

Deuteronomy 7

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Preacher: Stuart Cashman

[0 : 00] Well, if you're visiting today, let me explain. We're working slowly through this book of Deuteronomy, and we get to chapter 7. The context here is that God has rescued Israel from slavery in Egypt through their own disobedience. They wandered around the desert for 40 years, but now they're on the borders of the promised land, about to go in and take possession of it as God gives it to them.

And so Moses, their great leader, who is right at the end of his life, who will not go into the promised land, is urging them, encouraging them, preaching God's message to them, that they will firmly grasp hold of the great promises the Lord has made.

We come now to Deuteronomy 7, and the context is he's already said the great commandment that Paul read to us before our confession, chapter 6, verse 4.

Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God, the Lord is one. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your might. And so he's explaining to them and to us what it looks like in practice to love the Lord our God with all our heart and soul and mind and strength.

And this is a great chapter, but it sort of says some great questions in it, aren't there? Look at verse 2 for a moment, over the page in 152. When the Lord your God gives them, these nations, over to you, you must defeat them, you must devote them to complete destruction.

[1 : 26] We'll look down to verse 16. You shall consume all the peoples that the Lord your God will give over to you. Your eyes shall not pity them, neither shall you serve them or their gods, for they will be a snare to you.

Now how does that sound in our 21st century Western ears? It doesn't sound nice, does it? What's the great value that is still extolled in our culture today?

Sure, there's tolerance, isn't it? We've got to be tolerant to people. And yet here we read God commanding to destroy, to tear down, to have nothing to do with, to show no pity.

And that raises questions, doesn't it? So some people look at this and say, well, this is not a God of love. And so they will turn away and reject God completely. Other people will say, well, hang on, this is the Old Testament.

So, you know, God was a bit mean and nasty in the Old Testament. But in the New Testament, we get a much warmer, fluffier, cuddly God. He's more like us, we like him. So we'll ignore the Old Testament and just listen to the New Testament.

[2 : 32] Well, the thing is, to go down either of those routes is not to take God's revelation of himself, what God says about himself, seriously. If we want to follow the living God, we need to take him seriously, don't we?

We need to listen to what he says. So when we read things in the Bible that perplex us, or when we experience things in our own lives which trouble us, like the news we just heard of Hannah Lee and her family being killed in Afghanistan, as we read about those things, as we experience those things, we can either choose to walk away or we can choose to wrestle with them.

And say, okay, God, how does that work out? How does that fit with what you say? And if that's what we're going to do, if we're going to take God at his word, we need to begin by looking at who God is, what he reveals about himself.

And so at the center of this chapter, at the center of chapter 7, we get this description of the Lord's character. See what he says there about himself in verses 9 and 10.

This is where we need to begin with all our wrestling, all our seeking to understand his commands and what's going on in our lives. Chapter 7, verse 9. Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments.

[3 : 49] This is who God is. He reveals himself like this in scripture. He reveals himself ultimately to us in the Lord Jesus Christ through his death and resurrection. And what do we see about him? We see that he is God.

That's what it says there, isn't it? Know therefore that the Lord your God is God. There is no other. This is what he is like. And actually that's the whole point of G. Deuteronomy 7. The charge to destroy.

The charge to burn down all these other statues and gods. Which comes from the fact that there is only one God. He is God. This is not ethnic cleansing.

God isn't commanding this because he doesn't like the Canaanites. He's commanding it because he is God. And ultimately every man, woman and child who is alive today and alive throughout history is accountable to him.

And what sort of God is he? What does it say? He's a faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love. Well, what's a covenant? A covenant is an agreement.

[4 : 46] It's not an agreement. It's an agreement that God imposes on us. It's not something we discuss. It's what he says. And it's a promise. And he's faithful to that promise of relationship. And because he's faithful, the way we respond makes a difference.

He'll go either one of two ways. We will receive the blessing that he promises. So he keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him. And keep his calm to a thousand generations.

For those who trust him. For those who believe in him. For those who go his way. There is blessing, love for a thousand generations. That's forever really, isn't it? But if those who reject him.

Those who reject this God who is God. What happens? Verse 10. He repays to their face those who hate him. By destroying them. He will not be slack with one who hates them.

He will repay him to his face. This is what God is like. He is God. There is no other. He is a gracious God who shows love. But for those who embrace that love and trust him.

[5 : 50] There's love for a thousand generations. For those who turn away. Because there is only one God. There is judgment. And that's what this is about. We need to remember this as we unpack these commands here in G.

