

Part 17: A Guide to Not Missing Out

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In 1986, a young man named Len Bias was drafted #2 overall by the Boston Celtics in the NBA draft. After a lifetime of dreams, he had finally reached the pinnacle, he was a professional basketball player, and one at the top of his class. But tragically, two days afterwards, Bias died of an overdose.

He was so close to the reality of his dreams, but he missed out.

In the 1800's a physician named John Snow went public with a novel and transformative theory that most of the world's diseases, like the cholera outbreak which ravaged his home city of London, were transmitted not by dirty air, but by tiny invisible particles which could be ingested by humans.

Snow was the first person to publicly lend credence to a theory known today as germ theory. Even though this idea would soon become a revolutionary staple of modern medicine, Snow's idea was widely laughed at and he died a decade before his brilliance would be appreciated at a broad level.

Whether in basketball, science, inventions or even relationships we know how universal it is to miss out on something which it seems like we have invested our whole lives into. It is what fuels our social media addictions and is what marketers and psychologists call: FOMO (fear of missing out).

But this is why the conclusion to the book of Deuteronomy is so practical not only to those who witnessed the events thousands of years ago, but even for us today. And that's because the human condition hasn't changed. We still wrestle with frustrations and false hopes. We know the pain of missing out.

But in an ironic turn of events, our passage today highlights the story of a man who seemingly missed out on everything, but by the end we see he didn't miss anything.

Wouldn't you like it if you knew that at the end of your life, you would look back and know that you didn't miss out? Wouldn't it be a practical comfort in the times of trials and sorrow in this world if you could understand that this is not meaningless or arbitrary?

In the final chapters of Deuteronomy, Moses, the people's pastor, is going to die. But in the closing story and in Moses' closing message to Israel he wants to impart on them the practical ways in which they can avoid missing out on what they truly want.

Our text today is not just the conclusion to the book of Deuteronomy, it is the conclusion to the Pentateuch, which are the first five books of the Bible. Which means that this text really sets the tone for all of the history of Israel which is going to follow in the history books, the prophetic books and even in the New Testament.

Sandwiched between two accounts of Moses' death is his final blessing for his people and in that blessing he wants to set a trajectory which will endure God's people for all time. So here is what we are

going to see today in the final pages of Deuteronomy: **Why Moses Missed Out, Why God's People Shouldn't Miss Out**, and lastly we will see **Everything We've Ever Wanted**.

Now as Moses and the Israelites are sitting on the banks of the Jordan River, looking over into the Promised Land, we realize that this scene is not only the end of the Pentateuch, it is the culmination and climax of it.

The first five books of the Bible begin with the creation story: God creating Adam and Eve as his people, in the Garden of Eden as his place, and in his direct presence.

But Adam and Eve rebelled against God and were removed from God's presence and place. Fast forward in Genesis, God is going to show us that his is going to overcome the distance that sin created between him and humanity.

He chooses Abraham and says that he is going to be Abraham's God and God is going to make Abraham into a mighty people, and with the promise of God's presence and God's people also came the promise of God's place: God was going to bring them into the Land of Promise.

But by the end of Genesis, the sin and distrust of God has led God's people not to the Promised Land, but to Egypt as sojourners. Sojourners who quickly become slaves in Egypt. They might be God's people, but they're in the wrong place.

So enter Moses, God's chosen servant to bring Israel out of slavery and to the Promised Land [Exodus]. And this is what Moses does, he delivers Israel from Egypt, leads them to the Promised Land where the people once more rebel against God [Numbers].

And now, 40 years later, God has ended their discipline and by the hand of Moses has brought them right back to the doorway into the Promised Land. They are finally at their long awaited hope.

But look at what unfolds here: **Deuteronomy 32:48-52**.

Moses has given the last third of his life to the cause of getting God's people back into God's place but here at the end of all things, he's reminded of the fact that he is going to miss out.

In fact God gives Moses the command, "Go and die." Why? This is our first point today: **Why Moses Missed Out: He did not treat God as holy**.

That's what God said to him in verse 51.

God makes reference to a time back in the wilderness of Zin where Moses made a mistake. You can read about this story in Numbers 20. What we see is that Israel is grumbling again for water. So Moses goes to God and says, "What do you want me to do?" This is where the story picks up: **Numbers 20:7-12**.

