

Sermon outline and notes prepared by:  
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Swift Creek Baptist Church, 18510 Branders Bridge Rd., Colonial Heights, VA 23834  
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## Deuteronomy 11:10-25      “Crossing Over into a New Year”

Intro. New Year’s Day always brings an opportunity for a new beginning. As you look back on the past year, you will see some failures. You will probably see some hardships or losses. We all would like to believe that the New Year could be better. Is there a bad habit you would like to break? Is there some unfinished business you would like to take care of? Would you like to move past the sorrows of 2003?

Well in our text today, the children of Israel were on the brink of a new beginning. Their nation had failed to trust and obey God when the opportunity for a great new beginning had been given to them. Along the wilderness route, most wrung their hands and doubted that they could go on to possess the land, and they wished they were back in Egypt. As a result, they wandered in the wilderness of 40 years. Now, they were encamped on the eastern bank of Jordan overlooking the Promised Land. To prepare them for the great task at hand, we have before us one of several sermons Moses preached to his people before he went up on Mount Nebo, viewed the Promised Land and died. He encourages them that as they cross over to their promised possession, that they do so trusting in God’s provision, God’s presence, and God’s protection. So in the aftermath of his death, the children of Israel went on into the Promised Land and by faith in God possessed it.

As we stand at the brink of a new year, our hearts are filled with anticipation and challenge. Only God knows what the future holds, but the possibilities are limitless. As we cross over into a new year, we do so with the same challenges Moses gave his people so long ago. As we cross over into a new year, we should trust God for many of the same blessings that He promised to Israel. I Cor. 10:6 reminds us that everything that happened to the children of Israel did so as an example to us in this dispensation of grace. So I believe we can apply much of this text to us today, as we prepare to enter into a new year. Now the first lesson that we can draw from this text is the promise of:

### I. GOD’S PROVISION

Note that we take with us into a New Year the promise of God’s provision. God is the great Provider. He is our source. He provided His people with a new homeland, and He promised to provide them rain. V. 11 says, “but the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven.” That is, He provides for us supernaturally. He will meet our needs. Like the land of Israel, our land will “drink water from the rain of heaven.” Then v. 14 says, “then I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain and the latter rain...” How beautiful to know that He provides us with both autumn and spring rains. He sends the early rain for seedtime and the latter rain at harvest.<sup>1</sup> Both are important for growing a good crop. Then Moses goes on to say in vv. 14b-15 that God will provide rain “that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil. And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled.” He does not promise just a

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<sup>1</sup> Eugene H. Merrill says the former rains were in autumn and the latter rains were in the spring.

meager measure of a basic provision. He provides not only grain for bread, but also the new wine<sup>2</sup> of gladness, and the oil of beauty. He provides grass for livestock, not only that we may eat, but that we may eat and be filled! Even so, Jesus promised in John 10:10, "I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly."

For the children of Israel, the land of Israel was quite a contrast from the past years of Egypt. Moses reminds them that the land which they were about to possess was "not like the land of Egypt ... where you sowed your seed and watered it by foot" (v. 10). What was the difference? There was very little rain in Egypt. The Nile was their source of water, not the rain of heaven. It overflowed once a year. But to get the water from the Nile to the crops required hard work. By hand and by foot they dug trenches, canals, and ponds to irrigate the land. In Egypt the land was watered by human effort. The expression, "with your foot" probably refers to the large pumping wheels propelled by foot power. This probably referred to a long rope attached to wheels, which carried buckets; something like a paddlewheel. At other times they probably carried water by hand. Work, work, work was the motto. In Egypt there seemed to be no need for God. Water was stored by artificial means and fields were irrigated by human sweat and toil. The fertility of Egypt depended far more upon the labor of human hands than upon the rain of heaven & divine providence. Egypt did not depend on God like Canaan did.

In an affluent society such as we live in today, where things come so easily, I am afraid that people assume God has nothing in the world to do with it. We tend to look to the government, or to the bank, or to our employer as our source. I'm afraid most kids believe their food comes McDonalds rather than ultimately from God. Do you live each day with the recognition that you depend upon God each day for your provision? That is why Jesus taught us to pray in the model prayer, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11). The same problem can transfer over to churches. There are a lot of churches today that operate like the children of Israel in Egypt. That is, they have it all calculated with human ingenuity. They dig their own trenches. There's no real need for God. They go right on operating without Him, with their own initiatives, plans and promotions. They do not do anything that cannot be explained by human means. Most everything happens by human effort and ingenuity.

