

Resolved: I Will Be Who I Am!
Deuteronomy 4:20-21, 32-40
Reading: Colossians 4:1-6

Bethany Baptist Church
February 12, 2017

...pray...

“**Exceptionalism**” has been a *hot potato* word in the *past decade*!

Exceptionalism is a relatively recent term.

According to Webster’s dictionary the simple definition is to be *different* than the *norm*. Recently the concept of *exceptionalism* has been applied & debated **w.r.t.** *nations* & their *history* & even their geographic *location*.

What sets apart a *people* as *different...distinct* in the *sense* of *special*, or *providentially favored*?

Is someone special because of their *inherent goodness*...? That would be **hard** for Christians to *defend* in light of the Bible’s teaching that **all** *have sinned & fall short of the glory of God*. That **none** *are righteous, not even one...*

Can a *people* be special because of something completely **outside** of them...?

Could a *people* be special because God **chose** them to be *special*...?

What kind of *impact* would it have on *your* life if you were constantly convinced that God *set you apart* to be **especially His**?

Special despite the fact that sometimes you don’t **act** so *special*! ☺

Would that *realization* **motivate** you to live a more grateful & joyful & faithful **life!?!**

Let's open our OT to Deut 4 *one more time!* Read vv. 20-21 & 32-40.

Moses' *point* is that Israel is **uniquely** God's own people. That "*identity-truth*" will strengthen the people to *cross over* & to *conquer* & to *possess* Land.

And while the *Church* is **not** *Israel*, nor has it *replaced* Israel in God's *economy*, the Gospel teaches that the **Church** is *also uniquely* God's own – *a people for His own possession*.

Our *identity* - our *uniqueness* - is a *privilege* & a *responsibility*...

It takes *steadfastness* to *live up* to our *privileged identity!* To *live* for Christ... To *conquer* for Christ... To be *who we are*, day after day!

It takes *resolve*...

Resolved: *I Will Be Who I Am!*

Christian, this morning I want to help you *be yourself* – to be who you *are!*

We'll *unpack* Moses' insights into **God's people *Israel*** and then *apply* them to **God's people, *the Church***.

Here's our framework: ***Six truths that make God's people so special.***

1. ***Identity.***
2. ***Inheritance.***
3. ***Deliverance.***
4. ***Understanding.***
5. ***Privilege.***
6. ***Responsibility.***

Beloved, ***remembering*** that you are God's special people ***fortifies*** you to live a ***faithful life!***

Identity.

1. **Read v.20.** This could be one of the most *crucial* statements in **Dt 4**.
2. Moses reminds the people of their history with two *actions*: “*taken*” & “*brought out.*”
 - a. *The LORD has **taken** you.* In the context of Israel’s immediate history this suggests God’s coming to *Israel & gathering Israel* in the midst of their *cruel circumstances* in Egypt.
 - i. *Cruel slavery – brick-baking bondage.*
 - b. *The LORD has **brought you out.***
 - i. *Through Moses, by the plagues, across the Red Sea, on to Mt. Sinai, by way of the wilderness, following the pillar of fire & cloud ... God delivered Israel out of Egypt.*
 - ii. *Apart from God they would still be Pharaoh’s slaves, toiling in Egypt.*
3. *Egypt was the iron furnace – a picture of trials & suffering.* An agonizing place that made them *cry-out for deliverance.*
4. *Jehovah heard! Jehovah gathered! Jehovah brought them out.*
 - a. *But that’s not all! Israel was **not** to become the same old slave nation, simply serving a new & better Master in an easier situation.*
 - b. *God **took Israel & brought out Israel** for the express purpose of making them His own, distinct people. A people for God’s own possession.*
 - c. *Yes! - God owns **everything**, because He made **everything!***
 - d. *But God delivered Israel to become a people that are *uniquely* His.*
5. Moses says (20b) this was *true* then, this is still *true today*. As the people are preparing to *enter the Promised Land, to cross over & conquer & possess*, they need to be *fortified* by this fact: **they are uniquely God’s own.**

