

THE DEUTERONOMY FIVE

Part 1 • July 19, 2026 | Pastor Jason Smotherman

CHOOSE LIFE

DEUTERONOMY 4:1-9 (NKJV)

¹Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you. ²You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. ³Your eyes have seen what the Lord did at Baal Peor; for the Lord your God has destroyed from among you all the men who followed Baal of Peor. ⁴But you who held fast to the Lord your God are alive today, every one of you. ⁵"Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. ⁶Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' ⁷"For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the Lord our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? ⁸And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day? ⁹Only take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself, lest you forget the things your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. And teach them to your children and your grandchildren,

For the last several months we've been walking through the first books of the Bible, and something has become very clear, God wasn't just telling Israel's story. He was showing us ours.

In **Genesis**, we discovered our beginnings. We learned that God is a Creator who brings order out of chaos, makes covenant with His people, and calls ordinary men and women to trust Him. Genesis answers the question, "Who are we?" We are a people created by God and invited into His promises.

Then we entered **Exodus**, where God revealed Himself as Deliverer. He didn't simply rescue Israel from Egypt. He was teaching us that salvation is more than getting people out of bondage. It's about bringing them into relationship. God redeemed a family and formed a nation. Freedom was never the destination. Covenant was.

From there we stepped into **Leviticus**, where we discovered that redeemed people must also become holy people. God's presence changes everything. We learned that holiness isn't merely about avoiding sin. It's about living close enough to God that His character begins to shape ours. We learned about the biblical lens of unclean and clean. A holy God desires a dwelling place among a holy people.

Then we journeyed through **Numbers**, where we saw what happens between promise and possession. We called it Stewardship in the Wilderness because the wilderness is where God teaches us to manage what He's entrusted to us. We learned that purpose is revealed in the wilderness, that faith determines whether we inherit God's promises, and that God is often more concerned with who we are becoming than simply where we are going.

Now we arrive at **Deuteronomy**. The first four books have brought Israel to the edge of the Promised Land. A generation has died. A new generation stands before the Jordan River. Moses knows he will not cross over with them, so before they step into everything God has promised, he gathers them together one last time.

And what does he do? He preaches. Deuteronomy is not primarily a book of new commands. It is a book of remembered truth. It is Moses' final series of sermons. He reminds them where they've been, what God has done, who they are, and why obedience matters.

Because every generation has a tendency to forget. The greatest threat to Israel was never the giants in Canaan. It was spiritual amnesia. Information is easy to pass on, transformation of obedient hearts is really what is needed.

They could lose the land long before they ever lost the battles if they forgot the God who gave them the land. That makes Deuteronomy incredibly relevant for us today.

We live in a culture with endless information but very little remembrance. We celebrate what is new while often neglecting what is eternal. Yet God's people are always one generation away from forgetting His faithfulness.

So Deuteronomy calls us back. Back to covenant. Back to obedience. Back to worship. Back to loving the Lord with all our heart, soul, and strength. Because before God gives us new territory, He wants to make sure we remember the God who brought us this far. Deuteronomy is the book that teaches us this simple but life-changing truth: The future belongs to those who faithfully remember and obey God. It begins with a promise and a warning.

DEUTERONOMY 4:3 (NKJV)

"Your eyes have seen what the Lord did at Baal Peor; for the Lord your God has destroyed from among you all the men who followed Baal of Peor."

Moses is referring to one of Israel's darkest moments during the wilderness journey, recorded in Numbers 25:1-9. What happened at Baal Peor? As Israel camped in the plains of Moab, just before entering the Promised Land, the Moabite and Midianite women enticed the Israelite men into both sexual immorality and idol worship.

The people participated in pagan feasts, committed sexual immorality with the women of Moab, and bowed down to Baal of Peor, a Canaanite/Moabite fertility deity associated with Mount Peor. They joined themselves in covenant worship with this false god.

Numbers 25 tells us that the Moabite women invited Israelite men to: eat sacrificial meals, bow before Baal, and engage in sexual immorality connected to pagan worship. Many scholars believe the shrine at Peor involved fertility rituals that mixed worship with sexual practices, which explains why God's judgment was so severe.

Psalm 106:28 adds another disturbing detail.

PSALM 106:28 (NKJV)

"They joined themselves also unto Baal - peor, and ate sacrifices made to the dead."

