

A Light Shining in a Dark Place : Review of Deuteronomy for Today

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 25 February 2018

Preacher: William Philip

- [0 : 00] We're going to turn to God's Word, and for one last time to the book of Deuteronomy. We finished the last chapter last week, we're going to spend just one more week revising and reviewing what we've learned about the law of God.
- I'm going to read in just two or three places. First of all, in chapter 4, which I think is on page 148. Just a few verses from Deuteronomy chapter 4.
- Deuteronomy chapter 4, verse 5. The Lord says through Moses, See, I've taught you statutes and rules as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should do them in the land that you're entering to take possession of it.
- Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who when they hear all these statutes will say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.
- For what great nation is there that has a God so near to it as the Lord our God is to us whenever we call upon him? And what great nation is there that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?
- [1 : 25] Let's turn over to chapter 6. And a few verses at the beginning of chapter 6. Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the rules that the Lord your God commanded me to teach you, that you may do them in the land to which you are going over to possess it, that you may fear the Lord your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all his statutes and his commandments, which I command you all the days of your life, and that your days may be long.
- Hear, therefore, O Israel, and be careful to do them, that it may go well with you, and that you may multiply greatly, as the Lord, the God of our fathers, has promised you in a land flowing with milk and honey.
- Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one, and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.
- And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. And just turn over a couple of pages again to chapter 10. at verse 12.
- And now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and all your soul, to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I'm commanding you today, for your good.
- [2 : 55] Behold, to the Lord your God belongs heaven and the heaven of heavens, the earth with all that is in 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, the awesome God who is not partial and takes no bribe.

He executes justice for the fatherless and the widow and loves the sojourner, giving him food and clothing. You love the sojourner, therefore, for you were 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 these 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. You shall therefore love the Lord your God and keep his charge, his statutes, his rules, and his commandments always.

[4 : 13] Amen. May God bless to us his word. I'll take up your Bibles. at the book of Deuteronomy.

We're not going to be looking at a particular passage today, but I want to think in general as we conclude this series about God's law. And to use Peter's words from his second letter, I want to suggest that it is for us, as he says, a light shining in a dark place.

We're going to spend one last time reviewing this remarkable exposition of God's law that we have in the book of Deuteronomy. It's been a long book. If it's felt to you like death by Deuteronomy, then I'm afraid I must take the blame for that because what Moses actually wrote, he says, is the word of life.

This is no empty word for you, he says, but your very life. By this word, you shall live long in the land of God's promise. And these words are still the word of eternal life for us today, just as they were for Moses' first hearers.

They were written for us as the apostle. They're breathed out by God himself to make us wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, but also as God's servants today to equip us, to make us competent for every good work.

[5 : 38] God's law is written for our instruction. Paul says that to a largely Gentile Christian church in Rome. It's written, he says, to give us encouragement and endurance and therefore solid hope.

And so that strengthened by this instruction, Paul says, we might live in such harmony with one another in accordance with Christ Jesus that together we may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Isn't that striking? Think about that. Paul says it's the scriptures of the Old Testament which will teach the New Testament church how to live so as to have a united, harmonious witness to Christ in the world.

Think about that. That's why our Bibles are Bibles, not just New Testaments. We're not to be Marcionites following the second century heretic who thought God's law was so finished and done with that he actually cut out the whole of the Old Testament from the Bible and a good bit of the New Testament too.

Some modern Christians are really Marcionites at heart. Of course, the Bible is still all there. The Old Testament's there in their Bibles but in effect, they treat it so much just as a prelude, an introduction to the real thing.

[7 : 00] They jump to Jesus so quickly that actually they pay very little attention to the Old Testament at all. No, no, no. Jesus is very clear. You need all of this if you're to understand Jesus Christ properly, if we're to understand ourselves properly, and if we're to understand our role as the church, as the servants of Christ in these last days.

So no apologies for immersing us for a long time in this great book of Deuteronomy, the book of the prophet, the man of God, the servant of the Lord, Moses himself.

Peter tells us, doesn't he, in his first letter, after all, that we, the church of Jesus Christ, are the inheritors of Israel's mantle. We are a holy nation. We are a people of his promise to proclaim the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

And so what God teaches here in his law about what it means to be a holy people, that's vital, surely, for us to know today, just as it was for Israel right at the start.

And that's why, Peter says, in his second letter, that along with the apostolic word, we have something, he says, more sure. The prophetic word, the Old Testament scriptures, like this book.