6. Christian, the *Exodus* serves as a picture of your *salvation*!
 - a. You were a *slave of sin*. You were a willing *captive & follower* of the *prince of the power of the air*. You were *entrapped* in the *iron furnace* of this world.
 - b. But God *sent His Son* & *freed* you from sin & *gave* you a new life & *took* (*transferred*) you into a *new kingdom* – a *new citizenship*.
 - c. *Who are you – to this day, beloved?* The Apostle Peter writes: *But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION,...* [you are] *A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION...*

7. We speak of *amnesia, forgetfulness, dementia* – “*Old Timer's Disease.*” We nervously *joke & worry* about our *misplacing* our keys or *wondering* why we walked into a room... “*Who am I, what am I doing here.*”
 - a. All the while we know that *forgetting...forgetting where you are & who you are* is no joke.
 - b. You *must not forget* who you are in Christ! Don't be confused on this: you are *God's* & you are *God's* because He *gathered* you to Himself & *took* you out of the *furnace*.
 - c. **And He *delivered* you to make you *especially His!***

And because you are *His*, He has given you an *inheritance*.

1. Moses reminds God's people that they are about to receive an *inheritance*. **Twice** in vv.21&22, the *aged leader* refers to their *inheritance* as the "good land."
 - a. Being God's own, *special people* brings w/ it the *blessing* of an *inheritance*.
 - b. In our extended text (vv.1-40) the *land*, the *good land*, Israel's *inheritance* is referred to **10X**. E.g. in v.22 ...*you shall cross & take possession of this good land*.
 - c. Israel's *inheritance* is the *Promised Land*; *promised* by God to Abram centuries before, in the *Abrahamic Covenant* (Gen 12, 15, etc.).
2. All Israel needs to do now is to *cross* the River Jordon (God will *part* the river, even as He parted the *Red Sea*), *conquer* the pagan inhabitants (God will *go before them*), then *settle* the land.
3. What about **Moses**...? *Moses isn't going into the good land*. He is still *God's friend*, but it's the price of *losing his temper & disobeying His Lord*.
4. You are *God's people*, in fact thru faith in Jesus, you are *His children* – He has an *inheritance* for you.
 - a. Paul writes (Rm 8) – *For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of **adoption as sons** by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are **children of God**, and if children, **heirs** also, **heirs** of God and **fellow heirs** with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the **glory** that is to be revealed to us.*
 - b. By faith in Christ each of you have this *inheritance*: *forgiveness & new nature & spiritual gifts & word of God & Holy Spirit & daily grace & daily wisdom & eternal life & heavenly rewards & an eternal home*.

All this, and more, is your inheritance because you are His – His own!

Don't forget how He delivered you.

1. Moses rouses the people: do you ***realize*** what God has *done* for you! Your story is *absolutely unprecedented in the entire history of mankind!* **Read 32-34.**
 - a. From one end of *history* to another (*creation* of Adam to the reappearing in Egypt of Moses).
 - b. From one end of *creation* (heavens) to another.
 - c. **Ask! - Google it!** Here's the question: *Has anything been **done** like this **great thing**, or has anything been **heard** like it?*
2. Here's how it's *gone down for you*:
 - a. You ***heard*** God's *voice!* *All of you – the **entire nation**, standing at the foot of Mt. Sinai. You didn't see Him (12), but you heard His voice – from the midst of the fire. And you're still alive!*
 - b. You ***witnessed*** God's *power* – you're ***free*** because of His *power* (34): *trials, signs & wonders, war, mighty hand, outstretched arm, great terrors. ... He did them for you.*
 - c. No other *people* have witnessed this, no ***god*** has tried this, no other *nation* has become this – a *people for God's own possession!* That's what the Lord God *did for you!*
 - d. *Remind* yourself of God's *deliverance* ...it will keep you *strong!*

3. *Just the other day, someone told me their testimony **wasn't very interesting...***
- a. *...they had grown up in a **Christian home** & so they had always **heard about Jesus** and always **assumed** they were saved. And their sins were such **small, boring sins**.*
 - b. *Then God showed them, somehow, that they still needed to personally **turn** to Christ & **trust**, for themselves, in His death & resurrection for sinners. And they did...*
 - c. ***Not very interesting?** You were dangerously **deceived**. You **knew** about God but you didn't **care** about God. **You were going to hell!** (2X) How much more **interesting** could this get!?*
4. *Beloved, never forget & never diss **your** story! Your testimony of how God took for Himself a man/woman from within another kingdom (world; darkness) & **brought you out** by great signs & wonders of mercy & grace!*

Never forget your story – never forget your deliverance – never forget who you are, in Christ & because of Christ!

