

“Paths Away from God: The Temptations of Self-Assertion”

Deuteronomy 11:1-9

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Faith Presbyterian Church – Morning Service

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The Reading of the Word

We return this morning to the book of Deuteronomy, as Moses continues to give instruction to the people of Israel, as they stand on the verge of the promised land.

With that in mind, we turn to Deuteronomy 11:1-8.

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

Moses said to the people:

^{11:1} “You shall therefore love Yahweh your God and keep his charge, his statutes, his rules, and his commandments always. ² And consider today (since I am not speaking to your children who have not known or seen it), consider the discipline of Yahweh your God, his greatness, his mighty hand and his outstretched arm, ³ his signs and his deeds that he did in Egypt to Pharaoh the king of Egypt and to all his land, ⁴ and what he did to the army of Egypt, to their horses and to their chariots, how he made the water of the Red Sea flow over them as they pursued after you, and how Yahweh has destroyed them to this day, ⁵ and what he did to you in the wilderness, until you came to this place, ⁶ and what he did to Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, son of Reuben, how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households, their tents, and every living thing that followed them, in the midst of all Israel. ⁷ For your eyes have seen all the great work of Yahweh that he did.

⁸ “You shall therefore keep the whole commandment that I command you today, that you may be strong, and go in and take possession of the land that you are going over to possess, ⁹ and that you may live long in the land that Yahweh swore to your fathers to give to them and to their offspring, a land flowing with milk and honey.

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

Righteous are you, O Lord,
and righteous are your rules.
You have appointed your testimonies in righteousness

and in all faithfulness.
Your promises are well tried,
and we, your servants, love them.
Though we be small and despised,
yet we do not forget your precepts.
Your righteousness is righteous forever,
and your word is true.
Even when we face trials,
your commandments are our delight.
Give us now understanding as we come to your word,
that we might here find life.
Grant this, we ask, for Jesus's sake. Amen.
[Based on Psalm 119:137-138, 140-144]

Introduction

In in our passage this morning Moses calls Israel to look back at what God has done. And as he does, he calls them to consider three paths that lead away from God that they can observe in their history, and one path that leads towards God which they should take for their future.

Key in this is that Moses wants Israel to learn lessons from their past – from redemptive history. In verse two, the ESV says: “consider the discipline of Yahweh your God.” But as commentator Daniel Block argues, the Hebrew word that is translated there as “discipline” could be better translated as “lessons” or even “education,” which renders the phrase as: “Know today the lessons of Yahweh your God.” [Block, 282]

Moses is calling Israel to learn the lessons of Yahweh: to study Yahweh's actions in the past, in order to learn more about how to relate to him in the present. And we're called to the same thing as we come to the Scriptures.

After setting up that framework, Moses then points back to three past instances of people taking paths away from God – three forms of arrogant self-assertion that would lead them away from the Lord. Specifically, he warns against:

- Asserting our own cosmopolitan wisdom,
- Asserting our own autonomous authority, and
- Asserting our own personal weaknesses.

Moses warns the people against each of these paths that lead away from God, and then he presents us with an alternative path that will lead us towards God.

Let's consider each.

Asserting Our Cosmopolitan Wisdom

The first path Moses highlights here, which leads away from God, is the path of asserting our own cosmopolitan wisdom.

And we see that in verses three and four. Moses says to them: Consider Yahweh's "deeds that he did in Egypt to Pharaoh the king of Egypt and to all his land, and what he did to the army of Egypt, to their horses and to their chariots, how he made the water of the Red Sea flow over them as they pursued after you, and how Yahweh has destroyed them to this day."

The first person Moses points them to is Pharaoh. Now ... in one sense, Pharaoh's path away from the Lord is complex and nuanced. But as Moses calls us to consider it – to "learn lessons of Yahweh" from it – I think it's helpful to consider where Pharaoh's path began. And I would argue that one key component of its beginning was Pharaoh asserting his "cosmopolitan wisdom."

In Exodus 5, Yahweh sends Moses and Aaron to confront Pharaoh, and to demand that he let his people, Israel, go. And when Pharaoh hears this demand, his response is: "Who is Yahweh, that I should obey his voice and let Israel go? I do not know Yahweh, and moreover, I will not let Israel go." [5:2] That's the answer that Pharaoh gives. That's what sets in motion the escalations, the plagues, and even finally the drowning of Pharaoh and his army in the Red Sea – that answer is where it all starts.

