

Clough Deuteronomy Session 24  
Deuteronomy 8:11-20 The Heart of the Prosperity Test  
Fellowship Chapel; 18 May 10

Tonight in the outline we're continuing in chapter 8 and I wanted to again emphasize that we are in the section in Deuteronomy, from chapters 5-11 which is emphasizing the mental attitudes and the heart. And we divided the text so that... it's a natural division, we just recognize the division, that chapters 5-11 are preparatory to the heart attitudes of that second generation prior to the conquest. And the rest of the book, from chapter 12 on through chapter 26 is going to deal with the statutes and the judgments. It's that area where we're going to see that the Bible addresses economics, it addresses public health, it addresses a multitude of issues that involve politics, it involves social structure that were once well-known in this country, the founding fathers knew a lot about this because they had been taught this in the churches of the time. In our society, of course, as Cal Thomas used to say, the closest most people have been to the Bible is the Gideon Bible in the motel room. But for a literate previous generation this was well-known and as we get into this you'll see institutions that we just take for granted actually were founded on particular texts in the book of Deuteronomy.

But tonight we're going to pick up where we left off in chapter 8. We've gone through chapter 5 which is the Mount Sinai incident, we've gone through chapter 6 where the Shema is given, the Jewish slogan, "Love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart, with all thy mind, and with all thy soul." And how Moses urged that second generation to make that come to pass in the society. And in it was done in the home. And you have the classic passage in all of the Scriptures for home training of children, that home is the place where authority is learned, the home is the place where children pick up things. And only parents who are with their children have those teachable moments are able to guide; why that phrase occurs about do these things, talk in terms of them when you're in the house, when you're out of the house, in the morning and in the evening. And Moses isn't talking there about Bible stories, he's telling about whatever you happen to be doing, the farmers out in the field, the ranchers with their sheep, when you're talking about those things you talk about those things interpreted in the light of the Word. And so we call that living in the Word, and that was the method that Moses is saying, that's how you get this deep down into the heart.

And then in chapter 7 he gave the requirements mentally to prepare for the conquest, and in that period we are looking at war. And we'll go into some of the war doctrine in Deuteronomy 20, but there's a lot to do there with conquest, and that's the so-called thing that every non-Christian will hit you over the head with, is ooh, there's genocide in the Bible. Yes, there is genocide in the Bible but it's a bounded genocide, it's a genocide of a certain population that had to be eliminated from history in order that civilization could go on. And it's a picture of the future, when Jesus Christ comes back there's going to be genocide. I mean, if you think in terms of some of the social justice standards today, Jesus Christ would be censored for what He's going to do at the Second Advent. That tells you something about the moral standards, there's something twisted here. If Jesus Christ would be indicted, so to speak, for genocidal warfare at His return. So that's why that is in there, but devotional

writers down through the centuries of church history have picked up on the conquest for hundreds of years because the conquest is a conquest and a genocide of an evil confirmed people but the method of the mentality toward that is in our hearts because we're fallen creatures. So we have to have the imprecatory attitude in our case, not against flesh and blood, as Paul says, but against the thoughts that come into our minds and hearts, and we have to censor thoughts and we have to discipline ourselves.

And so that gets to chapter 8 and he's talking here... we've gone through the first ten verses, because those first ten verses deal with the adversity test. Moses is talking about getting these things in your heart. So we started, and we emphasized in verse 2 that, "you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all these forty years ... to humble you and test you, and to know what was in your heart," the word "heart" is key in this book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy is not like Exodus and Leviticus. Those are books written with the priesthood in mind. Deuteronomy is written with a lay person in mind and it's also written, as we said, after forty years of experience, of disasters, failures, and things that Moses observed and he didn't want the second generation to have to live through that again. So he's briefing them on the heart. And as I point out in the outline, the word "heart" occurs 42 times. It's pretty interesting that there's that high frequency of this word and if you do a graph, a frequency chart, and you graph the occurrences per book of heart you'll see this on the bar graph, Deuteronomy is way up here. And so that immediately tells you, as you observe the word frequency, that this is something that Moses is emphasizing here.

So, we made a point last time and I just wanted to review that, and I guess we have it here, that when the Bible refers to organs of the body it has been the tendency among Bible commentators to take this as well, that's a cute little spiritual expression. I don't believe that's so. I think if we'd think through the doctrine of creation, that God has created our bodies with functions that are revelatory, I've used the sunflower illustration, that that flower is tracking the light. That's saying something; it's saying that life needs the light. Now that's a revelation of certain spiritual principles. And so when we see the word "heart" it's not just talking about some vague inner feeling. We know in our own English language, we use expressions like heartfelt, heart-broken, now why does that terminology come up? Because there's some relationship with the physical heart and we feel it and we sense it. And so we went through last time to show there's an analogy between the way God designed our hearts and the way He designed our spiritual part of us. And so on the outline I point out that the heart, we always for years have known it as a pump that distributes the blood to the cells, and of course moves the CO2 and the debris back out.

