



Final Advice

Deuteronomy 4:9

- 1. Give Heed to Yourself.**
- 2. Pay Attention to Your Soul.**
- 3. Don't Forget what You Saw.**
- 4. Don't Depart with Your Heart.**
- 5. Make Them Known to Your Children.**

There are certain points in your lives where you face major challenges. Perhaps it is when you began studies at college, or when you graduated from college. Perhaps it is when you got married. Perhaps it is when your first child was born. Perhaps it is when you first started working at a new job. Perhaps it is when you moved into your new home. At such times as these, we often seek the final advice and counsel of others. For example, at college graduation ceremonies, the speakers often give final advice to the graduates. At wedding rehearsal dinners, parents will often give their final advice to their children who will soon be married. Before a football game, a coach will give his final advice to the team before taking the field. Before a battalion goes into war, the commander will often offer his final advice to his troops.

This morning, as we come to the book of Deuteronomy, we see Moses giving his final advice to the people of Israel as they prepare to enter the land. One month later, Moses would die on the top of Mount Nebo, overlooking the promised land (Deut. 34). They had been wandering in the wilderness for almost forty years, but the nation of Israel would soon enter the promised land and take it by force, under the leadership of Joshua. Moses wanted to do all that he could do to prepare them for that day. And so, he addressed the people with a series of sermons that sought to prepare them for entering the land. He had two main themes to address. (1) Moses instructed them on how to enter the land. In their fear of the defeating the powerful nations in the land (i.e. Deut. 9:2), Moses would instruct them to remember all that the LORD had done for them in bringing them thus far. (2) Moses also instructed them on how they ought to live once they had entered the land. Once they entered the land, the battle wasn't over, it was only beginning. The people would be tempted to forget the LORD and all that He had done (i.e. Deut. 8:11).

The previous generation of Israelites had made some incredible mistakes. They had rebelled against the LORD. They had refused to believe Him. They were involved in idolatry. They were engaged in immorality. They were constant grumblers, ungrateful for the things that the LORD had done. It was the desire of Moses to set the next generation along a good path that they might not repeat the history of the previous generation, which was a history of disaster. And like a good coach, or a good teacher, or a good parent, Moses seizes the opportunity to offer some final advice for those who were about to enter the land.

In order to open up the first half of the book of Deuteronomy this morning, I want to use one verse as a launching pad. Deuteronomy 4:9 contains some key elements of Moses' exhortation that are easily illustrated in the rest of Deuteronomy. Consider this verse:

Deuteronomy 4:9

Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons.

There are five exhortations in this verse that help to unfold much of Deuteronomy. I trust that you can see them there in the text. Moses says, ...

1. Give Heed to Yourself.
2. Pay Attention to Your Soul.
3. Don't Forget what You Saw.
4. Don't Depart with Your Heart.
5. Make Them Known to Your Children.

These five exhortations will form the structure of my message this morning. The verse has five exhortations and so I will have five points. And let me say that these exhortations are as applicable for us today as they were for the Israelites in the day of Moses. We may not be preparing to enter the promised land as they were. But, we ought to be living our lives, expecting to enter into the ultimate promised land: heaven itself. There are ways that we ought to be living right now to help us on this journey.

Our particular struggles will be different. We won't face the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, nor the Jebusites (Deut. 7:1) as they did. But, the final advice that Moses gives is such that it transcends these battles. You may be facing a specific, spiritual battle today. I guarantee you, the counsel of Moses will help you in that battle. My first point this morning is simply this, ...

1. Give Heed to Yourself.

I'm taking the wording of this exhortation straight from the text itself. "Give heed to yourself." With these words, Moses is simply telling the people of Israel that they need to pay attention to their lives. As we live our lives upon the earth, there are some dangers that we will encounter. We need to navigate through them carefully. Our lives are to be lived with a great deal of diligence and care.

Our particular struggles in journeying this path will be different. We aren't going to be facing the Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, or Jebusites (Deut. 7:1). But the final advice that Moses gives transcends those things. You may be facing a specific spiritual battle today. I guarantee you, the counsel of Moses will help you in that battle.

To illustrate this point, I want to take you to 1 Corinthians 10. In recent weeks, I have made only passing comments to these verses. Today, I would like for us to look intently at them, because they give us the same lesson that Moses is seeking to give to the people of Israel. I want to read the passage with you, making a few comments along the way.

