

“The Measure of Greatness”  
Deuteronomy 4:5-10  
(Preached at Trinity, June 30, 2024)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

**Disclaimer:** These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As Israel was preparing to enter into Canaan Moses was pressing the importance of holding fast to God's Word. It was essential to their life.  
**Deuteronomy 32:47 NAU** - "For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life."  
**Deuteronomy 6:1 NAU** - "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
2. In **Verse 1** Moses charges them to give careful attention to what he was saying. In the imperative:  
"Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform"
3. In **Verses 5-6** Moses continues to press this upon them - "See" "Observe" – "Pay attention to what I am teaching you."  
**Deuteronomy 4:5 NAU** - "I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me"  
**Deuteronomy 4:6 NAU** - "So keep and do *them*"
4. Few in our day give regard to the Word of God. They simply dismiss it. Most see the Bible as a religious Book that Christians hold to, but they don't see it as having any authority over them.  
The tragic truth is that many Christians also give little attention to their Bibles. They don't read it or study it in any depth. Many no longer carry their Bibles to church. They do not hold their Bibles as a constant companion. They fail to realize it as essential to their life. It is the only source of saving truth and how God may be known.
5. We don't worship the Bible, but we cannot know Christ without the Bible. As Christians we are commanded to be righteous. But there is no standard of righteousness without the Bible. Obedience to the Word of God is truly the measure of our life. Without it our religion is mere fantasy. It lacks substance. Without obedience our faith is counterfeit.  
**1 John 2:3-5 NAU** - "By this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments. <sup>4</sup> The one who says, "I have come to know Him," and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him; <sup>5</sup> but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of God has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him:"
6. As we've seen, the Book of Deuteronomy records three sermons Moses delivered to Israel before they entered into the Land of Canaan. In **Chapter 4** he is stressing the importance of holding fast to the Word of God. It was to be their life. It set them apart as the people of God. Israel was to be a light for the nations.  
**Isaiah 60:1-3 NAU** - "Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the LORD has risen upon you. <sup>2</sup> "For behold, darkness will cover the earth And deep darkness the peoples; But the LORD will rise upon you And His glory will appear upon you. <sup>3</sup> "Nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising."

7. Of course, Israel did not shine. Instead, they fell into idolatry. But through Israel God raised up the Messiah, the true Light. God's purposes will stand.  
**Isaiah 42:6 NAU** - "I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness, I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you, And I will appoint you as a covenant to the people, As a light to the nations,"  
**Isaiah 49:6 NAU** - "I will also make You a light of the nations So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."
8. Here in **Deuteronomy 4** we find this great duty pressed upon Israel. By clinging to God and keeping His Word Israel would be a marvel to the nations. Their greatness would shine.  
**Deuteronomy 4:6-7 NAU** - "So keep and do *them*, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' <sup>7</sup> "For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the LORD our God whenever we call on Him?"
9. This continues to be true in the New Covenant. Jesus referred to Christians as the light of the world.  
**Matthew 5:14-16 NAU** - "You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; <sup>15</sup> nor does *anyone* light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. <sup>16</sup> "Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven."
10. Moses is telling Israel that their greatness would be on display through their faithfulness to God and obedience to His Word.  
 In this passage we find the true measure of greatness. It was true of Israel. It continues to be true for God's people today.

- I. It is a great people who hold fast to the Word of God – **Verses 5-6**  
**Verse 6** – “for that is your wisdom and understanding”  
**Verse 8** – “Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law . . .”
- A. This is an amazing statement.
1. All of the nations would gaze upon Israel and see their wisdom and understanding.
  2. What was their wisdom and understanding? It was God’s Law.  
**Verse 6** – “These statutes”
  3. The nations would consider it a mark of greatness.  
**Verse 6** - "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."
- B. How is this? Do the nations recognize the value of God’s Word?
1. They can surely recognize the blessings of God.  
**Deuteronomy 28:11-13 NAU** - "The LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your beast and in the produce of your ground, in the land which the LORD swore to your fathers to give you. <sup>12</sup> "The LORD will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. <sup>13</sup> "The LORD will make you the head and not the tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath, if you listen to the commandments of the LORD your God, which I charge you today, to observe *them* carefully"
    - a. We can’t automatically take God’s promised blessings upon Israel and apply them to other nations. But we can’t deny God’s temporal blessings upon nations that follow Him and curses upon those who don’t. Look at Babylon and Assyria.
    - b. The nation that applies justice and equity and governs according to God’s Law will be blessed of God.  
**Psalms 9:17 NAU** - "The wicked will return to Sheol, *Even* all the nations who forget God."  
What about the nations that remember God?
    - c. When the queen of Sheba came to Solomon she could not believe her eyes.  
**1 Kings 10:4-7 NAU** - "When the queen of Sheba perceived all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, <sup>5</sup> the food of his table, the seating of his servants, the attendance of his waiters and their attire, his cupbearers, and his stairway by which he went up to the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit in her. <sup>6</sup> Then she said to the king, "It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. <sup>7</sup> "Nevertheless I did not believe the reports, until I came and my eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. You exceed *in* wisdom and prosperity the report which I heard."

