

Season 7: Deuteronomy

Episode 5: Remember God's Grace (Chapters 7-11)

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Felicity: Welcome to two sisters And a cup of tea. My name is Felicity and I'm in the States and I'm here with my sister Sarah. She's in the UK. And this episode we're back into Deuteronomy and we're going to be looking at chapters seven through eleven of this book. Sarah, great to be back with you.

Sarah: It's good to be here. Now, before we get stuck into that massive chunk, we've got a great question here. What lengths do you go to to get a quiet time with the Lord in before your kids wake up? What does it look like for you?

Felicity: I mean, the key there is not waking up the kids, isn't it? When we're talking about the length, we're talking about what you do to ensure that your children don't wake up. I find that I definitely do need a cup of tea with my Bible time. So I boil the kettles downstairs in the basement because that's out of earshot. Yeah, out of earshot. And I try and make sure I've got my cup out so there's none of the chinking and clinking. Our kids sleep on the same floor as the kitchen, so it's problematic unless you do everything downstairs. What about you?

Sarah: Yeah, I feel like I've honed where the creaking floorboards are so I know how to walk to the bathroom, whatever, and have a quick sound beforehand. What is hard at work is when I leave my Bible downstairs, that the rest of my notebook, whatever is upstairs. And then I know I have to get downstairs, but our floorboards really creak on the stairs, so yeah, I get it.

Felicity: And basically it's thinking about it the night before, isn't it? Which I know it's sometimes challenging, but I find that it's better if I do get up out of my bed, which is a noisy thing because of floorboards and such. Like, isn't it always worth doing it, as ever?

Sarah: It's always worth getting that time in, isn't it? And actually, I'm at the point where my kids are a little bit older now. Sometimes they will already be awake and that's fine, but they know that I'm not going to be disturbed until I kind of say breakfast time. So we're kind of getting into that nice routine where it's okay if they're awake, even if I can hear them and I don't want to hear them yet.

Felicity: Yeah, it's like an agreement between everyone in the house they're just about old enough to make an agreement.

Sarah: Exactly.

Felicity: Mine are nearly exactly.

Sarah: Not sure quite what's on the agenda yet, but yeah. Anyway, all right, so we're going to get into this big chunk of scripture as ever, we're not going to read all of it, but we are going to be talking through all of it. And the big and the thrust of this part of deuteronomy is God's extraordinary and lavish grace on his people. And I guess we just want to have that in the back of our minds as we hear you read a bit of chapter nine for a listie. Just keep thinking about God's grace to his people.

Felicity: Okay, so we're going to read chapter nine, verses one through to 24 here. Israel, you are now about to cross the Jordan to go in and dispossess nations greater and stronger than you, with large cities that have walls up to the sky. The people are strong and tall. Anarchites. You know about them and have heard it said, who can stand up against the