1 Corinthians 10:1-4

For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; and all ate the same spiritual food; and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ.

These verses are addressing the situation with the Israelites wandering in the wilderness. Verse 1 takes us back to the time in which Israel was brought out of Egypt. I trust that you remember when the people left the land of Egypt. They found their backs to the wall of the Red Sea with the Egyptian army coming after them. The LORD split the Red Sea and allowed all of the Israelites to pass through on dry ground. The reference to the cloud refers to how they all followed the cloud of the LORD around the wilderness. Verse 2 speaks about how they were united to God through Moses, their leader. All were following him. Verses 3 and 4 speak about how they were sustained in the wilderness. Not only were they eating from the Manna and drinking from the water that the LORD provided for them out of the water, but they were also sustained spiritually by the LORD as well. Verse 4 says that Jesus Christ was sustaining them in the wilderness.

The punch line comes in verse 5, "Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness." When Paul uses the word, "most," it is a vast understatement. You might easily read, "Nevertheless, with all but two of them, God was not well-pleased." It was only Caleb and Joshua who survived the wandering in the wilderness. The rest died while wandering around in the wilderness.

Verse 6 brings the application to us, "Now these things happened as examples for us, so that we would not crave evil things as they also craved." Over the past two weeks, I have sought to drive this home to you: the wanderings in the wilderness (as recorded in Numbers) is a negative example of how we ought not to live. They craved evil things. We ought not to crave evil things. Let's continue with the text, ...

1 Corinthians 10:7-10

Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and stood up to play." Nor let us act immorally, as some of them did, and twenty-three thousand fell in one day. Nor let us try the LORD, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the serpents. Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.

These four verses are speaking about four different events in the life of their wanderings. Verse 7 is a direct quote from Exodus 32:6, which described the actions of the people shortly after they had made a golden calf to worship. They were having a party in the midst of their idolatry. Verse 8 describes the immorality that was recorded for us in Numbers 25, when the people of Israel played the harlot with the daughters of Moab (Num. 25:1). They worshiped their gods. They acted immorally with their women. Verse 9 is referring to the occasion in which the people of Israel became impatient and spoke against God and Moses. We read in Numbers 21:6 that "The LORD sent fiery serpents among the people and they bit the people." Verse 10 is probably referring to the time in which the people of Israel grumbled and the LORD sent a plague that killed 14,700 people (Numbers 16:49).

The lesson for us all comes in verse 11, "Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come." (1 Cor. 10:11) In other words, the profitability of the account of the wanderings in the wilderness is the example that it leaves. You almost get the sense that God wanted us to have this example, and so He laid low this generation in the wilderness for that purpose. God was not pleased with them. They were immoral, idolatrous complainers. God "laid them low in the wilderness" (verse 5) and killed many of them for their grumbling (verses 7-10). Similarly, God will not be pleased with us, either, should we engage in similar activities.

Now, at this point, you might easily be saying to yourself, "Steve, c'mon, we live in the 21st century. Our dangers aren't their dangers. We aren't in danger of falling into the worship of a golden calf! My marriage is secure. I'm not going to fall into immorality. Besides, I haven't seen too many people fall by God's plague recently." If that's how you are thinking, then verse 12 then will come to you with a great warning: "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed that he does not fall."

This (by the way) is the exact point that Moses was making in the wilderness in our text this morning. Moses said, "Give heed to yourself." In this passage, Paul says, "take heed." The call is to be alert and active. The call is to understand what is taking place, lest you drift into sin as the previous generation did. The warning is this: "If you think that you are immune to any one of these dangers, then, you are in a special danger of falling into them! You need to take heed to yourself."

Church family, we need to take the wickedness of the generation of Moses' day into account! We may well fall as well. Their temptations are the same as our temptations. This is the point of the first half of verse 13, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man." Their experiences weren't unique. Their experience is our experience. Oh, we may not be wandering around in a dry wilderness. Oh, we may

not be tempted to bow down to a golden calf and worship it. But, we are tempted to crave evil things (verse 6). The pull of the flesh and our own pleasures is alive and well in each one of us (verse 7). The temptation to immorality is all around us (verse 8), on billboards, on television, and on the Internet. How easy is it for us to continue to try the patience of the LORD through our repeated sins (verse 9). And none of us are free from the sin of grumbling (verse 10). The sins of the generation of Moses' day are the sins of the generation of our day! Not much has changed. The human passions are still the human passions.