[8 : 23] And he says, we need to pay attention to it as a light shining in a dark place until the day dawns and the morning star rises in our hearts.

That is right until Jesus returns in glory and power. God's own spirit, says Peter, drove the writers of these ancient scriptures to speak God's words for us today.

And God's word, Peter says, is living and abiding. It remains forever. So before we finally leave Deuteronomy, I want to review the big picture of its message just to help us to understand and to see why God's law is such a light shining in the darkness and why God has given it to us to help us shine brightly in the darkness of the world around us today.

So I want us to be clear about three things. The extraordinary privilege of God's law and the evangelical prophecy of God's law and the enduring pattern that God's law gives still to God's people today.

First then, this revelation that's given by God through Moses was and is an extraordinary privilege for God's chosen ones. Isn't the apostle Paul as he speaks to the Romans about the privilege that Israel had as God's chosen people?

[9 : 53] To them belong the adoption as God's own people. The glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, the promises. To them belong the patriarchs and from their race according to the flesh comes the Christ who is Lord over all.

He writes elsewhere to the Galatian church. The scriptures preach the gospel beforehand, he says, to God's people Israel. So then, he says, the law was our guardian until Christ came in order that we might be justified by faith.

What a privilege. An extraordinary privilege given to this chosen people of all the peoples of the earth that it should be revealed to them this word of everlasting light revealing the true God of heaven to them and a word of everlasting life bringing them into relationship with that true God, the covenant God, the God of promising grace.

What a privilege. And we've seen, haven't we, the whole structure of the book of Deuteronomy. Its very shape speaks about that. It's a covenant treaty, isn't it, between God, the great king and his servant people, God and his people Israel.

And as we've seen, this book is a word of light. It gives a revelation of the covenant God, the God of promising grace. Grace from the beginning and grace, grace, grace, right to the end.

[11 : 24] Remember the first four chapters, they're all about God's grace in the past, aren't they? You could sum it up in the words of John Newton's hymn, Amazing Grace. Through many dangers, toils and snares, we have already come.

'Twas grace that led us safe thus far. Moses says in chapter 1, verse 31, you have seen how the Lord carried you as a man carries his son all the way until you came to this place.

Extraordinary grace. Especially when you read the very next words. Yet, in spite of this, you did not believe in the Lord. You rebelled and would not listen. And there were 40 wasted years in the wilderness.

But God's grace was not exhausted. You remember in chapter 2 and chapter 3. He rehearses the history of how God went before them to defeat their enemies, King Sihon and King Og.

And so, says the Lord in chapter 3, verse 21, so will the Lord do to all the kingdoms into which you are crossing. A unique blessing of God's grace.

[12 : 33] As chapter 4, verse 35 says, this unique revelation of blessing was given to you, Israel, so that you might know the Lord your God and that there is no other before Him.

An extraordinary privilege, the word of light, of divine revelation, so that they might know God. Chapter 7, verse 6, the Lord has chosen you of all the peoples on the face of the earth for His treasured possession.

It's grace, isn't it, right from the start? And it's grace right to the very end. Remember these last chapters we've been studying recently where Moses is looking to the future. And still, the people's hearts are hard.

Even when I brought them into this land, says the Lord, a land flowing with milk and honey, with abundant life, they will despise me and break my covenant. And Moses' great song, as we saw in chapter 32, was a witness against them of how dreadful, how heinous that is to turn your back on the one who is the rock of your salvation.

But even there, God's promising grace shines through. Do you remember? All their judgment in exile, all their deprivation, despite all of their sin, Moses still says, doesn't he, yet the Lord will vindicate His people.

[14 : 03] He will have compassion on His servants when He sees that their power is gone. God is the one who wounds in judgment.

But He also heals. He makes alive, even from the dead. And His grace will triumph. His grace will bring ultimate life. And not only to Israel, do you remember, but on that day, the nations will rejoice with His people when He takes vengeance on all His enemies and cleanses all His true people the world over from their sins.

And you remember the last great blessing of Moses in chapter 33 that rejoices in the God who rides through the heavens to share His everlasting peace and protection and joy with His people whom He holds in His everlasting arms.

This book is a book of wonderful light. The law is a great revelation of the God of grace. And hence, of course, it is also a word of life which brings into a relationship with the God of grace, into the life of a redeemed people which is the life of obedient faith and submission to God.

