

Taking God Seriously: 4. Don't Underestimate God

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[0 : 0 0] Well, we're going to come to our reading now this morning, and we're resuming our studies after the break in the book of Deuteronomy, and reading at Deuteronomy chapter 30.

Before we broke off for Christmas, we looked at chapter 29, and that is the beginning, and chapter 30 concludes Moses' last great address, the third of his addresses.

It's like the book in miniature, really, chapter 29 and 30. It's the whole scope of what God's covenant gospel is all about. And so we read from chapter 30 at verse 1.

It's page 172 in the church Bibles. And when all these things come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I've set before you, and you call them to mind or call your heart to return among the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, and return to the Lord your God, you and your children, and obey his voice and all that I command you today, with all your heart and with all your soul, then the Lord your God will restore, will return your fortunes, and have compassion on you, and will gather you from all the peoples where the Lord your God has scattered you.

One of your outcasts is even in the uttermost part of heaven. From there, the Lord your God will gather you, and from there he will take you. And the Lord your God will bring you into the land that your fathers possessed, that you may possess it.

[1 : 4 7] And he will make you more prosperous and numerous than your fathers. And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul that you may live.

And the Lord your God will put all these curses on your foes and enemies who persecute you. And you, you shall turn, literally turn and obey the voice of the Lord, and keep his commandments that I command you today.

The Lord your God will make you abundantly prosperous in all the work of your hand, in the fruit of your womb, and in the fruit of your cattle, and in the fruit of your ground. For the Lord will turn and take delight in prospering you, as he took delight in your fathers, when you obey the voice of the Lord your God, to keep his commandments and his statutes that are written in this book of the law, when you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and soul.

For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it a far off. It's 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.

Neither 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 you. It's in your mouth and in your heart so that you can do it.

[3 : 1 5] See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. If you obey the commandment of the Lord your God, then I command you today by loving the Lord your God, by walking in his ways, by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply.

And the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you're entering to take possession of it. But if your heart turns away and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, I declare to you today you shall surely perish.

You shall not live long in the land that you're going over the Jordan to enter and possess. I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse.

Therefore choose life that you and your offspring may live, loving the Lord your God, obeying his voice, holding fast to him, for he is your life and length of days, that you may dwell in the land that the Lord your God swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob, to give them.

Amen. May God bless to us. This is word. There's a lot of talk at the moment of great speeches and oratory because of the film The Darkest Hour about Winston Churchill.

[4 : 58] Apparently cinemas have been breaking into standing ovations at these great wartime messages of Churchill to the British nation.

I've not seen it yet, but I look forward to seeing it. I'm sure perhaps some of you already have. It seems something of the impact of this is because it's recognizing a quality of real leadership that is just so rare today in our Western world.

But of course, after the fall of France in 1940, everyone in these islands was only to aware that Britain stood alone, facing a huge threat, an apparently unstoppable Nazi Germany.

And the future that this nation faced was a very great abyss of great darkness, unless there was going to be an extraordinary turnaround.

And of course, Churchill's role was to galvanize the nation behind his leadership, to trust him, so as to be able to avoid giving up and giving in to that impending doom and disaster.

[6 : 02] Well, I don't suppose anyone gave a standing ovation to Moses as he delivered his last passionate message to Israel on the plains of Moab there. But in a very real way, he was facing Israel with their darkest hour.

Even before they set foot in the promised land, as we saw last time we looked at this in chapter 29, his message was deeply sobering. You might well be God's chosen people, he was saying, but do not overestimate yourselves.

Your hard hearts can make you deaf and blind to God's truth in his gospel. And defiance and presumption that refuses to take your sins seriously and distraction from God's clear call to know and to do his will, it will lead you into darkness and into disaster if you don't pay heed.

And Moses faces them, doesn't he, with the terrible reality of what it will mean to fall under the curse of God. Look at the end of chapter 29 again, just to remind ourselves.