Deuteronomy 7. They come from the God who is God. The God who is loving and gracious. And yet the God who will ultimately judge all rebellion. The central message is this.

Because our covenant Lord is faithful. In all his ways. We must resist all compromise. Because the Lord is faithful to us and to his promises.

We must resist all compromise in our lives. Now what's the basis of all this? It springs from his character. But we see it impressed here upon us by Moses. Because of the purpose God has for the world.

Because of the privilege he's bestowed on his people. And because of the promises he makes for our future. The purpose he has. The privilege he bestows. And the promises he makes for our future.

[6 : 49] I'm going to look at those hopefully relatively briefly. As long as my voice lasts. So first of all. What is God's purpose? Why does he want the Canaanites to be obliterated? Well look at verse 8 for a moment.

We get a hint of God's purpose here. Moses says, Not because you're a great number that the Lord called to save you. But, verse 8. It is because the Lord loves you.

And is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers. The oath that he swore to your fathers.

Genesis, that was in our call to worship this morning. The oath that the Lord has sworn to our father Abraham.

What was that oath? It was an oath to make Abraham into a great nation. It was an oath to give Abraham's descendants a land.

And here are the Israelites. A great nation. On the borders of that land. And what was the purpose of this oath? Genesis 12, verse 3. That in you, Abraham. In your offspring. All the nations of the earth shall be blessed.

[7 : 46] That's God's great purpose. It's why he rescued the Israelites. It's why he was giving them this land. It was so he could bring his blessing to all the world. A world that needs his blessing, doesn't it?

God is on a mission to end the brokenness. To end families being slain by terrorists in Kabul. To end injustice. To end depression. To end the fragmentation of living in a world where the created order is softened against us.

With tsunamis and monsoons and earthquakes. God is on a mission to end all that. To bring his blessing. His restoration. To get rid of Eden's curse.

And bring his blessings as far as a curse is found. As we sang earlier. And God's people have a part to play in all that. Now, how does that purpose lead him to be commanding the Israelites to destroy all the Canaanites?

How's that a blessing? Well, let's be clear. When God says that Israel has destroyed all the Canaanites, this is not ethnic cleansing. It's not God wanting to get rid of the Canaanites because he doesn't like them. It's not about demonstrating that Israel is powerful.

[8 : 53] Because they are not. They're trembling in their boots at this point. It's not a reward for Israel's good behavior. If you know anything about the Bible, you know Israel were not very good. In fact, consistently they were very un-good.

And it's not a command for us today to go and kill God's enemies. That's not the point either. What it is, is an act of judgment. Of the one true God. Declaring that he is the just judge. Back in Genesis chapter 15.

When the Lord had promised this land to Abraham. He said, I'm not going to give it to your people yet. Reason why? Genesis 15 and 16. For the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete. In other words, I'm not going to send your descendants in there, Abraham.

Until the people are ready for judgment. I'm going to be patient with them. But one day my patience will run out and I will judge. So that's what's going on here. It's God's judgment. And that is actually a warning to all of us.

That is a warning to all of us. And if you look at the text, verse 2, it makes that very clear. When the Lord your God gives them, the occupants of the land, over to you and you defeat them, you must devote them to complete destruction.

[10 : 00] Now, what that phrase means is essentially renouncing all rights over them, Israel. Admit they belong to God. Give them all over to the Lord God. To the one who is God. They're all his.

You're not to use the spoils for your own comfort. You're not to be after their gold or silver. You're to give everything over to the Lord God. It doesn't necessarily mean that every individual had to be killed.

If it did mean that, then verse 3 would be needed, would it? Make no treaty with them. Don't intermarry with them. What it meant is as Israel went about this war, they're to realize that every man, woman and child they came across, all the things they came across, belonged to the Lord God.

And that's true for everything on the planet, isn't it? There is one God. And all of us are accountable to him. And that's the point here.

Judgment is coming. The Lord is the creator. He has rights over everything he made. As the creator, he has the right to judge each one of us. He will do that in keeping with his character.

[11 : 01] So this is a little preview of what's going to happen one day. One day this great God will call everyone to account for the way we've responded to him.

Whether we have accepted the steadfast love he offers us in the Lord Jesus Christ. Or whether we turn away and reject that and therefore hate him. So this is there to teach us this judgment is coming.

And therefore, though we all need the blessing God promises. The blessing that comes only through Abraham's descendant. And more of him later. So why did the Lord want the Canaanites destroyed?