But the heart is more than that and I mentioned neurocardiology today that studies the electrical fields around the heart, and how they discovered that the hearts electrical power is fifty times that of the brain. And this kind of reorganizes our thinking a little bit because we always think of the brain as the electronic computer. It turns out that the heart has enough neurons in it so that as one researcher said, in the notes handed out last time, you can consider the heart as a microcomputer, and it is not totally dependent on the brain, it is independent in many ways. And

so the heart has a lot of power and it's just being discovered about how much it influences, it influences the whole body, every cell in our body feels the electrical pulsing from the heart. And so it's bathed in that electromagnetic field.

The most important thing for the analogy is that the heart controls the ease with which we perceive. The military has done a lot of studies on that and found out that when the heart senses stress it almost like it has its own little program that says okay, we're seeing a threat situation, and so now we're going to communicate to the adrenals, we're going to communicate to the adrenal glands over the kidney area to start secreting cortisone and so on, we're going to prepare the body for a struggle. Well, that emphasis, preparing the body for a struggle, deemphasizes the ability to think and perceive. It can't do everything at the same time so the heart actually has been told by the brain, threat, threat, and so it immediately engages this whole program. And one of the researchers pointed out that when we're afraid, and by the time we're afraid, and you've seen this sometimes when you drive and all of a sudden there's a threat situation, you almost get into an accident or something, and you instantly see the thing but then it seems like it's about sixty seconds later you feel your heart thumping, booming away, and it's like there's a delay in there. Well, they've studied that and they found out there's over one thousand two hundred chemical reactions that are triggered at the time there's a threat until the time your body is responding. That's an amazing kind of complexity that's going on here.

So the heart is controlling how we perceive, and I think probably over the centuries of time that was observed. So when Moses is talking about get this into your heart, he means what we mean when we say it's heart-felt, it's deep, it's embedded deeply so that it's almost automatic. And so when Moses says in verse 2 He's testing you to see "what was in your heart," in other words, under the pressure of a test, under the stress of a test, how will these people react. And so we said last time that the heart is almost like a conductor of an orchestra and the charts that I showed, slide number 1, was some research that has been done where they take the heart rate variability from beat to beat and they do is called spectral analysis of it and that's what that is, that's showing as our heart beats it's changing the time between the beats, and it's changing them either regularly or irregularly and the top graph shows you what happens when there's apprehension, when there's frustration the heart is constantly going like this suggesting the frequencies. Whereas, when there's an appreciation and a non-threatening situation the heart is changing in almost a rhythm. And so it can be detected; they've had these kind of monitors around for childbirth to test the fetal stress for years. And so they're just taking it and saying well gee, why don't we use the same instrument and see what goes on with different emotions. So it's a revelation of how much the heart does.

Well, when Moses is talking about getting the Word of God into our hearts, I believe that what he's saying here is that there's spiritual functions somehow connected to the heart and mind that needs to be saturated with the Word of God, such that under pressure, under stress, the right reaction occurs. And that's why in chapter 6 he said this has got to be a 24 hour thing, you're not going to get it in five minutes studying the Bible, it's something that's a way of life, it's sort of living in the

Word. And to show you this I've listed some verses there, just to give a flavor for this part of Deuteronomy.

Go back to Deuteronomy 4:39, you'll see just a few of these verses and after you read, maybe just four or five of them, Moses is pretty consistent in how he uses this heart vocabulary. In 4:39, "Therefore know this day, and consider it in your heart, that the LORD Himself is God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; and there is no other." See, he's getting back at the idolatry issue here.

And then you can come to Deuteronomy 6:5, this is the famous Shema, [4] "The LORD our God, the LORD is one! [5] You will love the LORD your God with all your heart," and I've emphasized the heart is the inner self and all of the controls that are going on that the physical heart senses, "and with your soul," which is nephesh, or life, those are going to be the details of life which are going to be in the last half of the book of Deuteronomy. Then in Deuteronomy 7:17, coming over there, there's fear. You see, "If you should say in your heart," in the middle of a conquest, in the middle of a war, wars are not pleasant, they are very threatening and scary, "If you should say in your heart, 'These nations are greater than I, how can I dispossess them? [18] You will not be afraid of them, but you shall remember," and he gives a tactic for handling fear in that situation and we went through that in chapter 7.

