

**“Not Because of Your Righteousness
or the Uprightness of Your Heart”
Deuteronomy 9
September 17, 2023
Faith Presbyterian Church – Morning Service
Pastor Nicoletti**

The Reading of the Word

We return this morning to the Book of Deuteronomy.

Moses is giving his instruction to the people of Israel, after forty years in the desert, as they now stand on the verge of the promised land, preparing to enter it and receive its blessings. God has promised this land to Israel, and in our text this morning Moses reminds them about what the basis of that promise is, and what the basis of that promise is not.

With that in mind, let’s turn to our text: Deuteronomy 9.

Please do listen carefully, for this is God’s word for us this morning.

Moses said to the people:

^{9:1} “Hear, O Israel: you are to cross over the Jordan today, to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, cities great and fortified up to heaven, ² a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know, and of whom you have heard it said, ‘Who can stand before the sons of Anak?’ ³ Know therefore today that he who goes over before you as a consuming fire is Yahweh your God. He will destroy them and subdue them before you. So you shall drive them out and make them perish quickly, as Yahweh has promised you.

⁴ “Do not say in your heart, after Yahweh your God has thrust them out before you, ‘It is because of my righteousness that Yahweh has brought me in to possess this land,’ whereas it is because of the wickedness of these nations that Yahweh is driving them out before you. ⁵ Not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart are you going in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations Yahweh your God is driving them out from before you, and that he may confirm the word that Yahweh swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

⁶ “Know, therefore, that Yahweh your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stubborn people. ⁷ Remember and do not forget how you provoked Yahweh your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against Yahweh. ⁸ Even at Horeb you provoked Yahweh to wrath, and Yahweh was so angry with you that he was ready to destroy you. ⁹ When I went up the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant that Yahweh made with you, I remained on the mountain forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water. ¹⁰ And Yahweh gave me the two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and on them were all the words that Yahweh had spoken with you on the mountain out of the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly. ¹¹ And at the end of forty days and forty nights Yahweh gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant. ¹² Then Yahweh said to me, ‘Arise, go down quickly from here, for your people whom you have brought from Egypt have acted corruptly.

They have turned aside quickly out of the way that I commanded them; they have made themselves a metal image.’

¹³“Furthermore, Yahweh said to me, ‘I have seen this people, and behold, it is a stubborn people. ¹⁴Let me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven. And I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they.’ ¹⁵So I turned and came down from the mountain, and the mountain was burning with fire. And the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands. ¹⁶And I looked, and behold, you had sinned against Yahweh your God. You had made yourselves a golden calf. You had turned aside quickly from the way that Yahweh had commanded you. ¹⁷So I took hold of the two tablets and threw them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes. ¹⁸Then I lay prostrate before Yahweh as before, forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all the sin that you had committed, in doing what was evil in the sight of Yahweh to provoke him to anger. ¹⁹For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure that Yahweh bore against you, so that he was ready to destroy you. But Yahweh listened to me that time also. ²⁰And Yahweh was so angry with Aaron that he was ready to destroy him. And I prayed for Aaron also at the same time. ²¹Then I took the sinful thing, the calf that you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it, grinding it very small, until it was as fine as dust. And I threw the dust of it into the brook that ran down from the mountain.

²²“At Taberah also, and at Massah and at Kibroth-hattaavah you provoked Yahweh to wrath. ²³And when Yahweh sent you from Kadesh-barnea, saying, ‘Go up and take possession of the land that I have given you,’ then you rebelled against the commandment of Yahweh your God and did not believe him or obey his voice. ²⁴You have been rebellious against Yahweh from the day that I knew you.

²⁵“So I lay prostrate before Yahweh for these forty days and forty nights, because Yahweh had said he would destroy you. ²⁶And I prayed to Yahweh, ‘O Lord Yahweh, do not destroy your people and your heritage, whom you have redeemed through your greatness, whom you have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²⁷Remember your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Do not regard the stubbornness of this people, or their wickedness or their sin, ²⁸lest the land from which you brought us say, “Because Yahweh was not able to bring them into the land that he promised them, and because he hated them, he has brought them out to put them to death in the wilderness.” ²⁹For they are your people and your heritage, whom you brought out by your great power and by your outstretched arm.’

This is the Word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.)

