

Season 7: Deuteronomy

Episode 9: Remember the Choice we all Face (Chapters 27-28)

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Felicity: We're grateful to 10ofthose and Kaleidoscope for sponsoring this season. I've been loving the Kaleidoscope version of Exodus. Finally free by Will Kasner. From the very start, Kasner gets the tone right and engages his readers by tackling the fact that they might not think that they're up for another church story. But within a few pages, he's given them a Hollywood style trailer that gets them to the heart of this adventure and gives them a big picture of our mighty God. I love it. Grab a copy at 10ofthose.com.

Sarah: Welcome to two sisters and a cup of tea. My name is Sarah, I live in the UK. This is my sister Felicity. She lives in the States. And today we're in chapters 27 and 28 of Deuteronomy. I feel like Felicity we've kind of climbed the mountain and maybe down the other side. What do you think?

Felicity: Yeah. How appropriate to use mountains.

Sarah: We are with mountains today.

Felicity: Yeah. We're possibly still kind of on the ascent. This feels like it's a challenging passage. It's more of an ascent rather than a downhill easy one.

Sarah: Probably right there. You're probably right. Yorkshire tea is at the ready. Before we get stuck into it, we talk a lot on the podcast about seeking to drive the Bible, drive God's word to our heart. And in fact, Moses does that as well, doesn't he? All three we've seen. Hold fast with your whole heart. What does the Bible mean when it talks about the heart?

Felicity: Yes, good question, because we do talk about it a lot and I think that all the way through the Bible, that is what is being spoken about in terms of what God is doing. So as God, through His Word, by his spirit, is seeking to change us, to be more like Jesus, actually, kind of the place in which that happens is the heart. So as we go to God's Word, it's not simply that we're seeking to gain information, because I think that's quite tempting, isn't it? We can open up the Bible and think, I'm going to learn a whole bunch of stuff here about God and what it is to be a Christian. But it's not just information, actually. God is in the business of changing us to be more like Jesus, and the means by which he does that is through Spirit, by His Word to our hearts, which then impacts every part of who we are. What do you think? Do you say?

Sarah: Yeah, all of that. The heart in Bible terms, is that controlling center. It's the very core of our being, isn't it? In Proverbs four, it's described, as it says, above all else, guard your heart. Everything else flows from it. So it's not just emotions. I think in our culture, in our language, the heart would be how I'm feeling, but actually, in the Bible terms, it's the very seat of my will, it's the very seat of my mind. And my emotions and my actions and everything flows from it. So how extraordinary that God's word would then impact that and shift that and seek to change my heart, to be more in line with God's heart. That's amazing, isn't it?

Felicity: Yeah. An exciting, like exciting, really?

Sarah: Yeah. We want it on that.

Felicity: Yeah. We want it to be that rather than surface level, like, we want to be deep seatedly. Yeah. Changed in this way. Yeah. Yeah.

Sarah: And this is a word that will do that today. So I'm going to read so we're kind of generally today we're in chapters 27 and 28, but I'm actually going to read from chapter 26, verse 16 to the end of chapter 27. The Lord your God commands you this day to follow these decrees and laws carefully observe them with all your heart and with all your soul. You have declared this day that the Lord is your God, and that you will walk in obedience to Him, that you'll keep his decrees, commands, and laws, that you'll listen to Him. And the Lord has declared this day that you are his people, his treasured possession, as he promised, and that you are to keep all his commands. He has declared that he will set you in praise and fame and honor high above all the nations he's made, and that you'll be a

people wholly to the Lord your God, as he promised. Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people, keep all these commands that I give you today. When you have crossed the Jordan into the land the Lord your God is giving you, set up some large stones and coat them with plaster. Write on them all the words of this Lord. When you've crossed over to enter the land, the Lord your God is giving you a land flaring with milk and honey, just as the Lord the God of your ancestors promised you. And when you've crossed the Jordan, set up these stones on Mount Evil, as I command you to do today, and coat them with faster. Build there an altar to the Lord your God, an altar of stones. Do not use any iron tool on them. Build the altar of the Lord your God with stones from the field and offer burnt offerings on it to the Lord your God. Sacrifice fellowship offerings there, eating them, and rejoicing in the presence of the Lord your God. And you shall write very clearly all the words of this Lord on these stones you have set up. Then Moses and the libertarial priests said to all Israel, be silent, Israel, and listen. You have now become the people of the Lord your God. Obey the Lord your God and follow his commands and decrees that I give you today. On the same day, Moses command of the people. When you've crossed the Jordan, these tribes shall stand on Mount Gerardin to bless the people. Simeon, Levi, Judah, Isakar, Joseph and Benjamin. And these tribes shall stand on Mount Evil to pronounce curses.

