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**Desiring a Better Country**  
**Deuteronomy 34**  
**Series: Loving God in Every Way**

**Introduction:** Take your Bible and turn with me to Deuteronomy 34.

We come this morning to the last chapter, and therefore to our last sermon, in the book of Deuteronomy. We obviously could have spent much more time in this wonderful book of Spirit-inspired Scripture, but alas, we come this morning to the end. And it is a most inspiring ending indeed. The verses before us form the conclusion to this book, and also to the 5 books of the Pentateuch, all authored by the pen of Moses. But these words most likely were not penned by Moses, but by a later editor of the Pentateuch who under the Spirit's direction added this conclusion to it all. And in this conclusion, we see Moses put before us as a model of the life of faith. You will remember that this book of Deuteronomy is a compilation of sermons preached by Moses to the people of Israel as they prepared themselves to go across the Jordan and take possession of the Promised Land. He preaches to them about their history as God's people and about the Law of God and its good design for their life in the Land. He preaches to them the warnings of the Law with its inherent curses, and he compels them with the blessings of the Law if they will listen and obey. He preaches and warns them of the dangers of the prosperity they will find when they enter the land. And he preaches to encourage them with the awesome privilege they have to be God's people in God's Land. And all of those things sit upon the great foundation of the key truth presented in this book, which is found in 6:4. "Hear, O Israel. The Lord our God, the Lord is One." In other words, Moses wants them to know the singular uniqueness of their God. He puts before them the glory and the majesty and unmatchable power of their God. And he calls them to the key response to that key truth about God. They are to love the Lord their God with all their heart, all their soul, and all their strength. In other words, because God is who He is in His unique glory and holiness, they are to love Him with a whole-hearted love which directs every part of life.

And what we see in this final chapter is that Moses is the embodiment of the keeping of that command. He is not perfect, but he has given his life to believing God and to obeying God. He has loved the Lord with all his heart, all his soul, and all his strength. And so, his life stands as a living parable to the nation of Israel to what it will look like for them to walk by faith when Moses is gone. Moses has taught them what it means to love the Lord, and Moses has shown them how to love the Lord in every way. Another way to state this – the way the New Testament states this – is that Moses is a model to us of the life of faith. That is what the Christian life is. If you are a Christian, then your life is defined by and directed by and determined by your faith in God. And this is a faith which is not some mere mental assent where we just agree in our minds with what God has said. But rather, this is a faith which takes God at His Word and our life is shaped in every way by who He is and what He has said. Hebrews 11:1

says that faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. In other words, faith believes what God has said even if what he has promised has not yet come to pass or if what he has revealed about himself is invisible to the human eye. Verse 6 in Hebrews 11 helps us some more when it tells us that without faith it is impossible to please God, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. So, faith in God believes that God exists which then compels a seeking for God which will be rewarded with all His goodness and lovingkindness. And this truth in Hebrews 11 is then put on display in the lives of the Old Testament saints who took God at His word, believed it was true, and had lives shaped by this faith. This is a synonymous thought to loving the Lord your God with all that you are and in every way. It looks like living this life of faith presented to us in the book of Hebrews. And Moses is one of the most prominent examples given in that Hall of faith in Hebrews 11. Deuteronomy 34 is the Old Testament version, if you will, of that description of Moses' faith. Let's read Deuteronomy 34.

May Moses' faith blow the needed oxygen of encouragement and instruction on the fire of our faith in the Lord. To do that, let me point you to 4 truths about authentic faith in God that we see on display in the life of Moses. I want to show you the perseverance of faith, the pain of faith, the peace of faith, and the promise of faith – all from Moses' life.

