

Q4 L06 - For What Nation Is There So Great? - 2021-11-06

Shawn Brummund: Hello friends, and welcome to another edition of the, "Sabbath School Study Hour." My name is Pastor Shawn Brummund, and I have the privilege of hosting today's lesson study. We're gonna continue to look at this quarter's quarterly study which is Present Truth In The Book Of Deuteronomy. For many of you who have joined us and rejoining us, it's nice to have you join us again here this morning.

For those of you who are watching live online, for those of you who are with us here in the Granite Bay Church, it is always nice to be able to have our church family come together on another Sabbath morning, as well as we have a number of visitors that have joined us and even coming in from out of town as well. We also know that there are some joining us and watching this in a future broadcast on the various networks. Nice to have you come and join us here today as well.

So, we are, as I said, we are in the Book of Deuteronomy. We're looking at lesson number six. And so if you have your quarterly, make sure that you go ahead and grab that so you can follow along with us. And, of course, we also want to make sure that we have our Bible with us as well.

Before we invite our musicians forward to help us lead us in song, I want to invite you to take advantage of a special free-gift offer that we have just for you. And this particular free-gift offer is one of my favorite study guides, and it's an important question to ask. "Is Obedience Legalism?" Is obedience legalism? This is a question that many Christians have asked through the centuries. It's one that you may be asking. I want to invite you to take advantage of that.

You just simply have to dial into 1-866-788-3966. Again, that's number 866-788-3966 and ask for free offer number 706. That's available for those who are in North America or any of the US territories. So, please take advantage of that if you've never gone through that study guide. And if you want to get a digital copy of that, that's also available for you in a digital format for your phone. You can download it by simply texting the code "SH041." And you want to dial that to 40544, and that'll give you a connection for a free download. You can also see the website address that you can also find that at the Amazing Facts website.

And by the way, if you don't have a copy of the quarterly and you'd like a copy, if you haven't visited your local Seventh Day Adventist Church. Very rarely it's hard to find a Seventh Day Adventist Church that doesn't have a free copy offer available for you to be able to have in your hands. And again, if you want a digital copy of that you just go to [Amazingfacts.org](https://www.amazingfacts.org) and in the search bar, just go ahead and put in their, "Present truth Deuteronomy Sabbath school quarterly." Any of those keywords and you'll be able to find a free digital download copy for you there as well.

Well, we're going to go ahead and invite our musicians forward as they're going to lead us in worship in song.



Shawn: Let's go ahead and pray. Father in heaven, we want to thank you so much for the opportunity to be able to worship you here this morning through study, through song, and want to pray that you'll bless Pastor Lucas as he teaches our lesson study here again this morning. And God, want to pray that you will bless us and that your Holy Spirit will be our teacher again. We thank you for the promise that you send your Spirit to all and sincerely ask that we might understand and embrace the truth. And so, God, we want to pray it in Jesus's name, amen.

Lucas Rodor: Our lesson today is a beautiful lesson. It's a lesson that kind of recaps a little bit of history. You know, the study of this lesson is really beautiful lesson. The Book of Deuteronomy, I think I remember Pastor Doug mentioning this a few weeks ago. But one of the things that I really like about the Book of Deuteronomy is that you know how each different culture has a different way of introducing or inaugurating their new leader, right?

For example, here in the US when the president, he takes power, they bring him the Bible, and there is a vow. He places his hand on the Bible, and he vows certain things. And each culture has something like that. In Brazil, they have something similar, in England. And they have different ways where they inaugurate the leader. And in the biblical times, the king was enthroned, or the way that the king was enthroned, is that they would bring the Book of Deuteronomy and he would read it. He would open up the scroll, and he would read it, and that would qualify him to then take power.

It's interesting that when you look at Revelation chapter 5 and you see that John is crying, and there's this whole scene up in heaven where John is crying, it's because he sees the scroll, and there's no one worthy to read it. And so, he cries because the meaning is that the universe has no king. But then he hears of the Lamb that is coming. And when he looks, he sees who? The Lion, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. And so, that, that being that we know who it is, he then opens the scroll and reads it. And that means that the universe is not left without a king. It's not left to just guide itself in chaos.

So, there's a lot of, there's a lot of meaning behind the Book of Deuteronomy, and it ties into the whole culture of the Jewish nation and the Israelite nation and to the whole logic, the very fabric of the Bible. So, there's a lot for us to learn right here and for us to unpack.

Now, the lesson today is lesson six. And the title of this lesson is, "For What Nation Is There So Great". Now, this is a very important lesson. The lesson--the memory verse comes from Deuteronomy chapter 4, and we're going to be reading from this chapter. The lesson revolves around the chapter 4 of Deuteronomy. And we're going to be reading the first few verses throughout the lesson. But the memory verse is Deuteronomy 4, verse 8 that says, "And what nation is there, that hath statutes and righteous judgments as are-- are in all this law, which I set before you this day?" That's Deuteronomy chapter 4, verse 8.

