theoretical. Moses replays before them the whole video, if you like, of their lives.

And it was a painfully humbling experience. But they need to know it, says verse 6. That none of their victories, none of the blessings to come are remotely because of what they themselves are.

because you're a stiff-necked people is how the NIV translates the word stubbornness. It literally means hardness of neck, like a mule that will not turn its head no matter how you pull on that halter.

[22 : 48] And notice He says, not, you used to be like that, you were like that before I called you. No, you are stiff-necked and stubborn and hardened. And verse 7, you're provocative all the time, provoking the Lord your God to wrath.

You don't believe that, really, says Moses, do you? So let me show you. I've got my iPad here. It's all on video. Here's the video.

It's called 40 Glorious Years, You and Me. I was thinking of putting it in a box set for our anniversary. No, I don't think so because it doesn't belong in the romance section, does it? It belongs in the horror section. Look at verse 7.

From the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious, stiff-necked against the Lord. Verse 8, Even at Horeb, the place of our wedding, as it were, when God stood before you and promised himself to you in faithfulness to love you and cherish you.

And you stood before him, don't you remember? And you said, Yes, I do. We will. We will obey everything the Lord has said. We will fear the Lord. We'll keep all his commandments. And so I went up the mountain, in verse 9.

[23 : 58] And I was there 40 days and nights and I got the tablets of the covenant, the words of your marriage covenant. But already you were committing adultery. The wedding reception was barely over and God said to me in verse 12, Quickly, go down and see.

Look what they're doing. Already. So quickly, they've turned away from me to a metal image. Adultery is a terrible thing, isn't it? And even the most liberal person must surely at least be shocked about adultery taking place before the honeymoon's even over, before the wedding is even over.

Well, that's what this is, says Moses. They've broken already the first commandment. No other gods before me. They've broken the second commandment. No images. And so it's no surprise, is it, in verse 14.

The Lord is so angry He wants to destroy them completely and build a new people through Moses and only his seed. And actually, as Derek Kidner puts it, that would not have been breaking God's covenant to Abraham.

It would simply have been channeling that covenant through one seed of Abraham at that point. One faithful, true Israelite. And the thoughtful among you might want to ponder what light Galatians 4, 15 to 29 might shed on that verse.

[25 : 23] But you see, Israel has broken their covenant with God already. And so Moses picks up the tablets and shatters them in front of them symbolically to say, you've shattered this whole relationship, this covenant.

And he lay prostrate with fear before the Lord, verse 19, because he knew God was ready to destroy them. And then, the video goes on, look at verse 22, he said, this wasn't just one terrible episode.

That was enough. But look, it was the same at Tabera, it was the same at Massah, it was the same at Kibberot Hatava, it was the same at Kadesh Barnea. Read Exodus, read Numbers, it's every single page is the same.

ever since I knew you. The story of God's people from beginning to end is one of provoking God to wrath, verse 22.

Rebellion against his commands, verse 23, because of unbelieving hearts, a refusal to obey him. You have been rebellious against the Lord your God from the day I knew you.

[26 : 38] Unless we might be saying to ourselves, well, that's true, we know that, but nevertheless, as God's people, their sin was still not as bad as the sin of those pagan unbelievers. Just look down to verse 27.

What is their stubbornness? It is wickedness, says Moses. It is sin. Exactly the same words, wickedness and sin that verse 5 said is the reason why God destroyed the Canaanites and cast them out of the land.

And Moses' words are echoed, aren't they, in the New Testament by Stephen in chapter 7 in his great speech. You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit as your fathers did, so do you.

People really don't like being told that sort of thing, especially good church people, and they did not like it, did they? In fact, they stone-steamed to death. But he said it, and Moses said it here, and Jesus and his apostles said all the same kind of things because God wants us to remember and never forget that we are perpetually rebellious people, even God's own people.

that's our true nature. That's what we are. And if you don't believe me, if you think that's not so, does anyone want to volunteer to put the DVD movie of their life story up on that screen for all of us to see?