In a sense that's not the right question. The question for us is, how can I be sure to experience God's blessing and not the judgment I deserve? That's really the question, isn't it? And that's the first reason.

That's the first thing we learn here. The first reason God is commanding this to the Israelites. He's showing us something of the Lord's purpose in his world. So why did Israel have this particular purpose?

[12 : 02] Why was Israel commanded to be loyal to the Lord by doing this? Well, here we go to the second reason. The privilege the Lord bestows on his people. He'd given them so much, hadn't he?

Let's look down at verses 5 and 6 to get the logic here. Verse 5. Thus you shall deal with them. You shall break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and chop down their asherim.

Poles used in worship in the land. And burn their carved images with fire. Why? Why? Verse 6. For you are a people holy to the Lord your God.

See the privilege that God's people have?

Moses uses three different phrases to describe the privilege. First of all, you are a people holy to the Lord your God. Now I don't know what idea comes to your mind when you hear the word holy.

[12:58] But it's probably not the right idea. We often think holy as kind of, I don't know, I don't know what you think, but people who are particularly religious and good. But that's not part of the idea. In the original language, the idea of holiness is the idea of separation.

Being separated for God. God, we have some holy wooden spoons in a utensils drawer in our kitchen. They are holy because they are set apart for a particular use.

They are set apart for gluten free baking. Now, more or less than important to you, but wood easily gets contaminated. You can't just put it through a dishwasher.

And so if you use these wooden spoons on normal flour, then the gluten from the flour will contaminate the wood. Not a problem for most people, but for our children who have celiac disease, who are in the words of their consultant, exquisitely sensitive.

It is a problem. So we have these holy wooden spoons. They're set apart for gluten free baking. So that our kids don't get sick everywhere and get their intestines destroyed.

[14:01] It's kind of the same idea here. Israel has been set apart. They're God's holy people set apart for his purpose. An even more important purpose than gluten free baking.

And so they must not become contaminated. You can see that's behind all these commands. Look at verse 5. They are to cut down all the religious symbols. The pillars and the ashering poles and burn their carved images.

The reason why? So they didn't become contaminated. So they remained fit for purpose. And not unfit. If our wooden spoons get contaminated, we may as well burn them.

If Israel gets contaminated, they're no longer fit as a vehicle for God's blessing in the world. I want to use perhaps a more relevant illustration. Think about medical professionals going to work in Ebola-hit areas in West Africa.

What do they need to be careful of above all? Surely it's that they don't get infected themselves. I mean, can you imagine a doctor working in an Ebola clinic in West Africa saying, I love my patients so much.

[15:07] I'm going to show them how tolerant I am with them. I'm going to share a drink cup with them. I'm going to finish the piece of fruit they've half eaten. Would that be tolerance? It would be foolishness, wouldn't it?

If they get contaminated, then they can no longer do the purpose which they've done there. And so it is for Israel. They're to keep themselves from any sense of the contamination. The infective ideas or the infective materials of the people of Canaan.

So look down at verses 25 and 26 for a moment. The carved images of their gods you shall burn with fire. You shall not covet the silver or gold that is on them, or take it for yourselves, lest you be ensnared by it.

For it is an abomination to the Lord your God. You shall not bring an abominable thing into your house and become devoted to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest and abhor it, for it is devoted to destruction.

It is a virus that pollutes. It is a virus that brings death. The Lord hates it. If he's to bring his blessing on the world, he needs to destroy it. If there's going to be healing in the areas of West Africa and infected by Ebola, the virus needs to be destroyed, doesn't it?

[16:18] All the contaminated material needs to be burnt up and killed. And so it is here. These sinful things will infect Israel, infect them, pollute them. So for their privileged role in the world, they cannot tolerate them.

The Lord will not tolerate them either. So they're privileged, they're holy and set apart. But see the other words Moses uses. Verse 6. They are treasured. They're not just wooden spoons in a drawer. They're something more valuable. Verse 6. The Lord has chosen you out to be a people for his treasured possession. Out of all the people who are on the face of the earth. Now that little phrase there, treasured possession, was the word used for the special treasures that kings kept in their

palaces.

I mean, the king would own everything, wouldn't he, in the ancient Near East? The king was incalculably wealthy. But he would have his treasured possession. That's the word here. The things that were most valuable to him.

Can you imagine the angels talking to the Lord God Almighty? What is your treasured possession? What's so valuable to you, Almighty God? Is it that beautiful planet you created?