So, in a way, our lesson this week revolves around Deuteronomy chapter 4. Now, the purpose of the sermon, or the message, of this chapter is not to just remind the people of their history. It goes beyond this. It also emphasizes the power, the grace, the mercy of God in the context in which they're going through. And God, this God that is being emphasized, is the God that never gives up on humans. Despite of their weaknesses, despite of their failures, and despite of the many times where he has to discipline them and even chastise them, this is the God that never gives up. The Bible says that God disciplines those who He loves. So, if God loves us, we can expect discipline. You can expect that have good parents also. If parents love their children, they won't just let them do whatever they want. That's not a proof of love. That kind of freedom is a proof of disinterest.

You know, the contrary of love is not hate. It's just disinterest, not caring. That is the true opposite of love. And so, the God that we find in the Bible is a God who extends His mercy, His love, and yes, His discipline, to those who are not perfect, who fall. And we see this here in the story of Israel, but he doesn't give up on them.

And so, the text that starts off the week really is Deuteronomy chapter 4, verse 1. And that's what we're going to read right now. Deuteronomy 4, verse 1 that says--now I really want you to pay attention to the wording because we're gonna go deep into the words that are presented to us here in this lesson. "Now," it starts off with "now." The whole chapter starts off with the word "now." "Now, O Israel, listen

to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you."

So, what's interesting is that the word that starts off the chapter is the word "now." This is a transitional word in this literature. It's a transitional word. "Now, O Israel, listen to the," it indicates the continuity, right? It's tying what is about to be said to what has just been said. The first three chapters are really a recap, a historical telling, of what had already happened to these people. And now, Moses gets into the application of what that recap was about. So, that's why he ties in chapter 1, 2, and 3 with chapter 4 saying, "And now. Now, Israel." So, he's applying it. "Now Israel." In the previous verses, he offers this historical revision, and he draws a portrait of everything that had happened to them so far, up to this specific moment.

Now, the past was a--you see how I used the word "now" there, right? Now, I'm applying this. So, that's what Moses is doing. But the past here, up to this point, was a reminder. It was a reminder to them. There's a saying that says, "Whoever doesn't have a past is discardable." So, of course, that's not, you know, literally true. You're not just going to discard a person because you don't know their past. But having a past, having experiences, that's a big thing, right?

My father always told me growing up that experience isn't primarily the things that happened to you, but the use that you have for the things that have happened to you. The Bible talks in the Book of Proverbs of old men that are foolish and young men that are wise. How is that possible? Well, that's possible, because it's possible for you to do the same thing for 50 years the wrong way. Have you ever heard someone say, "I've been doing this for 50 years, and I'm not going to stop now"? Well, that doesn't mean that much because you might have been doing it for 50 years in a bad way, in an inefficient way. And so, I really like that saying because growing up, I mean, I was a young guy, and I wanted to be wise. No doubt there were many moments where I was foolish, where I acted foolishly. But experiences in only the things that happened to you, but they use, the application that you give, or that you use, the things that happened to you.

So, not only do you have to go through life, but you have to apply the lessons correctly. And that is precisely what Moses is bringing the children of Israel to in here in chapter 4. Scripture frequently reminds us of the past, and this way it becomes our teacher. The past becomes our teacher.

Now, we can learn from what happens to other people. Those are the smartest kinds of people, those who learn from the mistakes of others. And you can also learn from the things that happened to you. Now, I'm not saying that that's not smart people because a lot of times things happen that's not under your control, and you can still use it. You can still apply it and learn from it, but fools do not learn one way or the other. So, you can learn from the things that happen in your life. You can learn from the things that happen in other people's lives.

But the point here is that you have to learn because fools don't learn either with the things that happen with other people, or with the things that happen to themselves. The first verb here after the word "now" in this verse, verse 1, is the transitional word also "shema." The word "shema." It's a Hebrew rich word, and it normally means here. You remember that prayer the Israelite-- the most important prayer that was pronounced by any Israelite was the Shema prayer. [Speaking in Hebrew] "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one."

Beautiful prayer. And that word "shema" is the word that is used here right after the transitional word, the transitional word "now." But to hear in biblical terms, it doesn't only designate literal listening or hearing with your ears the listening of sound, but it carries something practical in its meaning in the terms of obeying. Hear, listen, take note of, pay attention to.