But note the contrast of the Promised Land. It "drinks water from the rain of heaven." Canaan was and is totally dependent on God. Rain was His gift. In fact, this land has always been solely dependent upon His provisions. God did this purposely. He put them on a land that had to depend upon Him for rainfall. This would draw the people closer to God. That's why He chose this land to train His people. When you are put in a situation that seems to be beyond your human ability to handle, that is not a comfortable position to be in. But it is in such situations that you can grow spiritually, and learn to expand your faith.

As we cross over into a new year, we do so with the assurance that the same God who sent us the rains of the past will send us the rains in the future. As we cross over, we're dependent on the supernatural provision of God. Remember that God is our source. You may wonder if you will still have a job in 2004. Just remember, God is your source, not your employer. Jesus promised in Matt. 6:33, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."

Now as we face a new year, we also cross over by faith in:

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<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew word, *tiyrowsh*, refers to freshly pressed wine.

## II. GOD'S PRESENCE

Notice first of all:

A. The Assurance of God's Presence - V. 12 says they were crossing over into "a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year."

Some doubted that they could accomplish the task of taking the Promised Land. After all, the land was filled with giants and walled cities. But they had forgotten that they crossed over with God's presence and care. It was "a land for which the LORD your God cares<sup>3</sup>; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year." Here Moses says it is a land that is so precious to Him the He keeps it within his purview<sup>4</sup> of care the entire year long.

Even so, the year upon which we embark is a year that God cares for. He purposed it. He planned it. New Year's Day brings a fresh vision of new opportunities. What a blessing to cross over into a new year with the very presence of God Himself. The eyes of the Lord are upon us! He is watching the dear mother who faces the year raising children without a husband. He is watching the dad who's under tremendous pressure to provide. He's watching the teenager with all the pressures of adolescence. He's watching each of us. Yes, the Bible says, "for the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him" (II Chr. 16:8-10). Like the children of Israel, we go into a new year with God's provision and God's presence.

In 2002 you no doubt remember the sniper attacks in Maryland & VA that resulted in over 12 deaths, and several serious injuries. One of the victims was a 13-year-old boy, who was shot just outside his school. The sniper left a card that said, "I am God." The boy's uncle said in an interview on "Good Morning America" (12/12/02) that he wanted to say to the sniper, "No you're not. God is with my nephew in that hospital room." Indeed, many consider it a miracle that he survived, considering the significant damage to the boy's major organs, and the loss of blood.

### B. The Extent of God's Presence:

1. At All Times – He promised that "...the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year." As we cross over into a new year, we're reminded that God is watching us, that His eyes are upon us each and every day. This reminds me of the promise of Jesus in Matthew 28:20, "... and lo, I am with you all the days, even to the end of the age." [Literal translation].

2. At All Places – Moses reminded the people that, unlike most of Egypt, the land that they were about to possess was a land of "hills and valleys." Anyone who's ever traveled in the Promised Land knows the reality of this visual expression. I've been to Israel. I've seen the valleys and high mountains like Mount Hermon and Masada. There are desert places in the Judean wilderness and then there's the beautiful valley oasis of Jericho. It did not take the children of Israel long to discover that it was indeed a land of hills and valleys.

What does this mean? Why did God choose to give His people a land of mountains and

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<sup>3</sup> Here the word *darash* may mean, "to resort to, frequent (a place)." It's root meaning is, "to seek with care, care for."

<sup>4</sup> "Range of vision, comprehension, or experience; outlook."

valleys? God never promised us that the way would always be easy. Sometimes we too, like the Israelites, walk through the valley. They began their conquest of the Promised Land with the great victory at Jericho only to descend into the valley of defeat at Ai in the days that came afterwards. And then, there are those times when we come face to face with a mountain along the journey, which humanly speaking, looks impossible to climb. But He promises to be with them in the valleys, and up the mountains.

The same is true for us along our own journeys. Ours too is a journey through “hills and valleys.” Both are important! If there were no valleys, there would be no mountain top experiences. We never learn spiritual lessons on the mountain. They are always learned in the valley where we’re trusting, depending on the living God to get us through. Mountains are there to enlarge our vision, to let us see our potential, to give us a spirit of conquest. But in the valleys, that’s where we become more like our Lord. We would not choose the valleys. But His ways are not our ways. He is the God of the valleys.

He is also the God of the mountains. Do you remember what Elijah said to Ahab when Ben-Hadad, the cruelest general ever to March an army, besieged the city of Samaria! Elijah said. “...Because the Syrians have said, the Lord is God of the hills but He is not God of the valleys: therefore, I will deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the Lord” (I Kings 20:28). Our God is the God of both. He will be with you as you face the mountains and valleys of 2004, and He will provide for your every need, if you trust Him.