[28 : 08] Everything you've ever done, even the most secret things, everything you've ever said, everything you've thought. Let me tell you, if I put my story up there within one minute, you'd be running me out of this church and saying, that man is not fit to be a member of this church, never mind the pastor.

I'm not, I'm not being anything other than serious. And I think it would be the same for all of us, wouldn't it? But God does want to remind us of our story, of our life, of our hardness, of our stubbornness, of our wickedness and sin.

He wants us to remember and never forget our perpetual rebelliousness. And that the only reason we have not been destroyed is because of God's extraordinary patience and mercy towards us and persistence towards us.

And that is the third thing that Moses wants to remind God's people here. It's there in verses 18 to 20, but especially from verse 25 right down into chapter 10 and verse 11, where he impresses on Israel that real faith, that the victorious and fruitful faith will remember and never forget that they owe everything to their persistent rescuer.

That God is a persistent and patient savior. And God's people, although chosen by him, are only saved from destruction as the rest of hardened pagans are, only through the sheer mercy of God and the faithful, costly self-giving of their mediator.

[29 : 55] Moses was the mediator of God's commands to Israel in verses 9 to 11. You see it in chapter 9. He spent 40 days on the mountain receiving the covenant, commands of God, but also, verse 25 and following here, show us that he was the mediator of covenant mercy.

In the face of God's anger, in their sin and rebellion, he stood in the breach facing the anger of God. He interceded for them.

He interceded, verse 20, for Aaron even, the high priest of Israel, because even he had joined the rebellion against God. And he pleads, doesn't he, not on any of the basis of their deserving, but upon the honor and the righteousness of God.

God's honor to his promise. God's honor to his name, verse 27. He pleads the honor of God's covenant. He says to the Lord, you, Lord, said these are my people, but they're not my people, they're your people, called by your name, whom you've rescued.

Rescue them for your name's sake, so that your name is not blasphemed among the pagan nations. And God responded.

[31 : 11] That's what verses 1 to 10 tell us. He established a new covenant, or new tablets, with the same indestructible covenant on them.

Notice verse 5, it says, Moses turned and came down from the mountain. Exactly the same phrase as back in chapter 9, verse 15, where he turned and he came down. And what he saw then was the immediate terrible unfaithfulness of Israel.

But here he turns and he comes down and he sees the evidence of God's incredible faithfulness. The tablets of stone. God has written, again, signifying his covenant, the ark of the covenant, signifying his presence with them.

And here they are still, he says. He is still with you. And the priesthood is restored also. That's the point of verses 6 to 9 here. Aaron wasn't destroyed.

He went on and lived and died of old age. And his ministry passed on to his sons and to the Levites. And so, you see, verse 10, the intercession of the mediator brought rescue for God's people.

[32 : 21] again and again and again all through their history. The persistent rescue of persistent rebels only through the powerful ruler, the sovereign God of mercy.

It's a pitiful story, isn't it? Of Moses and his people. But one that Moses says they must never forget.

Always remember if there's any way that they're going to be fruitful and victorious and fulfill their destiny. Now, maybe we're thinking as we listen to all of this, thinking what a pathetic, useless bunch they were way back then.

Thank God that we as Christian people today are not like them. None of us has gone off and worshipped a golden calf. They committed themselves once for all to God, to the Lord, but their once-in-a-generation commitment didn't seem to be any longer than a once-in-a-generation commitment for Mrs. Sturgeon.

Immediately, they're right back to it again and again and again. Repenting and having to be restored. But thank God it's not like that for New Testament Christians, we might say to ourselves, because we've got better promises.

[33 : 37] We've got more grace. We've got a fuller revelation of God. We've got the spirit of the risen Lord Jesus. Thank God for all that He's given to us. And yes, indeed, thank God for all that He's given to us.

It is different. It is better by far than anything that they ever had. But what does the New Testament tell us that that means for us?

It means that the responsibilities that we bear towards God are also far, far greater than they were then. Is that not so? Do you think we have more excuses for sinful, hardened, rebellious hearts than Israel had for theirs?

Do you think we have more reason to be excused that or less? See, Israel professed faith in the Lord, but so quickly they turned and devoted all their gold, their wealth, all that they were supposed to be devoting to God's service and His tabernacle and giving it to another, to making idols and false gods.