The Book of Revelation, for example, while written in Greek, it does reflect the Hebrew mindset of its human author, of John. Revelation chapter 1, verse 3, for example, Blessed is he who what? Who reads and hears. Blessed is he who reads and hears. Now, what is John saying here? Blessed is he who looks at those letters and listens to whatever is being said? Is that what John is getting to? No. Blessed is he who listens and hears, or blessed is he who pays attention, listens, and puts into practice, applies into their very own life, who hear the words of this prophecy and keep those things which are written in it.

So, to read and to hear reflect one solid reality, which is to obey. To listen and to hear reflect the reality of obeying. When we think, for example, of atheism, right, when we think about atheism and we criticize atheism, and as believers, as theists, we criticize atheism because we believe that there is a God. But in atheism, you find two kinds. You find abstract or theoretical atheism, which is the belief system, the philosophical system behind atheism.

But there is one other part, one portion of atheism, one side of it, that we often forget and unfortunately, we may very well represent and replicate in our very lives. You know what that form of atheism is called? Practical atheism. Practical atheism translates into we may even know what's right, we may even know what's true, we may even hear, but we don't listen. We don't apply it. It's when you know something, but you don't do it. That's the famous, "God is saying, but I think." Has that ever happened to you? "You know, the Bible's saying this, but I don't think it's this way." That's called practical atheism. It's when you're convinced of the gospel, but not very much converted to it. And that's dangerous. And that's what Moses is calling the attention of the Israelites to here in chapter 4. Sunday's lesson presents this very reality where it starts the title is, "Do Not Add Or Take Away".

Now, Sunday's lesson here, it continues to present the lesson that God, through Moses, is striving to communicate. He's doing his best to communicate to give the context and to tell the children of Israel that they cannot add or take away from the words that God has given them. We see this here in verse 2. "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you."

So, here's where we find the logical sequence of the narrative. It's worthless to be reminded of the lessons from our past if we feel free to selectively add or take. And we call that cherry-picking, right? If we selectively cherry-pick from the lesson, "Well, God did this, God did that, I learned this, I learned that, but you know what? This year I don't really care for it, not because it's not important, but because it's uncomfortable." A lot of people like to cherry-pick their lessons. And God is telling them here, "You cannot do this. Do not add and do not remove what I have taught you. Do not add or remove from the statutes, the judgments, because these things are the entirety of the law, and you're not at liberty to just cherry-pick whatever you want."

That's what God is telling them here. And we, while this is a very ancient text, this is, you know, 3500 years old at least, this is a very modern problem. And we suffer also from this very same syndrome. Here, Israel is not--or is warned not to make history a lesson where they forget certain aspects of it, and they remember other certain aspects of it, choosing whatever is pleasing and rejecting whatever else seems to be a bother.

It's not by chance that the great scientist and philosopher Blaise Pascal, very famous, I believe, French scientist and philosopher, a great thinker, he said that it is not incredulity that breeds disobedience or that generates disobedience. Rather, it is disobedience that breeds or generates incredulity. So, what he's saying is that many times, it's not the fact that we don't believe that we start disobeying and we start sliding in our spiritual life. It's the contrary. It's when I start disobeying and not regarding God's judgments and statutes that then the doubt starts coming into my mind.

Do you see the difference? Primarily, it's not you not believing that leads to you disobeying. It's you disobeying that leads to you not believing. That's what he's saying. A lot of times people ask me, or and I've heard it asked to many pastors and elders. You know, and they say, in my case people come and say, "Pastor, where do I start from? How do I start this Christian journey, this walk? There's so many things, there's so many different aspects to it, right? I have to do this and this and this. And I have to go here and here and there. And there's apparently so many things that we have to do, how do I--how do--where do I start?"

You know what the best answer is? Start with what you know. Just start with what you know. There's some very simple basics. Start by obeying God's Word. Start by honoring his personality that way. And I'm sure that he will reveal the next steps. But he's not going to reveal the far away steps if you're having a hard time in your life or you're randomly, you know, or not so randomly, selectively cherry-picking whatever you want and casting aside what is bothersome to you. And that's precisely, for example, the description that Jesus gives us in John chapter 3, verse 19 and 20. Look at what he says. He says, John 3:19 and 20, "And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed."

And so, in the generalized disobedience of humanity, we choose exactly what is pleasing. I mean, that's just obvious, right? You're not going to choose what is displeasing, not normally. Why would you? We like choosing things that are pleasing, things that don't bother us and that leave us just as we are, without any real need of change. People usually don't like change.

I think it was Mark Twain, and I think Pastor Doug said this a few weeks ago, but I remember my dad, you know, repeating it over and over again as I grew up. Maybe he heard it from Pastor Doug. But I think it was Mark Twain that said that, "It's not the things that Jesus said that I don't understand that bother me, but the things that Jesus said and I do understand and have a difficult time in applying in my life." Those are the hard things. And so, the disobedience is confirmed by our incredulity that is used then to justify being left alone and in peace. "You know what? I don't want to obey because it's not comfortable to obey. And I don't think I even believe in this stuff anyway." That's the logical train of thought.