2. The wisdom of God's Word will always amaze those who do not have it.
 

**Deuteronomy 4:6 NAU** - "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."

  1. There will be consistent justice.  
Just and wise decisions are valued by both nations and individuals.
  2. How blessed is the nation with leaders who lead according to God's will.
 

**1 Kings 10:8-9 NAU** - "How blessed are your men, how blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually *and* hear your wisdom. <sup>9</sup> "Blessed be the LORD your God who delighted in you to set you on the throne of Israel; because the LORD loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness."

**Deuteronomy 4:8 NAU** - "Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?"
  3. We should pray for such leaders.
 

**1 Timothy 2:1-2 NAU** - "First of all, then, I urge that entreaties *and* prayers, petitions *and* thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, <sup>2</sup> for kings and all who are in authority, so that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity."

II. It is a great people who call upon God in prayer.

**Verse 7** – For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the LORD our God whenever we call upon Him."

- A. Those who cling to God and keep His Word enjoy the riches of His fellowship. This is a Christian blessing.
  1. There is a great difference between the religious jargon of prayer and actually having the ear of God.
    - a. We have a national day of prayer, but few actually pray.
    - b. Congressional sessions are opened with prayer, but it is just formality.
    - c. There are prayer breakfasts, but never actually crying out to God.
  2. When God's people pray the world takes notice. We need to be a people of prayer.  
Mary, Queen of Scots, is reputed to have said, "I fear the prayers of John Knox more than all the assembled armies of Europe."  
One of the simple, powerful, and profound prayers of John Knox was: "Give me Scotland or I die!"  
The prayers of John Knox sparked the Reformation in Scotland and brought about revival.  
Do we even pray for revival today?
- B. Those who seek to obey God have the ear of God.
  1. Many look at prayer as the right of all men. The Bible doesn't teach this. The lost have no way to approach the throne of God. It is ludicrous to think those who hate and despise God and mock His Son can beseech Him to bless them. The need to trust Jesus Christ.

2. And even Christians can have their prayers hindered by sin and neglect. We cannot lose our union with Christ but sin can have an impact upon our communion.  
**Isaiah 59:2 NAU** - "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He does not hear."  
**1 Peter 3:7 NAU** - "You husbands in the same way, live with *your wives* in an understanding way, as with someone weaker, since she is a woman; and show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life, so that your prayers will not be hindered."
3. The Bible provides many examples of the effectual prayer of the righteous.  
**James 5:16-18 NAU** - "The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much. <sup>17</sup> Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, and he prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. <sup>18</sup> Then he prayed again, and the sky poured rain and the earth produced its fruit."  
**Joshua 10:14 NAU** - "There was no day like that before it or after it, when the LORD listened to the voice of a man; for the LORD fought for Israel."

III. It is a great people who carefully keep the wondrous works of God on their mind and heart. **Verse 9** – “do not forget . . . that they do not depart from your heart . . . make them known.”

**Verse 10** – “so that they may learn to fear Me all the days they live on the earth, and that they may teach their children.”

- A. Moses is charging Israel to keep God constantly before them.
  1. Do not forget the reality of God’s presence. Do not forget the wonder of His works of providence.
  2. God’s people are to always be on guard, always alert.  
 We are charged to serious contemplation.  
**Ephesians 6:18 NAU** - "With all prayer and petition pray at all times in the Spirit, and with this in view, be on the alert with all perseverance and petition for all the saints,"  
**1 Thessalonians 5:5-6 NAU** - "We are not of night nor of darkness; <sup>6</sup> so then let us not sleep as others do, but let us be alert and sober."
  3. The charge is to keep our minds engaged. To remember. Don’t forget.  
**Deuteronomy 4:9 NAU** - "Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently"  
**1 Peter 1:13-15 NAU** - "Therefore, prepare your minds for action, keep sober *in spirit*, fix your hope completely on the grace to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. <sup>14</sup> As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts *which were yours* in your ignorance, <sup>15</sup> but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all *your* behavior;"

B. It is a measure of greatness when God's people keep Him continually upon their mind.

**Deuteronomy 4:9 NAU** - "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"

1. Where does your mind go by default? Do you think about God and His righteousness? Do you think about His mighty deeds?
2. Do you tell others of the greatness of God.

**Deuteronomy 4:9 NAU** - "make them known to your sons and your grandsons."

**Conclusion:**

1. The world has its definition of greatness. It is defined by power, prestige, wealth and riches. By popularity, by stardom.
2. What does God see as greatness? Well, there are no great men. Only weak men that God uses for His glory.
3. But these people follow Him with their whole heart. They obey Him. They pray continually. And they continually engage their minds upon those things that draw them nearer to God. Now this is greatness.