Then we come over to chapter 8, we've already seen verse 2, but if you continue through chapter 8 look at what happens in 8:5, "You shall know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God is chastening you." Verse 14 he says, "When your heart is lifted up," which we'll study tonight, "and you forget the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt and so forth. Verse 17, "then you shall say in your heart," see the emphasis, that's not accidental. Moses is drilling down and saying... a picture of this might be, think of the ocean and you think of the currents, the deep currents, we're worried about the oil spill in the gulf, about the oil getting into the so-called Luke circuit just west of Florida and these are big heavy currents with tremendous momentum but they're not seen, they're just underneath, and on the surface you have all the waves going on. Well, maybe you can think of that as the waves on the surface would be like the thoughts that come in and out of our head but underneath there are these heavy currents and that's at the heart level. So maybe that would help, or if you're an engineer and you like machinery, think of a flywheel on an engine, the flywheel is there to keep rpms pretty stable. So that's the background of the heart.

Now what we want to do is just mention something about the adversity testing and to do that we want to a flavor of what these people experienced. There's a picture when I took it around the so-called Mount Sinai or Jebel Usa, looking west from Jebel Usa, that's what you see and you can go for miles throughout the whole Sinai Peninsula and that's all you're going to see. So you can see from these pictures there's not too much growing there, not much food supply. And so when in Deuteronomy 8:3 Moses is saying you remember the adversity test, when He tested you, He took away the normal means of food supply, He took away the normal means of clothing, there was no clothing stores out in the Sinai Peninsula. And then the terrain, and they're walking around on this stuff and that is not just sand, that has little rock shreds in it and they were walking around

in this and the Bible points out their feed did not swell. So something miraculous was going on here. In other words, in this adversity test what God had done, He had taken away the normal processes so that people would have to realize that if I'm going to drink, man, there's got to be a miracle here because there's no water there, or I'm going to eat there's got to be a miracle here because there's no food here either.

And so in the middle of the adversity test God takes away the normal processes of life so we can see the underlying providential working. And that's the gap in the handout there, providential working, it's a good vocabulary word, providence. People 300 years ago in Christian circles knew very well and a lot of the devotional writers writing about, 300-200 years, they kept using this word "providence." It's sort of dropped out of our everyday vocabulary but it's a great biblical term because that's what they meant, that you can look at the surface but you've got to realize that underneath there's this quiet underlying providence that's going on, and then you will know, verse 5, he said, you will know that "man shall not live by bread alone," remember, that's the passage which Jesus used against Satan, remember, and the idea there is that, "man shall not live by ... but by every Word," or by every action that proceeds from the mouth of Yahweh, the action there isn't just in speech, the action there you want to realize is everything, it's the whole providential thing that's working. And so adversity testing strips away the normal activities so you can be cognizant and focus on the background stuff.

And then he concluded that in verse 5, he said, "You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so the LORD your God chastens you." And that's not just talking about discipline in a bad sense, it's talking about raising up a son and it's just hard to do and it requires... you know, every parent knows that and there are these disappointments in our children that go their own way, and after all the training you sit there and gee, what did I do wrong, and sometimes, you know, it's not anything you did wrong, it's just they are young adults and they are going to have to learn the lesson. And the Bible has an interesting way of handling that and that is you're going to learn the lesson and you can say to these kids, you're going to learn the lesson, hey, if you don't learn it from me you're going to learn it later on but you'll have to learn it in order to function in God's world because God has not designed the world to fit you, He's designed the world to fit Himself and His plans, so you can't remake the world, you've got to understand that.

So as God is going to chasten Israel, because Israel is His child, there's that familial relationship there. And what the idea is that we can get our eyes on God or we can get our eyes on nature and the absolute cold impersonalness, so that's what we mean that nature is some impersonal force, that there's no personal loving powerful God behind circumstances, it's just sort of oh, it's just all random.

So then in verse 10 we ended last time by saying that: When you have been fed, when you have been into this state, after you've conquered, after you're in the land, after you've received all the blessings of God, then what you are supposed to do is "bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you." And that's that thing that we studied before out in the desert, the theology of thanksgiving or the theology of complaining. And there's a theology behind this, this isn't just how we

feel. Remember, this is the heart, remember what God said, what is it in the heart.

Now we don't have time tonight to go through all the verses that I gave on heart there but if you go through them one of the verses that you'll see is in Matthew 12 and Matthew 15 where Jesus said out of the abundance of the heart proceeds our words. And so the Lord seems to be saying there that our speech, because when we're speaking, most of the time after we learn the language real well it's automatic, so we don't have to think too much about what we're saying in normal every day conversation. And what Jesus is rebuking the Pharisees for, is if I listen to you and I listen to your conversation, in chapter 13 and chapter 15 of Matthew, He says I can tell what's in your heart because what's in your heart is coming out your mouth. He can go so far as to say you Pharisees, you're worried about what you're eating, whether it's clean food or not. He says let me tell you something, it's not what goes in your mouth, it's what's coming out of your mouth and every person will give an account for words, every idle word that's spoken. So there's the connection between that automatic nerve deep waves that are in our bodies and our thinking that just emerged spontaneously.