Because God is the great King and the Lord and His people are God's servants. They serve Him, not the other way around. So chapter 5, verse 6, I am the Lord your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

[15 : 39] You shall have no other gods before Me. You'll walk in the way the Lord your God has commanded you, that you may live, that it may go well with you. And you see, the word of light is a word of life.

And the word of life is the way of life. But that way of life must be walked in, mustn't it? Not wandered away from.

Moses makes that very clear. There is no cheap grace, although it is abundant grace. There can be no presumption. You must be faithful. You must walk in God's light in order to know God's life.

And that's what's hammered home, isn't it, in those chapters 27 and 28, the somber chapters with promises and warnings and great curses. There will be disobedience and there will be punishment, just as there will be blessings upon obedient faith.

Because God will be faithful to His word. And if His people are unfaithful, then they will meet His wrath and His judgment. And you see, part of the privilege of God's revelation of gospel light is being forced to grapple with the truth about human nature, is being told, don't overestimate yourselves.

[17 : 01] That's the message right through chapter 29. Do you remember? The human heart is defiant. It's deaf so easily. It's distracted so quickly from God's word of life.

But no, don't be deaf. Don't be defiant. You can't be and live. God's word is for doing. Not just paying lip service to. That great verse, the last verse of chapter 29.

The things revealed belong to us and to our children that we may do all the words of this law. That's just what the Lord Jesus constantly says.

Don't call me Lord and not do what I tell you, He says. It's the one who does the will of God who will enter the kingdom of heaven. Make no mistake about that.

Read Matthew chapter 7. And that's such a vital thing for us to grasp, isn't it? There's no cheap grace in the gospel of Christ. God's grace always, always demands real response, real faith.

[18 : 04] God's revelation of light demands a response in life from every single human being. And that response is one of penitent faith, not the resistance of proud unbelief.

And so there's always a choice to be made, isn't there, in Moses' day or in our day. And Moses constantly calls the people, choose, choose life.

That's the final word of exhortation in his last great sermon in chapter 30. Choose life. Don't go the way of disobedience and curse. Choose life, which is to love the Lord your God, to obey His voice, to hold fast to Him, because He is your life and your length of days.

He is your life forever. That's what that phrase means. And the whole heart of the book, from chapter 5 right through to chapter 26, describes, doesn't it, that way of life, the redeemed life.

It's the life of those who say, yes, I do love you, O Lord. I do trust your voice. So help me, because I know I'm so weak. Help me to obey your voice.

[19 : 16] Help me to hold fast to you, always, direct my way. Command my life. And so Moses says, well, this is the way that you shall walk with your God.

This is the whole commandment. Do this, and it will be well with you always. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might.

Well, how do we do that? Well, these words I command you today will be on your heart, says Moses, so that you can do that, filling your life, your home, your family life, your work life.

And he goes on then, doesn't he, to teach Israel about how to love God with all of your life. How to worship God and no other God.

And remember, in chapter 6 to 11, that's repeatedly pressed home again and again and again. how it is all a matter of the heart, loving God with a whole undivided heart.

[20 : 18] That's so, so important for us to understand. It's the heart and it's the love of our hearts that has always been at the very heart of God's law. Living God's law has always been a matter of loving God's person, fundamentally, before anything else.

God's law has never been about legalism. It's always been about loving, loving God. If you doubt that, go back later on and read Deuteronomy chapter 11.

Over and over, you'll see it's all about loving God with all your heart. Chapter 11, verse 13, I command you today to love the Lord your God, to serve him with all your heart.

To love him, you see, is to serve him. And to obey his commands. His commands, not the commands of any other master. That's biblical faith.

According to Moses, according to Jesus, just the same. What does Jesus say in John chapter 14? Whoever has my commands and keeps them, he it is who loves me. If anyone loves me, he will keep my word.

[21 : 28] Whoever does not love me, does not keep my word. Simple as that. Loving God and loyalty to God's commands are just two sides of the same coin that is genuine biblical faith.

And of course, that love to God and that loyalty to God is something that is visible and tangible in an equally true heart love of man.

Loving your neighbor as yourself. It's no accident in chapter 10, verse 16, that we read there together, where God is talking about the circumcised heart, that you'll see he puts love for God and love for the fatherless and the widow and the sojourner right in the same breath.

I love the sojourner and therefore you love the sojourner for you are sojourners in Egypt. You shall fear the Lord and serve him and hold fast to him as you do that.

Loving the Lord and sharing his love in this world with others. That's the way of life. That's the way of blessing. That's the way of faith for God's people.