[17:23] Is it the beauty of the Norwegian coastline? Or the vastness of the Grand Canyon? What's really special to you? He says, well, out of all those who I've made in my image, out of those 6 billion image bearers on planet earth at the moment, the ones who are really special, the ones who are really treasured, are this bunch here, meeting in this school in West Healing.

And all those like them across the world, who my son has redeemed, my son has bought for me. They are my treasured possession. It's a special thing the Lord loves to gaze at and look at it. His people. If it was Israel then, it's us now. Set apart, treasured, and beloved. Look at verse 7. It's not because you're more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you.

It's not because there's anything about you, Moses says to Israel. But he just set his love upon you and chose you. And that word, set his love upon you, elsewhere actually expresses longing in the Bible.

So Genesis chapter 4 verse 8. A father says, my son longs for your daughter. It's the same word. It stresses attachment. Commitment. The Lord has committed himself.

[18:37] He's chosen his people. He's chosen to love. And he does all that. Why? Verse 8. Because he loves you. Because he loves you.

Why does the Lord love you? Because he loves you. Because that's what he chose to do. Why does he love the church? Because he chose to. It's a mystery of his sovereign will. Which we bow down in humility.

But you see the privilege here? Treasured. Set apart. Loved. If you're a Christian, that's who you are. That is the privilege you have.

In Christ we are holy and dearly loved. As Peter said, 1 Peter chapter 2 verse 9. Taking these words and applying them to the church of the New Testament. It says you're a chosen race. A royal priesthood.

A holy nation. A people for his possession. For his treasured possession. So that's the privilege we have. Just as Israel had this privilege. We have a privilege.

[19:35] And being given that love. Being given that privilege by the Lord. How should we respond? Well you see how Israel was to respond. Verse 3. You shall not intermarry with them.

Giving your daughters to their sons. Or taking their daughters for your sons. For they would turn your sons from following me. Because of this privilege, Israel was to be loyal to the Lord. We are to be loyal to him as well.

Now intermarriage obviously leads to divided loyalties. This time of year we always have a bit of divided loyalty in my family. Where are we going every new year? Are we going down to Mariel's parents? Up to my parents.

It's more of a divided loyalty when the six nations rugby kicks off actually. Then it's a bigger divided loyalty. Because in marriage it commits conflicting loyalties, doesn't it? It would do that for Israel then.

It would do it for us now. That's why Paul effectively reiterates this command in the New Testament. 1 Corinthians chapter 7 verse 39. He says that if a woman marries, If a married woman's husband dies, She's free to marry, But only in the Lord.

[20:38] See, Christians have to marry Christians. Now I know this is terribly hard for many of us, isn't it? I know if you're 16 at school, You think, well, What's wrong with going out with a non-Christian boy? I'm only 16, I'm not going to marry him.

It doesn't get any easier in your 20s or 30s, Or 40s, does it? Especially for the ladies among us, When there are less Christian men around. But do you understand?

It's not a command to limit you. It's a command to enable you to enjoy the privileges the Lord has given us. A command based on His grace. It's based on all that He's given. Based on the fact that you are, we are, Treasured, loved, privileged, set apart.

We live in a culture that teaches us you're only worth something if you're in a relationship. That your value is dependent upon who you're with. That is not true. What is this scripture teaching us? It's teaching us that a living God has loved His people, Loves His people, Treasures them. Why compromise that love? Why turn away from it? Why look for a lesser love?

[21 : 47] When the God of all creation has set His love upon you, He's given His Son to die for you, To make you His. Why trade that for the love of a man or woman that will not last forever?

See, because our covenant Lord is faithful in all His ways, We must resist all compromise. That includes personally the compromise of marriage to someone who is not committed to the God who loves us.

There's also an application for us as a church, isn't there? Look at verse 5 for a moment. Thus you shall deal with them. You shall break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and chop down their asherim and burn their carved images with fire.

Now, we don't have carvings of the goddess Asherah over our landscape here, do we? But what were these things? As the Israelites went into this land, they'd see all these symbols around, Which were symbols, yes, of the religious practice of the Canaanites.

But beyond that even, there were symbols of the worldview. Symbols of the basic assumptions, the stories that these people believe. And our culture is littered with such symbols, aren't they?

[22 : 50] I mean, just going to central London today, what do you see? See, an ever-increasing number of huge skyscrapers, huge tour blocks, The Shard and all these others. What are they there for?