So what we're getting at here is that the theology of complaining itself reveals a doctrine, it reveals a heart theology. And the first generation, remember, the idea was oh yeah, God's in charge, God claims to be loving and gracious but He treats me like He doesn't care or He treats me like He delights in my misery. See, it's an attack upon God's character, whereas in thanksgiving God is gracious and gives me what I do not merit, God has my ultimate good in view as he administers providential circumstances in my life. That is all a revelation in every day attitudes of the heart attitude.

So in verse 10 Moses says it ought be a theology of thanksgiving when you get into that prosperity that is coming your way. Now finishing the chapter, from verses 11 and following, this is the wrong way to respond, and he's going to go through the problems, because he's preparing that generation for another kind of test. They've already experienced through their dads and their moms, watching their parents to through the adversity test, so Moses is saying that adversity test had a lesson objective which was to make you conscious that behind every day activities is God's shadowing providence, and therefore you ought to be conscious of that. The problem is when you move from adversity to prosperity everything is working right, and when everything works right we forget the underlying problems because it's so obvious to say well, gee, I did this effort and I worked this plan out and I built this with my own hands and everything worked fine, no problems, so it is very easy for me to start thinking that I'm doing it all and what that does, that starts to alter the heart attitude because now the heart is sitting down here and it's being fed this line, oh I can do this, I can do that, I can do this, I'm successful here, I'm successful here, I'm successful here, and underlying there's no thankfulness, no consciousness, self-consciousness that God is involved here, don't you see. Well, no we don't see because we're enjoying ourselves and we're having great prosperity.

So that's what Moses is arguing about. He's worried in verses 11 and following, how are you going to handle the prosperity test. "Beware that

you do not forget the LORD," and in the Hebrew I've tried to translate it in a more literal way in your handout, "Keep yourself lest you forget," and then there's an expression, they smooth it out in the translation and I'm not proposing what I'm putting on the handout should be used as a translation, I'm just giving you a flavor for what the raw naked untranslated Hebrew looks like, "Keep yourself lest you forget ... not keeping His commandments," there's a state, the idea of not keeping His commandments becomes a way of life. "Beware that you do not forget the LORD" by having an new lifestyle, "by not keeping His commandments, judgments and statutes which I command you this day."

And we said over again whenever you see in this text "I" subject of the verb command, think doctrine of inspiration, because if he, Moses, is saying that you are responsible to keep the statutes I command you, Moses is putting himself up as the spokesman of God, so that Moses' words are the same as God's Words. Well, that would be blasphemy unless Moses was a prophet and unless this literature is inspired. You can't have it both ways. If Moses is not really getting verbal revelation from God this is arrogance. You can't read the Bible without seeing this, and so many people forget this. If you question revelation and you question that God has spoken in history, then this is all arrogance, you're saying to me that the whole nation Israel is going to go down because we don't listen to one man. No. The only way this makes sense, and that's the coherence and the beauty in the power of the Word of God. It has a coherence to it that carries you along. "...which I command you this day."

Now there's a structure to this and I have a slide here, the last one tonight, to show you. When you read the Bible don't just read words and a verse, verse, verse, verse, verse, verse, sweep down and look at the paragraph and watch how they do this, because remember, this was spoken, and Moses has these kind of things, the way he speaks, the very structure is telling us his emphasis. So what he's going to do, if you look at verse 14 about two thirds of the way through verse 14 you'll see that he's talking here about what's going on in the heart. So now he's looking at the attitude, the inner attitude. He says look, "lest your heart is lifted up and you forget the LORD your God...."

Now if you skip down to verse 17 he's doing the same thing, he's looking at the heart and he's checking the mental attitude. And so verse 14, a and b, there's three clauses there, clause 1, clause 2, and then skip down to verse 17 and you see he's saying the same thing. So it must be that he starts into a subject, he's diverting, he's going off, he's going to talk about something and then he's going to come right back and he's going to emphasize the same thing. So when you see that, kind of that little dance that's going on, track with him and you'll see the emphasis is on the heart here, the emphasis is what is going on here; don't "forget the LORD your God, lest," and then going down to verse 17, "you say in your heart," see, "heart" is in both verses, almost subliminally "don't say in your heart, 'My power and the might of my hand has gotten me this wealth.'" Now a person could say that in one sense, I mean after all, think of the businesses that the men had then. These guys were ranchers, they had sheep, they had oxen, the people who farmed and raised crops had... not tractors, they had work animals that worked the fields and they grew crops, they had vineyards, and there's a lot of work to that. You don't just grow grain and particularly they had no machinery in those days and

they had no way, really, not too sophisticated ways of irrigation, so you think in terms of what would you do if you were a rancher? What would you do if you were a farmer in those days? And think about the effort that required, how long you would be working, the dependence on the climate, the bugs and the wreckage of the crops, all those stresses that you would have, that's your business, and if you didn't make it you didn't make any money. So that was their occupation.

