

## Sophie Pawlett's Thanksgiving 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2025 Deuteronomy 4:6-9

Deut 4:6 **Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."** P182.

- Please keep p182 open.
- Choosing a name for a child can be a big decision.
  - Take one Australian couple for example.
  - The husband took the lead in suggesting (as he called it) the "unique and romantic" **Lanesra** which the wife rather liked.
  - Until two years later she figured out why he'd suggested it.
  - It was his favourite football team backwards! **Arsenal**
  - As the newspaper article which supplied this story put it, "*the beautiful game does not always lead to a beautiful name*"<sup>1</sup>
- Well we've heard from Johnny more about Sophie's wonderful names,
  - *Sophie*- which is nice sounding! Comes from Gk Sofia- wisdom
  - *Eliorah*- God is light
  - *Lydia*- based on the woman of faith and industry in Acts 16,
    - No Crystal Palace players there.
- But as we take a break from our current series on "The Church", I thought we'd go a little deeper into the theme behind the name **Sophie**. (Gk Sofia. Heb Hokma meaning wisdom v6). A theme which is all over the Bible.
- But we're not going to Paul or Jesus' teaching on wisdom, not to Proverbs or Psalms but the 5<sup>th</sup> book in the Bible- Deuteronomy. **Surprising**.
  - **It's an ancient book**- written mainly by Moses around 3000 years ago as he records the sermons he gave as the people of God teetered on the edge of the promised land.
  - **It can be a tricky book**- the giving of the Law of God to the people of God in the shape of an ancient treaty document.
  - **It's a little touched book**, and I don't think in my 20 years of preaching I've ever preached on Deuteronomy. So today is a first.
  - But as I've dug into it this week, I've found it a **hugely relevant** book as we look at **2 Bible themes** (and a **PS**) found here that are hugely relevant to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century...
    - whether you are already a committed Christian
    - Of if you've never stepped foot in church before.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/football/shortcuts/2016/jan/06/baby-named-arsenal-backwards-children-named-after-football-team>

## 1) God's wonderful wisdom obeyed and displayed (v5,6)

- Right from the start of the chapter the section focuses on God's **decrees and laws**.
  - And it's very clear that Moses (as he preaches to the people about their new home the promised land) wants them to obey these laws.
  - Let's look at a few verses.
    - V1, 2
    - V3-4 this is a warning from a recent episode where the people of God mixed illicit sex with worship of a false God, and God was devastated by their spiritual adultery.
      - It's pretty shocking if you want to read it in Numbers 25.
      - God hates immorality and idolatry.
      - He really does want us to live his way.
    - But V5-6 our main verses for today.
      - Let's pause on them for a moment.
      - God is about to give his people the 10 Commandments again. Flip over to ch5 and you can see that.
      - And he really wants them to live them out and actually put them into practice as they go into the promised land.
      - *"Observe them carefully". V6*
    - Why?
      - *"for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations who will hear about all these decrees and say "surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people".*
    - Wisdom is not something only for ancient people with beards like Yoda from Star Wars.
    - Wisdom is having prudence and practical skill in living
      - (we did a series on Proverbs last year which is still on our website- hugely practical advice on parenting, friendship, speech, relationships, money).
    - God wants his people to reflect his great wisdom to the nations around so they might see how great and kind he is.
- Perhaps it went something like in the neighbourhood 3000 years ago.
  - "You know that new tribe that have come out of Egypt.
  - They were wandering around in the desert for 40 years, but now they have got their act together and they are living in Canaan.
  - Do you know, once a week they stop what they are doing put down their tools and take a day off. Sabbath. It's because they reckon their God created the universe and then took a break!