#### **I. The Perseverance of Faith – vs. 1-4**

- a. The first is the perseverance of faith, and we see that in verses 1-4. True saving faith in the Lord is a faith which is not simply punctiliar. It is not a moment in time expression of belief in the truth which stays in that moment of time. Rather, true faith is a lifelong journey of belief and trust and obedience in God. It has a beginning point, but it never ends. The Christian life is defined by this persevering faith in God. This is what we see in Moses' life. Turn with me to Hebrews 11 to see Moses' faith described. In this hall of fame of the greatest saints with the most authentic faith in the Lord, we read this of Moses in verses 24-27.  
*Read Hebrews 11:24-27.*
- b. Think for a minute about the beginning of Moses' life. I know we are at the end of it in Deuteronomy 34, but the end is shaped by the beginning. He enjoyed all the privileges and opportunities of the greatest nation in the world at that time. Everything the world had to offer him in the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life was all available and offered to him in the royal family in Egypt. But Hebrews 11 says that he chose rather to be mistreated with the people of God rather than enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin in Egypt. And on what basis did he do that? By faith! And he considered the reproach of Christ compared to the wealth offered him in Egypt, and he determined that the reproach of Christ was a greater treasure. And on what basis did he do that? By faith! He was looking to the reward of God. He believed the promises of God and this set his life on a course of being maligned with the people of God as he looked for the fulfillment of those promises in God's time. And he left Egypt, not afraid of the king. He endured and persevered because he saw him who is invisible rather than

the great Pharaoh of Egypt who was visible before him. And on what basis did he do that? By faith!

- c. And where did that faith lead Moses? Well, it led him to a life of difficulty and adversity and trial, but also of deep joy and abundant worship of God. It led him to the wilderness trying to manage the oversight of God's unruly and stubborn people. It led him to Mt. Sinai where he saw the greatness and power and might of God on display before him. It let him through the wilderness as one generation died because of their unbelief and another generation was raised in the fear of the Lord. And it led him to the edge of the Promised Land where he would be denied entrance and would die on the mountain. What I want you to see is that his death is an evidence of his life of faith. He dies as he lived. He dies in faith. The Lord told him back in chapter 32 that he was to go up the mountain and be gathered to his people who have gone before him. And now, in chapter 34 he does exactly that. He ascends the mountain – one faith-filled step at a time. He is trusting the Lord and obeying the Lord. He is taking God at his word and he is believing that God knows best and is full of goodness and mercy. He knows that the Lord is with him as he leaves the camp and walks those last steps on the Earth.
- d. He has been listening to the voice of the Lord since the burning bush in the wilderness of Midian more than 40 years prior. And now, he will hear the voice of the Lord one last time in verse 4. And he will accept by faith what the Lord is telling him. The land he sees but won't be allowed to enter is the land the Lord will give as an inheritance to Moses' offspring. How can Moses just accept this from the Lord and die in peace on the mountain?
- e. Well, do you remember the conversation between the Lord and Moses some 40 years earlier at Mt. Sinai? The people had committed their great sin in the Golden Calf incident and Moses was interceding for the people before the Lord. And Moses prayed to the Lord in Exodus 33:13 and said, "Now therefore, if I have found favor in your sight, please show me now your ways, that I may know you in order to find favor in your sight. Consider too that this nation is your people." And the Lord responded in verse 14 and said, "My presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." And then Moses asked in verse 18, "Please show me your glory." And the Lord said to Moses, "I will make all my goodness pass before you and will proclaim before you my name 'The LORD.' And I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom I will show mercy." There is so much there, but I point you to that text to show you the heart posture of faith that Moses had. He wanted to know the ways of the Lord and he desired the presence of the Lord and he longed for the glory of the Lord. And the Lord revealed to him his goodness and told him that he would be gracious and merciful to whomever he pleased.
- f. And so, in chapter 34, at the end of the journey, Moses can persevere in one of the hardest moments of his life because he has this settled confident faith in the character, nature and ways of the Lord. He can die knowing that God, even in this moment, is being good and gracious and merciful. As one commentator put

it, “Nothing mattered more to him than knowing, obeying, and pleasing God. Moses knew that the things we wish for ourselves are not always best for us. There are times when only God knows the difference between what we merely want and what we genuinely need. Times when we feel ourselves to be seriously in ‘want’ are those which teach the best lessons.”