“All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” [1 Peter 1:24-25]

Let’s pray ...

Prayer of Illumination

Lord, your word is a lamp to our feet
and a light to our path.
And we, as your people, have committed ourselves
to keep your righteous commandments.
In the trials we face,
we ask you, Lord, to give us life according to your word.

As you have accepted our praises this morning,
so now teach us the way you would have us to go.
Your testimonies are our heritage forever,
for they are the joy of our hearts.
Incline our hearts to perform your statutes
forever, to the end.
This we ask in Jesus's name. Amen.
[Based on Psalm 119:105-108, 111-112]

Introduction

The opening words of our passage are significant this morning. "Hear, O Israel," Moses says. Moses begins with a call for them to hear what he, as God's servant, has to say about them ... rather than listening to what their own hearts have to say about themselves.

This is actually a recurring theme in chapters seven, eight, and nine of Deuteronomy. [Wright, 131; Theopolis, 10:00f] In Deuteronomy 7:17, 8:17, and again here in 9:4, Moses warns them against believing what they might say to themselves, in their hearts, and calls them instead to hear instead what God has to say to them. And so he begins this chapter "Hear, O Israel ..."

In the previous chapters, Moses has warned them about what they might say to themselves about the source of their victory and the source of their prosperity. Here, in chapter nine, he warns them about what they might say to themselves about the source of their favor with God.

The Temptation

God, we are reminded in verses one through three, is going to use Israel to dispossess the pagan Canaanites from the land they are in, and then he is going to give that land then to Israel.

And when he does, Moses points out in verses four and five, Israel will face the temptation to tell themselves that it is because of the righteousness of their own deeds and the uprightness of their own hearts that God gave them the land – that he showed them his favor. That's the temptation Moses is addressing here.

Whether from the vantage point of comparison, conflict, or comfort, Israel is in danger of believing – of saying in their hearts – that because the Canaanites' actions are wicked, their own actions must be righteous, and because the Canaanites' hearts are twisted, their own hearts must be upright.

That temptation could come from the starting point of comparison, as they look at the external sins of Canaanites' lives, and then look at their own. The temptation can get even more intense in the midst of conflict, where animosity towards their enemy can fuel their sense of self-righteousness. And the temptation can reach a level of smug self-satisfaction when they reach a position of comfort, after the conquest is over.

Both that day and in the days ahead, Israel will be tempted to believe, in their hearts, that they are good and righteous because they are looking at someone else who is sinful and wicked. And Moses

says that believing that would be a huge mistake. But it's a mistake we are often tempted towards as well.

And it's a regular feature of our culture – and the sinful human heart – to do this.

It's a common response in the cultural and political arena of our society, that when someone questions your integrity or uprightness, you respond by pointing out their sins. And the unspoken assumption seems to be that if you can prove that they are guilty, then you will be vindicated. If you can prove they are wicked, then you must be righteous.

For the last fifty years that tendency has been known as “Whataboutism.” The idea is that when someone points out your sin, you respond “Well, but what about ...” and then you point out their sin. And the logic seems to be that if we can prove that they are bad, then we've also somehow proven that we must be good. It's a logical fallacy, but it continues to permeate our political discussions at every level: “Because my opponent is so sinful, I must be so good.”

But such thinking is certainly not limited to our politics. It shows up in many of our relationships. In family conflict – with a parent, or a sibling, or a spouse, how often do we fall into this: When questions come up of whether we have done something wrong, we don't respond with self-examination and a thoughtful response – we respond with some form of “whataboutism”: “Well, what about when you did that thing?” The logic again seems to be: “If I can prove that you, my opponent in this argument, are sinful, then it means that I must be good.” It's nonsense, but I will bet that you have made that argument, either out loud or in your heart, hundreds or thousands of times.

It comes up in our acquaintances as well, as we interact with coworkers, or bosses, or rivals at work, as we deal with classmates, or fellow church members. And it's not limited to moments of conflict. Sometimes, even from a place of comfort, seeing the sin of another – having their sin exposed to us, gives us a pang of pleasure. Now why would that be? Well ... often it's because some part of our heart takes their sin as a sign of our righteousness.