Well, isn't that sometimes what we're very guilty of doing? Lots of zeal and commitment to the Lord at first, but doesn't that so often fade and our resources start to be devoted much more to self-serving and all these sorts of things, which is idolatry, isn't it?

[35 : 12] I wonder what a video audit like Moses of each of our lives and our stewardship of our own time, our own talents, our own money, I wonder what it would show. Would it show that unadulterated devotion to the Lord and His service or a whole lot of rival ambitions, rival desires, other things that easily creep in?

Do we think really that we as New Testament Christians are somehow different in spirit, somehow superior to the people of Israel? I think we do.

But friends, here's the truth, that is not how the New Testament talks, not at all. For one thing, it tells us, doesn't it, that we have far more clarity than they ever had on the real seriousness of our sin and our guilt.

God's wrath was averted from our sin not merely by any pleading that Moses could make, that was a temporary reprieve, but only through the interceding, through the interposing of the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, our mediator, the Son of God Himself.

Listen to how the New Testament Gospel tells us that we are to remember the truth about ourselves and our sin. Here's the Apostle John. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves.

[36 : 31] And the truth, that is the truth of the Gospel, is not in us. It's not a mark of faith to think that, it's a mark of unbelief to think that way. That's what he's saying. Oh, what about Paul in Romans 11 where he says, don't you Gentile Christians be arrogant and think you're superior towards the branches, the natural sinful people of Israel?

Yes, they were indeed broken off because of their unbelief, he says. And you stand by faith, but only by faith. And by God's mercy, not by your faithfulness.

So don't become proud, he says, you stand in awe. If God didn't spare those natural branches, how will he then spare you? Don't be proud, he's saying.

Be humble. Just what Moses is saying here. And again to the Corinthians of 1 Corinthians 10, Paul says very plainly, all these things were written for your instruction. Who live in the end of the ages, New Testament Christians.

And if any of you think you're standing firm, be very careful unless you fall flat on your face just as they did. Or here's the Apostle James speaking to the Church of Jesus Christ.

[37 : 42] You adulterous people, you fellowship with the world makes you enemies with God. Cleanse your hands, you sinners. Purify your hearts, you double-minded, you adulterous people.

Be wretched, weep, mourn, humble yourselves before the Lord. That's not very cheery, is it? Well, think of all the powerful warnings in Hebrews.

Hebrews chapter 3. Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God. Exhort one another daily so that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin because you share in Christ if you hold your original confidence to the end.

Don't harden your hearts today if you hear His Word. Or read the whole of Hebrews chapter 10 later on where He says that God's judgments under Moses were severe but how much worse they'll be for those of us if we spurn the Son of God Himself, not just Moses, if we spurn and scorn the blood of the covenant by which we've been sanctified.

It's a fearful thing, says the Apostle, for us to fall into the hands of the living God. You see what He's saying? You are in real danger if you ever forget your sinfulness, your hardness, your rebellious nature.

[39 : 05] That's the New Testament message as it is Moses. But don't we believe in the perseverance of the saints, the true believers of God?

Yes, we do. But here's the thing. The only way you will persevere is if you never forget that the very thing that will stop you persevering in the end is to fail to keep remembering your hardness of heart and keep remembering the deceitfulness of sin within you.

Because then you will fail to keep cherishing and prizing your mediator, your rescuer, your persistent Savior and your Redeemer. And without Him, you can't persevere one more day.

Never mind to the end of your life. You need Him. You need to remember how much you need Him. Striking, isn't it?

I'm sure you noticed how five times in this passage Moses stresses the 40 days and 40 nights that he was in the wilderness on the mountain with the Lord, receiving God's commands, interceding for the people even when they're showing themselves unfaithful.

[40 : 24] Do you think it can possibly be accidental that in Matthew chapter 4 where Matthew talks about Jesus going into the wilderness, he says explicitly He was there for 40 days and 40 nights.

He'd already been baptized, hadn't He? With John's baptism. A baptism for stiff-necked, rebellious people. He was the sinless one standing in our place to fulfill all righteousness, He says.

