

With All Your Heart

Bodies on the Hill

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Week 1

Deuteronomy 1-4

The book of Deuteronomy is composed of three sermons from Moses before Israel's entrance to the Promised Land through Joshua's conquests. Moses was standing at the edge of the Promised Land--the land that Israel had been searching for 40 years--wandering day after day under the discipline of God. The people of God were about to step into the land that was promised generations ago to Abraham. Proverbially, they are standing at basecamp, looking up at the summit. "Today is the day!"

Here's the catch--every single person who left Egypt during the Exodus has died. All of them except for Moses, Caleb, and Joshua. And they didn't just die because it took them a long time to find the Promised Land. No, Israel had disobeyed and turned away from God. And because they turned away, the generation of the Exodus was not to enter the promised land. The people Moses is about to preach to have seen a lot of dead bodies along the way, and each of his three sermons serves a specific purpose with one overarching theme.

1. When have you ignored a warning or advice because you felt confident you could handle things your own way?

3 Sermons from Moses:

- **Deuteronomy 1-4: Look at the Bodies on the Hill.** Don't just walk by and pretend they aren't there. Look at the bodies on the hill. Where did we come from? What did they do to get there?
- **Deuteronomy 5-26: Remember Your Training.** How can we make sure we do not fall into the error of our fathers? How are we to be as the people of God?
- **Deuteronomy 27-30: If You Do, and If You Don't.** The choice is yours, either live by this word, or die in obstinance to it.

Though distinct, when you put all three sermons together, there is a clear directive for those who hear:

*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, 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 commanding you today for your good?***Deuteronomy 10:12-13**

In summary---**Love the Lord your God with all your heart!**

For the next 10 weeks, we will be resting in Deuteronomy, seeing how wholehearted devotion to the Lord is found through faith, obedience, and ultimately, the person and work of Jesus, who loved our God with all His heart – perfectly - *for us*, for Israel, in spite of our constant rebellion.

So, to begin our time in Deuteronomy, let's place ourselves at basecamp--aka where Moses is going to give these sermons (somewhere east of the Jordan river in Moab). The land of Canaan, which is the Promised Land, is west of the Jordan. So, as they are preparing to enter the land, Moses gathers the people and it says that "**Moses undertook to explain this law.**" **Deuteronomy 1:5**. See the whole purpose of the book of Deuteronomy, "the second law," is to explain the law to the generation who is going to possess the Promised Land. But this is not simply a retelling of the law – it is, as Konkle says, "A reaffirmation of the covenant at Sinai." Why do the people need to be reaffirmed of the covenant God made with Moses? Because the covenant that God made with Moses was conditional:

- Keep the covenant: God will make Israel treasured among all nations. They will be a holy people, a kingdom of priests. (Exodus 19)
- Break the covenant: God will devastate their land and desolate their people (Leviticus 26)

The conditional nature of the covenant suggests that there is a point at which God nullifies the covenant completely because of the disobedience of the Israelites.

2. God's covenant with Israel included both promises and consequences tied to their response. Why do you think God takes obedience and faithfulness so seriously?

38 years prior God called the Israelites to enter the Promised Land. Moses begins his explanation of the law reminding them of this story. **Read Deuteronomy 1:6-8.**

Just two years after God led them out of Egypt, the Israelites were instructed to enter into the Promised Land. This is the famous story where they sent 12 spies into Canaan and 10 were bad and 2 were good. And they come back from spying and say, “the land is great...but we’re going to die!” When word got out to the Israelites, they didn’t respond by saying, “no, no, no ...God has been with us, and He told us to take the land.” No. Instead, they thought, *‘Because the Lord hated us, he has brought us out of the land of Egypt, to give us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us.* **Deuteronomy 1:27**

Moses then responds...

‘Do not be in dread or afraid of them. The Lord your God who goes before you will himself fight for you, just as he did for you in Egypt before your eyes, and in the wilderness, where you have seen how the Lord your God carried you, as a man carries his son, all the way that you went until you came to this place.’