So now because when they got in the land Moses was visualizing this future time when, because supposedly they have finished the conquest and done what God told them, which they really never did finish, but he's looking forward to what could have been, a time of prosperity, and he says look, you're going to get there and you're going to find it easy to do your business because everything is working out right; you took a risk with this crop and it worked; you took these sheep and gee, they're multiplying and you've got many of them now. And you're so enthralled by the ease and the lack of stress and the joy of being able to do this that it's easy to say "this day I did it," and so he says careful... careful because this gets into theology here and we don't normally think of this as theology, we think of this as more psychology or something. So that's the warning. Now, packed in between those two verses what does he say? What's the issue? In verse 17 it's saying in your heart, verse 14, lest "your heart is lifted up," but the connection with the content in between there is this one, right at the end of verse 14, that second clause, "and you forget the LORD your God," so now what he's going to do, he's going to divert, he's going to deal with the person of God Himself. So he's saying get your eyes off your business, off your ranching, off of this, off the normal activities of life and just think about something; think about your relationship with God.

So instead of looking at the secondary means, look at the alternate. Now look what he does, look at the clause structure here. I've gaped it in the text here in this outline just so you can see the way it's constructed. Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, Who led you through the great and terrible wilderness, who brought water to you, who fed you with manna? See, the boom, boom, boom, what is the answer? God did it, God did it, God did it, God did it. And these are all acts in history, these aren't thoughts out of a devotional, these are actual historic events, He brought you out of the land of Egypt and that was a memorable event, that was the Exodus. Egypt was a super power; do you realize that in the 3,000 years of Egyptian history never once was there ever a revolt except the Jews. And how many people did they have in their army? They didn't have any army. It's an amazing event in human history that all this took place under the greatest super power in the ancient world and they didn't even have an army.

How did that happen? Because Yahweh [14] "brought you out of the land of Egypt;" He [15] "led you through the great and terrible wilderness," and those are strong Hebrew words. This adversity test was a real bear, you guys really had to suffer through all this, but who was it that led you...led you, "who brought water for you out of the rocks," see, he's reviewing all the historical events of the adversity test. [16] "Who fed you with manna" and we talked about that word, the Hebrew word "what is it," two words, MANNA and HU "what is this," and that was their nutrition, it was the "what is it" package, "which your fathers did not know,"



emphasizing the miraculous element here, "that," now there's three verbs here. Look at the sequence of the verbs in this structure. "That He might humble you," verb number one, now what is he talking about humbling? He's talking about the fact of saying I am a creature, I am totally dependent on my Creator, I'm dependent on him for my breath, my food, my water and everything. It may come out of a rock but it's God that's doing this. And so that's the humbling, the humbling idea, and it's in the New Testament. Remember what Peter says, "Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God," where do you suppose Peter got that from? This is the picture. "That He might humble you to test you," so the idea of the adversity thing here, here's the adversity test, "to do you good in the end," the "end" is going to be after the conquest. So what he's saying is He administered that so that you would learn what you need to learn so you can enjoy yourself, because Israel was set up in a covenant arrangement where, although she might enjoy herself, if she didn't remember Yahweh the enjoyment wouldn't last. So the idea is to do you good in the end, that's the ultimate reason, there's the "all things work together for good to them that love God," in this case everything working in Israel.

Now, on the outline I point out where I discuss this, they're all, in verses 8:14-16, they're all in the hiphil stem in the Hebrew language; the hiphil stem is the stem you use to convert a verb to a causative verb. Like, for example, I run, that's the normal stem, but if I put in a hiphil stem it means I cause you to run. And so all the verbs that he's talking about, He brought you, He led you, He brought water out, He fed you, they're all hiphils, they're all hiphil stems, He caused this to happen, He caused that to happen, He caused this to happen. So the fact that he's using that hiphil stem here tells you that he wants us to remember who is doing the ultimate causing here. It's not them, it's Yahweh that's doing it. And he's humbling them.

Now verse 18 he says, after he gets through all that, he tells us what is going on in their relationship with God. And this raises the question we dealt with last time, something that our culture in our moment of history has lost sight of completely; we've lost it in corporate life, we've lost it in our nation, we've lost it in our personal individual level, and that is this axiom-you cannot have a personal relationship without structure. This idea, and we hear it all the time, and as I said last week, the murder of the coed down at the University of Virginia, the commentator said well, she and her murderer had a relationship. And this is used again and again, young people particularly, you'll hear them say well, they're having a relationship. Well they sure did, murder was the result of a relationship. What was the matter? There was no stability in the relationship.