Now, the warning regarding the danger here of adding or taking away, it echoes in multiple places of Scripture. For example, Revelation chapter 22, verse 18, and 19, and I'm sure that many of you here know this by heart. It says, "For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book."

Now, someone could say, "Well, seriously? That's how--that's how far God would go here? That's how serious this is?" Yes, seriously. That's how serious this is. Matthew describes this reality perfectly. I'm going to jump the text that I was going to read, but it's Matthew 15:1 through 9. And what we see reflected here is Jesus calling out the hypocrisy of the Jewish leaders that did selectively choose what they wanted to take heed of and what they wanted to discard. And unfortunately for them, what they were discarding were the commandments of God that they found in the Old Testament, and what they were selectively choosing were their own traditions.

You know what that equates to? Idolatry. You know why? Because when I indoctrinate my opinion, I am placing myself in the place of God, and I am therefore making myself a god unto myself. You have to be very careful to not indoctrinate your opinions. We are different people. There are things that we like and things that we dislike. There are ways that I like to comb my hair that doesn't work for everyone.

But if I go around saying that, "This is the way of heaven and you gotta comb your hair the same way that I do because that's the way that God revealed it in the Bible and if you don't, you're going to hell." Well, does God really say that? Does God imply that?

You see what I did there? I placed myself in the place of God. I put words in God's mouth, and I broke, right there, a bunch of commandments. Be careful not to indoctrinate your opinion. Be careful not to add or to withdraw. The religious leaders of Jesus's day had become experts in adding and taking away God's divine orders. Zeal without understanding, zeal but ignorant, zealous but ignorant.

Emil Brunner, he was a Protestant theologian. You have to take a lot of what he says with a grain of salt, not Adventist, but he did say a few interesting things. And he called this human compulsion, especially the compulsion of adding, adding to things, of exaggerating or blowing things up where they weren't. He calls this the sin of devotion. And that's precisely what the Israelite leaders of Jesus's day did. They increased. They were so zealous in their own way that they just-- about the commandment of the Sabbath.

I think I've said this before. Do you know how many laws there were? One thousand two hundred and fifty-one laws or whatever 39 times 39 is. I might be wrong there with the 1,251. But it was around 1200 or 1300 laws just about the Sabbath, just about the Sabbath, 1200 laws. The sin of devotion, idolatry, making yourself, or in this their case, making themselves gods unto themselves. Adding or taking away expresses human dissatisfaction with God's orders. The famous mentality that I've already mentioned, "God said, but I think. God said, but I think." Or even yet the syndrome of, "I think I know better. I think it will work better for me if I just go this way."

And friends, we're all tempted of this. And that segues into what happens on Monday's lesson because here we see a practical reality of this very situation. Monday's lesson is entitled Baal Peor. Now, I might be pronouncing that, that latter word, incorrectly in English, but Baal Peor, which is the name of a false god here. What happens here is that Israel is reminded of the incidents of Numbers chapter 25, and the chilling consequences of God's judgments and the death spiritual to that spiritual prostitution and harlotry to Baal Peor.

Now, this god Baal Peor, or just Baal is how you usually will find him, he was the god of the Moabites. This was a Moabite god. Some interpreters believe that the worship that is described in 1 Kings chapter 18 in the scenario with Elijah and Mount Carmel, that was the worship of Baal Peor, that's what was involved or was one of the elements of their worship. Now, the idolatry to Baal infected the ten tribes of northern Israel, and he became their official god. You know how Moses warns the children of Israel.

Later we're going to look at this throughout the lesson, but he warns them that if they became worse, if they did not listen to the statutes and judgments of God, if they did not take heed to what he had ordered them, they would become worse than the surrounding nations. And indeed they did. The northern ten tribes, their main god, their official god, became Baal, and this infected also Judah in the south. And worship to Baal only ended truly with the captivity and the exile of Babylon. Worship to Baal Peor was tied to fertility. And we talked about this a few weeks ago when we were talking about the difference between polytheism and monotheism.

So, it was tied to that concept of fertility, to survival. They needed to be fertile so that they could survive. And that led to religious harlotry and prostitution, and they're in light--it's appealed to these people. Baal, among other gods, represented and was considered the god of sexual desires. To the Israelites, he was described as the god of sexual sins.