And then now He's in the desert as the faithful one replacing and therefore reversing Israel's faithlessness in those days.

Where is our real hope as the New Testament people of God? Well friends, it is not, not in the vain thought that somehow we are less rebellious in heart, less in need of rescue than the Israelites were.

But our hope does lie in the wonderful truth that we share their true mediator. That we share the one who alone could truly save them.

[41 : 32] The one to whom Moses pointed. The one whom Moses foreshadowed so vividly in His mercy and His love and His dogged perseverance and persistence.

The minister grace to such a sinful people. And isn't it true that the more we remember and realize just how hardened, just what sinners, just how rebellious we really are by nature, the more we remember that, the more we will prize and cherish our great mediator, the Lord Jesus.

Because it is only He, only He, who can make us fruitful, who can bring us victory in our faith. And you see, if we are a people who are always remembering, remembering God's unwarranted grace towards us and remembering the real sinfulness of our own hearts, our constant need for a Savior, then we will be, won't we, a people who are also always repenting.

God's kindness in the face of our sinfulness is meant to lead us to repentance as the Apostle Paul. And the more we remember our constant wickedness and His constant kindness in the face of that, the more we will be led to continual repentance.

And that's what verses 12 to 20 at the end here are expressing, aren't they? And now, verse 12, therefore, what does the Lord require? Well, He wants you to throw yourself on Him to be the only Lord, the only Redeemer, the only Savior.

[43 : 12] Verse 20, hold fast to Him. He is your praise. He is your God. He is your everything. There's great, great simplicity here, isn't there? There's nothing complicated about what God requires.

Verse 12 is simply saying, let Him and only Him have all your love, all your service, all your reverence. How do you do that?

Well, verse 13, you trust and obey Him and you know that everything He commands is only for your good, only for your blessing, only for the victory and the fruitfulness of your life.

He has given us everything we need for life and godliness so that we will not be ineffective and unfruitful. That was Edward's message last Sunday evening from 2 Peter 1, wasn't it? Here's Moses saying exactly the same thing.

Obey Him because you can trust Him and His every command is His provision for your fruitfulness and for your victory in life. Don't we believe that?

[44 : 18] Well, again, Moses says, remember, remember the sheer wonder of His love. Look at verse 14. To your God belongs heaven and the heaven of heaven is the earth.

Everything in it and yet, look at this, He chose you. You stiff-necked, hardened sinners. He chose you above all others. Isn't that astonishing?

My father often used to quote the words of an old hymn that says this, that thou shouldst love a worm like me and be the God thou art is darkness to my intellect but sunshine to my heart.

You see, when we remember that as we must remember that, then it's not only that a response of our hearts is required from God but that a response from our hearts, even our hardened hearts, is enabled and is brought forth by Him to cut away the hardness and to expose the tender flesh of our most intimate organ of love for its proper, unique purpose for which our heart was created, to love God alone.

That surely is the tenderness, the intimacy implied by this language, isn't it? Look, circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart. It makes us blush. But surely God wants us to grasp how real and how deep and how intimate is His desire for our heart.

[45 : 49] What an exclusive claim that He has and He alone upon our heart, the deepest place of our love. And also He wants us to see the pain, the cost to that of real, deep repentance and how humbling it is.

It's humbling to talk that way, isn't it? But only thus, He is saying, will our deepest heart be touched and transformed in the secret place by His heart of deep love.

Because real repentance towards God is what reunites us with God in spirit, in heart, and in soul and that must always transform. And that evidence of transformation is seen, isn't it?

In what issues forth out of hearts that have been transformed by Him. Look at verses 17 to 19. You see, God chose you, He says, but don't forget, He's the Lord of Lords, of all Lords.

He's the awesome God of all the earth. And He cares, not just for you, but for His whole world, all that He's made. He's without partiality. He loves the sojourner, the alien, the widow.

[46 : 59] So when your heart is touched by Him, what do you do? You love the sojourner and the widow and the alien, He says, you see, real repentance is a turning away from yourself and a turning upwards towards God, to love God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength.