Verse 13 ends with hope: "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it." Be assured, O child of God, that when the temptations come upon you, God is sovereign over the temptation. He isn't going to bury you beyond your abilities. When any temptation ever comes your way, God "will provide the way of escape." So, when you are being tempted to crave evil things (verse 6), God will be providing you the way of escape. When you are pulled to take pleasure in the things of the world, God provides the way of escape. When immoral thoughts come into your mind, or when you are contemplating one of your most common sins, or when you are downhearted and wanting to grumble, God has provided a way of escape.

The way of escape is always the same: remind the cross of Christ. We look to him who canceled the debt that our sin required. We are no longer a slave to sin! We are free to do righteousness. The grace of Christ is working in us! We can overcome the temptation.

2. Pay Attention to Your Soul.

In Deuteronomy 4:9, Moses told the people, "Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently." This is great advice for Moses to give to the people of Israel as they stand on the precipice of entering the promised land. The generation before them had failed to keep their souls. Rather than keeping their heart focused upon the LORD, they allowed the issues of the day to run their passions. When in danger, they grumbled. When thirsty, they grumbled. When hungry, they grumbled. When tempted, they fell into immorality and idolatry. As a result of their sin, they wandered around the wilderness for forty years and eventually died. They failed to keep their souls. Moses is telling the next generation to learn from their fathers!

It is of utmost importance that you pay attention to your soul. Moses said that you should be diligent about this task: "keep your soul diligently." By this, he is simply telling us to be active in this pursuit. He is telling us to be attentive to our souls. He is telling us to be occupied with the cultivation of our souls. He is telling us to guard our souls. He is telling us to watch over our souls. He is telling us to keep our souls.

This all begins when we grasp how valuable our souls are! We naturally treasure those things that we consider to be valuable. We easily part with those things that are considered to be of little value. We don't think twice about throwing away a piece of paper. And yet, should we hold a twenty dollar bill in our hands, we wouldn't throw that away. Why? Because we consider it to have value. When we lose something of value, it is most distressing to us.

A good illustration of this took place in our home this past week. Last summer, my wife and daughter had the opportunity to accompany my mother-in-law on a trip to Tahiti. While there, my daughter, Carissa, purchased three black pearls (for which Tahiti is famous). When she arrived at home, she had one of them fixed to a necklace. The other two were mounted onto a base and made into earrings. These weren't particularly expensive pearls. But they were special pearls. Every time that Carissa has put them on, they have reminded her of her special trip that she took to Tahiti with her mother and grandmother.

One day this past week, my daughter chose to wear these special earrings. Mid-morning, she discovered that one of the earrings had fallen out of her ear. It was lost! Surely, you know how she responded, don't you? First of all, it caused her great distress to think of losing one of these earrings. Next, she went looking for it with great earnestness. She took out a flash light and searched in every nook and cranny of the house where she had been that morning. Eventually, she found it. And when she did, she was very happy. Why? Because she considers it to be of value to her, and she did not want to lose it.

Do you realize the value of your soul? There was an occasion in the ministry of Jesus when He asked the rhetorical question, "What does it profit a man to gain the whole world, and forfeit his soul?" (Mark 8:36). The obvious answer is, "Nothing! There is absolutely nothing in this world that is as valuable as your soul." In fact, Jesus said that should you be in a position that you own the whole world and rule it however you desire, such would be vain if you lost your soul. There is no profit in gaining the whole world at the expense of your soul. Please realize that the most valuable thing that you have is your soul! It's because the only thing that you possess that is eternal. Your clothes will wear away someday and will be replaced. Your car will find its way into a junk heap someday. There will be a day when your home falls down as well. But, your soul will live on forever!