And this can be especially pronounced when we – as Christians – compare ourselves to the unbelieving world around us. I would guess that when we Christians decry the sin or the wickedness of the pagan world around us, our motives are not as pure as we'd like to think. We want to believe – we tell ourselves – that what chiefly motivates us is a love for God's holiness, or a hatred for sin ... and hopefully that is part of what's going on in our hearts.

But I would bet that when we so loudly decry and lament the sins of the unbelieving world, more often than not, an even bigger motivator for each of us, is a little voice, in our hearts, that says to us “Look how good I am in comparison.”

I remember a TV drama about a company that had been mired in a scandal. And then, as they were dealing with it, another company – a competitor – fell into a similar scandal. And when the news of that other company's scandal broke, the employees of the first company spontaneously burst into cheers. Until their boss shouted at them to be quiet. Then he reminded them that this new scandal did nothing to undo what they had done. And he looked at them, and speaking about their competitor, the boss said: “He got knocked down. We didn't get any taller.” [Sorken]

And yet ...as Moses points out here, when others get knocked down, we so often do believe that we have gotten taller: that the exposure of their sin makes us more righteous.

Where do you see that tendency in your own life ... in your interactions with your family ... or your acquaintances ... at work ... in our church ... in your politics ... or in your cultural engagement?

The temptation Moses brings to light here is that when we see the sin of others, we are tempted to respond by viewing ourselves as righteous and upright.

That's the first thing we see here: the temptation.

The Truth

The second thing we see is the truth that Moses confronts Israel with.

And the truth he confronts them with is that Israel is not righteous. Israel is unrighteous. In fact, Israel is stubborn, stiff-necked, rebellious, unfaithful, and wicked.

And Moses doesn't make this point lightly, or delicately. Moses is intent on driving this point home.

First, Moses repeatedly tells them that they are stubborn and stiff-necked. In verse six Moses says that they are a stubborn people, in verse thirteen God says that they are a stubborn people, and in verse twenty-seven Moses repeats it again.

Despite all Yahweh has done for them, Israel continues to resist the yoke of the Lord. They harden their hearts against God ... they resisted his commands ... not unlike how Pharaoh and Egypt resisted the Lord. [Theopolis, 28:00f]

Second, Moses reminds them that they have repeatedly been rebellious and unfaithful.

He says it in verse seven: "From the day you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against Yahweh."

Moses goes on to detail one case in particular of their rebellion: their making and worshipping the golden calf instead of Yahweh.

But then, in the middle of that story, in verses twenty-two through twenty-four, it's like Moses breaks from the story and starts just listing other times that Israel rebelled as well. It's as if Moses wants to be extra clear that their rebellion was not an isolated incident, but a repeated pattern. It didn't just happen that one time, at Sinai, with the golden calf. It also happened at Taberah, with you grumbling against the Lord [Numbers 11:1-3], and at Massah, with the water [Exodus 17:1-7], and at Kibroth-hattaavah, with the quale [Numbers 11:31-34], and at Kadesh-barnea, the first time God told you sent them on the conquest [Numbers 13-14]. Moses concludes by saying "You have been rebellious against Yahweh from the day that I knew you."

Israel has been stubborn and stiff-necked. Israel has been rebellious.

Finally, Moses tells the people that they themselves have been wicked.

In verse twenty-seven Moses acknowledges before God that Israel's sin is wicked. Which sounds a lot like the verdict that he pronounced on the Canaanites in verse five, and the reason they were being destroyed. Moses says here that the Israelites, just like the Canaanites, are guilty of wickedness. And he then tells a story in which the Lord declared that Israel deserved the same punishment that the Canaanites deserved: total destruction.

Now ... we might be a bit incredulous at this point. The Canaanites had accumulated and grown their sin for over four centuries. Israel's total sin described here took place over four decades, and the incident that God said earned them the same sentence as the Canaanites took place over just forty days. The Canaanites had filled their land with idols. Israel had really just made one idol in this account. Can we really equate the two? Is it really the same?

In Luke 12, Jesus tells a parable about servants. And at the end of it he says: "That servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more." [Luke 12:47-48]

It may be true that if you looked only at the external sins committed, with no other context, then the Canaanites' sin looked much, much worse than Israel's. Canaan was a dark, abusive, and terrible culture and community – it's true. By comparison of their external sins alone, Israel looked much better.

And the same can often be said of us Christians today. If we look only at the external sins, without any other context, we can often pat ourselves on the back for how much less severe our sin looks compared to many unbelievers around us.