And that answer is not one of an inquirer who wants to know more, or of a humble man admitting a point of ignorance. Instead, Pharaoh's words are the words of a man confident in his own wisdom, confident that he has a solid and sophisticated handle on how the world really works, and confident that he need not take too seriously the obscure and idiosyncratic god of such an unremarkable and odd people as Israel. Pharaoh is well educated. He's powerful. He understands the ways of the world. And he's not going in for this appeal to an odd and obscure deity.

Commentator Robert Alter writes: "The very name, YHWH, of this Semitic deity may be news to Pharaoh, and even if he grants that there is such a god, there is no reason that he, as an Egyptian polytheist and as a figure thought to have divine status himself, should recognize the authority of this Hebrew deity." [Alter, 333-334]

It's almost like Pharaoh says to him: "Moses ... you simple man. It's nice that you have your little god Yahweh. I've never heard of him. And I doubt there's anything special about him. Don't you know how many gods are out there, in the big wide world? Don't you know how many gods I know and serve already? Don't you know that I, myself, am a god? I'm hardly going to reorganize my life and my world just because your particular god tells me to. Expand your horizons, Moses."

When Moses calls on Pharaoh to respond to the demands of Yahweh, Pharaoh instead asserts his own cosmopolitan wisdom. He asserts that he knows better.

And then, in reply, Yahweh tears Pharaoh's wisdom to shreds. In the events that follow, Yahweh shows Pharaoh who he is. He shows him that Yahweh, this unexpected deity, is not just one more god in a large pantheon ... but he is the all-powerful God of the universe. And he does that by

systematically dismantling Egypt, by showing his power over the Nile, over the land, over the weather, over the sun, over the crops and livestock, and in the process, over every god that Pharaoh would have assumed was larger and stronger than Yahweh. In the end, Yahweh kills Pharaoh's heir, and then drowns Pharaoh himself.

Pharaoh had asserted that his understanding of the world was bigger than Yahweh. But the lesson of the exodus – the lesson that Yahweh makes painfully clear in all that follows – is that Yahweh is bigger than Pharaoh's understanding of the world.

Pharaoh had asserted his own cosmopolitan wisdom against the God of the Hebrews. And in the end, that path led him away from the truth, away from reality, away from a relationship with God, and towards self-destruction.

And by calling Israel to consider that lesson, Moses is reminding Israel and us, that that remains a real temptation and possibility for us too.

And, in fact, total trust in cosmopolitan wisdom is a common path away from God today.

Now, don't hear what I'm not saying. There's a place for cosmopolitan wisdom as a tool in our lives. There's value in education. There's value in the collective wisdom of broader perspectives. There's value in listening to worldly experts. All of these things can be a good, God-given tools to navigate certain issues in life. But when confidence in cosmopolitan wisdom becomes the dominant force in our worldview – when it drives us to assume that we, or that a certain class of people, always knows best, and leads us to scoff at other possibilities in the world, then it can become a path of arrogant self-assertion that leads us away from God.

And, in fact, the cosmopolitan wisdom used to reject the God of the Bible changes so much from age to age, that we should see that it cannot really be a reliable path for us.

In ancient Egypt, cosmopolitan wisdom rejected Yahweh in favor of a worldview of polytheism and Pharaoh-worship that today we would scoff at and reject as folly. Centuries later the cosmopolitan wisdom of the Romans would reject Christ in favor of paganism and emperor-worship that today we also would scoff at and reject as folly. Centuries later, the cosmopolitan wisdom of Europe and America would reject Christianity in favor of enlightenment rationalism ... which educated elites today scoff at and reject as folly. And now today, the cosmopolitan wisdom of our own culture would reject biblical Christianity in favor of a religious relativism and ethical progressivism that we have every reason to expect will be one day be scoffed at and rejected as folly by the elites of later generations. There's no rational or historical reason to place our trust in the prevailing opinions of our particular moment over others, as if after all that past error, we must have now at this time, finally reached the truth.