[22 : 41] And that's the way of shining God's light also in this world. Remember that crucial missionary aspect of God's law.

We read it there in chapter 4 where it says, but by living like this, Israel, the people round about, the nations, will see your wisdom and your understanding and it will be light to them.

They'll see Israel's righteousness and they will see the light and the glory of God's beauty in the midst of them and it will lead them to praise the Lord and to see his unique glory.

Just think of all those central chapters of Deuteronomy. Think what they describe as they lay out the real implications of the Decalogue as they're spelt out to shape society, community life, the whole of Israel's life as a nation.

A place where only the true God, the God of beauty and truth, is worshipped. In joy, not in fear. Where generosity blesses everyone, not just the elites.

[23 : 51] Where there are none of the horrors of the worship of man-made gods, of the violent bloodshed of those who kill innocents in the name of their gods. Or none of the worship of Eros, the sex gods, so common there and so common still today who exploit women and exploit even little children and so cheapen and disfigure the true human life of love.

A place where the name that is truly honored is the name of our glorious Father in heaven, the Father who loves justice, who cares for the widows, the fatherless, the sojourner. And has taught his people to honor his name in everything that they do so that they eat and drink and spend not selfishly for themselves but for the glory of God and for the blessing of others.

A place where everybody lives in the liberation of the God of Sabbath. Liberated from the tyranny of self-gain and liberated for sharing and for joy in work and in rest and for forgiving debts and releasing slaves and restoring health.

A place where leadership is good and true always and justice always prevails in private life and in public life. And the leaders we long for are truly everything we hoped for.

and the truth of God is preserved and is pervasive in all things. And his truthful word runs unhindered to bless all society with its wisdom.

[25 : 27] And a place where life is cherished by all and protected and honored and blessed. And where family is honored and marriage and sex is protected from all exploitation, from all spoiling.

and where unfaithfulness is unknown. And where families are stable and children are stable and healthy and cherished and valued.

And a place where all people truly reflect the glory of the God of heaven, the abundant giver of life. And everything that that life attends, they're honest stewards of all the gifts of life, sharing total honesty in all matters of wealth, all matters of substance, no exploitation of any kind or any people.

Where all are true ambassadors of God's justice, full of compassion for the poor, for the worker, for the vulnerable, even giving dignity to the guilty in their punishment.

Where all are just generous advocates of all God's kindness. Where generous self-giving replaces all covetous self-gain and family life and work life and every sphere of life is suffused with that joyful giving.

[26 : 51] A place where overwhelming gratitude in the heart to this wonderful giving God spills over into overflowing generosity from the heart in the lives that are lived to bless others in order to glorify the God of grace and to bring others to rejoice in his wonderful name, to love him, to serve him and to obey him.

That's the society, isn't it, that we've seen Moses lays out for Israel, for his chosen covenant people in the heart of this great book of his law. And it sounds like heaven on earth, doesn't it?

Well, it does. And of course, that is what the book of Deuteronomy is describing and is foreshadowing. Because like all of the Old Testament scripture, this revelation that is given through Moses is first and foremost an evangelical prophecy.

It's a prophecy of God's kingdom and God's Christ. The end of chapter 26, look at the very last verse of chapter 26. After laying out this picture of wonderful society full of the beauty of holiness, Moses says to Israel that the Lord has declared that you shall be a people holy to the Lord your God as he promised.

is God going to fail in that? Is God just sort of hoping for the best? I'll keep my fingers crossed and maybe eventually they'll sort of get quite near it one day?

[28 : 38] Of course not. This is the sovereign Lord of earth and heaven who is speaking. Read Ephesians chapter 1 later on. It tells us absolutely plainly God chose his people before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him.

This is his purpose says Paul which he set forth as a plan for the fullness of time that his chosen people should be his workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works which God purposed in advance that he should work in them.

That is exactly what Deuteronomy's law foreshadows and promises. The law sets the ideal of God's righteous society whilst of course yes at the same time being absolutely realistic about the present day reality of Israel's rebelliousness and their uncircumcised hearts by nature.

And yet Moses can still call his people can't he to repent truly and to find life to circumcise their hearts. Trusting their God to do in them what they by nature can never do for themselves because God promises that he will ultimately do this for them that he will be the true heart surgeon that he will circumcise their hearts.

God has brought his promise near to you says Moses so you can do this. You can trust his words because he has promised that ultimately he will do whatever it takes to bring about that regeneration of your hearts that you truly need.