They're symbols of human pride. Symbols of human progress, aren't they? Look how clever we are. Look how wealthy we are. We can build tall buildings. Now, some of them are very beautiful, and that's good. But in a sense, they're...

There's one song I used to know as a teenager I had it. They're shrines of wonder. Man worshipping man. They're propagating the idea that we're progressing. Especially if you look at the contrast in these little churches down here and these huge new tall buildings.

What is that architecture communicating? It's communicating a worldview of this is where our power is. This is where our strength is. It's our own progress. It's our own wealth. Our own intelligence. Our own engineering.

And it's so easy to fall into that way of thinking, isn't it? To get into those ideologies. To think that progress is all about what we humans do. But if you've listened carefully to the language used about the discussion when the Church of England chose to ordain female bishops, what was the language?

[23 : 56] On the BBC, it was the language that the traditionalists were against it, but the progressives were in favour of it. What's that language seeking to communicate to us?

Seeking to communicate that people who like tall buildings, people who like good computers, people who are into progress, they're with these new ideas, whereas traditionalists who don't like those things, they're all backward and a bit stupid and not up with it, and they still listen to tradition in the Word of God.

That's what it's trying to communicate. It's so easy for us, isn't it? To fall into line with that thinking. But just as the Israelites were to cut down the Asherah poles, so we too need to cut out all from all our thinking, the idea that somehow human society is progressing.

If progress means moving away from the Word of God, then that is not actually progress. The people who move further in that way are actually further behind, not further ahead. So we have this privilege of being God's people.

Treasured, loved, set apart. So we must not fall into the practices of the world around us. We must not fall into the worldview and the thinking of a culture that has rejected God.

[25 : 13] We need to remember who we are, the privilege we have. We need to remember the purpose for which God has called us. And ultimately, through His people, He brings His blessing to the world. And also, thirdly, and more briefly, hopefully, we need to look at the promises He has for us.

There are two types of promises here. You've got promises to encourage obedience, and promises to enable obedience. Look at the promises to encourage obedience there in verse 12. Here's what the Lord promises His people Israel as they move into the land.

Because you listen to these rules and keep and do them, the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant and steadfast love that He swore to your fathers. He will love you, bless you, and multiply you. You also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain, your wine, your oil, the increase of your herds, and the young of your flock, in the land that He swore your fathers to give you.

Now what we can't hear, because we weren't there, is that Moses is actually promising that the Lord will do all the things that the gods of Canaan promised.

Because all the gods that those nations worshipped were all basically fertility gods. If you came and worshipped them, then the idea was you could cajole them into giving you fruitful crops, and fruitful herds, and fruitful families.

[26 : 27] The Lord says, no. You won't get those things through those other gods, through those false gods. Leave them completely. I'm the one who gives you all things.

I'm the one who can make you fruitful. I'm the one who can provide you with security. Because ultimately that's what large families and large crops and herds are about. They're about fruitfulness and security.

Now we don't have Canaanite pagan religions around us. But if you look at the magazines on sale in Tesco's, if you look at the books in Waterstones, then actually 21st century European paganism is alive and kicking.

Come to this investment seminar. It will make you rich. Read this magazine. It will tell you how to be healthy and beautifully and sexually successful. It's all the same thing, isn't it?

Basically. Wealth and fruitfulness. That's what it's all promising. The Lord says, no. Those things ultimately come from me. Don't look for your happiness.

[27 : 27] Don't look for your security. Don't look for your prosperity anywhere else. Because I am the living God who loves you and treasures you. Trust in me. Reject those things. Be loyal to me. Escape those things.

Now of course this is not a simple promise. That if you do God's will, life will go well with you. We know that's not true right now, don't we? We've heard the terrible news of that family being killed in Afghanistan.

A reminder that faithfulness to God does not mean life will go well now. It is true that generally, as we follow God's ways, because we end up being nice to people who are kind, to others, often there is a payoff there.

But in this world, while there is still evil, while there is still sin, there is no perfect security, no perfect happiness. Until sin is completely obliterated, until evil is finally judged, this is still a broken world. So, we will not experience these promises in their fullness until Christ returns. But it was there for Israel. If they had lived this life in the land, the Lord would have provided.

[28 : 38] Well, that's a promise to encourage their obedience. Well, I don't know about you, I don't need promises to encourage my obedience, I need promises that enable my obedience. If you could tell me, you'd give me a million pounds if I ran a marathon, that might be an encouragement, but it doesn't actually help me run the marathon.