Deuteronomy 1:29-31

They didn’t believe God. And like a screaming toddler being carried into an amusement park, they kicked and slapped their dad so many times in the parking lot to the point where he set them back on the ground and said “Alright, we’re not going.”

Everyone from the generation of the Exodus had died at the point of Deuteronomy. Why? Because that was the penalty for their rebellion. Verses 34-40 say that only the two spies who believed God, Caleb and Joshua, would enter the promised land. Not even Moses would get to go. So, Israel said, “No we didn’t mean it God. See, we will go fight them now!” In God’s grace, He tells them not to go. *Do not go up or fight, for I am not in your midst, lest you be defeated before your enemies* (**Deuteronomy 1:42.**) God could’ve just said, “yeah go try that out” and let them get slaughtered, but He didn’t say that.

You would think they would have listened this time, but they fought anyways. Moses describes it this way... *Then the Amorites who lived in that hill country came out against you and chased you as bees do and beat you down in Seir as far as Hormah.* **Deuteronomy 1:44**

3. Israel first refuses to go when God said “go,” and then tried to go when God said “don’t.” What does this reveal about the difference between repentance and simply reacting toward consequences?

This story serves as a reminder of the seriousness of God's covenant. Obedience and faithfulness are not just suggestions, but stipulations of this covenant. "Do you want to walk into the land I will give you and be my treasured possession? Trust me! Do what I say!" **Breaking God's covenant leads to death.** That's why there are bodies on the hill! Moses is telling the Israelites, "Remember why you've wandered! Remember why your parents didn't get to go into the land! Will you take this seriously?"

When Moses is recounting the story of Israel's disobedience, he is calling back to Leviticus 26 to say that the consequences that were laid out were not hyperbolic, but literal and real. However, Leviticus 26 doesn't end with hopelessness because of the unfaithfulness of Israel to the Mosaic covenant – instead it ends with God's faithfulness to the covenant He made with Abraham. A covenant that was conditional upon the obedience and faith of the people.

Read Leviticus 26:40-45.

Israel is experiencing the actuation of this promise in Deuteronomy. It is the next generation's turn to look at the bodies on the hill, remember the unfaithfulness of their ancestors, and humble their hearts because God's promise is still valid and His covenant is available. Moses begins to demonstrate this to them by reminding them of what has recently happened. Chapters 2 and 3 reminds them that they just defeated two real kings of real nations and took their land. God was not with their ancestors, but the evidence shows that He *is* with this generation because they are beginning to live in His promises again.

4. The Israelites could see evidence that God was with this new generation. What are some ways we can recognize God's faithfulness in our own lives today?

Moses wraps up his history lesson for the Israelites in verses 35-40. **Read Deuteronomy 4:35-40.**

The Israelites most definitely needed to obey this law. But the crux of the issue is this--Lay it to your heart that the one true God is with you. Obey, but trust precedes obedience. The ask is not just that the Israelites would live perfectly, the ask here is to have faith that God is He who He says He is and will uphold His covenant for us.

It is true for us today, that there are consequences for our disobedience to God. But obedience without the right heart doesn't save us, trusting in Jesus does! As we continue through the Deuteronomy series, our constant call

is going to be to follow God with all your heart which is beyond obedience, it is faith. But even when we are unfaithful, God is *faithful and* has obeyed this law perfectly on our behalf in the person of Jesus.

Where Israel failed, Jesus obeyed. Where Israel deserved judgement, Jesus took it. And because the grave couldn't hold Him, Jesus has defeated death so that all who would have faith in Him--all who would trust Him with their whole heart would be saved.

We need to learn from our past, and the sins of our fathers need to be warning for us in the present. We need to look at the bodies on the hill and act differently. But ultimately, we remember a body that didn't stay on the hill. That God has given a new covenant in the blood of Jesus. And in the same way we see God remaining faithful to His covenant when His people did not, God remains faithful through the blood of Jesus for unfaithful people like us. While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

- 5. What next step is Jesus calling you to take—not just in outward obedience, but in deeper trust that He is faithful even where you have been unfaithful?**