*And Moses says: **Know this** – there is only one true God!*

1. You ever heard it said, “It’s not **what** you know, it’s **who** you know...!”
Well, Moses says it’s “*what you know **about** who you know.*”
2. **Read v.35-36.** “*that you might know...*” Moses is saying: “*Here’s **why** God let you **hear** His voice & **witness** His deliverance.*” So this is a *purpose statement* & God’s *purpose* is all about *what you **know** about **Him**.*
 - a. One writer comments: “*Israel’s relationship was rooted in **reality** not philosophy*” (*reality* → *delivered out of Egypt, gathered at the foot of Sinai, led across the wilderness*).
 - b. Here is what God’s people need to **know**: YHWH, the “I AM,” is God. He is *real*. He is *unique*. There is simply **no other God**. The LORD isn’t the *best God*, He’s the *only God*!
3. **Read v.39.** Moses comes back to the *need to **know***. Not just to *know it in your **head***, but to *embrace the truth about God in your **heart**!*
 - a. Jehovah is the God of *heaven & earth* (Moses loves that expression!), the Lord of *everything, everywhere*.
 - b. He is **Creator, holy** (→ Law; appeared in fire, disciplined the unruly), unquestionably **mighty** (signs & wonders & terrors), .. *amazingly merciful* (He *took you & brought you out*).
 - c. And, again...*there is **no other***. So *pull down your idols, and enter the Land!*
4. Beloved, your *identity* as a Christian is wrapped up in *knowing* God personally and *knowing* what God is like correctly, and **taking that to heart**.
 - a. I like to say the *longed 18 inches* in the world is the **journey** between your *head* & your *heart*!
 - b. Will this *truth* from Deuteronomy, that the *only God there is* – Lord of *heaven & earth* – has sent His *Son* & saved you in order to make you *His own*, ... will **that understanding make any difference in your life this week!?** Will you **rejoice in the privileged person you are!?**

Because beloved, to belong to God is a huge privilege!

1. Why did God *take* Israel & *bring them out* of the furnace? Was it because they were *many*? Was it because they were *mighty*? Was it because they were *so deserving*...?
 - a. Moses will put *that* suggestion to rest in just a few more pages! Flip forward w/ me to **Dt 7:6-11**.
 - b. So Israel's *incredible deliverance & new national identity* isn't really about *Israel* at all, it's about **God**...

2. **Read vv.37-38**. There are **3** more actions I want you consider here: *loved & chose & personally brought*.
 - a. God ***loved*** Abraham & Isaac & Jacob.
 - i. This is a *unique, a specific, love*. Set upon the *Patriarchs & now focused on their descendants* – this *new nation, Israel!*
 - b. The *result* of God's love for the *patriarchs* was His ***choice*** of Israel.
 - i. As Moses said in **v.20**, to ***take*** Israel.
 - ii. And again, *not* because of Israel's great *qualifications* but because of YHWH's great & faithful, *covenant-keeping love*.
 - c. *Third* action item (37): God *personally brought* you from Egypt by *His great power*. The Exodus was a never-before-seen act of *divine liberation, bringing God's people out* of captivity.
 - i. While this is very similar to Moses' remark in **v.20**, what I want to point out here (37) is the indication that God's *deliverance* was ***personal*** – lit. *by His presence...or by His face*.

3. As a result of His *love & choice & rescue*, God would *go before* Israel as the people entered the *Promised Land* & He would *drive out* their enemies, not matter *how big* the enemy might appear to be!