Ruben, Gad, Asher, Zebulin, dan and nastylee. The Levite shall recite to all the people of the Israel in a loud voice. Curse is anyone who makes an idol a thing detestable to the Lord the work of skilled hands and sets it up in secret. Then all the people shall say our men. Cursed is anyone who dishonors their father or mother. Then all the people shall say, our men. Curse is anyone who moves their neighbor's boundary stone. Then all the people shall say Amen. Cursed is anyone who leads the blind astray on the road. Then all the people shall say Amen. Cursed is anyone who withholds justice from the foreigner, the fatherless or the widow. And then all the people shall say Amen. Cursed is anyone who sleeps with his father's wife, for he dishonors his father's bed. Then all the people shall say Amen. Cursed is anyone who has sexual relations with an animal. And all the people shall say are men. Cursed is anyone who sleeps with his sister, the daughter of his father, or the daughter of his mother. Then all the people shall say are men. Cursed is anyone who sleeps with his mother in law. Then all the people shall say our men. Cursed is anyone who kills their neighbor secretly. Then all the people shall say our men. Cursed is anyone who accepts a bribe to kill an innocent person. Then all the people shall say our men. Cursed is anyone who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out. Then all the people shall say our men.

Felicity: Thank you, Sarah. What a chapter. What a chapter we have. We have everything going on there, don't we? And it's worth saying. So at this point we have had this kind of full kind of expounding of the law that Moses has done in the last big chunk. And then the people are being instructed as to when they go into the land, aren't they? So when they go into the land, they're to set up these two altars and that is then big indicator the law stands in the land as much as when he was saying it just now. So I think that's a helpful kind of starting point.

Sarah: I love how vigil it is. I love as a visual learner myself, I love that he's kind of expounded the law and he's kind of the people have sat and listened and now he's like saying, right, what you need to do is you see these two mountains in the center of your land. This is going to be your massive visual reminder of the law that I've given you and what it is to either obey or disobey that law. And I just love how visual it is because that's really powerful. So where the mountains were in this land, you could see them from anywhere in the land. So they're very much at the center of it. There was no mistaking these two mountains were what you needed to gaze at and remember the Lord by and remember the opportunity for blessing and then the opportunity for curses. Because it's really kind of a kinesthetic learning, isn't it? They're literally six tribes go up the one mountain, six tribes go up the other. They've got to act out this, haven't they? And they've got to call out what's going to happen on each mountain. Yeah, I know.

Felicity: It's interesting, isn't it? I wonder whether they could hear each other from each mountain on a really clear day.

Sarah: But interestingly isn't but what's fascinating about it is that the curses are read out and called out on the mountain, but then the blessings aren't. Okay, so these ones that

were just read out just now, they're like called out and everyone has to say, are men, because they're saying, I agree. And yet the blessings, then it says they're not called out in the same way they're kind of talked of and then they're not labored to any degree compared to the rest of the curses. And I think that's just indicative of where Moses, I guess, where he sees their hearts, isn't it? Because he knows, he knows however good the blessing is, it's not going to come to this people.

Felicity: Yes, and I think that's a really good point. Moses pastoral kind of concern for the people is that they're more likely to choose the death route rather than the likely. So he's kind of laying out that route that they're more tempted towards. But it's helpful to just to notice 26 versus 16 through to 19, we have just lots of covenant language like, this is who you are. As my people. You're his treasured possession, as he promised you are to keep all these commands. So as covenant people, as people who are in relationship with God, the rescued people, this is what you are to do, is to be obedient to this word of life that I've been giving you all the way through. So it's helpful to have that in mind as we then hear this kind of, as you say, fully kind of declared curses that we hear here. Interestingly. I thought it was interesting with these curses like 27, verse 15, and 27, verse 26, it's kind of like a bookend of don't worship anyone but God again, isn't it? We've had this thing about worshiping God. So it seems then that the ones in the middle are then this is the consequence of if you get it wrong in terms of how you feel about God, then actually your private life, your domestic life, your marital life, all of these things are going to go topsy turvy, big time.