Some scholars think this refers to ancestor worship or offerings connected with the underworld. Before Israel ever bowed to Baal, they sat at Baal's table. The enemy rarely asks us to reject God outright. He simply invites us to dinner. What we continually consume: physically, emotionally, spiritually, and culturally has a way of shaping what we eventually worship.

He knows that if he can normalize compromise, he won't have to force rebellion. Sin almost always begins with an invitation that seems harmless but slowly reshapes our affections until our hearts bow where our knees never intended to.

The result was immediate. God's anger burned against Israel, and He sent a plague that killed 24,000 people (Numbers 25:9). The judgment stopped only after Phinehas zealously confronted the public rebellion by executing an Israelite man and a Midianite woman who were openly defying God's commands.

Why does Moses mention it in Deuteronomy 4? Moses is preaching to the next generation. He's reminding them: You saw what happened when people abandoned God. Then he contrasts those who rebelled with those who remained faithful.

DEUTERONOMY 4:4 (NKJV)

But you who held fast to the Lord your God are alive today, every one of you

His point is simple: Idolatry leads to destruction. Faithfulness leads to life. Obedience isn't merely about rules; it's about remaining in covenant with the God who gives life.

Why is Baal Peor significant in Deuteronomy? This reference comes at the beginning of Moses' first sermon. Before talking about entering the land, he reminds Israel that they cannot possess God's promises while embracing the gods of the surrounding culture.

It's a powerful contrast: Baal of Peor promised fertility, pleasure, prosperity, and acceptance through compromise. Yahweh promised life, blessing, and covenant through faithful obedience.

That theme runs throughout Deuteronomy: remember what God has done, refuse the temptation to compromise, and choose life by remaining loyal to Him. Moses doesn't begin with victory stories. He begins with a warning. Before God entrusts Israel with new territory, He reminds them of the last place compromise nearly destroyed them. The greatest threat to their future wasn't the walls of Jericho. It was forgetting what happened at Baal Peor. Every generation has a Peor—a place where culture invites us to trade covenant for convenience, holiness for pleasure, and worship for compromise.

There has been and always will be a strong fronting wind against the people of God to try and stop them from advancing. The Wind of Resistance Comes in Three Ways

1. THE FAMILIAR

Not everything that resists your walk with God comes looking like an enemy. Sometimes it comes looking like comfort. The greatest dangers are often the ones that become familiar. Familiar habits. Familiar voices. Familiar compromises. Familiar sins that no longer shock us. Within every believer is the capacity to become either a committed warrior or a compromised warrior.

We can be Samson, empowered by the Spirit, tearing apart a lion and defeating the Philistines on one day. Or we can be that same Samson with our head in Delilah's lap on another. The tragedy of Samson wasn't that he lost his strength. It was that he became comfortable with what was slowly stealing it.

Many in the Church today still have the melody of worship in their ears while lying in the lap of Delilah. We raise our hands on Sunday but cradle compromise on Monday. We long for intimacy with God while maintaining intimacy with the very things that dull our affection for Him. Compromise rarely begins with rebellion. It begins with familiarity.

2. THE FOE

Sometimes resistance is unmistakably spiritual. The enemy knows he cannot stop God's purposes, so he seeks to weaken God's people. He studies our patterns, exploits our weaknesses, and looks for opportunities to distract, discourage, deceive, and divide.

Israel defeated armies they could see but nearly fell because of an enemy they couldn't recognize. Balaam couldn't curse them from the outside, so he taught Moab how to corrupt them from the inside. The devil has learned that what opposition cannot accomplish, temptation often can.

The greatest victories are not always won on the battlefield. Many are won in the private places where no one else is watching.

3. THE FALSE PROMISE

Every temptation comes wrapped in a promise. Baal promised pleasure. Egypt promised security. The golden calf promised something visible. The world still makes the same promises today. It promises freedom but produces bondage. It promises fulfillment but leaves emptiness. It promises acceptance but demands your worship. Satan has never had to improve his strategy because humanity keeps believing the same lie: that life can be found apart from God.

Moses stood before a new generation in Deuteronomy and essentially said, "Don't believe the promise of the enemy. You've already seen where that road leads." Every false promise asks us to trade what is eternal for what is immediate. God says, "Choose life." The world says, "Choose what feels good." Only one of those voices leads to blessing.

Dig deeper into The Book of Deuteronomy with this Bible Study Guide. Also sign up at parkwaycc.com/newsletter. Select "General (Newsletter + Updates)" to get notified of additional content.