Verse 23, he says, if you do that, the whole land will be judged like Sodom and Gomorrah. Verse 25, the people of the world will see it and they will say it is because they abandoned the covenant of the Lord and served other gods.

[7 : 26] And so, verse 27, God's own anger is unleashed upon his own people. Verse 28, he, he uprooted them from their land in great anger and wrath.

It's a terrifying prospect, isn't it? An unimaginable prospect for God's people Israel. But God says, don't overestimate yourselves. This is what I foresee because I know your hearts, says Moses, and God knows your hearts.

And that is what will happen to you if you forget God's gracious revelation to you. As a privileged people. And forget that, as the very last verse of chapter 29 says, God's word is for hearing and doing.

Because as Jesus himself said, it's no good. It's no good calling me Lord, Lord, and not doing what I command you. Who are my true people? Who are my family? It's those who hear the word of God and do it.

Who live out their love for me in obedient faith to me. In lives of living sacrifice. Not in disloyalty.

[8 : 41] And you see, if Moses' message ended at the end of chapter 29, my goodness, it would indeed be bleak. And not just for Israel then, but for all the rest of us today. Because which of us, which of us can possibly be confident that our heart is any less perverse?

That our hearts are less prone to wonder, as we just sang. But of course, thank God his speech didn't end there. Because if the message of chapter 29 is don't overestimate yourselves and your righteousness, then the message of chapter 30 is emphatically just as strong.

Don't ever underestimate God and his righteousness. Being made right with God again, even in the wake of great sin, great rebellion and rejection of him.

So as to deserve nothing but his wrath. Being made right with him again is not impossible. Because it's not about our merits, which are truly pitiful.

It's all about God's mercy. And his mercy is truly plentiful. That's Moses' gospel. That's the covenant gospel of God.

[9 : 55] And that's the Bible's gospel from its beginning to end. The Apostle Paul picks up Moses' words constantly in his great letter to the Romans. For God says to Moses, says Paul, It depends not on human will or exertion, but upon God who has mercy.

Romans 9 verse 16. And he goes on in Romans 10 to quote Moses' very words from this chapter. And he says, This is the very same word of faith that we proclaim.

Lay hold on God's mercy, he says, and you will be saved. You will be saved. Because nothing is impossible with God. And the Bible's clear from beginning to end.

God is a God of justice, a God of judgment. But, mercy triumphs even over judgment. C.S. Lewis has a marvelous phrase in his book, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*.

Where he speaks about the deeper magic from before the very dawn of time. Which overcomes the deep magic from the dawn of time. That demands that the sons of Adam must be put to death.

[11 : 08] If they sell themselves into the hands of the evil power of the white witch. But there's a deeper magic. And that's what this chapter is revealing to us.

Moses presupposes, doesn't he, God's judgment upon his people's sin. But, he proclaims life. He proclaims restoration. Through repentance. But, granted by the sheer grace and mercy of God.

Grace and mercy that Paul tells us was purposed even before the very foundation of this world. So, it's a great chapter of hope. Of great gospel hope.

Moses and Paul and Jesus all, they speak with one voice. And it is the voice of absolute realism. Yes, we must never overestimate ourselves. The human heart is at best utterly frail.

At worst, it's utterly foolish. It's utterly filthy. Isn't that true? But, praise God, the future depends not upon human will and exertion.

[12 : 14] But, upon God who has mercy. So, never underestimate God. This chapter echoes Moses' words right back. You may remember at the end of chapter 4.

Where, likewise, he speaks about that calamity of exile that would come upon them. And yet, even there, he promises that those who are truly his will return to his land and obey his voice.

Because, he says, the Lord your God is a merciful God. He will never leave you, nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant he made with your fathers.

So, let's look a bit more closely here in this chapter about how Moses tells us that that can be so. And especially in the face of human beings whose hearts are so rebellious and so hardened.

Moses proclaims in this chapter a gospel of utter certainty. And a gospel of unmistakable clarity. And a gospel of urgent challenge.

[13 : 19] Look at verses 1 to 10. Where we see that, you see, because the gospel of God is an enduring covenant word, there is utter certainty. Utter certainty.