But context matters to God. The Canaanites had God's general revelation. They had enough to know better – it's true. And so they are certainly responsible for their sin. But Israel had so much more. They had the special revelation of God, and the promises of God. They had experienced God's work firsthand: They saw what God did to Egypt. They saw him part the Red Sea. They saw his fire and they heard his voice, as Moses reminds them in verse ten. They had received all that. And then they still build an idol, and worshipped it instead of Yahweh.

Jesus tells us that the more knowledge of God we have, the more culpable we are for our sin. And that is so true that in verse fourteen God tells Moses that in just forty days, and with only one idol, Israel has earned enough guilt to deserve the same punishment that it took the more ignorant Canaanites four hundred years to justly merit. [See Genesis 15:16]

That should shock us. And it should change how we assess ourselves and the severity of our sin, as Christians.

Think, for example, about the area of sexual sin. The Church today in the West rightly points out the prevalence and the severity of sexual sin that is embraced in the culture around us. And

speaking the truth about how God has designed human sexuality is, of course, part of our calling as God's people.

But that call to speak the truth so often shifts into self-righteousness. And often, we don't speak the truth in love as much as we scoff at and mock the non-Christians around us. And we don't speak with gentleness and humility as much as we pat ourselves on the back for being so much better than the people around us.

And then, compared with their sin, we downplay our own sexual sins in the Church. And we do this by disregarding the words of Jesus that frame the severity of our sin in terms of the depth of our knowledge about God.

When non-Christians, who deny God's creational intent for human sexuality act according with that professed belief, we should not be shocked.

But when Christians, who not only have heard, but claim to believe what the Bible says about God's creational intent for sexuality – when such Christians commit what, without context might look like lesser sexual sins, then just like Israel with their one idol, our true culpability may be even greater than that of the pagans who embrace more extreme external sins. Because as Christians we should know so much better.

Brothers and sisters, as your pastor I can assure you that sexual sin is very present, both in our congregation and in the conservative Reformed church today.

And yet ... we can be so self-righteous in this area. As if their Asherah poles render our golden calf as a harmless, minor thing. But remember – Israel earned the same condemnation in days with their one golden calf, that it took the Canaanites centuries to earn with their many Asherah poles. Because Israel knew their Master's will far more clearly and truly than the Canaanites did. And so it is for us.

And this dynamic is not limited to the realm of sexuality.

We see it in many other places. We are so quick to excuse our slander by comparing it to the slander of the pagans, to excuse our anger and hatred by comparing it to the anger or hatred of unbelievers, to excuse our greed and idolatry by comparing it to the greed and idolatry of the heathens, and the list can go on and on.

But such comparisons, and such self-justifications ignore how important our knowledge of God is in how he judges our guilt. It ignores that in God's eyes, the one idol of the Israelites, who knew God, could merit the same judgment as the many idols of the pagans who did not know God.

In God's eyes, our sin is truly heinous, because we commit it despite all we know of him, and all we've received from him.

The truth that Moses confronts Israel and us with, is that in ourselves, we are not righteous, but we are stubborn, rebellious, unfaithful, and wicked.

Of course, that leads to a problem ... doesn't it?

If Israel is wicked, just as the Canaanites are wicked ... if Israel deserves judgment and destruction just as the Canaanites deserve judgment and destruction ... then why is Israel going to inherit the land while the Canaanites are going to be dispossessed of the land? Why is one people treated so differently than the other?

Moses answers that question here, in this passage. And he answers it by telling Israel – by reminding Israel – that the good things they will receive and the judgments they will be spared, they owe not to themselves, but to another.

In our text, Moses reminds Israel that the favor they will received have been secured by the faithfulness of another. And then Moses reminds Israel that the forgiveness they have received has been secured by the intercession of another.

The Source of Our Blessings

First Moses reminds Israel the source of their blessings – past, present, and future – is not ultimately their own faithfulness, but the faithfulness of another.

We see this in verses five, and again in verse twenty-seven.

In verse five, Moses tells the people that the reason they are going to receive the promised land, is because of the word – the promise, the covenant – that God made with their forefathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

What’s going on there?

Well, Moses is pointing Israel back to the covenant. The covenant was the formal structure of the relationship God had established between himself and his people. And when God made a covenant with his people, it included a covenant representative for the people – someone who would represent the people to God, and who would act on their behalf.