Now the relationship between Yahweh and Israel is covenantally defined. And we said last time, and this is a lesson for our time and our moment of time, and that is that every time God works with either us as believers, or He works in this case with Israel, He works according to His integrity. God is not knocked off balance because Israel doesn't like Him, or because Israel is having a bad day, or because Israel feels under the gun or something, or Israel is neglecting Him. God is not responding, in one sense, to how Israel acts toward Him. God is executing the terms of His contract because of His integrity. There's a contractual frame of reference for the relationship and we have to notice that.

And that's why in verse 18, very carefully, "You will remember," see there's that word zakar, "You will remember," again and again. When I went to Israel many, many years ago the first thing that struck me is everywhere you go you see monuments. I remember going up the road to Jerusalem, along the side of the road they have monuments to the Jewish teenagers who fought in the war of 1948. Here is a place where they didn't have any tanks so they put welded lead steel plates on the side of busses and that's how they were trying to make their way up toward Jerusalem and they were killed by Arab gunners at that particular point in the road and here was a monument and it had every one of the teenage guys and their age that were killed on that bus right there and so everybody driving by sees the monument. And I thought to myself, you know, in the Old Testament they're always putting up rocks for monuments and you go to Israel and they're still doing it. It's vital to them to understand their own history.

So Moses says "Remember Yahweh, your God, for it is He who gives you power," and see the contrast, look up in verse 17 and see the word "power." See where it's used, there's a deliberate contrast here, in verse 17, "my power," Moses says oh no it wasn't, it was Yahweh who gives you power, "to get wealth, that He may establish His contract," the berith, the word for contract, covenant, "which He swore for your fathers, as it is this day. So God is working in conformity to contracts. When you have a contract between two people you have a stipulation of behavior, whether it's a mortgage contract, whether it's a loan, a bank loan, whether it's two companies, whether it's a contractor with somebody building your house, there's an agreement there. Now why do you suppose over centuries of time the human race has always entered into contracts? Because we know we need reliability, we need definition. And so therefore we have contracts.

That's why we have marriage ceremonies, so all the little fornicating young people that want to have a little sex on the side but don't want responsibility, they don't want a marriage contract. You know why? Because it's responsibility, it involves integrity, it involves setting up a family, it involves years of character building that is going to be the transmitting site, the family, for the next generation. That's how culture gets transmitted. That's why we have marriage ceremonies. So yahoo, those who are having relationships. We have treaties between nations; the same thing. The human race has learned this centuries ago and it doesn't work if you don't. We've got thousands of years of experience to know that it doesn't work unless you have explicit understandings and this is why historically in a wedding service you have a group of witnesses. I mean, the classic wedding mode is before these witnesses, you hear it in the liturgy of every ceremony. What is going on there? You're establishing a contract to give stability to this.

So, God is the One who is the archetype of all contracts, this is the Mosaic contract and the Abrahamic; theologically what's going on here is the contract with the fathers, the Abrahamic contract 600 years prior was I will give you a land, a seed, and you will become a worldwide blessing, the three things of the Abrahamic contract. Those are unconditional, they're going to happen, period. Two of them have already happened, God has already given Israel a land, of course they are out of the land right

now but the land physically is there and we know that He was faithful to that in the book of Joshua, you have the tribal boundaries and you have all these little textual details, those are just real estate markers to show that He executed His contract for the land. Then you have the worldwide blessing and that isn't quite yet because Jesus Christ, who is the seed of David and the seed of Abraham hasn't come back yet to form His kingdom, but that's going to happen. But God also allows for human responsibility and so what Moses and his Sinaitic contract there with God, Yahweh, that is contingent, whether Israel is prospered or they're going to get kicked out of the land is up to them... hey, your responsibility. So that's the honoring of personal responsibility. But in back of that is this idea that eventually it will work; it's going to work and there's no doubt that it is going to come to pass.

Okay, so we have verse 18, He gives you power that He may establish His covenant, and you'll notice the purpose clause here isn't that they be happy, the ultimate purpose clause is that God is going to establish His covenant for His glory. Yes, they will be happy but that's not the ultimate end in history; the ultimate end is God will be glorified. And that is encouraging because it's bigger than me, it's bigger than you, and it's trustworthy.