4. The *point* beloved is much the same, **34 centuries** later.
- a. The **Church** is *also* God's *distinct* people.
 - b. And **not** because we are *incredibly qualified*. Paul put that to rest in **1 Cor 1:**
*For consider your calling, brethren, that there were **not** many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify the things that are, so that no man may boast before God. But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, so that, just as it is written, "LET HIM WHO BOASTS, BOAST IN THE LORD."*
5. So whether *Israel* on the verge of the Jordon, or the **21st** century *saints* worshipping here in *Sedalia*, we have this *incredible, unsought, underserved privilege*:
- a. God set His *love* on us.
 - b. God *chose* us to make us His own.
 - c. God *delivered* us from the *iron furnace* of this world & *brought us out* into the freedom of Christ!
6. The writer **Charles Wesley** captured the *wonder* of our *privilege* - do you know this *hymn*? ...

*And can it be that I should gain
 an interest in the Savior's blood!
 Died he for **me**? who caused his pain!
 For **me**? who him to death pursued?
 Amazing love! How can it be
 that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
 Amazing love! How **can** it be
 that thou, my God, shouldst die for me?*

Amazing love...amazing privilege! It's yours! How can it, beloved...?

But privilege is not idleness & ease; God's elect people have been entrusted with a great responsibility. Read v.40.

1. Moses *spells out* an instruction he's already repeated several times (1, 2, 5, 6, 13...here, 40): **keep** God's statutes & commandments.
 - a. Don't **add** to them or subtract from them.
 - b. Don't **forget** them.
 - c. Don't **keep** them from your children.
 - d. Don't **ignore** the top of the list: pull down your idols & worship God alone.
 - e. And when you fail, ... **repent!**

2. And then, when the *nations* witness the *power* of God's truth in the lives of His people, they will be *amazed*...
 - a. **V.6** - "So keep & do **them**, for that is your wisdom & your understanding in the sight of all the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, "Surely this **great nation** is a wise & understanding people."

3. Moses' mention of Israel's *neighbors* (v.6) reminds us of one of Israel's *great neglected responsibilities*: to be God's "witness nation" in the world.
 - a. God promised *Abraham* that his *seed* would be a blessing to the nations.
 - b. Through *Isaiah* He reminded Israel that they were His *witness*.
 - c. They would *confess* the One True God, *teach* His Law and *bring forth* *Messiah*, His Son. The *blessing* of all *nations*!

4. The *Church* has **also** been entrusted with *God's Word* & appointed as *God's heralds!*
- a. We are the ***pillar & support*** of *God's truth*. We are ***proclaimers*** of *God's excellencies*.
 - b. **1 Peter 2:9&10** - *But you are A CHOSEN RACE, a royal PRIESTHOOD, a HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.*
 - c. This is simply the *Great Commission* of our Lord Jesus Christ: *All authority has been given to Me in heaven and earth. Go, therefore, making disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father & the Son & the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*
 - d. That's *us*, beloved, that's ***you!*** The hand-picked people of God – *loved, elect, taken, brought out, commissioned...joyfully faithful!*

Let's go from this place this morning, determined to *be just who we are!*

We've started the year by identifying six spiritual resolutions from Moses' admonition to *enter, conquer & possess!*

To help you *apply* them this year, I'd like to suggest a simple memory verse to underscore each one (got your *pencil* handy? ..or your *smart phone*?):

Resolved: *We will make God's Word a daily feature of our lives.*

Psa 119: 11 – *Your Word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against you.*

Resolved: *We will keep the fire burning on the altar of our hearts.*

Psa 42:1 – *As the deer pants for the water brooks, so my soul pants after Thee, O God.*

Resolved: *We will leave a godly legacy.*

2 Timothy 4:7 – *I have fought the good fight; I have finished the course; I have kept the faith.*

Resolved: *We will pull down our idols.*

Ex 20:3 – *"You shall have no other gods before Me."*

Resolved: *We will live a repenting life.*

Psa 51:17 – *The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.*

Resolved: *We will **be** who we **are**.*

2 Cor 5:17 – *Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.*

May God bless *this* people, **His** people, in the *months & years* to come!

...pray...