History displays the limits of a human wisdom that seeks the truth apart from God's help. We may turn up our nose at what seem to us to be the quaint or quirky or outdated aspects of Christianity. But as with Pharaoh, our self-confidence or the self-confidence of those around us, probably bears little to no relation to whether we are actually competent to evaluate the claims of the God of the Bible.

Pharaoh assumed that his understanding of the world was broader and more expansive than the narrow, particular, idiosyncratic god of the Hebrews. But what the exodus proved was that that seemingly odd, particular, and idiosyncratic god, Yahweh, was actually the supreme God of the cosmos. His power, and his sovereignty, and his wisdom, and his being were far larger than Pharaoh's understanding. But Pharaoh's refusal to accept that put him on a path away from true truth, away from true wisdom, and away from the true God.

And Moses here warns us not to make the same mistake. Whether you're a non-Christian resisting the claims of Christianity, or a Christian who is struggling with the plausibility of your faith, you need to recognize that when it comes to matters of ultimate importance, the wisdom of cultures come and go, they change and reverses course, they flip and flop from generation to generation and century to century. In the moment, the world's wisdom can feel powerful and ubiquitous. But it always fades and dies ... just as Pharaoh's wisdom did.

But God remains the same. And because he remains the same while every age changes, he will always strike the worldly wisdom of the moment as out-of-step in one way or another. Each century might have a different reason for thinking that the God of the Bible is too narrow or too particular or too strange or too idiosyncratic – the Egyptians, the Romans, the Rationalists, and the Relativists will disagree on the details – but Yahweh will always, in some way, contradict the worldly cosmopolitan wisdom of the moment. But that shouldn't upset us. Instead, it should boost our confidence – or at least our curiosity. Because any God who is worthy to be called God should stand above and apart from the passing intellectual fads and fluctuations of the moment. And such a God would himself be the source of true wisdom. And accepting that – expecting that – is an important step towards real wisdom for us.

And so, in Pharaoh, we see that the first path away from God which Moses warns us against is the path of asserting our own cosmopolitan wisdom against who God himself tells us he is, in the Scriptures.

Asserting Our Autonomous Authority

The second path away from God that Moses warns the people about – the second lesson about how not to relate to Yahweh that Moses wants them to learn – is the path of asserting our autonomous authority against the authority structures God has placed in our lives. And this comes up in verse six, when Moses urges the people to consider what Yahweh “did to Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, son of Reuben, how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households, their tents, and every living thing that followed them, in the midst of all Israel.”

Here Moses is referring to events in Israel's history that are recorded in Numbers 16. Let's hear how that episode begins. We read there:

^{16:1} Now Korah the son of Izhar, son of Kohath, son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, and On the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, took men. ² And they rose up before Moses, with a number of the people of Israel, 250 chiefs of the congregation, chosen from the assembly, well-known men. ³ They assembled themselves together against Moses and against Aaron and said

to them, “You have gone too far! For all in the congregation are holy, every one of them, and Yahweh is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the assembly of Yahweh?”

Now ... what exactly is going on here?

Well, God, after the exodus, had established certain authority structures, and he had told Israel that he would work through them. Specifically, he established the Aaronic priesthood to serve as spiritual authorities over Israel, and he established Moses to serve as an authority over Israel in both spiritual and temporal matters. And some of the Levites and Reubenites were not okay with that. They instead assert their autonomous authority – in spiritual and temporal matters. They won’t have any spiritual authority in their lives telling them what to do. They won’t have some temporal authority placed over them in the world, exerting influence in their lives. And so they come to Moses, and they assert their autonomous authority over and against the authority of Aaron and Moses, whom God had appointed.

If Pharaoh’s path was the path of sophisticated cosmopolitanism, then Dathan and Abiram’s path was the path of traditional conservatism. Because Dathan and Abiram were really just trying to conserve and return to the more family-centered, decentralized, less hierarchical way that thing used to be in Israel.

In the past, there had been no centralized priesthood, and no centralized authority figure over the twelve tribes. Each Israelite, within their family structures, could sacrifice to God all on their own, wherever they wanted, without submitting to the authority of an Aaronic priest, and each clan could operate in temporal matters as it wanted, without needing to consider some centralized leader like Moses. That’s how it had been in the past – that was the Israelite tradition. And the tradition seemed good to them. It made sense. And it protected their own autonomy and independence. It didn’t call them to submit to some priest in religious matters or some human head of Israel in temporal matters. And they want to return to that. And so, to put it in modern terms, in Dathan and Abiram, Aaron and Moses have something of a populist, anti-authority, anti-institution rebellion on their hands.