Sarah: And you get to the point, you get to verse 26, which says, cursed as anyone who does not uphold the words of this law. I mean, that in itself, you can have left silent, aren't you? Because, you know, I know in my heart where I stand with that. And anyone knows, don't they? And yet they're having to say, our men, they're having to kind of agree with this. And you kind of like, how much are they kind of agreeing under baited breath? Because they just know their own hearts in that. I think that's really striking. I think the mountain language is striking as well, isn't it? It's happening on mountains again. The law was given on Mount Sinai. We're now here at these evil Mount Guerrism. It's been given, it's been just being given again to the people and then the consequence is laid out for obeying or disobeying the law.

Felicity: Absolutely. And as we get into chapter eight, he kind of goes he goes big time, doesn't he? Like, there's kind of three kind of big volleys of curses, I think. And especially we get quite detailed explanation of what it will look like when the people are taken into exile. And we know if you know Bible history at all, the exile is very real. That does happen. So it's amazing that it's talked about in such detail here and very land orientated gtrone has been a lot about taking the people into the land, hasn't it? And here we have it just being wound back and that's the yeah, isn't it?

Sarah: It's a really big sense of reversal and that's set up for us. And the way that he talks about the blessings at the beginning of Chapter 28, this is what you'll be blessed by, this is what will happen in the land. Then that language really is reversed as you get back into chapter 28, verses 16 to 19, that it's definitely reversed in every way. And I feel like maybe there's a bigger reversal going on because we've been talking a bit through deuteronomy about the kind of fall being reversed and kind of them getting to the land and kind of Eden being restored in some sense. And yet this feels like then that's really rolling back again. And at the end, we basically get this picture of Egyptian slavery that they're in and it's gruesome in every way, isn't it? It's pitiful. It's awful. The language that's used to describe their peril at this point and I think.

Felicity: You can get to this point. You can get to this point, I think, why is that really all necessary? This just seems really, as you say, intensely pitiful. And I think we think no way because we're not convinced that sin is really that bad. It feels disproportionate. But actually this is proportionate to the nature of sin. Like the heart that is not following the Lord and the kind of disorder and chaos that comes with yeah, exactly.

Sarah: The disorder and chaos. And that is very like Moses keeps saying that through these curses. Like I've kind of gone through and highlighted in my pink highlighter every time there's a because and each time it's because you have forsaken the Lord in favor of evil, you've forsaken the Lord in favor of God. So you don't know. And that's been the

message throughout Duterte, hasn't it? And I wonder whether we just think our view yeah, as you were saying earlier, our view of sin, we just don't have a big enough view of sin. And we know that God is completely just. And so sin must be so awful that our idolatry must be so awful to merit the consequences that is being appropriately given at this point.

Felicity: Yeah, absolutely. And it's interesting, isn't it? Because we've been kind of, you know, we're a bit shocked at how the nations around them who are worshiping different gods get destroyed and all of this. And actually we've kind of been watching that happen and then it's coming to bear upon God's people and we're sort of like, no way. But actually that's exactly what we deserve as well. And that is the thing, isn't it? The today that we have Moses talks about today quite a lot in many ways that today is for us now in the sense of we have a similar situation in hand, that we are sinful and today, what do we choose to do? But there's a big but to that, isn't there?

Sarah: Yeah, there is, because we're in Jesus, aren't we? And yet we want to sit with the weight of this, all the while kind of just marveling at the fact that the New Testament tells us that Jesus has taken that curse for us, that him who was cursed to hang up on a tree, everything, everything that we're reading here is put on to Him for us. But it leaves me kind of just stopped in my tracks because you can't quite comprehend the weight of that.

