

The Generous Mercy of God's Covenant Love – Deuteronomy 10:1-11

Introduction – Moses continues recounting the events of the terrible rebellion at Horeb (9:8-21). The people had broken covenant in their sins of rebellion and idolatry. Had Moses not stood in the breach for them, the Lord would have destroyed them (Psalm 106:19-23). But God responded to Moses' intercession for the salvation of Israel for the sake of the glory of God's name (Deut 9:25-29). Moses was not recalling this story to open old wounds, but to establish in the hearts and minds of the people that they were God's people according to His mercy and not according to their own righteousness. The people of God would need to be reminded of this constantly (i.e. Neh 9:16-19, Psalm 106:19-21, Acts 7:39-41). But God listened to His intercessor, and these verses speak of the merciful power of God's covenant-renewing love.

Mercy to Israel (vv1-5) – Moses was told to make two tablets “*like the first*” (v1, 3) and God would write on the tablets the words “*that were on the first tablets*” (v2, 4). The same covenant with the same stipulations was remade; forgiveness had erased the sin and the covenant was renewed. This time Moses is instructed to place the tablets in the ark (v2, 5), and in this sermon Moses says, “*and there they are*”. The law can only be truly understood and kept in the context of this covenant, and it is a covenant of grace. This is why the ark rested under the mercy seat. You either have a broken law and a shattered covenant leading to judgment, or law kept in the covenant under God's mercy. This was always a covenant of unbelievable grace for those who kept it by faith. *Note how God was giving the people an entirely new beginning. They did not deserve to be pardoned, but in His mercy, God forgave them and He did so fully, completely and immediately. This is what forgiveness looks like.*

Mercy to Aaron and His Descendants (vv6-7) – Aaron's own hands had fashioned the molded calf (Ex 32:1-4). He was guilty of leading the people to worship other gods and to make an image to worship. The penalty for breaking this commandment was clear: God's judgment would fall upon Aaron and his household to the third and fourth generation (Deut 5:8-9). But Moses interceded particularly for Aaron (Deut 9:20) and so mercy was given. In his sermon, Moses clearly points out that mercy was given to Aaron and his descendants for Eleazar was anointed priest at Aaron's death. While God has always been a God of holiness, His covenant actions towards His people have always revealed His longsuffering grace and mercy towards them. *Note how we are to repent of our sin lest God's judgment fall upon us and our posterity. But note also how we can repent and plead in the name of our Mediator who renews covenant with us on behalf of our posterity. Learn to plead the covenant promises as Moses did, as Jesus does, as Aaron enjoyed.*

Mercy to and through the Levites (vv8-9) – Not only did God provide mercy to Aaron, but the whole Levitical priesthood was established to display this mercy to the people. They bore the ark of the covenant, keeping it in the midst of the people (although even the Levites could not touch the ark, symbolizing not only the holiness of the mercy seat and ark, but the only origination point of that mercy and grace. God alone was the source of mercy and of the law. To “*stand before*” was an idiom meaning to wait upon or serve, and so the Levites ministered on behalf of the people before the Lord. And they also ministered on behalf of the Lord to the people, blessing “*in His name*.” The covenant always provided means by which the people of God witnessed that He was in their presence, that His Word was to instruct them, and that He would provide mercy. *Of course, we are in a new administration of this covenant, a far simpler administration. But we still see that God provides the means of grace through His Word and appointed sacraments, all of which are to be embraced by faith.*

The Mercy of Covenant Renewal (vv10-11) – These verses sum up Chapters 8, 9 and this section of 10. Because of a mediator, the covenant and its people are not destroyed but renewed. Having received the instructions of the law again, they are then sent out with the blessing of God to “*go in and possess the land*.” This is a foreshadowing and short summary of all that goes on in covenant renewal services. The overpowering sense should be of our own lack of merit and God's gifts of grace and mercy. Note that the covenant community is always a community that exists by grace. There never was nor is anything that distinguishes those whom God is saving from those whom God is bringing judgment upon in the persons themselves. This is the mystery of His counsels, something we cannot touch (Deut 29:29).

Always a Covenant of Grace and Mercy – The Gospel of our God is the righteousness of Another and not ours. He is the One who is meting out His justice and His grace. When we preach this, we are preaching the Gospel and whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Rom 10:13). When we think we deserve such favor, we have turned to another god. Israel was in the covenant of grace and so are we. They however, only received this covenant in types and shadows (Moses, the tabernacle, the Levitical sacrifices, etc.). We however, enjoy the fullness of the revelation of Jesus Christ. How much more, then, shall we see our election as all of grace and not of ourselves? How much more, then, shall we see, receive and imitate our Savior in His grace and mercy, His forgiveness and love, and His uncompromising zeal for His law? How much more shall we respond with His blessing upon us to “*go and take the land*”?