Because it is God's sovereign regeneration and restoration of the heart. A powerful regeneration. This promise that God will do it, says Moses.

Not because people deserve it. Look at verse 3. But because God will have compassion on you. Great mercy. Notice how definite, how certain it all is.

It's in verse 1 when all these things happen. Not if. Moses is presupposing God's judgment on their sin. There's no question.

They will be driven out. Verse 3. They will be scattered. And they deserve to be, utterly. Because they've violated God's covenant. They've rejected him. They've rejected his love.

[14 : 17] And yet, look at verse 3. Then the Lord your God will restore you. To abundant blessings. Even more blessings than their fathers. God will do it.

It's utterly certain. He will turn back to them. But not notice, not notice, without them also turning back to him. Do you see that?

There's nothing uncertain about it. But nor is there anything unconditional about it. That's something these verses make absolutely clear. As does the whole Bible.

God's sovereign regeneration and restoration and our repentance. They always go together like two sides of the same coin. So it's not uncertain.

God will do all this. Look at verses 3 to 7. All that God will do. It's one great unbroken sequence. God will restore and gather his people. Verse 3. Verse 4.

[15 : 14] Even from the farthest outposts of heaven. And he'll bring them back. Verse 5. And prosper them more than their fathers. He will circumcise their hearts. And make them love him with heart and soul.

Verse 6. That's the foundational call, isn't it? Of the covenant. To love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul. And verse 7. He will curse every enemy and foe.

It is not uncertain. Because it's God who will do all of this. But notice it's not unconditional. They will repent. They must return to God.

Even as God will return to them. All through verses 1 to 10 here. There's a great play on that verb. To turn. To repent. And God does it.

And human beings do it. So in verses 1 and 2 there. As I read. It's literally. When you call to mind. When you return in your heart. To God's covenant.

[16 : 14] And verse 2. When you return to the Lord. Then verse 3. The Lord will restore. Literally return your fortunes. You see? The same in verses 9 and 10.

Verse 10. When you obey the voice of the Lord your God. When you turn to the Lord. With heart and soul. Then. As verse 9 says. The Lord will again delight.

The Lord will literally turn. And take delight in you. And the challenge of verse 8. Is the same. It's really better rendered. As a command. As a challenge. Today.

Moses is addressing his heroes. As for you. Today. You shall. Turn. And obey. The voice of the Lord your God. You see.

Moses. Is declaring a gospel of utter certainty. Of a God who is sovereign. Who alone. Can bring about that powerful. Regeneration of the human heart.

[17 : 10] Who alone. Can give a certain promise. Of eternal life. But. To turn. From rebellion. And to turn towards the living God. Is the only way.

That that life. Can ever be imparted to human beings. In every age. Moses day. Jesus day. And in our day. The gospel of God. Is not uncertain.

He is. The sovereign God. But it is certainly not. Unconditional. We must submit. To the sovereign God. So Derek Kidner.

Is right to say. That the curses. Which outweighed the blessings. In chapter 28. We see in this passage. Shows grace. Super abundant.

Where sin abounded. Praise God. Praise God. For his. Super abundant grace. But you see. God's grace. Is never cheap grace. When grace reigns.

[18 : 06] As Paul reminds us. In Romans chapter 6. There. There will be obedience. In the heart. To God. Because we're no longer. Slaves to sin. But. In slavery. To God's righteousness.

That's what real. Repentance. Real returning to God. Is all about. Isn't it? And it is the. Inseparable fruit. Of God's.

Regenerating. The human heart. And that's the true. Biblical gospel. Always. Always. It is. Simultaneously. A proclamation. Of God's grace.

And. A summons. To repentance. It proclaims. The turning of God. Back. Towards sinners. But it demands.

The turning of sinners. Back towards God. But God. Promises. What he commands. What is the great commandment.

[19 : 01] According to the Lord Jesus himself. Well it's what the second half. Of verse 6. Here expresses. Isn't it? Loving the Lord. With all your heart. And soul. So that you might live. But that is the fruit.