- Do you know, they don't agree with sex before or outside marriage. They believe that their God is a faithful God who loves them like a loving husband loves a bride, and they are trying to replicate that exclusive faithfulness and love in their marriages.
    - They even treat their animals with care as a gift from God and children with dignity in the image of God.
  - Wow- I have to say I'm intrigued.
  - GOD'S WISDOM OBEYED AND DISPLAYED.
- Well zoom forward to March 2025 and to little Sophie.
  - Wouldn't it be a lovely thing to pray that she (and her sister) do what I've seen their parents do.
    - Living wisely in the way of God's commands in the Bible in such a way that other people around them stop and notice.
  - Wouldn't it be great if Sophie grew to be an "**Ethics girl**"- not because she lives in Basildon but because she grows wise in how she lives her life, a life of integrity and kindness.
  - Again and again I've seen this wisdom displayed in Johnny and Katie
    - Johnny and Katie have their hands full at home and work and yet a few weeks ago Katie emails me to say are there a couple of admin jobs I can do for the church?
    - And so on a Friday when others are watching TV (nothing wrong with that), she's wrestling powerpoint and Open LP to get it to give us the right words on a Sunday.
    - And countless times (including this week) we've been discussing something as elders or a church council and Johnny says "wouldn't it be more loving if".
      - They've opened their home to the church
      - They've opened their lives to many individuals.
- You see the 10Commandments aren't some list of rules, like we might feel tempted to think about the highway code (one of you did your Driving theory test this week. Well there are some people out there who love traffic laws, but most of us they don't float our boat).
- But actually the 10 Commandments aren't so much rules they are loving principles to guide us to love God and to love our neighbour.
- They are wonderfully wise. Jesus summed them up by saying
  - *"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." ...<sup>39</sup> And ....: "Love your neighbour as yourself."<sup>40</sup> All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.'*

- These 10 Commandments aren't heavy or burdensome, they are the loving instructions of a Father, like Johnny will one day tell Sophie to look left and right when crossing the road, because he doesn't want her to get hurt.
  - These 10 commandments are for living out.
  - Life is best when we live God's ways.
- And they are seen perfectly illustrated in the life of Jesus Christ who always loved God and loved neighbour.
  - He lived a life of integrity
  - Always walking his talk and talking his walk.
- But maybe you are thinking, "OK SO FAR BUT..."
  - "I know enough Christians who are hypocrites" - they don't walk their talk. They are more foolish than wise.
  - Or "I can't keep the 10 Commandments".
  - OR "Is the Law the thing to be focused on anyway?" Especially when we've just read Galatians and hear that we aren't put right with God by works of the Law.
- Well those are all valid points, and it's why we need to hold the first great principle of wisdom or ethics alongside the second great principle...

## **2) GOD'S AMAZING GRACE THAT GOES BEFORE**

- In the Bible, how God wants us to live is always linked to (I could say preceded by) rescue.
- Wisdom (principle 1) is driven by Grace (principle 2)
  - GRACE= God's undeserved kindness to people who don't and can't keep the law.
- ▲ Here's farmer barley mow.
  - He's got some work to do.
  - He's got a pig/ a chicken/ a horse /and a cow
    - to take into the barn who all have a broken leg.
    - Quite how they all got injured I don't know, stray meteorite?
  - Well that's too heavy to push- over a tonne of livestock
  - So how is he going to get them across the vets?
- Easy.
  - He has a tractor.
  - The tractor pulls the load.
  - Of course it's not the other way around.
- Forgive the farmyard analogy, maybe Sophie appreciated it, but it speaks of some pretty basic laws of science.
- In layman's terms: You need something **strong** with power to pull what could look like a **heavy load**.

- And so it is with wisdom.
  - How do we live a life of godliness?
  - How are we ever going to live up to the heavy lifting of God's good ways.
  - Answer it's **grace** that drives **godliness**. Seen that in Titus.
  - It's God's rescue that fuels and motivates a life of obedience.
  - WE love God with a life of wisdom and obedience because he first loved us, sending his son as a sacrifice for our sins.
  - **Love** drives **lifestyle**
- **It's not I obey therefore I'm accepted.**
- It's **I'm accepted (by grace) therefore I obey.**
  - That's every other religion on planet earth which are false religions
  - Christianity (even way back in the OT) is I'm accepted, I don't deserve it, therefore I want to obey and Kind and loving God.