Anarchites? But be assured today that the Lord your God is the one who goes across ahead of you like a devouring fire. He will destroy them, he will subdue them before you and you will drive them out and annihilate them quickly, as the Lord has promised you. After the Lord your God, has driven them out before you. Do not say to yourself, the Lord has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness. No, it's on account of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord is going to drive them out before you. It's not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you're going in to take possession of their lands, but on account of the wickedness of these nations. The Lord your God will drive them out before you to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Understand then that it's not because of your righteousness. The Lord your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff neck people. Remember this and never forget how you aroused the anger of the Lord your God in the wilderness. From the day you left Egypt until you arrived here, you've been rebellious against the Lord. At horror. You aroused the Lord's wrath so that he was angry enough to destroy you. When I went up on the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant that the Lord had made with you, I stayed on the mountain for 40 days and 40 nights. I ate no bread and drank no water. The Lord gave me two stone tablets inscribed by the finger of God. On them were all the commandments the Lord proclaimed to you on the mountain out of the fire on the day of the assembly. At the end of the 40 days and 40 nights, the Lord gave me the two stone tablets, the tablets of the covenant. Then the Lord told me, go down from here at once, because your people from whom you brought out of Egypt have become corrupt. They've turned away quickly from what I commanded them, have made an idol for themselves. And the Lord said to me, I've seen these people and they are stiff. Next people indeed. Let me alone so that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven and I will make you into a nation stronger and more numerous than they. So I turned and went down from the mountain while it was ablaze with fire, and the two tablets of the covenant were in my hands. When I looked, I saw that you had sinned against the Lord your God. You had made for yourselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. You had turned aside quickly from the way that the Lord had commanded you. So I took the two tablets and threw them out of my hands, breaking them to pieces before your eyes. Then once again I fell prostrate before the Lord. For 40 days and 40 nights. I ate no bread and drank no water because of all the sin you had committed doing what was evil in the Lord's sight and so arousing his anger. I feared the anger and wrath of the Lord, for he was angry enough with you to destroy you. But again the Lord listened to me, and the Lord was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him. But at that time I prayed for Aaron too. Also. I took that sinful thing of yours, the car you'd made, and burned it in the fire. Then I crushed it and ground it to powder as fine as dust and threw the dust into a stream that flowed down the mountain. You also made the Lord angry at Tabara, at Massa, at Kibroth hathafa. And when the Lord sent you out from Kadesh Banya, he said, go up and take possession of the land I've given you. But you rebelled against the command of the Lord your God. You did not trust Him or obey Him. You've been rebellious against the Lord ever since I have known you.

Sarah: What an indictment, isn't it? But I think that sets the tone for this whole kind of chunk that we've got in Deuteronomy, because what we've got here is a really emotive part of scripture because it's talking about the driving out of other nations as these people enter the land. We particularly get that in chapter seven, and we get a little bit of that at the beginning of chapter nine here, don't we? And I think it's meant to arouse those really strong emotions in us. This is big stuff that we're talking about and that's been described, but we have to see it in the context of the people's hearts, the people of Israel, and how much they are like the nations around them with their own hearts and therefore how big God's grace is, would you say?

Felicity: Yes, I think that's right. And I think when we're reading the Bible, our emotional response is a right and a good thing. So it's not to sort of shy away from that. It is shocking, but I think seeing it in that context of seeing that the people, this sinful people, stiff necked people, I mean, that last statement is just huge. And you've been rebellious ever since I've known you, and yet God is giving them this land, and yet God is keeping his covenant that he gave back in the day to Abraham. So the steadfastness of God despite the people's sin,

that's actually the biggest shock here, because the wickedness we've seen all the way back in from Genesis, we've seen that wickedness and choosing that which is not God, that leads to destruction. So in some ways, it's not a surprise that other nations who are worshipping a different God are heading for destruction. And the anarchites we know about them.

Sarah: Previously and what seems to be happening is a kind of a reversal of evil almost, doesn't it? As in, like, would you say that? Yeah. So the promised land and seeking to live a good life, and the promised Land, that's just been presented for us in the chapters before. But actually, to do that, you need to drive out the enemies and you need to completely wipe them out, it says, because their guards will be a snare to you, you need to smash down all their idols, all their astropoles, burn everything, for you are holy people to the Lord. It says in chapter seven, verse six. And actually, you can't have both. You can't have both existing side by side. So you have to wipe out one in order for another to exist. But that's, as we've seen in this chapter, here in chapter nine, that is only by your grace. I think three times in the bit you read, it was not by your own righteousness, not by your own righteousness. Like he's really laboring. That point isn't me. And I wonder whether it's just worth just one more point on that with the particular people group that they're wiping out. If we go back to Genesis, chapter 15, verse 16, we read in the fourth generation, your descendants will come back here, for the sin of the amirites has not yet reached its full measure. This is a wicked, wicked. People who back then were named as that. They have had hundreds of years to repent of their wickedness and they have not done that. And this is God's righteous anger at a nation who are rightly deserving of judgment. Their wickedness was abhorrent in every way. That doesn't mean that Israel having a one upmanship, but it's just extraordinary grace that they've been chosen at all, even though it feels very hard to read. Yeah.