- g. And Moses had one more lesson to learn in the school of faith before he graduated to the Heavenly presence of his Lord. He was denied the earthly fulfillment and was forced to trust the Lord and walk by faith.
- h. This is the life of faith for the believer. We, like Moses, must choose Christ over the fleeting pleasures of sin in this world. Jesus himself tells us to count the cost – knowing that we must die to self – forgetting our selfish ambition and desire – and we must follow him at any cost – taking up our cross and dying daily as we find true and lasting life in Him alone. It is not the journey of faith that saves us. It is the salvation of our souls in the finished work of Christ which puts us on this journey of faith. And this journey of faith will often lead us through the wilderness of this life as we see the fulfillment of God’s promises with the eyes of faith, but don’t greet them in person. And yet true faith perseveres because it fixes its eyes on the glorious hope of a better country yet to come.

## II. The Pain of Faith – vs. 1-7

- a. And this is accompanied by the pain of faith. Perseverance is not perseverance if there is not pain. You don’t have to persevere through a bowl of ice cream, but you do have to persevere through a dentist visit to fill a cavity. But the pain presented in the text is not the pain of perseverance, but the pain of faith. Moses is trusting God and believing God and obeying God. And so, by the command of the Lord he goes up on the mountain, across from Jericho, to catch a glimpse of the vast land which would be the inheritance for God’s people. Verses 1-3 tell us that the Lord showed Moses the land from the North to the South, from the Jordan to the Mediterranean Sea. Just consider for a moment that Moses never once entered this land in his lifetime. He was God’s chosen leader to bring the people to the Land, but now, he will die and not enter. He could have gone rogue and tried to sneak across the Jordan river on his own, just to enter the land at least one time. But by faith, he believes that what the Lord has for him is best.
- b. Verse 5 tells us that Moses died in accordance with God’s Word, and that God buried him in an unknown place. This was probably done so that no one would memorialize Moses unnecessarily, or propagate some kind of false worship at his burial site. This might also have been done by the Lord so that no one took his body and brought it into the Promised Land like they were doing with the bones of Joseph. But the point here is that this is all God’s doing. This is amplified in verse 7 where we are told that Moses did not die of the effects of old age or disease. Like he had prayed for Asher in chapter 33, his strength lasted as long as his days. There is no confusion here. Moses died by the Lord’s doing as a result of the Lord’s judgment on his sin. And Moses died all alone without having received the fulfillment of the promise. This man who had hardly ever been out of the public spotlight over the last 40 years was now alone with the Lord as he

breathed his final breath on this Earth. Moses knows that there are no untimely deaths with the Lord. Every lifespan is determined by His sovereign will, and his lifespan would be no different. And so, by faith he accepted that even gladly submitted to that.

- c. But what I want you to see is that this path of faith was painful for Moses. We're not given the details of that pain in the text here in Deuteronomy 34, but it's not hard to imagine. How he must have struggled with all of the what-ifs of his longing faith. What if he had been more vigilant against his own anger in the wilderness? What if he had been more obedient and fuller of faith? What if he had been more watchful over his heart so that he did not disregard the holiness of God in the presence of the people? He could have entered the land with them. He could have enjoyed the privilege of leading God's people into God's land. But he can't.
- d. Every saint will die with these 'what-if' questions about their journey of faith. They will have unmet expectations and hopes that their faith in the Lord has fueled. That is why Romans 8:23 says that we groan and the creation groans as we await the full enjoyment of our adoption into God's family. This is why 2 Corinthians 5:4 says that we groan while we are still in this body as we wait for the mortal to be swallowed up in the immortality of eternal life. This is the pain of faith. Because we believe in the good promises of God, we will have good and right desires and expectations which accompany that faith which will go unmet in this life. Moses' life story makes clear to us that not everything given to the believer is possessed immediately. So many Christians seem to want to make the promises of all the glories of our inheritance be in our immediate possession. We most certainly have this rich inheritance in Christ which will be the eternal possession of the elect, but our enjoyment of the fullness of that rich inheritance awaits a land that we have not yet entered. Just like Moses, we get to see them from across the river, but in this life, we don't get to experience them. Things like a completely sinless life, and the healing of all disease, and perfectly harmonious relationships, and unlimited physical abundance and prosperity – so many Christians want to make the Christian life about the possession of these things without the long journey of faith in which we also die in faith, desiring a better country in which those things will be true in far greater and more glorious ways. This means then that there is a pain to this life of faith, and it is the pain of currently unfulfilled promises. It is a pain which will be overcome and conquered by the God who always keeps his promises, but it is a difficulty of faith that we must face. Moses can die in peace because he has this faith in the Lord, even though this faith has created pain for him as well. The pain is conquered by the look of faith at "what will be" of the future instead of the "what-ifs" of the past. Moses can die in peace knowing that God's promises will not fail and their future fulfillment will be better than any present unmet earthly desire.