You see these laws aren't given to a people in order to get into a relationship with God, they are given to a people that are already in a relationship with God.

- Look at v7 in particular.
- These laws are given to a people who are already in a relationship with God. Moses is appealing to his fellow Israelites about how wonderful it is to have God answer prayer. V7.
- He's near.
- It's the same at the end of the chapter- look at v37-38.
  - The Israelites weren't rescued because they were better than the other nations.
  - God loved them.
- over the page, pls turn to chapter 5.
  - The 10 commandments (starting with Commandment 1 in v7)
  - Is preceded by Commandment zero. Which is about the second greatest rescue in the Bible- the exodus out of Egypt by the shedding of the blood of the Passover lamb.
- God's amazing grace goes before.
  - And it's the same in the New Testament.
  - Paul says, "you were bought at a price, therefore honour God with your bodies".

- And so actually the whole Bible points to Jesus the Passover lamb who died instead of us to free us from the curse of our sin.
- You see here is the great engine that drives living out the Christian faith.
  - You are loved even when you are unlovely!
  - It's amazing.
  - It's called grace.
  - It's what every marriage should be founded on
  - It's what every parent should pour onto their children
  - It's what every church should be known for.
    - AMAZING GRACE, How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me!
- Grace doesn't minimise our selfishness or sin,
  - It says, I love you so much I'm going to pay for it.
    - But wonder of wonders, you can be forgiven.
- But praise God! Jesus died instead.
  - He died instead of you.
  - He took the penalty you deserve because he loves you.
- God's "Amazing Grace"! We aren't singing the song today, but John Newton who wrote it was an immoral, foul mouthed people trafficker. And then on a boat that looked like it was going to be smashed to pieces by a storm in March 1748, he cried out for God's GRACE and MERCY. And he found it.
- God had mercy on him and saved him through his son Jesus Christ, who forgave all his sins.
  - Not only did it change his life after death,
  - it changed his life before death. Here is what he said...
- *'It is certain that I am not what I ought to be. But, blessed be God, I am not what I once was. God has mercifully brought me up out of the deep miry clay and set my feet upon the Rock, Christ Jesus. He has saved my soul. And now it is my heart's desire to extol and honour his matchless, free, sovereign and distinguishing grace, because 'By the grace of God I am what I am.'*
- So can I ask. Have you received this grace?
  - Have you asked God for the free gift of his love and rescue
    - That you cannot earn
    - And don't deserve.
- It is just a prayer away. Ask God to rescue you like John Newton did.
- And if you have, will you constantly meditate on the cross so that you are motivated to live a life of love?

## And a final PS!? TEACH THESE TO THE KIDS

- Look at v9.
  - TEACH THEM TO YOUR CHILDREN & TO THEIR CHILDREN.
  - This isn't just for the adults, it's for the kids.
  - You can never be too young to learn about Jesus
  - You can never be too young to become a Christian.
    - Some of our 5 years olds are our best evangelists.
- So teach the kids.
  - Teach them God's ways.
  - Johnny and Katie (and all other parents here)
  - And grandparents too- Brian & Kath, James & Elizabeth did you see that?
  - And even if we aren't parents or grandparents it takes a village to raise a child.
- Don't fall for this crazy philosophy these days which says "Kids need to figure out what is right and wrong".
  - No, Proverbs 22:6 "start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it".
    - Teach wisdom **BUT teach the Grace that drives it**
  - Out there in Sparklers, GSMA, TROGS, in our family bible studies we don't teach morality. Be good, brush your teeth every day, don't sit too close to the TV. That's rules.
- We teach them Grace!
- God loves you, Jesus died for you, The Spirit wants to help you. Grace drives godliness, Love drives lifestyle.
  - Which is the environment in which a child will flourish?
  - Or one where they are loved unconditionally
- Let's pray.