Isn't it? Only. Of the first half. Of verse 6. Of the Lord. Circumcising your heart. So that. You will love the Lord. With heart and soul. And live. God.

Grants. Repentance. As he commands it. Because the gospel is. Says Paul. The power of God. For salvation. It is certain. But it's not unconditional.

It's for. Everyone. Who believes. Who turn. To him. In obedient faith. Of course. Moses is principally.

Talking here. To Israel. As a whole. He's. Talking about. The coming historical reality. Of the exile. As it ultimately happened. In Babylon. And in those dark days. The prophets.

[19 : 57] Like. Jeremiah. And Ezekiel. And so on. They picked up. These very promises. Didn't they? They proclaimed them again. To God's people. Promising. The certainty. Of God's ultimate.

Turning back. And gathering all his people. Once again. Under his shepherd care. Indeed. Multiplying them. With people of every nation. Just as God had promised. Right at the beginning. To Abraham. A certain future.

Never again. To be spoiled. An everlasting covenant. Never to be revoked. Read the end of Ezekiel's prophecy. And you'll see. He envisages. That returning. Of the Lord.

To the midst of his people. To Zion. The Lord living. In his great city. Forever. Right in the midst. What will the city be called? Last verse of Ezekiel. The Lord. Is there.

He's seeing the same. Ultimate zenith. Of glory. That. The apostle John sees. In his vision. And revelation. The great city. Coming down. Out of heaven. To earth. Full of the glory.

[20 : 55] And the praise. Of all the nations. And of course. When the Lord. Jesus came. At last. He was proclaiming. The beginning. Of that very return.

Of the Lord. To redeem. To restore. His people. That's what John. The Baptist's father. Saw isn't it. In those readings. That we read at Christmas. In his great song. At the beginning. Of Luke's gospel.

God has visited. He has redeemed. His people. To show the mercy. Promised to our fathers. To give. Salvation. To his people.

In the forgiveness. Of their sins. Because of the tender mercy. Of our God. Certainty. Because of God's. Sovereign mercy.

A powerful regeneration. Is promised. God. Will. Do it. He has returned. He's turned towards his people. In abundant mercy.

[21 : 48] And grace. The kingdom of heaven. Is at hand. That was Jesus. Very first words. In his public ministry. It's begun. There's nothing uncertain.

It is a work of God's. Sovereign grace. But. It's not unconditional. Isn't it? What were Jesus' very next words? The kingdom of God is at hand. Therefore. Repent.

And believe the gospel. God is turning to you. In his. Sovereign mercy. So you must. Turn to him. And bow. To his. Sovereign majesty.

And just like. Just like Moses. Jesus' call was. Yes. To Israel as a whole. To the whole nation. He was. Summoning the people.

Once again. To turn to God. But. At the same time. He gave that very same message. Didn't he? To every single individual. That he spoke to. You must repent.

[22 : 45] You must obey the Lord. Your God. From your heart. That was his message. Even to the most religious. Even to the most upright. The most pious of people. Just like Moses here.

You see there's no. Cheap grace. In the gospel. But there is. Deep grace. Deep. Deep grace. None.

Are too far away. Ever. To be brought back. Into the love. Of his everlasting life. Isn't that what Jesus showed. So wonderfully. In his ministry. Think of his words.

To the tax collectors. To the outcasts. To the sinners. Of the very worst kind. These are the very ones. I came to seek and save. He said. Not the sick. Who need the doctor.

It's not the well. Who need a doctor. But the sick. I came to call sinners. To repentance. The outcasts. The far away ones. Think of the parable. Of the invitation.

[23 : 39] To the great banquet. When the master. Sends his servants. Out. To bring in. The poor. The crippled. The halt. The lame. Go. Into the highways. And the byways. As far away as you can.

And compel them. To come in. For my house. Will be full. He's telling us. Isn't he. That none. Are too far away.

To ever be brought back. To the abundant blessing. Of his life. Isn't that what verse 4. Here is telling us too. Right in front of us. The authorized version.

