

## God's Faithfulness for Moving Day

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As we close one significant chapter of ministry here at this location and begin a new one at our new location, I'm planning on some Sunday morning times with audience participation in mind. Look at the screen.

- On Sunday, Feb. 18 our theme for the morning will be *What would they say?* What would the founding members of our church say to us as we begin a new era of ministry? What would the people who sat in these seats 40 years ago tell us we should do? For those of you who've been around for awhile, you might remember know of these people. They've been dear to you; they taught you in SS; they encouraged you in Bible studies. With a shorter sermon, there will be time for an open mic for some of you to share what you think your dad, your mom, your brothers or sisters might have said to us as we make our move.
- On Feb. 25 the title for the morning will be *What did God do?* I know God has worked in this place. I know some of you have had breakthrough moments with God right here. What were those? Did God humble you in your sin? Did God remind you of his lavish love for you in Christ? Did he heal your marriage? Did he introduce you to a lifelong friend? Come ready to share those things. Everyone will have a chance to write out what God has done; if some of you would like, you can share them during our Sunday morning meeting.
- Then, on March 18, when we are in the new facility for the very first Sunday we're going to celebrate what God has done through this journey. You'll have a chance to answer this question: *What has God taught you on this journey?* We're going to remind you of our RB goals for provision, for unity, for growth in Christ and I'm excited to hear from you.

Today, I want to begin a period of reflection and encouragement as we transition - not merely from one building to another, but from one kind of existence to another. It reminds me a little bit about a move the nation of Israel made. The very large extended family of Jacob, the 12 tribes of Israel, moved from their home in Egypt to a new home in the Promised Land. They got delayed by 40 years because they didn't trust in God (boy, let's try and avoid that mistake), but they made it. So, get this picture: 40 years are up and they are ready to cross the Jordan River and enter into a new home. Their minds must have been filled with questions: What will we do with all that space? How will we know where to go? Will there be enough parking? And is it true that there's a swimming pool there? (OK, they probably didn't ask that, but you catch my drift).

So, God wrote them a book by his servant Moses to help them make the move; that book is called Deuteronomy. Turn with me to Deut. 7. I'm not going to read the first 5 verses, but what God does is he warns them about coming temptations. He basically says, "Be careful! Your new land has temptations." And so does our new land. We're going to be tempted to be proud (i.e. "Look what we've done.") We're going to be tempted to idolize the wrong things like

loving the carpet more than the kids who might spill juice on it. We're going to be tempted to love how comfortable it makes us rather than to keep sacrificing for others. But God has help for his people when it comes to these kinds of temptations; read with me starting in vs. 6 (READ vs. 6-11).

Let me show you some things that jump out at me. Here's the first thing: You fight the temptations that come with your new home by reminding yourself of who you are (REPEAT). Did you see that? God didn't spend tons of time talking with them about their new home; he didn't say, "You'll need to watch out for that city, and that river is pretty deep, and it's really dry on the Megiddo plain." He redirected their focus away from their new home to their identity. This is who you are, people. And by remembering who you are you will be kept and saved from the temptations that are coming. So, who did he say they were?

Here's the first thing: *You're not so great*. Did you see that? Look at vs. 7 (READ). I hope that their temptation towards pride is not hard for you to imagine. Israel plowed through the mightiest nation on the face of the earth - Egypt. Now, they are poised to enter Canaan and bulldoze all the kings and nations in their Promised Land. God said, "I'm giving you this land that's flowing with milk and honey." It's not hard to imagine that they might be a little proud. God didn't warn them about a pride that said, "We don't need God." He warned them about a pride that said, "We must be pretty great for God to do this for us."

FBC, ask God to help you kill every ounce of pride in you that tempts you to think there's something special about you... that there's something special about us. Like we are some special church that's just a little bit better than other people and churches around here. Friends, nothing is more arrogant and it's dead wrong. I love how God says, "I didn't choose you because you were the greatest; you were the fewest. You were the most pathetic. You were weakest of everyone around you." So are we, FBC.

Consider that statement again: you're not so great. There's a way of thinking of that statement, there's a way of appropriating that statement that's not true or helpful. We could say that statement in a very self-pitying, very groveling kind of way that misses the mark; in fact, there's a way of saying that in a very prideful, look-at-me way. We as a church family recognizing the gifts God has given us, recognizing the skills and talents and opportunities God has given us is right and important. Humility isn't degrading yourself or thinking less of yourself; humility is seeing yourself rightly and not being so preoccupied with yourself. Pride says, "Look at me, I'm so great" or "I'm so miserable." Humility says, "Look at God, he's so great" and "Look at others, let's give them a hand."

But there is a way that we should say and embrace the message that *we're not so great*. Here's how this should work: every good thing we have, every good work we are able to perform, every gift we've been given, every hope we have for the future is the result of God's rich, lavish, merciful grace. There's nothing special about me, there's nothing special about us that earns God's good graces; there's something really great and amazing about God. The first

thing God reminds the people to guard them from falling into temptation when they enter their new land is *you're not so great*. I think being spared that kind of pride will help us, too.

The second thing God tells them about their identity is this: *You are loved by God*. Look at vs. 8, "But it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping his oath that he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt." The Lord loves you. If you incorporate the first aspect of our identity that we just talked about without incorporating this second one, you'll always run away from God. Right? Because if all you know of yourself is that you fall short and that you're not all that impressive to God, you'll spend your whole life running away from him. At least, if you're smart you will because God is terrifying; he's a consuming fire. You better not disrespect him.