Finally, we cross over to a new year with promise of:

### III. GOD’S PROTECTION & VICTORY

The people of Israel would not enter the land unopposed. They would face ungodly, pagan enemies. But the Lord assures them that He will go before them and drive out their enemies. So look on down to vv. 23-25. There Moses tells them that “...then the LORD will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess greater and mightier nations than yourselves. Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the River Euphrates, even to the Western Sea, shall be your territory. No man shall be able to stand against you; the LORD your God will put the dread of you and the fear of you upon all the land where you tread, just as He has said to you.” This reminds me of Romans 8:31, “If God is for us, who can be against us?”

F. B. Meyer told the story of a godly Lutheran pastor, Sander, of Elberfeld. He had been compelled to rebuke an evildoer for some gross sin, and had thereby attracted to himself his malicious hate. The man vowed to repay him. One night the pastor was called to visit a house that could only be reached by passing over a plank that bridged a racing river. Nothing seemed easier to his enemy than to conceal himself on the bank until the man of God was returning from the opposite end of the plank, to meet him in the middle, throw him into the deep and murky stream, leaving it to be surmised that in the darkness he had simply lost his foothold. When, however, from his hiding place he caught sight of the pastor's figure in the dim light, he was surprised to see that he was not alone, but accompanied by another. There were two figures advancing towards him across the narrow plank, and he did not dare attempt his murderous deed. And as they passed his hiding place, the one whom he did not know cast such a glance towards him as convinced him of the sinfulness of the act he had contemplated, and began a work in his heart which led to his conversion.

When converted, he sought out the pastor, to confess to him the murderous intention

which had so nearly mastered him, and said, “It would have been your death had you not been accompanied.” “What do you mean?” said the other; “I was absolutely alone.” “Nay,” said he, “there were two.” Then the pastor knew that God had sent His angel to protect him.

Now we have seen some wonderful promises of God’s provision, God’s presence, and God’s protection. Isn’t it great to be able to go into the new year with the assurance that God will provide for your needs, that He will be with you, that He will protect you, and give you success? Yet you may can look back & see times when you lacked God’s provision, God’s presence, and God’s protection. What was wrong? Did God fail you? Did He not keep His promises? Well, just as we see here, many of God’s promises are conditional. For example, note that v. 13 begins with “if” and v. 14 begins with “then.” For any of us who wonder why we may be living outside the provision and protection of God, the reason might be found in these verses. So I want to share with you last of all:

#### IV. THE CONDITIONS FOR RECEIVING THESE PROMISES

The “natural” benefits of the land of promise would tend to lull the people into complacency, into a sense of independence in which the land itself and not its Creator and Sustainer would be viewed as the ultimate source of blessing. So the Lord warned that the continued blessings would be conditional. Thus, this promise is not for everyone. It is for whom? It is for those who meet the conditions listed here. I will put them in logical order. First of all, we must:

A. Love God (v. 13) – Moses reminded the children of Israel, and us, what is of utmost importance: loving God. This is a restatement of the *Shema* of 6:5, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.” Jesus said this was the greatest commandment (Matt. 22:34). Again, note the repetition of this important command in v.22, “For if you carefully keep all these commandments which I command you to do—to love the Lord our God, to walk in all His ways and to hold fast to Him.” Religious ritual is of no value to those who neglect this most important command. And the reason we break most of the other commandments is because we do not obey this great commandment. Men and women would not defile their bodies in adultery or fornication if they loved God with all their hearts. You wouldn’t lie if you loved God as you ought.

Here we find the Israelites’ primary purpose. It was and is to love God! Everything in life has a primary purpose. The primary purpose of a pen is to write. I would rather have a cheap plastic pen that worked than an expensive one that didn’t. The primary purpose of an automobile is to transport us from place to place. I would rather have a 10-year-old automobile that always started & operated than a shiny new one that did not work. When something ceases to fulfill its primary purpose, it becomes useless. We’ve all seen wrecking yards with hundreds of cars lined up side by side that once were valuable. Could it be that so many Christians are defeated because so few are fulfilling their primary purpose? No wonder Moses spoke this stern warning related to God’s promise in Deut. 11:13-14.

B. Obey God – The words translated “earnestly obey” are actually a translation of the Hebrew word “to hear” stated twice for emphasis. To listen carefully is the first step toward obedience. You have to know the commandments of God before you can obey them. If you want to have God’s blessings for 2004, you need to obey Him. And you cannot obey in your own

strength. You can only obey by faith in the strength He provides through the Holy Spirit, and the Word of God.

C. Serve God – Are you working for God? Are you serving God? One way is to serve through a ministry of the church. Another way is to do good works in His name. Jesus said, “If you’ve done it unto the least of these my brethren, you’ve done it unto me.”