Puts it rightly. In the singular. If any one. Of your outcasts. Is banished. Even to the uttermost. Parts of heaven. From there. The Lord your God. Will gather. And bring you.

And cause you. To love him. So that you may live. No one. Not. Even. Those who have been. Farthest. Banished away from God.

[24 : 35] Because of their sin. And their rebellion. And their hatred of him. No one. Is too far away. To be brought back. Into the life of God. And Moses says.

That is utterly. Certain. Because it's not about. What we deserve. If it were. None of us. Could have any hope.

It's not about. Our merits. It's all about. God's great mercy. And how much more. Certain. Can we be today. Of that great promise.

Of mercy. Because we live in the light. Of that great fulfillment. In the Lord Jesus Christ. Who came to bring us. Forgiveness. Who bore away. Our sins. In his own body. On the tree.

As Peter puts it. So that we might return. To the great shepherd. Of our souls. We have a risen savior. And Peter preaches that. Doesn't he? God has exalted him.

[25 : 29] As leader. And savior. To do what? To grant. Repentance. To Israel. And forgiveness of sins. And a bit later on. He says. God also has granted.

Repentance. And life. Even to Gentiles. Which most of us are. Because the gospel is. God's enduring covenant word.

We can have utter certainty. In his sovereign regeneration of the heart. God. And no one. Can ever be beyond.

That reach. Or power. Or mercy. Even in the uttermost parts of the earth. That should give great encouragement to us. Shouldn't it? Especially if we might feel ourselves.

Oh well. My life has been so far away. That I must be beyond. The mercy and the power of God. No. No. For some of us who feel.

[26 : 27] Well there are people we know and love. And they are just too far gone. They will never repent. They could never. Come to the Lord Jesus Christ. No. Our sovereign God can.

And he does restore. Even from the uttermost reaches of heaven and earth. It's right in front of us. And it's certain. And Jesus tells us doesn't he.

When he does do that. There is unbridled joy. Among the angels of heaven. In the father's house. In the father's house. So let's never give up. On calling people to turn.

To the Lord. And let's never stop crying out to God. To turn his face towards us. To turn our hearts. Constantly back to him. So that we might love him.

With all our heart and our soul. And others with us. And. Let's never try to pretend.

[27 : 22] That what God asks of us. Or of others. In turning to him. Is somehow something. That's beyond us. Look at verses 11 to 14. Where Moses tells us plainly.

That because the gospel of God. Is his enduring covenant word. We have unmistakable clarity. We have God's sufficient revelation.

To our hearts. We have plentiful. Personal revelation. So that we can do. What he commands us. Often people say that.

Don't they? They say. Oh I can't do that. What your gospel demands. With I understand it. To be right with God. I can't do it. It's impossible. It's too hard for me. You don't know. Or they say.

Well I wish I could understand. And have your faith. But I just don't. I can't see. I don't get it. Well that's not true. Look at verse 11. Says God.

[28 : 17] What I command you today. Is not too hard for you. Neither is it far off. So there can be no excuses. It's not unintelligible. And it's not inaccessible. And verse 14.

He says again. The word is very near you. It's in your mouth. And in your heart. So that you can do it. You can do it. See what Moses is saying.

Even way back then. In the Old Testament. Is that God's gospel covenant. Can be kept. By human beings. Because it's not about. Legalistic perfectionism.

And rules. It's about loving passion. For the ruler. We've seen that again. And again. All through Deuteronomy. There is no book. In the Old Testament. That has more. About the heart.

And that's what God's covenant gospel. Has been about. Since the very beginning. The commandment. The verse 11. Speaks about here. Is the whole. Covenant revelation. The whole gospel. With all its.

[29 : 15] Promises. And all its demands. Remember back in chapter 6. At Sinai. God said. And this is. The commandment. To love. The Lord your God.

With all your heart. And soul. And this is what's to be. On your heart. It's a matter of the heart. There's nothing legalistic. About it at all. That's why the Lord Jesus.