Your ultimate destination is based upon the state of your soul! All of you will live for eternity someplace. You will either enjoy the pleasures of God forever. Or, you will suffer the torments of hell forever! Jesus put it all in perspective when He said, "Do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both the soul and the body in hell." (Matt. 10:28)

Sadly, there are too many who go around life not caring anything for their soul. They think that the things of the world are more important than their soul. They think that getting their own way is more important than their soul. But, there will be a day when it will all be made clear to them. By then, it will be too late. And so, I exhort you (as Moses did): "Keep your soul." In other words, Pay attention to your soul! In other words, Pay attention to your inner man. Pay attention to your attitudes. Pay attention to your perspectives. Pay attention to your thoughts. It is from your heart that flow the issues of life (Prov. 4:23). Let them flow well.

One of the biggest temptations that will come upon your souls is the pull of the world. Consider the following warning that Moses gave:

Deuteronomy 6:10-13

It shall come about when the LORD your God brings you into the land which He swore to your fathers, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to give you, great and splendid cities which you did not build, and houses full of all good things which you did not fill,

and hewn cisterns which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not plant, and you eat and are satisfied, then watch yourself, that you do not forget the LORD who brought you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall fear only the LORD your God; and you shall worship Him and swear by His name.

When things are going well for you, it is then that you need to be most diligent to keep your souls. Because, in prosperity, it is easy for us to forget the LORD. How easy is it for us to say with Nebuchadnezzar, "Is this not Babylon the great, which I myself have built as a royal residence by the might of my power and for the glory of my majesty?" (Dan. 4:30). But, be warned, "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling" (Prov. 16:18). And the things of this world have a way of tugging at our souls, saying, "Trust me! Trust me! Pursue me! Boast in me! Boast in your vineyard! Boast in your olive trees! Boast in your bank accounts!"

When we do so, we can easily forget God. And so, I exhort you, "Pay attention to your soul."

3. Don't Forget what You Saw.

Moses told the Israelites, "Do not forget the things which your eyes have seen" (Deut. 4:9). Their eyes had seen some wonderful things that the LORD had done for them. And their eyes had seen to terrible things that they had done. Both of these things were important for them to remember. In fact, in the first three chapters of the book of Deuteronomy, Moses relates to the Israelites some of the wonderful things that the LORD had done for them as well some of the terrible things that they had done.

In the beginning of Deuteronomy, chapter 1, we see a reminder of God's initial promise to the descendants of Abraham. God's promise to Abraham had been given over 400 years prior to this point in time. They are recorded for us in Genesis 12. I trust that you remember the three promises that God gave to him: (1) A land; (2) A great nation; and (3) Abundant blessing.

At this point in Israel's history, they were on the precipice of seeing the fulfillment of these promises. Moses reminded the people of Israel how God had made of Abraham a great nation. This point is made in verse 10, "The LORD your God has multiplied you, and behold, you are this day like the stars of heaven in number." Furthermore, Moses pointed out to the Israelites that God was about to give them the land which He promised to Abraham so long ago. This is the point of verse 8, "See, I have placed the land before you; go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to give to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to them and their descendants after them."

Unfortunately, when the spies came back with their report, the people of Israel refused to enter into the land. "You were not willing to go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; and you grumbled in your tents and said, 'Because the LORD hates us, He has brought us out of the land of Egypt to deliver us into the hand of the Amorites to destroy us'" (Deut. 1:26-27). When the LORD heard their grumbling, He was angry with their words. He said, "Not one of these men, this evil generation, shall see the good land which I swore to give your fathers" (Deut. 1:35). It was only Caleb and Joshua that were permitted to enter the land (Deut. 1:36-38). They are the two bright, shining lights in this entire generation.

The story of the people of Israel was placed on hold for these forty years. But, when the generation finally passed away, the LORD began to move the people of Israel toward the land (See Deut. 2:16). In chapters 2 and 3, we begin to see their military victories. First, they defeated Sihon, King of Heshbon. In actuality, it was the LORD who fought for them. Look at verse 33, "The LORD our God delivered him over to us, and we defeated him with his sons and all his people." Beginning in chapter 3, we read of the defeat of Og, king of Bashan. Again, it was the LORD who won the victory for them. Look at verse 3, "So the LORD our God delivered Og also, king of Bashan, with all his people into our hand, and we smote them until no survivor was left."