And Abraham was a key covenant representative for Israel. So that God will relate to Israel on the basis of his relationship with Abraham. And that becomes pretty important here.

Because, you see, where Israel had built an idol, Abraham had abandoned the idols of his father in order to serve Yahweh alone. Where Israel resisted the Lord’s leading into the wilderness, Abraham followed the Lord’s call even when he did not know where God was leading him. Where Israel sacrificed to the golden calf, Abraham proved himself willing to sacrifice to Yahweh whatever Yahweh required. Where Israel had been faithless, Abraham had been faithful.

And in response to Abraham’s faithfulness, God promised to give his favor not only to Abraham himself, but also to Abraham’s descendants. He said to Abraham: “I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.” [Genesis 17:7-8]

What that means is that Israel's favor before God is not based on their righteousness. Rather, it is based on the faithfulness of Abraham, their covenant representative. And so it's only because Israel is united to Abraham that they have God's favor.

That's what Moses is reminding them of in verse five, and again in verse twenty-seven.

Abraham's faithfulness was real ... but we also know it was far from perfect. Which reminds us that his faithfulness was never meant to be the absolute grounding of the blessings of the covenant. Abraham himself was always meant to point forward to something greater – to a greater Abraham.

Because where even Abraham's faithfulness fell short, Jesus's faithfulness would be complete. He would live a truly perfect life. He was faithful to God not only in life, but even to the death. He lived the life we should have lived, and he did so on our behalf. And so his faithfulness is the only reason we can ever hope for or expect God's blessing – both in this life and in the next.

The favor of God has been secured for us by the faithfulness of another – the faithfulness of Jesus Christ – the greater Abraham.

And we need to remind ourselves of that. Our sin is real. Our sin is heinous. But as Christians, we can have the favor of God anyway – not because if you grade us on a curve with the pagans, we come out on top – no. We have the favor of God because the faithfulness of Jesus Christ has secured it in our behalf.

And so, in Christ, we neither despair over our unworthiness, nor can we boast in our righteousness. Instead, we can embrace the fact that we are unworthy, while also rejoicing that through Christ's merit alone, we have the favor of God.

That's the first form of hope Moses holds out here: that in Christ, we have the favor of God through the faithfulness of another.

The Source of our Forgiveness

But there's a second element of hope that goes with it.

We see that we have the favor of God through the faithfulness of another. But our need, actually, does not stop there. Because we need not only God's favor. We also need his forgiveness.

And the second thing Moses points to is that in the gospel, the forgiveness of God has been secured for us through the intercession of another.

And we see this in the role of Moses here. Because Moses is another covenant representative for Israel.

God declares in verse fourteen that the people of Israel deserve death. And in response, Moses himself – who is innocent in this matter – Moses himself takes on the form of death. I mean that's what it would have looked like: he lies prostrate, like a dead man, before the Lord, neither eating

nor drinking, for forty days. That's what we're told in verse eighteen. What's described there is a miraculous imitation of death that Moses takes on before the Lord. [Theopolis]

And it's after his substitutionary imitation of death that Moses then cleanses the people of their sin, and secures their forgiveness with God. [See Exodus 32:30]

First, he cleanses them of their sin. We read in verse twenty-one of how he crushed their sin and washed it away. He takes the idol, that is the manifestation of their sin, he crushes it to dust, and then he throws the dust into the water. While the Exodus account focuses on different elements of this ritual, here in Deuteronomy, Moses points out that he threw the dust of the idol into a brook that ran down from the mountain ... so that the brook would have carried their sin away from the presence of God, and ultimately away from the presence of the people as well. [Theopolis, 41:00ff]

Then, second, Moses intercedes with God himself. He calls on God, in verse twenty-six through twenty-nine, to forgive the people, in light of his covenant. [Wright, 138]

And God, in his mercy, hears, and willingly receives the intercessory work of Israel's covenant representative. After all, despite the real truth of his wrath expressed in his words here, it was God who appointed the covenant representative for this very thing. [Wright, 140]

And so, as Moses enters into a picture of the death that Israel deserved, as he symbolically cleanses them of their sin, and as he advocates for them in the presence of God, Moses secures forgiveness for the people of Israel, on their behalf.