### III. The Peace of Faith – vs. 8-9

- a. And that leads us to the 3<sup>rd</sup> element of this authentic faith we see in Moses, and that is the peace of faith. There was great pain and difficulty in this moment for

Moses, but there is no hint of resistance in the text. He does not argue with the Lord. He does not try to bargain. He does not resist obedience. He knows that the next part of God's plan for God's people cannot go forward with him still around. He must die before the people can enter into the Land. And so, he submits himself to the Lord's will rather than fight the Lord for the fulfillment of his earthly desires.

- b. This really comes out in verses 8-9 where the leadership of the people is passed to Moses. The people rightly mourn for Moses and then submit themselves to Joshua's leadership. And they respond so faithfully because they have been well instructed by Moses in obedience to God. Moses had long ago accepted the will of the Lord about his death on this side of the Jordan. He was at peace with the Lord's decision and the people followed that lead. Moses laid his hands on Joshua as a public display of this transfer of leadership. The Spirit of God who had so filled Moses with wisdom and leadership skill now filled Joshua. And all of this came about in the peace of faith. Moses was looking to the Lord in contented and submitted faith. Joshua was looking to the Lord in contented and submitted faith. And the people were doing the same. And so, this transfer of leadership is peaceful and honoring to the Lord.
- c. But Moses' death is also full of peace. And this is true because he saw and he heard. The Lord showed him the land and then the Lord told him that he would not go over there, but this land would be given to the people of Jacob in fulfillment of God's promise. Moses can die in peace because he has full confidence in the Lord's will, ways, and word. True faith in the Lord will have this settled peace as its sure result. The full acceptance of God's will, ways, and word will lead to this peace of heart which trusts God fully.

#### IV. The Promise of Faith – vs. 10-12

- a. This leads then to the promise of faith in verses 10-12. Moses could die in peace without entering the land because he knew that the promise of God would ultimately be fulfilled by one greater than him. These last three verses of the book are verses of Gospel hope. They are obviously not words written directly by Moses, but they are words written after Moses' death. And presumably, sometime after Moses' death and sometime before the divided Kingdom that came after the death of Solomon.
- b. These verses present the uniqueness of Moses in three ways. He was known by the Lord face to face. In other words, the Lord spoke directly to Moses. He didn't use a mediator but talked with him directly in the tent of meeting and on the top of the mountain. Moses was also unique in that no one else has performed the signs and wonders that he did in Egypt to Pharaoh and all his servants and all his land. Every other time in the book of Deuteronomy that these signs and wonders have come up, Moses has attributed those signs and wonders to Jehovah God. But here, the editor attributes them to Moses as a way to show that God was God and that Moses was his true and unique prophet. And Moses is also unique in that he displayed mighty power and great deeds of terror in the sight of all Israel. So, the uniqueness of Moses is seen in his relationship to the Lord, in his display