They effectively say: “Who do you think you are? No one claims authority over me, or my household, or my clan. No one claims spiritual authority over me. I am my own priest. I am my own king. You have no right to assert your authority over me – whether in earthly matters or eternal matters!”

Dathan and Abiram show up and they assert their own autonomous authority – both in human society and before God.

In response, we read in Numbers 16, God warns the people to get away from the tents of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram. Then Moses says to the people: “Hereby you shall know that Yahweh has sent me to do all these works, and that it has not been of my own accord [...] if Yahweh creates something new, and the ground opens its mouth and swallows them up with all that belongs to them, and they go down alive into Sheol, then you shall know that these men have despised Yahweh.”

“³¹ And as soon as he had finished speaking all these words, the ground under them split apart. ³² And the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up.”

As God had swallowed Pharoah and his followers up in the water, so he swallowed Dathan and Abiram and their followers up in the earth.

Because God, in his wisdom, had established authorities over them in both spiritual and temporal matters. He had appointed those human beings to serve as his representatives. And to reject that – to assert their autonomous authority over and against those whom God had appointed over them in their lives – was, Moses says, ultimately, a rejection of God himself.

Now, once again, don’t hear what I’m not saying. There’s a place for autonomous authority in certain areas of our lives. There is a time to oppose real tyranny and to value God-given liberties. But as philosopher Charles Taylor has explored and documented, in our culture, what began as an effort, centuries ago, to assert autonomy in a specific realm of politics, and liberties in specific areas of life, has become, in the modern West, an overarching dominating worldview that demands autonomy in every area of life and rejects authority structures that Christians had accepted as God-given for centuries, up until recently. And when insistence on autonomous authority in life, and in the world, and before God – when that becomes a dominating force in our worldview – when it drives us to reject the authorities that God has placed over us, then it can become a path of arrogant self-assertion that leads us away from God.

We see this in earthly and temporal matters. The Bible tells us, in Romans 13: “Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore,” Paul writes, “whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. [...] For he is the servant of God, an avenger who carries out God's wrath on the wrongdoer. Therefore one must be in subjection, not only to avoid God's wrath but also for the sake of conscience. [...] Pay to all what is owed to them: taxes to whom taxes are owed, revenue to whom revenue is owed, respect to whom respect is owed, honor to whom honor is owed.” We read also in 1 Peter 2: “Be subject for the Lord's sake to every human institution, whether it be to the emperor as supreme, or to governors as sent by him to punish those who do evil and to praise those who do good. [...] Honor everyone. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the emperor.”

The Apostles Peter and Paul could write those words even when Nero was the emperor of Rome. Nero – whose rule and personal life was tyrannical, corrupt, self-indulgent, unjust, and full of debauchery. Now ... that doesn’t mean that Peter and Paul wouldn’t be willing to challenge and correct the false claims and sinful actions of Nero – not at all. But even so, if Peter and Paul could write those words of exhortation to Christians living under Nero – if they could tell them to honor and respect Nero as one put in his position by God ... then surely the same exhortation would apply to Biden ... or to Trump ... or to Inslee ... or to any other leader we may or may not particularly like. So the lesson of Dathan and Abiram applies to how we relate to temporal worldly authorities.

But it also, importantly, applies to how we relate to spiritual authorities – to the Church as an institution. As theologian Daniel Strange points out, we are a culture that trusts our own spiritual

intuitions far more than we trust religious institutions. And that presents challenges for Christians and non-Christians alike when it comes to the Bible's calling on us to be active members in the Church community, and to submit to the Church's authority and leadership in our lives.

God has established his Church. It is far from perfect – Scripture and history make that clear. But we are called to respect and to receive from the Church, to submit to it, as a means God has established for our spiritual growth. You need the oversight of church elders in your life. You need the exhortation of church deacons in your life. You need the sermons and counsel of church pastors in your life. And beyond the officers themselves, you need the shepherding and wisdom of various church leaders and members in your life. You are not enough to live the Christian life. God has established the Church – as both a community and as an institution. And you need that. God has provided the Church for your encouragement ... but he has also provided it for your correction.