[30 : 25] And that's what Moses sets his people's hearts truly on. What God their Savior will do for them ultimately in the latter days. When he promises to vindicate his people when their power is gone.

When he promises that at last they will share in his glory. glory. But they will be a people holy to the Lord as he has promised. And when even others from all nations will be brought in to rejoice with them in that glory.

That's the promise of the song of Moses. And you see the New Testament when we come to it tells us how and in whom that great promise is at last revealed and fulfilled in the one that Moses spoke of.

The one who would be like him from among their own brothers but even greater than Moses himself. In the Son of God come in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Can the truly heavenly beauty of life as portrayed here in Deuteronomy can it ever be seen in reality in this world on this earth and not just in the dreams and the hopes that we might long for but never actually see.

[31 : 42] Yes. God's promise can never fail. And he will have a people. He will have a world living in true and whole and wholesome beauty and humanity.

A people full of happiness. A people with a life like none other as Moses proclaims it will be. A people saved by the Lord. A people living in his rest and his peace and his joy to the praise of his glorious grace.

Moses is a prophet. An evangelical prophet. And all that he shows here in the law is prophetic of life and the light of God's glory that he will bring to fulfillment at last in this world through what the Lord Jesus Christ has done.

And we will see it when the Lord Jesus returns to reign and that truly and literally will be heaven here on this earth. when the glory of heaven comes down forever.

Finally, persistently, never to leave this world again. That's God's promise to Moses' people way, way back then. But friends, to us, we have a far, far greater assurance of all of these things.

[33 : 00] Because this world has already seen a glimpse of the beauty and the glory and the wonder of God's heaven. Far brighter and greater than ever it was.

Even in Israel's greatest days, even in the heyday of Israel's obedience under David and Solomon and the kingdom radiated its glory to the ancient world. We've seen it in the life and on the lips of our Lord Jesus Christ.

In his life, the world has already seen all the grace of God's perfect law of life. All the fullness of his truth embodied in human flesh with absolute completeness.

The abundant kindness, the goodness, the truth, the mercy, the generosity, the love of the God of covenant grace. If you want to see what heaven on earth really looks like in human nature, read the gospels and see the Lord Jesus Christ and see the light that he shone into a world of darkness.

See the life that he brought into a world of sin and death. He came to bring full and ultimate revelation of the covenant God of heaven into this earth.

[34 : 18] And he came to bring people into that ultimate relationship with the God of life. And in him we see that life in all its fullness. We see true humanity as God created it to be and as God has promised to redeem it to be.

and in him we can find and we can enter that life in all its fullness. Because Jesus said, I came that you may have life in all its abundance.

I am the way and the truth and the life. Everything that Moses' evangelical prophecy proclaims is fulfilled completely in the kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

And it has been fulfilled in the revelation of Christ in his life in this world and it will be ultimately fulfilled at the return of Christ for all the inhabitants of this restored world.

All his people. As Paul says to the Thessalonians, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints and to be marveled at in all who have believed.

[35 : 28] And his resurrection makes that a sure and certain hope for us today. But of course that day is not yet, is it?

The story hasn't yet reached its complete fulfillment. So what about now? What about the relevance of all God's commands for holiness and wholeness and beauty for us today in the church of Jesus Christ?

Well you see, if Israel of old were called to foreshadow and to embody as a living prophecy God's kingdom of light here on earth, how much more is that true for us today?

Who are the true circumcision? Who are the true Israel of God in Christ? How much more are we today as the church to shine forth the beauty and the truth and the glory of God's heavenly kingdom right here on earth in the midst of the darkness?

That's the final thing you see, we must be absolutely clear about the law of God. This book of the perfect rule of life for God, the royal law as James calls it, it's an enduring pattern.

[36 : 39] It's an enduring pattern for the church of Jesus Christ in every age until he comes. It's written for us. It's written to show us how to live as light in this world.

God's revelation is given to us so that we will know God, but also so that we will show God and shine his light in the world. It leads us into relationship with him to share his life, but also it leads us and teaches us how to radiate for him and to shine his light in this world.

And that's the constant teaching not only of the Old Testament but the New Testament. Paul says to the Philippian church, you must obey God always and so be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation among whom you shine as lights in the world.

Peter's just as plain, we've already said. We, he says, are a chosen race, a holy nation, that we may proclaim to the world the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness and into his marvelous light.