Now, while, friends, this is a very ancient issue, Baal continues alive and well in modern culture. In the Playboy mentality, the culture of pornography that corrupts and destroys millions of its worshipers, paves the way for the prince of darkness. It corrupts and disfigures the beautiful creation of God. Pornography, and all that it involves, is considered the moral AIDS of the modern age. That terminology didn't come from me. That was on the cover of "Time Magazine" a few years ago. And in that case, our prayer must always be the same as David's in his psalm of penitence, Psalm chapter 51, verse 10. "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."

You know, the verb "create" here is a very special verb. It's the Hebrew word "bara," and it is a word that is exclusive to Hebrew. This Hebrew word that translates to "create" is only applied to God, to Yahweh, only. And what it translates into is an ability to create from nothing, to call things into existence. So, what David is literally saying, he's saying, "God, call into being, call into existence in my life a pure heart because, of myself, I can't do this." The children of Israel were very explicitly involved in what that meant. And today, friends, perhaps implicitly in your life, you may be involved. Pray this prayer, "Create in me, O God, a pure heart." Those who desire to overcome the culture of sex must learn to pray for the creation, the bara, of a clean and pure spirit.

Friends, this is something that only God can do, only God can do. In the context of Baal Peor, Satan's strategy was the only possible one, but it was also the most effective one. "Patriarchs and Prophets," page 451, is very insightful here. It says Balaam, and this is in the context of that story there of Numbers 25 and what Balaam did. "Balaam knew that the prosperity of Israel depended upon their obedience of God, or to God, and that there was no way to cause their overthrow but by seducing them into sin. He now decided to secure Balak's favor by advising the Moabites of the course to be pursued to bring a curse upon Israel. He immediately returned to the land of Moab--" This is where he had already been sent away.

He had been--God had not allowed him to pronounce curses. He had, on the other hand, pronounced blessings. Balak, the king there, was angry. He sent him away. The Spirit of God left Balaam. Balaam then starts to devise how he could then secure Balak's favor. He comes back and presents a satanic strategy. "He immediately returned to the land of Moab and laid his plans before the king. The Moabites themselves were convinced that as long as Israel remained true to God--"

Friends, as long as we remain true to God. That's the teaching here. As long as we remain true to God, we remain protected. "As long as they remained true to God, He would be their shield. The plan proposed by Balaam was to separate them from God by enticing them into idolatry. If they could be led to engage in the licentious worship of Baal and Ashteroth, their omnipotent Protector would become their enemy, and they would soon fall a prey to the fierce, warlike nations around them." The prosperity of God's people depend on their obedience to him. The only way to overthrow them is seduce them into sin.

Now, someone might be tempted to say, "Well, I mean, isn't this taking away our free will?" If I have to, if I want to be protected and if I want to have a good life, well, then I have to obey God?" First of all, that's a fallacy because in the Bible, you'll see that those who are obedient to God, most of the times, good things don't happen to them, right.

So, that's already a fallacy in itself. That's a fallacy called prosperity theology, where you think you can put God in your pocket. Gonna give God a bunch of money, give tithes and offering, I'm gonna pay my tithes. There's a--if I have a pet peeve, it's when people say, "pay tithes." We do not pay tithe. We return to God what's already his. But in any case, that is a fallacy in and of itself right there. The prosperity of God's people depend on their obedience of him. The reason here, the real reason, is because God is the

source of life. God is that energy socket. All right, am I saying that right? Is it an energy socket? It's the the plug or where you plug it in, God is that.

I can willfully decide to plug my life into that or to disconnect my life from that. That is where I choose. That's where you apply your choice. It is your choice to be connected or disconnected, but don't think that you can have the benefits of being connected while you're disconnected. It just doesn't work like that. You see, God, more than a personal being, God is a force of nature. God is a force. He's a personal being. He is a person, not a human person, but He has a personality, but He is, nonetheless, a force. He is life. He is love. He is all these things.

And so, when I decidedly disconnect myself, how can I continue living? What happens if you disconnect your phone from the charger? The juice will run out and the phone will, how do we say it? The phone is what? Dead. Imagine if someone, if that happens to someone, your phone is dead, and then you start ranting and raving, "Well, how could those engineers project this this way? They're dictators. They're tyrants. How dare they say that my phone, or force my phone to run out of juice because I, you know, because I wanted to use it."

It doesn't work that way. And so, God is the same way. This prosperity of God's people depend on their obedience to Him because obedience means being connected to Him. And that's where Tuesday's lesson is so monumental because Tuesday's lesson that says, "Cleave to the Lord your God," or be close to Him. Friends, in the biblical drama, apostasy invariably lead to death. Numbers 25, verse 9, "And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand."

Sin always leads to death. The wages of sin is death. But many were not corrupted in this story. Deuteronomy 4:4, "But you who held fast to the Lord your God are alive today, every one of you." Life and death, opposites that become ever so evident in the experience of the lives of those who serve and the lives of those who do not serve God.