How do you feel about that? Are you really willing to accept it? Or will you only really hear the Church's correction in your life, if you've already decided, on your own, that you agree with it, in that particular instance? If so, that's not accepting authority. That's just two people agreeing about something.

Now, Church authority, of course, is not absolute – we had a Reformation over that issue. But that doesn't mean it's not still real. That doesn't mean it's not still important.

God has established the Church because we, in our autonomy, are prone to error, to arrogance, and to folly. He gave us the Church to confront and correct us. If we reject the very means God has placed in our lives for our spiritual growth and maturity, then we are rejecting him. And that puts us on a path away from God ... just like Dathan and Abiram.

Proverbs 26:12 says:

“Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes?
There is more hope for a fool than for him.”

Asserting our cosmopolitan wisdom is not the only way to become more hopeless than a fool. Asserting our own autonomous authority is another way to fall into the very same trap, if we reject the humbling, instructive, and corrective authorities that the Lord has placed in our lives. If we make that arrogant mistake ... then there is more hope for a fool than for us.

And so that is the second path away from God that Moses highlights here.

Asserting Our Personal Weaknesses

The third path away from God that Moses warns the people about is the path of asserting our personal weakness against the power of God.

And we see this, I think, in verse five. There, Moses points Israel to the judgment that had fallen on their parents and grandparents. There he tells them to consider what Yahweh “did to you in the wilderness, until you came to this place.”

Now, there were many episodes of sin and judgment over those forty years, but as with Pharaoh, I think it's helpful to look to the sin that stood at the headwaters: the sin that led to the time in the wilderness in the first place. And that was Israel's sin at Kadesh.

In Numbers 13 we read of how God brought Israel to Kadesh, on the verge of the promised land, and then called them to go in in conquest, to battle God's enemies, and to take the land. But when Israel learned about the size and the strength of the Canaanites in the land, they refused to go in. "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we are" some of their leaders say [13:31]. And in light of that fact, the people refused to enter the land. They believed that their human weakness was a bigger factor in what would happen to them than God's cosmic strength was. And so they refuse to follow Yahweh. And that sets them on a path away from God. That is the mistake that their parents and grandparents had made, and Moses warns them not to make the same mistake – the mistake of asserting their personal weakness in a way that will put them on a path away from the Lord.

Now, again, don't hear what I'm not saying. There is an important place for humble self-awareness of our weaknesses – for owning them, and making decisions with them in mind. That is certainly true, and it's an essential aspect of biblical humility. But when honesty about our weaknesses goes from being an important part of humility, and becomes instead so dominating in our worldview that it leads us to limit what God can do in us and through us – then it can lead us to reject God's calling on us, and it becomes a path away from God.

And that was the fatal flaw of Israel at Kadesh. They believed that their weakness was stronger than God's strength. Which ... ironically, is actually a form of arrogant self-assertion – insisting that what they bring (or don't bring) to the table is more important than what God brings.

And we can so easily fall into the same error.

For some, it has to do with our past sin. Maybe you have done terrible things in your past. You know this. You own it. Which is good. That's the first step towards biblical repentance. But then, rather than bring those sins to God and trust the work of Jesus Christ to remove those sins from you through the cross ... you insist that your sins are too great for God to forgive. Which may sound humble. But it's actually, at root, an arrogant claim that your ability to sin is stronger than God's ability to forgive. It's a claim that Jesus's work on the cross has met its match in you.

Brothers and sisters, your sin may be heinous. It may be powerful. But don't you for a minute think it's more powerful than God. Don't you for a minute believe that Jesus is too weak to forgive your sin. Don't doubt his promises that if you come to him, in faith and repentance, then he can and will forgive you. To deny that is to take the path of arrogant self-assertion over humble reliance on God.

For others, the assertion of their personal weakness against the power of God may come out more as they think of their current struggles with sin.

They look at the sins they seem ensnared by today ... the sins they cannot seem to shake or overcome ... and they look at Jesus's call to follow him and to live in obedience to him ... and they throw up their hands, and they say they can't do it. They are too weak to live the Christian life. And so they turn from the Lord.