That's the church's calling today. If the world wants to see a picture of heaven on earth to get a taste of the love and the truth and the beauty and the joy and the honesty and the care for life and the compassion and the concern for generosity, all of these things that mark the God of heaven, where will it see these things?

[38 : 11] If not in the midst of the people of God in Christ, in the church of Jesus Christ. That's why Paul writes to Timothy and says you need to know how to conduct yourselves in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, which is to be a pillar and buttress of truth in a world of confusion and falsehood.

To the Ephesians, the whole letter is about these things, isn't it? He says that all that God is doing, his plan for earth and heaven is that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God will be made known to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly realms.

That is God's eternal purpose. That we, the motley crew of mixed people who make up the church of Jesus Christ, mixed up people for that matter, that we should be astounding the angels and the devils in the heavenly realms.

That the vast wisdom and grace of God that is displayed in our midst and in our common life together through the spirit of God at work in the people of Jesus Christ.

As the righteousness of God's law, as Paul says, is fulfilled in us who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit of our Lord Jesus Christ. Isn't that astounding?

[39 : 38] How will we live like that? Well, Paul writes to that church in Ephesus. Live in a manner worthy of your calling. He says, live no longer as pagans, but as children of light, as God's people.

Find out what is pleasing to God. Understand what the will of God is. And he goes on to echo, doesn't he? So much of what we've read and learned from Moses in Deuteronomy about marriage and about family life and children.

And so he even quotes the fifth commandment and says it's the first commandment with promise. Children, obey your parents. Live like this, he says, so that it may go well with you and that you might live long in the earth.

See, friends, the book of Deuteronomy, like the whole Old Testament, is given to us as an enduring pattern of life and especially of corporate life.

To enable us as God's chosen people, not only to know him truly, but to show him truly to this world, to bring light in a world of darkness. Just as we close, turn with me to Matthew chapter 5.

[40 : 49] And just let's give the Lord Jesus himself the last word on this. Matthew 5 verse 14, Jesus says, you, his people, you are now the light of this world.

In verse 16, he says, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your father in heaven. That's what God commanded Israel through Moses.

So often they failed. So often they didn't obey him. But God didn't abandon his plan. And nor does Jesus coming somehow render God's people, his church's life irrelevant.

Not at all. Look at verse 17. Don't think I've come to abolish the law and the prophets and their whole purpose for my people. I've not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them.

And that is fulfill them for you, yes, but also in you. Washing away all your transgression and sin, but renewing in you the true life of heaven through my Holy Spirit.

[41 : 54] And so he says, verse 18, not a jot of my law will pass away until all is accomplished, until the Lord Jesus returns. And so until then, says Jesus, verse 19, if you want to be great in my kingdom, be doers and teachers of this enduring pattern of life, of God's beauty and his truth and his generosity and his love as expanded by Moses and as exemplified even more so by the Lord Jesus himself.

Indeed, verse 20, how much more and how much greater must your living righteousness be than ever before? We who have so much better promises, we who have so much better and everlasting covenant.

You see, our calling is to be lights shining in the darkness until the day of the Lord Jesus. And that's why Peter says that these ancient scriptures are for us a light shining in a dark place until that day dawns.

A light to guide our path so that we might be a living demonstration in this world of the message that we preach. Demonstrating the way of heaven here on earth, even as we declare the way to heaven here on earth.

God wants people who are still walking in darkness, who are still strangers to his word, who are still afar off. He wants them to see in the life of his church.

[43 : 28] See things that will make them say in that place and among those people. Well. That surely must be what heaven is like.

He wants people to be seeing the Christian church and saying, whatever those people have got, I want it. Whatever they're saying, I want to listen to it. Because light and love and life radiates whenever those people are seen.

Because they see that we do love the Lord our God with all our heart, with all our soul, with all our strength. And that we do truly love one another. And indeed love all men with the generous love of God.

It's when the law of God becomes flesh in the lives of God's people in Christ. That we will be lights to the world. And that we can lead others to the light of the world.

Our Lord Jesus Christ. And that's why this book is in our Bibles. That's why its message needs to live in our hearts and in our minds always as the church today.

[44 : 38] Let's pray. Oh Lord, open our eyes that we may see wonderful things out of your law. For your word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path.

And it will be until the day breaks. The morning star rises in our hearts and our Lord Jesus returns. So Lord, may your light lead us to live as light.

And indeed to live in such harmony with one another. That together we may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Not only in knowing you.

But in showing you and your life to this whole world. And we ask it for Jesus' sake. Amen.