Uses exactly the same. Kind of language. All the way through. His own gospel. In fact. Jesus. Own. Final public. Message. In John chapter 12. He cries out.

With passion. In exactly the same way. He's urging people. To believe. And obey. The commandment. That God has given him. My father has given me. A commandment he says. To give to you. And his commandment.

Is. Eternal life. Because it's the command. To trust him. To love him. With all your heart. And soul. That's what Moses. Is urging here.

[30 : 08] Look at verse 6. Look at verse. 10. Look at verse 16. Look at verse. At 20. Love him. That's why Paul quotes.

These very words. In these verses. In 11 to 15. In Romans chapter 10. And he says. This sufficient revelation. Is the word of faith. That we are proclaiming. As apostles of Christ.

And his point is. That now. In the fulfillment. Of all the covenant promises. In Christ. This word. Is sufficient. And has gone out. To the whole world. It's come near. To all the nations.

So that everyone. He says. Everyone. All the world over. Who calls on the name of the Lord. Will be saved. God's. God's. Saving gospel.

Is no longer. Inaccessible. To anybody. It's not impossible. For any. For any nation. For any creed. For any culture. To find salvation. In Jesus Christ. But that salvation.

[31 : 08] Has been accessible. And possible. Right from the very beginning. To all those. To whom God. Has revealed himself. That was the privilege. Israel had. In these early days. Over all the Gentile nations.

Paul says. In Romans 9. They had the covenants. They had the law. They had the patriarchs. They had the prophets. All of that. They had. Plentiful. Sufficient. Revelation. To their very hearts.

So they could be. Doers of the word of God. Not just hearers. So that they could have. Love and loyalty. To God. In their hearts. And be saved. Moses gave them.

Paul says. A law that would lead. To righteousness. It was they. Who resisted that. They did not pursue it. By faith. He says.

They did not submit. They did not obey. The gospel. Was that God's fault? It's funny. Even some Christians. A lot of Christians.

[32 : 04] Seem to think that. They seem to think. That God. Perversely. Gave a law. That could never be attained. Because it was unattainable. Because it was impossible. And so they were doomed. To fail. No.

No. No. No. No. Look at verse 11. How plain is it? It is not. Too hard. For you. God has brought.

His revelation. Near to us. He says in verse 14. So we can. Do it. Because it's not. And it never was. Anything to do. With legalistic merit.

It was always. To do with. Loyalty. To God's mercy. It was never about. Sinless holiness. It was always about. Having submissive hearts.

To the lordship of God. The psalmist understood that. Read the psalms. Read especially the long psalm. 119. It's full. Isn't it? Of clear. Confession of sinfulness.

[33 : 01] And yet at the same time. Profession of faithfulness. And obedience. To God's covenant law. And that's just. Biblical faith. That's just obedient faith. And faithful obedience. It's knowing that you are.

At the same time. A sinner. And yet. You can be right with God. Through obedient trust. In his covenant word. The very last verse. Of Psalm 119. Sums it up perfectly.

Just listen. I have gone astray. Like a lost sheep. He says. I'm a sinner. Seek your servant. For. I do not forget. Your commandments.

I trust your promises. And I obey your commandments. I'm your servant. You alone are I God. See. He gets. What Moses. Was talking about.

What Jesus is talking about. That God's commandment. His covenant. Is eternal life. And he has brought it near to us. So that we might find life. Not. So that we won't find it.

[33 : 59] That's Moses gospel. Even way. Way back here. His plea is. You can do it. You can have it. You can have life.

If you will obey the call of God. You don't take. You don't take Moses seriously here. You are going to misunderstand. The whole of the Bible. Well. Chris Wright is absolutely on the money.

When he says this. The idea. That God made the law. So deliberately exacting. That nobody would ever be able to live by it. That belongs to a distorted theology.

That tries unnecessarily to gild the gospel. By denigrating the law. No. No. No. Look at what Moses message is. It's not. You can't do it. It's the opposite.