Friends, according to Jesus in Matthew chapter 12, verse 30, we are either for Him or against Him. There is no possibility of neutrality. Something that I said this last week in the midweek Bible study is that you cannot--this is the one place in life where you cannot opt out. You can opt out of many things in life, but you cannot opt out of this whole situation. Jesus expands and says here in Luke 11:23, he adds, "He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters."

Two glorious promises in this context here of Israel in Deuteronomy 4:4. Two marvelous promises are provided for them so that they can understand that they're not alone in this, that God is giving them strength. He provides power so that they can overcome, so that they can live by His side. The first one is found in Jude 24. Beautiful text. It says, "Now to Him," talking about God, "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you faultless."

Is this something that you do yourself, keep from stumbling and present yourself faultless? Can you do this by yourself? We can't, we absolutely cannot. That's why we depend on Him, Jesus Christ the Righteous. "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. To God our Savior Who alone is wise Be glory and majesty Dominion and power Both now and forever. Amen."

And the second promise is found in 1 Corinthians 10:13, equally magnificent. It says, "No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

There's this terminology in the legal, judicial world which is "equality of arms." And basically what "equality of arms" represents is the equality of opportunity of might and of resources of both sides in any given case. God does not allow the devil to use attacks that cannot be resisted in Him who is powerful to keep us and to lead us from victory to victory. We all have equality of arms.

Sometimes you might be tempted to think, "Well, our enemy, this enemy of mine, he's organized, he's very well motivated. He's powerful and strong. It's personal to him. How can I withstand?" You can't. And I don't want to surprise you here, you can't. There's no way. There's absolutely no way. He's been around for at least 6,000 years here tempting us, learning, growing his reserves of strategy and methodologies.

By ourselves, we cannot withstand him, but God doesn't abandon us here. And contrary to the theory of deism that believes in this absent landlord, that he just created this world and then walked away, we have a God that is so present that He didn't just confine Himself to staying up there, He rolled up His sleeves and He got into the nitty gritty dirtiness of our world, and He came down and lived with us. And not only this, He provides a whole battle armor for us. Just read Ephesians chapter 6 where we have the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the sandals of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of truth.

No one can claim that they haven't been provided all they need to resist, to overcome, and to be faithful to God. In the entirety of Scripture, we find almost 60 different titles that are attributed to Jesus Christ in the context of his defense for fallen humanity. He will never let us fight our battles alone and unaided. He is the door. He is the way. He is the lily of the valley. He is the water, the shepherd. He is the morning star. He is the true and the faithful witness. He is the one who loves us. He is the undefeatable advocate.

Friends, we are not fighting for victory. What Moses is telling the children of Israel in this whole context here is that they're not really fighting for victory. We already begin the journey with victory guaranteed in Him. He is our fortress, our shield, and all we need is to accept and to obey. And so, we find the streamline here of Wednesday, God's dream for Israel. For what nation is there so great, as the lesson puts it.

What follows next in the few verses after Deuteronomy 4:4 are some of the most profound and beautiful texts of in all of Scripture. And here we have Deuteronomy 4, verse 5 through 9 that says, "Surely I have taught you the statutes and judgments, just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. Therefore be careful to observe them; for this 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.' For what great nation is there that God-- that has God so near to it, as the Lord our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day? Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life."

Friends, we see that God's dream for Israel, that they would live the statutes, they would exemplify these judgments, and that the nations around them would see that that nation was different, that they were special, not because of anything from themselves, but because they were so close to their God. Isn't it what the text says here? Because it literally says here, "For what great nation is there that has God so near it?"

God's people were meant to be known because God was near them, because God was close to them. That was God's dream. It did not have to go down the way it went. Jesus didn't have to suffer the way He did. He didn't have to be tortured and tormented the way He was. That was not God's dream. That

wasn't the ideal. God's dream was for Israel to be faithful. I don't know what it would have been then. I don't know how it could have been. Perhaps, the Messiah would have come down, and perhaps the same hand that stayed the hand of Abraham, he would then bring down the knife.

I don't know. But this was God's dream. They would be brought to God. The nation surrounding Israel would be brought to God because He was the true secret of success. But in this, friends, there is also a warning. The warning is only take heed to yourself and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life.

You see, there was a danger in arrogance and pride. They're called not to forget the things that they had witnessed in their history. You know, in the book "Patriarchs And Prophets," Ellen White observes that a full cup, the full cup that runs is the one that runs the risk of arrogance and of spilling over. Attributing your success to your own power, to your own strength, to your own virtues and performance, that is the danger there. God wanted His people to know that they had been called and chosen for a special purpose, that they would indeed become a great nation, as had been promised to Abraham.