Felicity: Yes. And that's kind of why it's worth sitting in this, isn't it? To feel the weight of our sin, to see that actually on our own, we'd be left under the curse. But then, through being this side of the cross, knowing that He has taken the curse upon Himself, we can then hear this, but know that we're not under it. This is life in Christ means that we then are free of these curses, but that doesn't mean that we're in any way less sinful or any way less deserving of this. So I think you get to that point and you're just such a big sigh of relief. And as you say, I'm marveling at Christ. It's real kind of Galatians Three kind of stuff, isn't it? The curse has fully been taken. We are not under this anymore.

Sarah: But it's that tension, isn't it, of sitting in it? So I've been looking at Ephesians, chapter two, trying to kind of memorize a bit recently, and actually it's good to memorize the fact that by nature, all of us are deserving of this. Ross it's good to keep remembering that because then His mercy is all the sweeter as I remember it, isn't it? And so as we get to right at the end of the Book of Revelation, this just really struck me thinking about the kind of curses through the Bible again, I just used Bible gateway to just have a quick flick of where it could have ended. And then Revelation, chapter 22, we've got on each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse and just that tree of life. So as we gaze at the cross that is our tree of life, that bears the weight of the curse, the weight of our sin, but also brings us life. We've got these twelve tribes of Israel's here kind of declaring the blessings and curses on these mountains that actually by the cross we have the healing of the nations and no longer will there be any curse. And I just for me, that's where it's hit home this week. They're being called to look at the mountains. That's their kind of visual reminder of what they're meant to do. At this point in Gtromony, we're called to look at the cross and we're called to go back there and look and remember that there will be no longer any curse. We have every spiritual blessing in Christ because of the cross. Because of Christ.

Felicity: And yeah, hooray for that, our men and our men. And I think that is it.

Sarah: That's what's happened.

Felicity: I feel like I've been in this passage is that I've been prompted to look at the cross more. And that's why we need to be in Deuteronomy in order to then see it more and to want it more and to be pushed there more. Because by default, I kind of, like, have it hit my side view rather than my kind of front full center. Like everything hangs on the cross. And I think, yeah, the enormity of it all has just been a thrill this week to be pushed that direction.

Sarah: To one another, but it's continuing to hold it in tension so we don't just flatten what we're reading in Gtromony, isn't it? We're coming back to what Nancy has been saying as well, isn't it? A few episodes ago, we don't want to just flatten what we're reading here because we've been sat in tutorial for a while now and it's rich and it's good and it's really, really worth being here with the people on the plains of the Moab looking at those two mountains with them. But also, what a privilege. We get to gaze past the mountains to the

mountain of Olives where that cross stood. We get to gaze at a mountain. Whoa. I'm just literally like, yeah, there's another mountain going into that.

Felicity: Why don't you pray for us as we seek to put our gaze to that mountain. The best mountain. Yeah.

Sarah: Love to you. Not that these aren't good mountains.

Felicity: I know. You're right.

Sarah: Okay, I'm going to pray. Father. Thank you. Thank you that this word is here for us. Thank you that we need to sit in this word. We need to hear the full weight of the blessing that comes from obedience to Your Lord and the full weight of the curse that comes for disobedience. Lord, we sit here knowing that we are in peril without the cross. And we sit here knowing that we cannot sit under Your judgments on our own. And we just thank you that we get to gaze not at these two mountains here, but we get to gaze at the mountain volley. It's that cross where Your glory is most revealed, where the curse is gone forever because of Christ dying for us. We just praise you. Praise you for the relief, the joy that we get to get to experience and the life that we are given because of Jesus. In your name we pray. Amen.

Felicity: Oh, man. Thank you, Sarah. Well, this has been great. We're going to be cracking on in the next episode. Looking forward to it. But in the meantime, why not check out our website? We have loads of resources on there and to help you get into Deuteronomy and all the other books of the Bible that we've been doing in our seasons, blogs and all sorts there. So do check us out www.Dot.Two.sisters.and.a.cup.of.tea.com. Look forward to seeing you next time.

Sarah: Indeed. See you next time. Bye.

Felicity: We're so grateful to Kaleidoscope and ten of those.com for sponsoring this episode.