You can do it. You can find life with your God. Because he has brought his commandment of life near. So near. Right into the heart of your lives.

[34 : 58] In sufficient. Plentiful. Powerful revelation. Which mediates God's powerful transforming mercy from heaven. Into your very heart.

So that the very thing. Which can only be the fruit of God's mercy. A real heart of love and loyalty to God. So that it becomes something you can do.

In response to his word. Because his grace brings you into submission. Into obedient trust in him as your Lord and God. You can do it.

Says Moses. God makes his promises to enable you to respond to him. And of course that means doesn't it? You can't ever blame God.

If you are the one who refuses to respond. And again how much more true is that for us. To whom God's revelation has been even more abundant.

[35 : 53] And complete. And sufficient. His word has come so near. In God himself. Taking human flesh. And coming among us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. So no one can say.

Oh I've searched high and low for God. I've searched ever. I can't find it. No says Jesus. Whoever has seen me and heard me. Has seen and heard the Father. And no one can say.

Oh I can't do that. Because Jesus has said. Come to me. And whoever comes to me. I will never cast out. See friends.

The truth is not over the sea somewhere. In some strange philosophy and religion. It's not up in heaven. Among elite. Elite. Erudite professors and philosophers and holy men.

No, no, no. The word became flesh. And dwelt among us. And we have seen his glory in the gospel of the son. God's gospel grace came near.

[36 : 48] In the law of Moses. But the fullness of his gospel grace has come to all. In the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. So we can know God. So we can find life.

In his enduring covenant word. Is unmistakable clarity. So that we can find him. So that we can follow him. So that we can have life.

And we can never blame God. If we refuse. And determine to remain in darkness. Because we will have actively rejected his command to life.

We will have actively chosen his sovereign curse. And that's what Moses makes clear, isn't it? In this final section in verses 15 to 20.

Where he insists that for all God is sovereign. And for all his revelation is sufficient. Precisely because his gospel is a sovereign word.

[37 : 49] It always issues the human beings an urgent challenge. It demands a sincere response from our hearts. A personal response is required of us.

God says you can do it. And therefore you must do it. See I have set before you verse 15 today. Life and good. Death and evil.

Verse 19. Life and death. Blessing and curse. Therefore choose life. Life. It is a matter he says of life and death.

And that is the choice in front of us here, isn't it? It's the choice that is there all the way through the Bible. From Moses and Joshua to Jesus and John.

And it's an unavoidably binary choice, isn't it? Nothing blurred. Nothing indistinct. Nothing remotely relative.

[38 : 50] It's life and death. Blessing and curse. Heaven and hell. Of course Moses is looking into the future.

He's seeing the whole story of God's people as a whole. But do you notice that also in every section that we've looked at today, he is very clearly addressing and exhorting that generation, those people that day who are standing right in front of him.

He's not just talking about big picture biblical theology. He is speaking a personal word to everyone who is listening. And he is calling them with an urgent challenge to respond today.

Verse 8. As for you, you are to obey today. Verse 11. This command, I command you today. And above all in this last section, again and again, verse 15.

See, I'm setting before you today life and death. Verse 16. If you obey today. Verse 18. I declare to you today. Verse 19. I call heaven and earth as witness against you today.

[40 : 05] See, it's true. God's story is, of course, bigger than any generation, than any age. His purpose is everlasting. It is eternal. Seen in that perspective, each one of our lives is just about a speck of dust in the scheme of his great plan.

But doesn't Jesus tell us also that that great and mighty God is the God who numbers the very hairs of each one of our heads? Isn't he the one who knows every single one of his sheep by name?

And his gospel does make an urgent plea, doesn't it, to every single individual hearer. And he presents every single one in every age with this urgent choice.

Choose life. Choose life. Something I think that highlights that all the way through this chapter is that where you read the word you, it is nearly always in the singular.

I mentioned that in verse 4. If any one of you are outcasts as far away. But it's all through. If you have an old version, it's thee and thou. It's not you and ye. Only in verse 18 where he gives that general warning in the plural.