Again, the first steps of this thought process are right. You are too weak. You are no match for your sin. You don't "got this." Israel was right when they looked at the Canaanites and said, "We can't defeat these guys." But they were wrong when they also said, "And the Lord can't defeat them for us either."

In the same way, when you look at your sin, you should see that you cannot defeat it. But next, you must remember that God can. Stepping onto the battlefield believing that is what biblical faith so often looks like.

Now, we should note that this is not a promise of instant success. In the conquest, some Canaanites were defeated swiftly. Others the Lord allowed to remain an ongoing struggle for Israel. But in either case, he did not allow his people to be destroyed by their enemies. And he gave them victory in the end. And he will do the same for us. We may struggle with our sin. But if we trust in the Lord, he will not wholly give us up to it. And he will give us ultimate victory – in this life or the next. Because he is always stronger than our sin.

Finally, for some, this assertion of personal weakness takes the form of cynicism that they will be able to affect the world around them. Which leads them to abandon God's calling to love those in the world and to seek to make disciples of unbelievers.

Again, it's true that we may be weak individually. It's also true that right now the Church may be weak culturally. But God remains as strong as ever. And his strength is made perfect in weakness. We do not know what he plans to do in us and through us. But we do know that nothing is impossible for him. And so despite the power of the unbelief we see in the individuals around us or in the culture we live in, we are called, with faith that God's power is stronger, to continue to carry out his commission to seek to make disciples of all nations – including our nation. And we must not withdraw or retreat from our commission, like Israel did at Kadesh.

Stepping back, we see that Moses has laid out three paths that could lead us away from God: the path of arrogantly asserting our own cosmopolitan wisdom, the path of arrogantly asserting our own autonomous authority, and the path of arrogantly asserting our own personal weakness.

What then is the alternative that Moses calls us to?

The Alternative: Taking Our Eyes Off of Ourselves

Well, we see that in verses seven through nine. There, Moses first reminds them: "your eyes have seen all the great work of Yahweh that he did." And then he says to them: "You shall therefore keep the whole commandment that I command you today, that you may be strong, and go in and take possession of the land that you are going over to possess, and that you may live long in the

land that Yahweh swore to your fathers to give to them and to their offspring, a land flowing with milk and honey.”

Moses tells them in verse seven that they need to take their eyes off of themselves, and set their eyes on Yahweh. They need to take their eyes off of their own Pharoah-like cosmopolitan wisdom, off of their own Abiram-like autonomous authority, off of their own Israel-like personal weaknesses – they need to take their eyes off of themselves, and set their eyes on Yahweh, and his great power, which is seen in his great works.

In verse seven he reminds them to set their eyes on God’s power. And in verse nine he calls them to remember God’s promises – promises made to their forefathers.

And with their eyes set on God’s power and promises, they are then to respond to his call, and keep his commandments. They need to strive to do what he has called them to do, not because they trust in their own wisdom, or autonomy, or power, but because they trust wholly in the power and the promises of God.

And God calls us to the same thing.

Do you want to live the Christian life? Do you want to receive the blessings of the gospel? Do you want to walk in faith – in faith that can overcome both your sin and the unbelief of the world? Do you want to find the truth? Then take your eyes off of your worldly wisdom. Let go of your demands for worldly autonomy. Stop fretting about your worldly weakness. And set your eyes on the Lord.

From the Scriptures, from creation, from history, from his work in your heart – learn the lessons of Yahweh your God, as verse two calls you to. Remember his power and his promises. And then, trusting in him, rather than in yourself, step forward and obey his calling on you, in faith that his power is supreme, and his promises are sure.

That is the call of the gospel.

That is the call that Moses gives to Israel.

And that is what it looks like to love the Lord, and to walk on a path that will bring us closer and closer to him.

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.
- Theopolis Podcast. Episode 654: “Love and Serve Yahweh (Deuteronomy 11).” With Peter Leithart, Alastair Roberts, Jeff Meyers, and John Bejon. June 28, 2023. <https://soundcloud.com/user-812874628/episode-654-love-and-serve-yahweh-deuteronomy-11>
- 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.