However, here there was this danger of pride. Be careful, lest you forget, lest you forget. And finally, in Thursday's lesson, which is the conclusion of all of this, your wisdom and your understanding. Verse 6, Deuteronomy 4, verse 6, "Therefore be careful to observe them, the statutes and judgments, for this 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.'"

Now, friends, this text here can be very easily misunderstood because true wisdom and understanding will not be seen primarily from the statutes and judgments, but from the life of obedience and fidelity of the children of God. So, just having the statutes and judgments, that's not when guaranteed their wisdom, their understanding. Their wisdom and understanding would be guaranteed would be seen in them keeping these statutes and these judgments.

Do you see the difference? There's a big, big, big danger here, and this massive danger is when truth does not convert, it fossilizes. When truth does not convert your heart, when it doesn't convict you, when it doesn't bring change, it then petrifies and fossilizes your heart, making it so much harder for the Spirit to touch you.

Friends, we live in a time and an age where people believe-- in this portion, correctly, they say, "God will accept you and take you just as you are." And yes, He will, but He loves you too much to leave you just the way you are. He wants to give you a better life. You see, God doesn't see you primarily for what you are right now but for what you can be. He has a dream for you. And the children of Israel, they would live this dream, not because of only what God gave them, but because of their answer to what God gave them. God is giving them the statutes and judgments and He's saying, "Live by it, and they will see your wisdom and your understanding." That's why the children of Israel were frequently called to obedience because obedience to these statutes and judgments was what mattered.

In the book, "Christ's Object Lessons," beautiful book on page 288 we read, "Their obedience to the law of God would make them marvels of prosperity before the nations of the world. He who could give them wisdom and skill in all cunning work would continue to be their teacher, and would ennoble and elevate them through obedience to His laws. If obedient, they would be preserved from the diseases that afflicted the other nations, and would be blessed with vigor and intellect. The glory of God, His majesty and power, were to be revealed in all their prosperity. They were to be a kingdom of priests and princes. God furnished them with every facility for becoming the greatest nation on earth."

Friends, that dream that unfortunately did not find its fulfillment in ancient Israel, can very well find its fulfillment in modern-- in the modern Israel that is the church. This is God's dream. We know that we are a holy nation, a holy priesthood. And we can fulfill God's dream, not by our might or strength, but by His might and His strength. Allow God to fulfill His dream in your life. And allow the world to look at us, the nations, the peoples, and say, "For what great people is this that have got so close to them?"

May God bless you in your studies of the Bible and in your application of it in your life. May God bless you in, not only applying and understanding and obeying, but in sharing this reality, sharing this truth that is such a great, joyful truth when lived out the correct way.

I would like to invite you to remember that we do have a free offer for those that are watching online, and those that are here also if you're new. You can get, "Is Obedience Legalism?" You can get this beautiful study if you call 866-788-3966 and text or ask for the offer number 706. If you're in the continental North America, you can text SH041 to 40544. And outside of North America, you can go to study.aftv.org/SH041 and you can get this very important study that has a lot to do with what we talked about here today. I would like to finish this moment with you with a word of prayer.

Dear Lord God, thank You so much for Your love. Thank you so much for Your blessings. Father, I ask You to always be close to us, Lord. We want to be known as a great people, not because we are great or numerous or intelligent or whatever, but because we have You close to us. Allow this church to be seen as a church that has God close to them. Allow us to study and understand and apply these judgments that You have provided in Your Word and be seen then and be known as a wise and understanding people, not for our own benefit, but for the benefit of this dark world around us. I ask You these things, Lord, and I ask for the rest of this day. In Jesus's name I pray, amen.

May God bless you.

Announcer: Don't forget to request today's life-changing, free resource. Not only can you receive this free gift in the mail, you can download a digital copy straight to your computer or mobile device. To get your digital copy of today's free gift, simply text the keyword on your screen to 40544 or visit the web address shown on your screen. And be sure to select the digital download option on the request page. It's now easier than ever for you to study God's Word with Amazing Facts wherever and whenever you want, and most important, to share it with others.

Male: I grew up in a church-going family. I mean, we were at every meeting. I sang in four of the choirs there, I directed three. Very involved, very active. It almost seemed like busy work sometimes, you know? I went to Sunday school, I knew about God, I knew about Jesus. But I didn't have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. My senior year in high school I got the news that my father had been murdered. Now, I played it off well. No one really saw that I was struggling with it. It just really felt like there was a hole that needed to be filled and I tried to fill it with drugs, with alcohol, with partying. After college, I just stopped going to church altogether.