D. Stay Loyal to God – Moses gives a warning here. He says in vv. 16-17, “Take heed<sup>5</sup> to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, lest the LORD’S anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you.” It would be easy for Israel to share the naturalistic point of view of Baal worship. In such worship the forces of nature must be acknowledged and appeased if productivity of animal and vegetable life were to be achieved. Thus, Moses issued the most urgent warning to his people that they be careful lest they be deceived by what appeared to be cause-and-effect reality and worship the gods who represented the vital elements of nature.

Then, v. 22 adds that we should “hold fast to Him.” That Hebrew word means “to cling to, to stay with.” It’s the same Hebrew word found in Genesis 2:24 where it says, “Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” Stay close to the Lord in 2004. Don’t drift away. Don’t backslide on God.

E. Stay in the Word (cf. Deut. 6:6-9) - Moses ties his people to the Word of God. Hear him as he challenges his people in vv. 18-19, “Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.” Note that we are to “lay up,” to consciously place God’s Word in our hearts by listening, reading, reflecting upon, and even memorizing God’s Word. Though it is not necessary to literally bind Bible verses on our hands & between our eyes, we should carry out the spirit of this requirement and take steps to place reminders of God’s Word ever before us. One way is to do something similar to v. 20. Have you decorated your home with significant Bible verses? Is a copy of God’s Word on display in your home? Finally, v. 19 says that we should teach and discuss God’s Word with others. The best way to learn the Bible is to teach it, and talk about what you have read, or talk about what you learned in S.S. Moses knew the only way his people could love the Lord with all their heart was to saturate themselves with a conscious awareness of His word.

There is a real need for this. According to a recent survey (10/03), 58% of Americans cannot name 5 of the 10 Commandments, and just under half know that Genesis is the 1<sup>st</sup> book of the Bible.

I want to challenge you as you are about to begin a new year, commit to reading God’s Word on a daily basis. Commit to regular attendance in S.S. and church. Let me illustrate why is it important to be persistent in the Word of God. The nature of water is soft, that of stone is hard; but if a source of water is above the stone, allowing the water to fall drop by drop, it wears away the stone. So it is with the Word of God; it is soft and our heart is hard, but the man who hears the Word of God often, opens his heart to God<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Be on your guard.

<sup>6</sup> Abba Poemen, *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers* (quoted in CT, 10/22/01).

What could be more simple? Israel only had to love Him, and to walk in obedience to God's Word. All that kept them from the blessing of God was disobedience. It is the same with us. I often wonder what would happen to the church if all of the members began to truly love the Lord with all their heart and serve Him with all their soul. The single most important thing we can do as we cross over into a new year is to love the Lord our God and to serve Him with all our hearts.

Conclusion: Yes, it was a long, continuous journey for the children of Israel through the decades of wilderness wanderings. Moses led them all the way. And thus he comes to the end of his own life and assures the people of Israel of God's provision and presence. As we cross over to this new year, Moses stands to remind us that as we go, we too will need God's provision. To depend on human effort is sheer folly. We will need God's presence. There will be times when we, like the children of Israel, wonder where God is. But His eyes are upon us. And, we go with His protection. There may be times when we'll be without help or hope unless God supernaturally intervenes.

We, too, have been on a journey. Now we are crossover people ourselves. We are crossing over into a new year with new opportunities and new beginnings. Yes, He brought us out from there that He might bring us in to a land of blessing. As we enter a new year, let us, like those who've gone before, love God, obey Him, serve Him, hold fast to Him, and stay in His Word!

Sources: O. S. Hawkins, *Good News for Great Days* (Dallas: Annuity Board, SBC, 2001); Matthew Henry *Unabridged Commentary* (on Online Bible); C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Commentary on the Old Testament in Ten Volumes* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1978 reprint); J. Vernon McGee, *Thru The Bible*, Vol. 1 (Pasadena, CA: Thru The Bible Radio, 1982); Eugene H. Merrill, *New American Commentary: Deuteronomy* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1994); Larry Pierce, *Online Bible* [CD-ROM] (Ontario: Timnathserah Inc., 1996). Unless otherwise indicated, all Scripture quotations are from *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1982).

#### ABOUT THESE SERMON NOTES

This document has not been transcribed from an audio recording, but is the result of the sermon preparation process. Most outlines are original to the author, but much of the content of the notes are taken from commentaries, other sermons, and Bible study aids (see sources above). Sermons are preached without notes, and thus the content of the "live" sermon is in the author's own words. To get an audio recording of this message, you may send \$1 for each audio cassette tape ordered, plus \$3 shipping & handling for each order mailed in. Up to 2 messages come on each cassette. Make checks payable to Swift Creek Baptist Church, P.O. Box 235, Colonial Heights, VA 23834.