And so it's a turning away from yourself and a turning outwards to love your neighbor as yourself. That's why real repentance is always a visible, tangible thing.

That's why John the Baptist said, repent and show fruit in keeping with repentance. And He tells them how to do that in real life. But Jesus said exactly the same thing. Luke chapter 10, do you remember the story where somebody asks Him?

The great commandment, He says, love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength and your neighbor as yourself. Do this and you will live. He's telling Him to repent. He's telling Him to turn around, to love God with all His heart and love His neighbor as Himself.

But He says to the man, you actually have to do it, not just discuss it, He tells them that story, remember, of the Good Samaritan and the punchline, all right, you've got it. Now go and do likewise.

[48 : 13] Show fruit in keeping with real repentance. That's real repentance. And real repentance is costly. It costs.

It hurts to be circumcised. And it's painful, isn't it, to circumcise your heart, to put off your sinful self-rule. In fact, it's the very thing that we can't do.

That's what Moses is reminding us. Your heart is hardened. It's perverse. And yet, in God's call to us to repent comes the very power that transforms us and enables us.

Do you remember the time in the synagogue where Jesus said to the man with the withered hand, stretch forth your hand? He was commanding him to do the one thing he could not do, wasn't he? And yet, as he responded to the grace of God, came his miraculous healing.

And you see, friends, because our Savior, our mediator, has stood in our place to do for us what we could never do for ourselves, if we throw ourselves on him, if we hold fast to him, as it says here in verse 20, it's the same word in Genesis 2 about a man leaving his mother and father and holding fast to his wife being united in one flesh, if you unite yourself to him, then in doing that comes the true circumcision of heart which we so desperately need if our heart is to be touched by his.

[49 : 47] That's the promise later on in chapter 30. God says, no matter how far away from me you have been, if you return, he will circumcise your heart so that you will love him as he created you to be there for loving him.

And he'll do that because you see, if we are united with our God and Savior, Jesus Christ, then through his death to rescue us from our great rebellion, we were circumcised.

Our sinful flesh and sinful heart was put off in the circumcision done through the death of the Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. That's the language that Paul uses to the Colossians in chapter 2.

We share, therefore, in his great victory and his great fruitfulness through all our enemies. That's the message of the Christian gospel. Circumcised hearts at last through the mercy of God in Christ.

So how do we live as victorious believers, fruitful believers following the Lord? Well, Paul says, to the church there in Colossians, just really what Moses says here.

[51 : 01] You'll be always remembering, never forgetting the reality which became yours when you were baptized into Christ so that you will be always repenting, always putting to death the fleshly, earthly attitudes of your heart, cutting them away day by day and putting on the newness of the Lord Jesus Christ.

that's the way to live. Remembering your sinfulness but remembering also all the more your great, great Savior every day of your life.

Or maybe it was the Lord Jesus who put it most simply of all. If anyone would come after me, he said, in the way of fruitfulness, in the way of destiny, in the way of victory, let him deny himself.

That is, let him remember and reject his hardness of heart, his sinfulness. Let him deny himself, remember. And let him repent. Let him take up his cross, circumcise his hard heart daily and follow me, serve me, hold fast to me alone.

Do you see? always remembering and always repenting. That's the way. That's the only way of fruitfulness. And that is the way of victorious faith according to the Lord Jesus Christ.

[52 : 30] Well, let's pray. Heavenly Father, we find it so difficult to honestly confront the truth about our own hearts and our own lives.

Some of us have been walking with you as your people for many decades, 20, 30, 40, 50, 60 and more years some of us.

And still the truth is you can say to us, since the very first day I knew you, you've been rebellious of heart. and yet you still are our God.

You remember us and you rescue us. Help our hearts to be full, we pray, of remembering, remembering the truth, the awful truth about ourselves, but remembering ever more strongly and wonderfully the awesome truth about you, our great and gracious God and our great mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And help us to live today and tomorrow, every day of this week, every day of our lives, remembering and therefore repenting, turning away from our sin and turning to you, our great Savior, that you might lead us in paths of fruitfulness and lead us into your heavenly kingdom of joy.

[54 : 12] For we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.