Felicity: And I think that's not to diminish the horror of what's going on here, but seeing it in that context, I think helps. And I wonder whether in that, first of all, remembering that we have heard mention of the other nations, like God is giving this law, this word, so that it would be distinctive to those outside of this nation.

Sarah: Attractive, he says.

Felicity: Attractive.

Sarah: Exactly.

Felicity: Which earlier on yeah, which I think shows God's heart that he is. And we see that as the Bible kind of goes on as salvation story opens out, we see this is being taken to the other nation. So it's not that this is it destruction and that's it. But also all the more so as God speaks to his people and gives them this word which if they keep these commands, they will live well in the land actually. If they don't, if they're not obedient, if they're not listening to God, if they're not holding fast in that deuteronomy kind of phrase, then actually you're heading towards destruction. It's a stark warning as well, isn't it? I feel like it highlights all the more that this is an actual lifeline, a gracious, undeserved lifeline that's being given to this people who unbelievably he calls his treasured possession, when every description that Moses gives us suggests that they wouldn't be that treasure.

Sarah: Like it's so extraordinary, isn't it? Take verse ten, chapter ten, verse 14, just it's extraordinary. To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth, and everything in it, everything is his. Yet the Lord said his affection on your ancestors and loved them, and he shows you their descendants above all the nations, as it is today, and just that stream of grace. And what I love is that last week we were talking about the chapter six kind of impressive on your children's hearts and kind of the importance of doing that for the generations to come. In chapter eleven, we've got a similar thing and where we got in verse eleven, verse 18, fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds and teach them to your children. And these words in between those two sandwich points seem to be this kind of just Moses expounding on grace, expounding on every way in which the Lord has given them grace upon grace, and they've rejected it in so many ways, as we saw in our reading today. And yet he keeps his covenant. Yeah.

Felicity: And in that instruction to tell your kids, it's actually tell them of the grace, like give them the grace, give them the word that is the gracious word of this gracious loving God. And isn't that interesting that then as you are given grace, then the response actually as

described all through geothermal should be to well, we hear it, but we get it back in ten, verse twelve. Fear the Lord your God, walk in obedience to Him, to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and to observe the Lord's commands and this, like, hear and see the grace and respond with a fearing. But that's a kind of reverent awe, isn't it? Which then leads to obedience. And I think that's a really helpful thing just to connect that as saved, rescued people, this obedience is not in any way gaining salvation. It's not the means of rescue. But as rescued people, we then seek to be obedience.

Sarah: We strive to the overflow, isn't it? It's the overflow. But I do find it interesting the way the whole way through it is a command to love the Lord your God with all your heart, isn't it? Like, you'd think that's just an overflow. You'd think that would just be the natural response, but actually, no, he has to command it. And I think that's what's really struck me through this, actually. And I need the same I need that same command to intentionally love the Lord as we talk about just even, like, intentionally wake up before my son get that time in. Actually, that takes effort to prioritize that time and to put Him first in my day.

Felicity: Absolutely. And I think we hear that in verse ten, verse 16, that we circumcise your hearts, therefore, and do not be stiffnecked any longer. Default position stiffnecked, but commanded to circumcise your hearts essentially means engage your whole heart in loving the Lord, doesn't it?

Sarah: Yes. And that throws up a tension because later on in Deuteronomy, it's the Lord who circumcises hearts. And I think that probably it helps us to see that tension, because we know we know as we hear these commands, as we were saying last week, we say it again this week, I can't do it. I can't obey in this way. I know that I really can't. And so then, hooray for Jesus.

Felicity: Yeah.

Sarah: Is that too early to just go, Hurray for Jesus? How do we really drive this through the cross without just, like, tagging Jesus on the end?