I just cannot do it. So, we need more promises, don't we? Look at verse 17. This is to help them, help them to live the life in the land they should do. If you say in your heart, these nations are greater than I, how can I dispossess them?

That was a fear for them, wasn't it? What are they to do? They're to remember the past. Verse 18. You shall not be afraid of them, but you shall remember what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh, and to all Egypt. The argument here is that, remember, you're in Egypt, and the Lord rescued you. And Egypt was the superpower of the day. If the Lord did that to them, he's going to have no problem with the Perizzites, and the Gergoshites, and all these others. And let's face it, today, how many of us know people who've gone to see great Gergoshite palaces and ruins in the Middle East?

Hands up if you know someone who's done that. Who knows anyone who's been to see great palaces in Egypt? Some people are away still, that's good. You see the point?

[29 : 47] Egypt was a superpower. The Lord dealt with them. He can deal with these smaller people along the way as well. That's the point. And remember, that's the great promise to enable them here. Look at verse 21. You shall not be in dread of them, the nations, for the Lord your God, in your midst, is a great and awesome God.

Don't be scared, because the Lord is in your midst. Now, what relevance does this have to us? Well, we don't have to fight Canaanites, but we fight battles on two fronts, don't we? Externally, as we proclaim the Gospel, we no longer fight with swords made of metal, we fight with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God.

As we go into the world, proclaim the message that Jesus is King, and there is repentance on offer, there is forgiveness on offer, if people will repent and believe in Him. As we go with that message, it's easy to be intimidated by the world around us, isn't it?

Think, well, how can we preach that in an age which hates the idea of absolute truth, in an age where secularism is rife? How do we preach this? Well, do not be afraid of them, for the Lord your God is in your midst.

And personally, there's an application, because the external battle we fight, but the internal battle is against our own sins, isn't it? To subdue everything in our lives which is contrary to God's Word.

And that's hard, isn't it?

[31 : 04] And at times we can want to give up. I've got a problem with my temper. So did my father. So did my grandfather. You know, I can't change. I won't bother. Oh, I have a problem with lusts and with the images I look at and the films I watch.

How can I get rid of that? Or I'm always anxious. I can't change that. As soon as we think we cannot change, as soon as we think these problems are too big for us, we're doing what the Israelites were doing, saying these nations are too powerful.

What hope is there for change? What hope is there for defeating the sin in our lives? That the Lord our God is in our midst. The Lord who not only defeated Pharaoh, but through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, has defeated sin and death and hell forever.

If you can defeat those things, then through the Lord Jesus, through his grace, he can defeat the sins in our lives as well. And we can be truly new. While there's promises to encourage us, promises to enable us, there's also a promise for the future here, isn't there?

Those blessings that were promised to Israel, they don't come yet, do they? They don't come fully yet. What would it take to live in a world where actually there was no death, no one died young?

[32 : 21] A world where there is absolute fruitfulness of the sort promised there. It would take Eden's curse being removed completely, wouldn't it? What does it take for a holy God to forgive people like us who are not faithful?

It takes someone else to take that curse and take that punishment away. And the good news is that has happened, hasn't it?

That's what our call to worship reminded us of. That in the birth of Jesus, God was remembering his covenant promises. That in Jesus Christ, someone came, the new Israel, the true Israel, to do what these Israelites never did and never could do.

To be fully obedient to his Father. To love the Lord his God with all his heart and soul and mind and strength. To be perfectly innocent and yet to die on the cross to take the curse that we deserve.

To take the curse for our rebellion. As Paul tells the Galatians, chapter 3, verse 13, Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us.

[33 : 28] For it is written, cursed is everyone who is hanged on the tree. And why did he do that? Galatians 3, verse 14, so that in Christ Jesus, the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles.

See, God's promise, God's purpose still stands. He still wants this blessing to flow to all the nations. The blessing that is found only in the Lord Jesus Christ. The blessing of forgiveness, of new life, of hope for eternity.

The Lord fulfills his purposes. The death and resurrection of Jesus show that. The Lord keeps his promise. The resurrection of Jesus shows that. The Lord has given us a privilege.

If we're Christians, we are his treasured possession. If we are not yet Christians, we need to consider we're standing in line as those who are rejecting God to receive the curse, to receive the punishment, to receive the destruction prefigured by what happened to the Canaanites.

See, our covenant, the covenant Lord is faithful in all his ways. We must resist every temptation to compromise. Instead, cling on, trusting in the Lord Jesus who has borne the curse for us so that we can have the blessing.

[34 : 43] Let's pray. Thank you.