So, God wants to make sure you and I know: even though you're not that great, you are loved. Because you're loved, you belong; because you're loved, you are accepted. Because he loves you, God is for you; he will look after you. He loves you so much that he'll even make you a little uncomfortable. Now, why would he do that if he loved us? Because we're not where we want to be. We need to grow, we need to be corrected; we're not where we want to be and we're not who we want to be and God loves us so much that he's willing to put us through the necessary trials to wake us up to our needs so we can be mature in Christ.

When you know you're loved by God, you have everything you need. You don't actually need the new land (or the new building), you don't worry if someone is sitting in your favorite spot, you're not concerned with being recognized for your hard work or for all the money you gave to the project. You have the greatest gift in the world; you have the love of God.

Friends, do you know if you are loved by God? Is that who you are? It makes all the difference in the world. And it will keep us as a church family guided as we move from this home to our new one.

So, as we start thinking about making this big move, knowing who we are is more important than knowing what our new home will be like. But guess what, there's even something more important than knowing who we are... and do you know what that is? It's knowing who God is. Let me show you (READ vs. 9-11).

Look at that first word - *know*. The most important thing to know is God; who he is and what he's like. Whether we know who God is and what he's like makes a huge difference in how we live our lives. If you know God, you live a certain way; if you don't know God, you live differently. That's what Paul is getting at when he says in 1 Thess. 4 (vs. 4-5), "that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God." Do you see the connection? When you know God you will live honorably; if you don't know God you won't.

So, who is God? What is he like? The big idea is this: God is faithful. Now, we talk a lot about that, right? We sing songs about God's faithfulness. We're even celebrating this now as we reflect on what God has done here and what he will do in the future. But what does it mean? Well, this passage tells us.

There are two words or phrases found in vs. 9 that let us know; do you see it? It says God keeps covenant and steadfast love. Those go together; let's talk about what they mean. God keeping covenant means he keeps relational promises. That's what a covenant is. If you're married, you made promises on your wedding day; you made a covenant. Through your vows you established the kind of relationship you will have with your spouse. *To have and to hold from this day forward, for better or for worse, for richer or for poorer as long as we both shall live.* That's a promise. And God wants you to know that he is a covenant-keeping God. That's what he is like. He will always do what he says. What God has promised his people, he will keep. Now, make sure you know what he's promised. I've heard so many people say to me things like, "And God's promised that he will...." And then when they tell me what they think God has promised I quietly wonder, "Really? He's promised that? When do he do that? And where's that promise in the Bible so you can know with certainty it actually is a promise?" Friends, know that God keeps covenant, but also know what promises he has made. I've seen people crushed in spirit because they think God isn't keeping his promise, but in my heart of hearts I'm thinking, "But I don't think God has made that promise."

The second phrase is steadfast love; God is faithful in that he keeps steadfast love. Like I mentioned, this gets at the idea of covenant again, but it makes love more obvious, more explicit. God loves his people and his love is steadfast. Do you know what that means? It means his love is strong; his love sticks.

Has your love ever hurt? Here's what I mean: sometimes we want to give up, don't we? It would be so much easier just to quit, to throw in the towel. You're tired of trying, forgiving, and hoping. It's so easy to imagine how life might be better if you could cut the strings of a relationship. If you haven't had that before, you probably have really never loved someone. Because true love is tested not when everything is going well, but when it's put to the test. Do you remember how Jesus asked in Luke 6:32, "If you love those who love you, what benefit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them." What he's getting at here is so profound. He's saying, "There's a kind of love that's easy; there's a kind of love that everybody has, that doesn't cost you anything; a kind of love that requires no strength from God at all." It's the kind of love kids have for their grandparents. Who wouldn't love their grandma and grandpa? I remember both of my grandmas would make some of my favorite foods; Grandma Rose would always make me waffles in the morning, Grandma Elda had cinnamon rolls waiting for us when we arrived. Man, I loved my grandmas. My Dad made me mow the lawn... for nothing! Mom made me eat my vegetables.

God's covenant love is steadfast. When the people ignored God, he still loved them. When the people disobeyed God, he still loved them. When the people took advantage of

others, God still loved them. When the people exchanged the glory of God for created things, he still loved them. When the people prostituted themselves, God still loved them. He hated their sin; he judged them for their sin. But his love remained. The Bible doesn't just say it, it sings it: the steadfast love of the Lord endures forever.

Know this, my good brothers and sisters. Know your God. Knowing your God will keep us when we face the temptations that are sure to come. But consider this, too: let's keep working so others know and cherish God's steadfast love, also. Let's not be content that we know, but our neighbors and coworkers don't. So, let's keep working, keep praying, keep inviting others into our church family where they will be introduced to our Lord Jesus Christ.

Key vs: Deut. 7:9

#### Questions for the week

- *What would they say?, What did God do?, and What has God taught you on this journey?* are three questions we will be answering soon; how would you respond to these questions?
- Do you believe you have integrated *You're not so great* and *You're loved by God* into your identity? What's the danger of not incorporating both of these statements?
- Why is knowing God the most important thing we remember as we make our move?