One day, on a Sunday, 'cause I didn't feel like going to church with my mom. I thought, you know, "I should get a little bit of Word." She had the satellite system hooked up and I'm flipping through channels. And then the logo pops across, "Amazing Facts Presents." I've listened to a lot of different ministers but this was the first time that he's actually saying something where I had to grab my Bible and actually pick it up and I've never heard this before. Let me look through and find this.

I went through all the Storacles, I went through all the study guides and I just couldn't get enough. And then the Sabbath came up and he's going through the appeal and I'm just going, "Lord, I hear You. I have

to go to church." So I show up. It was funny, I didn't feel like I was going to be judged, anything judgmental, anything. And I walked in the door, and I just felt at home.

But there's still a problem. I'm still partying. I was still going out to the bars. At this time, I was selling cocaine to pay my rent. Sixteen days later, I find myself in a life or death situation. I had just come back from a liquor store and I grabbed a bottle of vodka. And there I am, high off cocaine, with my Bible in hand, trying to do a Bible study. And I heard an audible voice, "Just look at yourself." And I did, and I was, like, "What am I doing?" And I got on my knees and I said, "Lord, if You do not take this away from me now, I'm going to kill myself." I was going to continue this lifestyle and I was going to end up overdosing, having a heart attack, whatever it was. "You have to take this away, all of it." And that day, He lift it all up and away from me. It was all gone. When God does something in your life, He does it complete.

Announcer: Amazing Facts, changed lives.

Josh: Our family was Christian to begin with. Mom and Dad were involved at the church at times. On the inside our, family wasn't really Christian, I guess. It was just, it was a front that we put on. My dad suffered from bipolar disorder. Instead of taking his medication, he turned to alcohol. He could be mad one second and the next second, he'd be happy. And it was so confusing for us. Most of the time, we'd be upstairs to try to avoid him.

I made good grades all the way up until high school. High school, I started struggling because my mom was a single parent at the time, and I had to get a job. I was working every day after school. I didn't have many friends to talk to, so I was getting depressed. I was always tired. I started failing my assignments because I would fall asleep during class, and I couldn't listen to the teachers. I couldn't comprehend what they were saying.

By my 11th-grade year, I dropped out and I tried homeschooling. I just ended up working full time. I had lots of girlfriends growing up, but I was always terrified of talking to guys. Like, my hands would start to sweat. I would tense up. I just I couldn't talk. I guess that's when I started developing an attraction. Gay guys weren't scary to talk to, so I started talking to them. And then I started meeting them. And then it just went from there. And then I started having relationships with them. I just wanted to find someone who would care.

After high school, most of my friends were gone, but there were a few left home. We all started getting into drugs and smoking weed and drinking. I was able to leave my depression behind and I wasn't shy anymore. I was able to talk to anyone I wanted to. It wasn't real, but it felt real at the time.

During this time, I felt like God had left me. I'd hear conversations at church talking about gays and people on drugs and stuff. And, you know, they talked so bad about them, it drove me to leave church. I eventually just left church, I left God. I just didn't care anymore. I didn't, I didn't care what God thought because I didn't think he cared about me. At the beginning of this year, I've moved in with my boyfriend. I still felt empty. I still wasn't happy.

I thought I had what I wanted. I had a guy that I could love, and I thought he loved me, but I was still empty. I still felt like if I died today, I wasn't sure where I was gonna go. And I wasn't sure if I'd be a disappointment to everyone. My grandma texted me. She told me that an Amazing Facts evangelist was coming to our church to do a prophecy seminar. I didn't really want to go because I've been to those before, and they were normally pretty boring and I'd fall asleep. I was planning on making excuses for every night, but she was dedicated. She really wanted me to go and so did my mom.

So, I ended up going to church and the evangelist that was speaking, he was speaking on the sanctuary that morning. It made sense to me that there was someone up in heaven pleading my cause. I've never heard Jesus this way before. I went back all the nights that I could, except the nights that I worked. At the end of it, I ended up getting rebaptized.

I made a decision to leave this life behind. I was still attracted to men, but I wanted to leave the lifestyle. I didn't want to live in it anymore, any longer, because I knew it was wrong. The evangelist that was at our church, that did the prophecy seminar, became my mentor. He told me about this school called AFCOE, and it stands for Amazing Facts Center Of Evangelism. And I was like, well, I want that because I want to learn how to share Jesus. I want to learn how to be able to help others.

I prayed about it. I applied online. They accepted my application, but I still had the money problem left. That night right before I left, He provided over \$3,000 and He's been providing for me ever since. The tools that I've learned here are tools that will stick with me forever. And it was life changing to be able to come here to AFCOE.

I would love to help other people in my situation because a lot of people have prayed that God would take this stuff away, and then they get discouraged when He--when He doesn't. But what they don't know is that Jesus is there. He will help you through it. My name is Josh, and Amazing Facts has helped change my life.