Felicity: Yeah, I think that's right. That's a good question to ask you because we don't want to flatten it. So you just jump straight to Jesus. I think as we hear this command to circumcise our hearts, we know that that command has been given because we are the rescued people. Like, to the people at the time, that's the reason that they're being commanded to circumcise their hearts in order that they might live this good life, live well in the land. So as rescued people, the command is to be obedient. And then as people this side of the cross and we hear this in Colossians, too, like, again, we hear that it's through Christ that our hearts are circumcised. We know this side of the cross. We know that because of Jesus, by the Spirit's work, our hearts are circumcised. So we're more able to hear these commands to be obedient, but the command to obedience is the same. So whether you're back in Deuteronomy time, or you're here now, we, as rescued people, are to be obedient to this mighty gracious God who is giving us words to obey.

Sarah: Yeah, okay.

Felicity: I think that's been a helpful kind.

Sarah: Of yeah, that is helpful. And I guess the thrust of that obedience is always coming from the grace, the lavish grace that we have been given. And if at any point we find ourselves allying out of duty rather than kind of motivated by this grace, then there's a danger there. Is there?

Felicity: Yeah, I think so. And I think that's why then Moses keeps on bringing the people back around to do you remember what happened next to us? Do you remember? Do you remember who God is? Do you remember who it is who's speaking as soon as we disconnect the words from God? I think that's where maybe duty comes in, isn't it? Because it's just a slightly detached yeah.

Sarah: And I think it makes obedience then it's sure doesn't it? And then you're less likely to want to do it. Because actually, as we understand grace more and more, so we long to live in light of that, don't we? Yeah.

Felicity: Relational.

Sarah: Yeah. But I need to keep praying that I would keep coming back to this lavish grace.

Felicity: Yeah. And that must be part of the big hit to our hearts, isn't it? That as we see the grace here and we're amazed by it, so then it helps to point us forwards to the even greater grace we see through Jesus dying on the cross for us, who are by default, stiffnecked people. Because I think that's the danger. We reason we're like, man, these guys, they got it so wrong. And Moses tells them again and again. But actually that is the direction that we're heading until God intervenes. And as New Covenant people, we are then this treasured possession that he talks about here.

Sarah: And I guess that then drives our compassion for others that don't yet know this grace, doesn't it? Because we have no right to sit in arrogance in any way above them because we're humbled. This is like a humbling series of chapters.

Felicity: But that humility. That's the thing which makes us then point to God, isn't it? Rather than point to anyone's behavior, we're seeking to tell people about Jesus. We're not going to say, sort yourselves out before you come to God, but actually look at who God is and then consider what it is to live for Him.

Sarah: It's really good, isn't it? It's really necessary.

Felicity: So I think that's what's been striking to me. It's really necessary. And I haven't really spent much time in Chicago before.

Sarah: I pray.

Felicity: Please do. Sarah father, we just thank you so.

Sarah: Much these chapters are here. We thank you so much that we really need them. We need to see a fresh view of our own hearts and a fresh, big view of Your grace. And we just thank you that we live in light of your lavish grace poured out onto us through the Lord Jesus Christ. And we just pray. Lord, please help us to live in light of your grace to us. In his precious name, we pray. Amen.

Felicity: Oh, man. Wow. Five chapters.

Sarah: I think that was six chapters, but good camping. But just come back next week because actually, Felicity, who have we got? We've got a guest on next week and she's going to really help us. If you're struggling to kind of track through Deuteronomy so far, who's going to help us to really kind of root it a bit more for us.

Felicity: Yes, we're excited to welcome Nancy Guthrie, who is well versed in how you see Jesus through the Old Testament. And she's a great Bible teacher and we're really glad to have any help, to be honest. But it's actually from Nancy, so do tune in next week for that. And why not tell a friend about this podcast? If it's been helpful to you, then grab a friend, get them listening, get chatting with others. We always find our hearts are warmed by talking about it together. And we'll look forward to seeing you next week.

Sarah: Brilliant. Take care. Bye. We're so thankful for Kaleidoscope and ten of those.com who are sponsoring this season.