And like Abraham, Moses's work of intercession was, of course, real. But it wasn't really sufficient. Israel, for their sin, deserved actual death. And it's true that Moses's prostrate fasting before the Lord was *like* death ... but it still wasn't actually death.

But, like Abraham, Moses wasn't meant to secure the forgiveness of God's people on his own ... as much as he was meant to point forward to the One who would.

Because where Moses would imitate death in his intercession for God's people, Jesus would actually enter into death itself. On the cross Jesus experienced not just physical death, but the cosmic judgment of death that was due to God's people.

And now, having paid for the penalty of his people's sin, Jesus cleanses us from our sins, washing them away from our presence and God's presence, while serving as our advocate before God in heaven.

Christians are not forgiven because our sins are less severe than the sins of other people. Christians are not forgiven because we've done enough good things to balance out the scales of our mistakes.

No – Christians deserve eternal death for their sin – their sins are that heinous and the scales are that unbalanced, and we ourselves cannot make things right.

Christians deserve eternal death ... and Christ, in his infinite nature as the Son of God, received that death onto himself on the cross, so that we wouldn't have to. And for his sake, we are now forgiven.

In Christ, we have the forgiveness of God through the intercession of another.

Christians are not saved by their own righteousness. Christians are saved by the faithfulness and the intercession of another.

Conclusion

One of my favorite stories that Jesus told in the gospels is the parable of the pharisee and the tax collector.

And it goes like this – Jesus says to the people: “Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.’ But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ I tell you,” Jesus said, “this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted.”

Luke tells us that Jesus told this parable because there were “some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt.”

Brothers and sisters, that can far too often describe us. We can far too often be like that Pharisee: listening to ourselves, and placing our hope in ourselves, as we assure ourselves that we are righteous by comparing ourselves to others in superficial ways. But that way lies self-deception, and ultimately death.

Instead, Jesus calls us, like the tax collector, to listen not to ourselves, but to the Word of God, and to hope not in ourselves, but in the mercy of God.

Jesus calls us to take our eyes off of ourselves, and to set them on him. Because he is our perfect representative, who lived the life we should have lived to secure God’s favor on our behalf. And he is the perfect sacrificial lamb of God, who died the death that we deserved to die, and so secured God’s forgiveness on our behalf.

How can we be so naive ... how can we be so foolish ... how can we be so wicked as to ever say to ourselves “My righteousness, and the uprightness of my heart have earned me the favor of God.”

Brothers and sisters, if we want to receive God’s favor, if we want to receive God’s forgiveness, we cannot look to ourselves. For we are sinners. We need another to secure God’s favor for us. We need another to secure God’s forgiveness for us.

Thanks be to God that in the gospel of Jesus Christ, God has provided just that for us.

Amen.

This sermon draws on material from:

- Alter, Robert. *The Five Books of Moses: A Translation with Commentary*. New York, NY: Norton, 2004.
- Barker, Paul. Introduction and notes to Deuteronomy in *The ESV Study Bible*. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008.
- Block, Daniel I. *The NIV Application Commentary: Deuteronomy*. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012.
- Sorken, Aaron. *Newsroom*. I think it's from season 3, episode 1: "Boston," 2014.
- Theopolis Podcast. Episode 648: "Not Because of Your Righteousness (Deuteronomy 9)." With Peter Leithart, Alastair Roberts, and John Bejon. June 7, 2023. https://soundcloud.com/user-812874628/episode-648-not-because-of-your-righteousness-deuteronomy-9?utm_source=clipboard&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=social_sharing
- Wright, Christopher. *Deuteronomy*. NIBC. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1996.

Note: In my preaching I often cite and draw from a range of sources, which includes material from Christians within my theological tradition, Christians outside my theological tradition (in keeping with our church's core value of "Reformed Catholicity"), and also (following the Apostle Paul's example in Acts 17) non-Christians who are well outside of Christian orthodoxy and orthopraxy. And so, when I cite an author or a source, that citation should not be understood or construed as me necessarily agreeing with, endorsing, or recommending to others anything else from that author or source, except for what I explicitly say I agree with, endorse, or recommend. When engaging with different materials and thinkers, all Christians must exercise wisdom and discernment to determine what is helpful, appropriate, and edifying for each person, taking into account their current needs, wisdom, and spiritual maturity.