When Moses began to see the strong hand of the LORD revealed against the enemies, even Moses longed to enter into the promised land. Moses wrote, "I also pleaded with the LORD at that time, saying, 'O Lord GOD, You have begun to show Your servant Your greatness and Your strong hand; for what god is there in heaven or on earth who can do such works and mighty acts as Yours? Let me, I pray, cross over and see the fair land that is beyond the Jordan, that good hill country and Lebanon.'" (Deut. 3:23-25). Moses was very aware of the "strong hand of the LORD". He knew well the "mighty acts" of the LORD (verse 24).

Though the LORD prohibited him from entering the promised land, Moses wanted to be sure to press to the next generation what wonderful things the LORD had done for Israel. And this is the point of what Moses is saying in Deuteronomy 4:9, "do not forget the things which your eyes have seen." He was saying, "You have seen how faithful the LORD has been. You have seen how unfaithful the initial generation that left Egypt was. Trust in the LORD. Be a faithful people!"

The burden of Moses is the same burden that many parents have today. There may be things that they have done in the past, which were wrong. When such a parent embraces Christ, they will often fear that their children might be involved in many of the same sinful activities in which they engaged. As such, they will often warn the children of the difficulties that such decisions will bring upon them. Like Moses, they will say to their children, "Trust God!" They will tell them to hope in the cross like they have done. They will tell them of the wondrous blessing that is found in Christ and warn them, "Don't miss the blessing!" This is exactly the sentiment of the heart of Moses. Moses pleads with the people of Israel to remember what great things the LORD had done.

Consider the flavor of the following two sections of Deuteronomy:

Deuteronomy 4:32-40

"Indeed, ask now concerning the former days which were before you, since the day that God created man on the earth, and inquire from one end of the heavens to the other Has anything been done like this great thing, or has anything been heard like it? Has any people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of the fire, as you have heard it, and survived? Or has a god tried to go to take for himself a nation from within another nation by trials, by signs and wonders and by war and by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm and by great terrors, **as the LORD your God did for you in**

Egypt before your eyes? To you it was shown that you might know that the LORD, He is God; there is no other besides Him. Out of the heavens He let you hear His voice to discipline you; and on earth He let you see His great fire, and you heard His words from the midst of the fire. Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them. And He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power, driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in and to give you their land for an inheritance, as it is today. Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other. So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time."

Deuteronomy 11:1-7

"You shall therefore love the LORD your God, and always keep His charge, His statutes, His ordinances, and His commandments. Know this day that I am not speaking with your sons who have not known and who have not seen the discipline of the LORD your God--His greatness, His mighty hand and His outstretched arm, and His signs and His works which He did in the midst of Egypt to Pharaoh the king of Egypt and to all his land; and what He did to Egypt's army, to its horses and its chariots, when He made the water of the Red Sea to engulf them while they were pursuing you, and the LORD completely destroyed them; and what He did to you in the wilderness until you came to this place; and what He did to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben, when the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, their households, their tents, and every living thing that followed them, among all Israel--but **your own eyes have seen all the great work of the LORD which He did.**

When you look back to what the LORD has done, it gives you a certain perspective. This is what will help you conquer the land that the LORD is giving you! The application comes straight to us. We may not have been there to see the mighty hand of the LORD work as did these Israelites did. But, we sure can read about it. We can believe it. We can live faithfully unto our LORD. And so, I bring it to you, church family: never forget what the LORD has done for your soul. These Israelites were called to look back upon the power of God in delivering them from Egypt. So also, are we to look back to the power of God in redeeming us from our sins. In 1 Corinthians 1, the message of a crucified Savior is "the power of God" to those who believe (1 Cor. 1:24).

4. Don't Depart with Your Heart.

Again, this comes straight from Deuteronomy 4:9, "Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and **they do not depart from your heart** all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons."

Throughout the book of Deuteronomy, Moses is continually advising the people to remember what the LORD has done for you. It would give them courage to conquer the land. It would give them perspective when they entered the land. In Deuteronomy 7:17, Moses puts forth a scenario when that might take place when it actually comes time to take the land. He says, ...

Deuteronomy 7:17-19

"If you should say in your heart, 'These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?' you shall not be afraid of them; you shall well remember what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt: the great trials which your eyes saw and the signs and the wonders and the mighty hand and the outstretched arm by which the LORD your God brought you out. So shall the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid."