Then he says, in verse 19, "Then it shall be, if you by any means forget the LORD your God, and follow other gods, and serve them and worship them, I testify against you this day you will surely perish." Both the verbs "perish" and "forget" in the Hebrew construction it's the infinitive plus the verb, they are tied together. You don't see that usually but where you have this infinitive and then you have the verb what's happening is the infinitive is making the verb emphasized. Like, for example, God says to Adam and Eve the day you eat thereof you're going to die. That's the first case where that happens, and he means it. So this is another one of those strong verbs. So the translators have done it pretty well, I'm looking at the New King James and some of you will have different translations but I think you will see in verse 19 where you see the verb "forget" the translators have tried to connote, by translating it into the English, they're saying how important it is not to do this. If you so much as "forget the LORD your God, and follow other gods," now what does it mean. We have to remember what we've covered previously in the Deuteronomy series. Idolatry in the Old Testament has to be recognized for what it is today; idolatry continues today. It's just that we don't look at... you know, the little statues like I brought that little statue in one night and it was from, I guess it was the Middle Bronze period of Palestine, and it was found in a Jewish home, by the way, dated in the Old Testament, and it was a statue to the bull god of Aaron. And it shows you that the society... we read the Bible but the general society didn't always follow the prophets.

Well, idolatry today, and this is why I have those three questions, the basic three questions of life and every college student gets hit with this, and this is why I emphasize it, for the sake of the college students. The metaphysical question, which is on the university campuses right now, basically can be boiled down to this: What is the purpose of your life? What is the purpose of existence? That's a basic question. And you see the tragedy in the secular education is you can't discuss the question. If I'm a teacher in a secular school I can't discuss that question because I'd get sued by the ACLU because it inevitably involves a

religious issue and my hands are tied because the secular rules of the game don't permit that. So in effect, what happens is the secular education becomes in one way trivial. It never can deal with the big heart issues. So the heart issue is what is the purpose of your existence.

Paganism never can find a purpose for existence. You go into the ancient Greeks, you go into Baalism, you go into the Hindu thing, there's no real purpose in history. The Bible gives purpose in history and the reason that the Bible gives you a purpose, and I always emphasize who were the world's first historians? It wasn't Thucydides and it wasn't Herodotus like I learned in my secular education. The first historians were the authors of the first books of the Old Testament. Think of the book of Judges, that's a history book. Who wrote it? The prophets wrote it, maybe Samuel wrote it, we don't know. Why did they write the history. They were monitoring God's contractual adherence to His stipulations and Israel's violations of the stipulations. In other words, because they first had the Word of God in treaty form, and revelation from God, they knew there was a purpose in history and a plan to history so therefore I will write history. When I was educated and I wasn't a Christian until I got in college, history courses were just something to get an A in by memorizing dates, that's all, you know, memorize the dates for the test today, forget them and memorize a set for the next time. And that's all history was to me, and I later, after I became a Christian I realized history, the way I was taught it was a set of marbles, just random events, just put little tags in it, this happened then, this happened then, this happened then, there was no purpose in it. So only the Bible gives purpose.

And this question, what is the purpose of your existence, if that's not answered by going back to the Bible you're following an idol. Secondly, how do I know what you're telling me is the truth? That's the epistemological question. How do I know what is truth? And we have a whole generation out there, in the post modern generation that doesn't believe in truth. I mean, ask some of the college students right here in the congregation what they're getting down at the community college here; there's no sense of truth, except, of course, what the prof says, that's true. But everything else isn't true, it's just whatever somebody feels like last Tuesday afternoon or something.

Then ethics, and the question needs to be asked and it can be asked graciously, but it's a very serious question: Who are you to tell me how I am supposed to live my life? Everybody is putting out this ought to be, we ought to do this, or that's wrong and this is right...says who? Where is your moral authority; surely it's not your personal opinion because your personal opinion is no better than mine so we have to have some source of moral authority. See, that question is never asked.

Then I've just included studying, the Rutherford Institute just put this out and I thought this was very interesting in light of what we're talking about. "At least one in 10 young people now believe life is not worth living. A 2009 survey of 16 to 25 year-olds by the Prince's Trust found that for many young people life has little or no purpose, especially among those not in school, work or training. More than a quarter of those polled feel depressed and are less happy than when they were younger. And almost half said they are regularly stressed and many don't have anything

to look forward to or someone they could talk to about their problems. No wonder many young people have such a pessimistic view of the future."

Now, that's the result, I mean, ideas have consequences and bad ideas have bad consequences. So you continually tell people that you are the material casually evolved entity over millions of years by chance processes that by definition have no purpose or they wouldn't be called chance processes, that there's no design, you're going to live that way. This programs the heart and it causes depression, and this is why we have a very high and rising suicide rate among teenagers. If you think this way, why not, you know, try to get into the heads. If this really is the case, that there is no purpose, why should I really be excited about going on living? Why put up with the stress day after day after day after day after day if there's no ultimate redeeming purpose in it all. So this is the problem.