- [41 : 18] But every other plea here is personal. It's to each one of you personally. You, my friend, each one of you, choose life. Choose what he promises.
- Choose what he offers. You turn to him. Don't turn away from him. You see, the challenge of the biblical gospel is not impersonal.
- It's deeply personal to every individual because God cares for everyone who is outcast because of their sin. That's what Jesus makes so clear, isn't it?
- In the parable of the lost sheep. And 99 good sheep in the flock is not enough if even one individual lost outcast of his is out there. His gospel call is personal to us.
- And it's a personal call, isn't it? To him. To personal commitment to him. It's not a call to religion. It's not a call to ideas. It's not a call to performance.
- [42 : 19] Look at verse 16. How do you obey him? By loving him. By walking with him in his way. Verse 20. Finding life is loving the Lord.
- It's listening to the Lord. It's being loyal to the Lord. Cleaving to him. That's real faith for the Bible, isn't it?
- That's, sometimes people say, what is faith? There it is. It's personally loving, listening, and being loyal to the Lord our God, made known to us. Most fully in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- He who has the Son has life, says the Apostle John. That's what Moses is saying here in verse 20. He is your life. He is your life. The challenge of the gospel is not impersonal to things or to thoughts.
- It's personal. It's to us. And it's to each of us to be with him. And therefore, you see, the challenge is not avoidable.
- [43 : 24] Sometimes people think, oh, if God is sovereign, how can there really be a choice? But you see, in fact, the Bible makes it clear that it's precisely God's sovereignty that demands a choice.
- There can't be impartiality when the sovereign Lord of heaven and earth demands that you choose his life. We can't just say, oh, well, no, Lord, I think I'll sit on the fence.
- To not obey, to not choose life is to choose defiance and disloyalty. Paul says in Acts chapter 17, doesn't he?
- To some of the cleverest men in the world in Athens. But the times of ignorance, and he means your ignorance, God in the past overlooked. But now he commands all men everywhere to repent.
- Why? Because he has set a day for judgment and the Lord Jesus Christ will be the judge. There is no avoidance. Choice is unavoidable. There at Kidna's right, he says, life and good are man's to choose.
- [44 : 31] Never to earn, but to choose. It's a command of the sovereign God. And yet it is an offer of sheer grace.
- So that to refuse that call of grace is to spit in the face of the God who so loved this world. He gave his own blood that we might choose life.
- And none can so profane the blood of the covenant, so outrage the spirit of grace. And not in doing so, thereby exclude themselves from that life that they have treated with such contempt.
- But notice one final thing that's so, so clear here. The challenge of the gospel is not impersonal. Nor is it avoidable.
- But the challenge of God's gospel is not dispassionate. Moses cares what his people choose. And God cares what people choose.

[45 : 35] He sets before them the truth that is absolutely clear, absolutely certain, deeply challenging. He's hidden nothing. He's set before them life and death, blessing and curse, heaven and hell.

But he does not say, not here, not anywhere in the whole scriptures. I've put it before you. Do as you please. See if I care.

Take it or leave it. Never. What does he say? Choose life, says Moses. Enter by the narrow gate, cries Jesus.

Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden. I will give you rest. Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, says the Lord God?

And not rather that they turn from their ways and live? No. No. God, our Savior, says the Apostle Paul, desires all people to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.

[46 : 41] So never underestimate God. He says to you personally, each one of you today, each one of us here in this room, choose life.

None can be too far away. He promises powerful regeneration of your heart, powerful restoration through Jesus Christ.

He has given every single one of us here this morning plentiful revelation in the Lord Jesus Christ. But he does demand from every single one of us a personal response to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Today, his mercy, his sovereign mercy calls us. And he says, choose.

Choose life. Let's pray. Let's pray. The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart so that you can do it.

[47 : 46] And this, says Paul, is the word of faith that we proclaim. Because if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

You will be saved. Grant us hearts, Lord, to turn to you. Today and every day we pray.

And to know your great mercy. Now and forever. Amen.