In essence, Moses was saying, "When fear comes upon you, because you think that the task is too large, simply remember the power of the LORD in delivering you from Egypt. The plagues were powerful! The splitting of the Red Sea defies any other explanation, but that the LORD, your God, is a mighty God. He will be on your side! You can conquer the land!"

The power of the people is nothing in the land of God. A great illustration of this took place the other night. My wife, Yvonne, had a dream. I'll call it the snarling wolves dream. There were snarling wolves all around her. She was startled. The fear was real! It startled her so much that she woke up with her heart beating rapidly. It was then that she heard me snoring. She was afraid of her husband's snoring! But when she understood reality, her heart was calmed and comforted. The people of Israel needed to see reality! And as verse 18 (above) shows, when God is on your side, there is no need to fear. Remember His power! Take it to heart! But the command to remember goes far beyond the battle. It takes us after the battle as well!

Once they were in the land, they needed to keep remembering these things as well. Consider the following passage:

Deuteronomy 8:11-20

Beware that you do not forget the LORD your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; otherwise, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived in them, and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. He led you through the great and terrible wilderness, with its fiery serpents and scorpions and thirsty ground where there was no water; He brought water for you out of the rock of flint. In the wilderness He fed you manna which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do good for you in the end. Otherwise, you may say in your heart, 'My power and the strength of my hand made me this wealth.' But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. It shall come about if you ever forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I testify against you today that you will surely perish. Like the nations

that the LORD makes to perish before you, so you shall perish; because you would not listen to the voice of the LORD your God."

Oh, how important is it for us to remember! We need to remember what God has done for us, that we might never presume upon anything. How easy is it for us to look at our own righteousness, or our own spiritual accomplishments and comfort ourselves that we have simply received what we have deserved! When Israel would conquer the land, they were in great need of seeing that it wasn't their merits when brought them into the land. Rather, it was all the working of the LORD. The day that they would forget that it was the LORD would be the day that they would perish (i.e. verse 20). In chapter 9, the theme continues on!

Deuteronomy 9:4-7

"Do not say in your heart when the LORD your God has driven them out before you, 'Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,' but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is dispossessing them before you. It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God is driving them out before you, in order to confirm the oath which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Know, then, it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people. Remember, do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness; from the day that you left the land of Egypt until you arrived at this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD. "

When Israel would look back and consider why it is that they arrived in the land in the first place, they needed to take it to heart that it had nothing to do with them! It wasn't their righteousness that brought them into the land. To be sure, God destroyed the nations who dwelt in Canaan because they were wicked. But, God certainly didn't bring Israel in because of their own righteousness. Were the facts to be known, it is clear that Israel was a stubborn people (verse 6) and a rebellious people (verse 7).

So, why did God bring them into the land? It was all because of the oath that God gave to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (verse 5). In other words, God made a promise to Abraham (which extended to Isaac and to Jacob and to his posterity after him). As God's promises will hold true, He would surely bring them into the land. But, why did God make this oath to Abraham? It was the sheer mercy of God. This is expressed very well in the following verses, ...

Deuteronomy 7:7-8

"The LORD did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the LORD loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the LORD brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt."

It wasn't because Abraham was so numerous that God set His love on Him and chose Him. It was because God chose to love Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That's why the LORD brought the people out of Egypt. That's why the LORD will bring the people into Canaan. Because, in His sovereignty, He chose Israel. And it is no different for us. Let me say to you, "If you are a believer in Christ, you have a great future to look forward to." The blessings that you have in Christ are abundant! The blessings that you can look forward to are awesome. As Paul said, "To live is Christ and to die is gain!" (Phil. 1:21). It was all God's mercy. The only reason why you are in Christ today is because of His choice to love you and to open your eyes to the gospel of Christ. The only reason why you have spiritual victories in your life is because it is God who is at work in you. Church family, never let these things depart from your heart.