Now what Moses is saying is if you "forget the LORD your God," He's going to discipline them in a very direct way, "I testify against you this day that you will surely perish." He means perish from the land because in verse 20 he then concludes with the word "as," so as what. You see, you have to be careful how you interpret the verb "perish" at the end of verse 19. If you think of "perish" as the whole nation disappears in history you're wrong, because Israel isn't going to disappear from history because the Abrahamic Covenant continues, so how do you interpret that verb "perish." It must mean perish in some sense; well, what's the sense? "As the nations which the LORD destroys before you, so you shall perish, because you would not be obedient to the voice of the LORD your God."

The idea was that these nations, they didn't really disappear from history, some of them did, but the idea is that Israel will disappear from the land. This is the whole heartthrob of Isaiah and Jeremiah, of the prophets, Amos, Hosea, the prophets are crying out, Israel, Israel, God is going to kick us out of the land because we are going after other gods. And yes, they were going after statues and had these high places and these wooden poles that were giant phallic symbols and so forth, and as I explained before, that we have to think of their way of thinking of why they went for Baal. They went for Baal because Baal was their idea of an impersonal nature.

See, paganism still does this. There's a parallel between ancient paganism and modern paganism. And you can get a lot of insights, Darwinism and its consequences by going backwards in history and studying the ancient forms of paganism, that by the way, are coming back in witchcraft today, into the New Age movement, they basically are borrowing directly from the ancient paganism. The idea behind ancient paganism is that the universe has no purpose and they would refer, in their frustration they use the word fate, or tables of destiny. And the idea was that somehow nature was one impersonal thing. Well nobody can live in an impersonal total universe, you're all made with the image of God in us and so we want to have some personal... and so in the pagan mind what they would do is they had these gods and goddesses. Of course Paul, our church fathers, believed they were actually demons that were manifesting to these people, I mean, really manifesting so that the craftsmen were making these idols to actually physically copy what they saw in these demonic visions. So they had a little help from some evil friend, shall we say. But the

gods and the goddesses were the only personal element. The overall picture was impersonal, so the gods and the goddesses were just like super-girls and super-boys, but they were not what we call the Creator God over all, which is the God who revealed Himself to Israel.

So then, here the guy is, he's a rancher and he's a farmer, and he notices that the grass is greener in the spring and in the autumn because in the summer you have drought and in the winter you have grass and it goes dormant, so you have your two growing seasons, the spring and the fall. So what does it look like? Fruitfulness goes on for a few months and then you go into a drought, and then fruitfulness comes back in the form of rain and the right temperatures and so on. So they thought well, that must be the god rising and dying, and that's how they worshipped. So they said well, we want to encourage... you know, here it's been a long winter, we want to be sure that spring is going to come. So what they would do is they would go out in the fields and have various ceremonies, including fornication and so on because they did that not so much for the sex side of it but they did it for the fertility sign, the idea was can we get these gods to keep fertile, keep our flocks fertile, keep the grass fertile. Well why is that? Because it's my business, it was a business thing. We forget that. The religion was a manipulation to encourage their business. It has to be seen in an agriculturally based economy.

So this is why Baal because the god of nature for them. That's why, when you read in Kings, Elijah and Elisha, when they do their miracles, every single one of those miracles, the giving of the widows providing grain for her, the lightening, the rain, and the not rain that Elijah was dealing with, all of those miracles are attacks against Baalism. In other words, those prophets were raised up by God to say okay, these guys think that Baal is going to cause spring rain. Remember what happened? Elijah goes to the king and he says: Except by my command there will be no rain for three years. And they went after him. And there wasn't any rain. And so what did that do? That cut across the claim that you could go out here and slice your own arms and put tattoos on your body and do whatever else, and fornicate and go to the temple prostitutes, no matter what you're going to do you're not going to bring rain because I, Elijah, I have a pack, Elijah, and I have a pack and I have been told by Yahweh there is no rain, period.

So you can see why there was a confrontation throughout the book of Kings over this whole issue of idolatry. And it was the same thing, are we creatures or are we autonomous beings? Are we creatures who are going to be dependent upon God or are we carving our own way by our own hand to make us wealthy.

Well, verse 20 finishes the chapter and it's the threat; it's the threat that if they don't straighten out their heart in terms of the prosperity time they're going to go down in history, which unfortunately they did because in many ways it's harder, and I think we all know that personally, prosperity tests are sneaky and it's almost harder to endure prosperity tests and keep our eyes on the Lord than it is in the adversity. Somehow in the adversity test you're knocked flat on your back and you have to look up, but with prosperity you're not flat on your back so you don't look up. So prosperity tests really in one sense are trickier and harder to handle than adversity tests.

So that's chapter 8, next week we'll go into chapter 9, a whole new section where the deal of grace comes up and this is a great Old Testament exposition of the doctrine of grace.