of God's power to the world around him, and to the people of the Lord. And the narrator wants us to know that there has not been one like him in Israel since his death. This might seem like hagiography – like the narrator is just speaking overly kind words about Moses after he is gone. But they aren't. These are words of faith built upon God's promise found in chapter 18. In 18:15 Moses told them that “the LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers – it is to him you shall listen.” The editor picks up that same Hebrew word to say that there has not yet arisen a prophet like Moses from among the people of Israel. In other words, though the book ends with the death of God's greatest Old Testament leaders, the book does not end in a funeral dirge, but in great gospel hope. Someone like Moses is coming – but in fact someone greater than Moses is coming!

- c. Notice that the hopeful note at the end of the book is not the faithfulness of the people. The keeping of God's promises is not dependent upon the faithfulness of the people given the promise. Moses himself proves that to be true here. He is himself dying because of his sin, but the promises of God are not affected. God will still do what God has promised. Moses has already told the people that he knows they will not be faithful but will fall into sin and unbelief, and one day apostasy. In fact, we find out in Judges 18:30 that it will be one of Moses' own grandsons who will be at the center of the aberrant worship in the tribe of Dan in 2 generations. The book of Deuteronomy does not end in a note of coming judgment or in a note of hope in the people's faithfulness. Rather, it ends in a note of hopeful expectation that one like Moses will be raised up by God soon. And all the things which make Moses the greatest prophet will be found in even greater measures in this prophet to come. And this prophet to come is the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one that is greater than Moses.
- d. Whereas Moses was known by the Lord face to face and was the mediator of the word of God to the people – Jesus is the Word in the flesh who came from the Father to proclaim grace and truth. As John's gospel begins – In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. Jesus is greater than Moses.
- e. Whereas Moses performed many signs and wonders before the world to prove he was from God, Jesus performed more. He healed the blind and the deaf and raised the dead. He calmed the storm with his voice, and he fed 5000 with 5 loaves and 2 fish.
- f. Whereas Moses displayed awesome power and mighty deeds of terror among the people of God, Jesus was greater in his display of divine authority before the people of God. He spoke with authority unlike any other. He commanded the evil spirits like no one else could. He turned back the curse of sin with his touch. He baffled the religious leaders of God's people with his wisdom and he shut the mouths of his accusers with his pure and spotless life. He was greater than Moses indeed.
- g. Whereas Moses was taken to the top of the mountain by the Lord to see the land he would not himself possess, Jesus was taken to the top of a great mountain by

the Lord's enemy, Satan himself. And in a moment of great mimicking and deceit, Satan showed the nations of the world to Jesus and told him that he could have them all if he would just bow and worship at his feet. But like Moses, only in an eternally greater way, Jesus chose death on another mountain.

- h. Whereas Moses was never allowed to enter the land of Promise on his own accord, the Father sent him to minister to the One greater than himself on a mountain in Galilee. This was the first entrance of Moses into the Promised Land, and it was for the purpose of strengthening Jesus in his journey toward the Cross. Luke says in 9:31 that Moses and Elijah talked to Jesus about his departure – or literally – his exodus, which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Moses knew the rejection and rebellion of God's people. Moses knew the perseverance of obedience in the face of great opposition. Moses knew the power of evil seeking to stop the plans of God. Moses knew the threat of worldly powers seeking to thwart the promises of God. But Jesus knew them more and faced them in greater amounts in the work of his passion. He faced the hour of the power of darkness – the betrayal of one of his closest followers – the hatred of the world – the violent opposition of the religious and political leaders – the full brunt of the condemnation of the sin of those the Father had given to him.
- i. Whereas Moses ascended a mountain to die for his own sins, Jesus ascended a Mount to give his life as a ransom for many. Whereas Moses died in need of a Savior, Jesus dies to provide that salvation for Moses and for all.

**Conclusion:** Oh friend – do you know this one greater than Moses? Do you have these marks of authentic faith – perseverance, pain, peace, and promise?