5. Make Them Known to Your Children.

Again, this comes straight from Deuteronomy 4:9, "Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make **them known to your sons and your grandsons.**"

In other words: Pass it on! Moses instructed the people of Israel to communicate these things to their children. We can only assume that doing so might protect the children from suffering the same fate of the generation that died in the wilderness. Near the end of chapter 5, Moses was recounting what happened on the day when he delivered the Ten Commandments to the people of Israel for the first time. In verse 27, they spoke to Moses and said, "Go near and hear all that the LORD our God says; then speak to us all that the LORD our God speaks to you, and we will hear and do it." This was a good thing. Look at verse 28, ... "The LORD heard the voice of your words when you spoke to me, and the LORD said to me, 'I have heard the voice of the words of this people which they have spoken to you. They have done well in all that they have spoken. Oh that they had such a heart in them, that they would fear Me and keep all My commandments always, that it may be well with them and with their sons forever.'" When these stories of God's great power would be passed on to the next generation, it would go well with the sons and daughters. But, should the sons and daughters prove to be obstinate to the word of God, it will not go well with them. Perhaps the most famous place in which Israel is told to pass on what they know to the next generation is in chapter 6.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9

"Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded me to teach you, that you might do them in the land where you are going over to possess it, so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do it, that it may be well with you and that you may multiply greatly, just as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has promised you, in a land flowing with milk and honey. Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God

with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

In other words, the things that you have seen and heard and experienced are to be passed down to your children. Please notice the divine order: in your heart, first, and then in your home. Should you miss the first, but try to keep the second, your children will see right through you. You can't hide your hypocrisy! But, should your faith be authentic and true, and should your love for God burn in your heart, it will express itself in your home!

Moses tells us to teach our children diligently! We should teach them when you sit, when you walk, when you lie down, and when you rise up. The sense of these words is that you ought to be teaching your children all the time. Whether it is when you sit down for dinner, or when you are driving through the city. Whether it is when you tuck your children in bed or when you awaken your children in the morning. God's Word should be the focus of your conversations!

Be like the wise man who walked by the field of the sluggard and noticed how it was overgrown with weeds, and so teach your children of the dangers of laziness (Prov. 24:30-34). Be like the rabbi of the early centuries who taught his pupils as they walked about in society. Be like Socrates, and ask penetrating questions of children, leading them to the proper conclusions about life and God.

Take opportunity of all the resources that are available to you! I know that in the past, I have spoken of the importance of family worship, the simple gathering of your family in your home for the purpose of worshiping God. It is not the end-all of end-alls. But, it is merely one of many possible applications of the things to promote the discussion of God in your homes, as you read the Bible to your children. Other possibilities are numerous.

One of the things that we have done for years that has proved to be very effective is the discipling of our children through tapes and CD's. We have made sure that each of our children have always had a tape deck or a CD player on the side of their bed. Each night when we tuck them into bed, we have encouraged them to listen to their Bible tapes (or CD's). These have varied quite a bit. When the children were small, my wife and I would make tapes for them. We would simply record our voices into a tape, telling our children of the things that we would like for them to learn. Often this was filled with Bible songs and scripture memory. As they have become older, this has changed a bit, as they begin to prefer some of the Bible story CD's that we have purchased for them. However, the homemade tapes are always loved and appreciated. In fact, this past week I made a CD with my son. He has just received a new book in AWANA and needs to memorize many things in the book. So, I read the book into the computer and produced a CD for him to listen to every night. With my oldest daughter, I have begun to give her sermon tapes and CD's with messages that are appropriate for her to hear. Why have I done all of this? I want to maximize the opportunities that they have to learn the things of God. Through these tapes and CD's, I have the opportunity to disciple my children every night as they drift off to sleep.

This is one of many ways in which you can disciple your children. Praying together as a family is a great way to bring God into real life as you trust Him for great things in prayer. You can intentionally bring up spiritual topics and discuss them (at the dinner table, or at other purposefully arranged times). You can expose your children to good Christian literature and tapes. You can choose to memorize verses together as a family. You can print out Bible verses and hang them up in your home. This was the express command of Moses: "write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" (Deut. 6:9).

So important was this to the people of Israel, that Moses repeats it on several occasions. Consider the following:

Deuteronomy 11:18-21

"You shall therefore impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall teach them to your sons, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your sons may be multiplied on the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens remain above the earth.

Authentic religion will work hard to pass things along to the next generation! It will bring great blessings (Deut. 11:21).

May you learn these lessons well:

1. Give Heed to Yourself.
2. Pay Attention to Your Soul.
3. Don't Forget what You Saw.
4. Don't Depart with Your Heart.
5. Make Them Known to Your Children.

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on February 26, 2006 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.