God tells Moses to speak to the rock, and what does Moses do, he strikes the rock twice. This might seem so insignificant. This might seem like normal frustration. But in this we actually see the severity of sin and the holiness of God.

God told Moses what to do, and Moses did it his own way. And God here in Deuteronomy 32 provides Moses the theological distinction behind what happens when any of us sin: we refuse to treat God as holy. When Paul talks about sin, this is how he describes it: **Romans 1:20-21**. People saw God's holy attributes, but refuse to honor him as holy.

Holy is a word which kind of creates its own momentum, but simply put to be holy is to be set apart and distinct. Because all sin is disobedience, all sin is a fundamental rejection that God is holy. It says, "Why do I need to care about what you say?" Moses' grave with a view stands as a stark reminder of how dangerous our sin is.

And not only do we see the serious of this sin, but we also see God's faithfulness to judge sin. Just as the nation of Israel was judged for not obeying God fully at Kadesh-Barnea, so too is Moses judged for not obeying God fully at Meribah.

Sin is serious, and God judges all sin seriously regardless of who you are. This is why we need Jesus who takes the punishment for our sins. If Moses wasn't safe from his sin, you certainly aren't safe from yours.

Moses is going to die on a mountain overlooking the Promised Land, without ever actually setting foot in it because he refused to treat God as holy. He forgot that God is different, special and wonderful.

So what is Moses going to do? He's going to be a good pastor. He is going to bless his people despite his own circumstance and at the heart of his blessing he is going to give his people everything they need to not make the same mistakes he did.

In fact it is precisely because Moses is missing out on the Land that he sings this song and gives this blessing to his people. Because Moses missed out, he wants his people to learn from his foolishness.

This is our second point today: **Why God's People Shouldn't Miss Out.**

If the heart of sin is a failure to see God as unique, set apart, and holy, then Moses' practical word to his people is meant to help them see the wonder of their God.

In the scope of this song Moses is actually going to give four primary reasons why Israel shouldn't forget or ignore this God.

Have you ever wondered why anyone would follow the God of the Bible? Why is it that for the glory of Jesus Christ this history of this world is littered with examples of willing and joyful sacrifice of lives, careers, finances and family?

Because God is holy. There's nothing like him. This is exactly what Moses brings to express: **Deuteronomy 33:1-2.**

So here's the first reason why we shouldn't ignore this God: ***He speaks!***

Moses here is describing in three ways what happened at Mount Sinai. For those who remember, Sinai is the place where God first gave his law to his people after they were saved from Egypt. And Moses can't help but communicate God's word outside of visible imagery.

It was in God's speaking to Moses on the mountain where God came to them. God dawned on them with all the piercing power of the morning sun. He shone forth in radiant splendor.

Do you understand what is at the heart of the Christian God? Here is a God who not only exists, who not only created, who is not only mightier than 10,000 angels burning as a flaming fire, but he comes to his people and reveals himself to them.

I remember in college there was a time where you could go to a website and pay money to have some celebrity call your friend on their birthday. They would get a phone call and it would be Chuck Norris or someone reading a birthday greeting.

But the truth is, Chuck Norris didn't actually care about knowing my friends or being known by them, he just sat down one day and read through a list of names combined with birthday greetings.

But, brothers and sisters, God has revealed himself to his people in history and in his word because he wants us to know him. I've heard it said before that all of the Bible is a burning bush! God wants to be known and has acted in the history of redemption because he wants to be known.

This God is unique from everything else in his ability to wake dead hearts with the warmth of his revelation. Don't forget that to hear God in scripture is to see God shine forth. God wants you to know him and has spoken to us so that you can know him.

That's what Moses wants Israel to be reminded of. But even more than that, look at what he says next: **Deuteronomy 33:3-5**.

Why does God speak? Why does God reveal himself in salvation to his people? Because *he loves* you!

A good god might be motivated by pity. A great god might even be motivated by mercy. But the God of the Bible is motivated to save people because he loves them!

God judges people because he is just, but God saves people because he loves them. God's salvation is not transactional, it's relational.

This has been a major point of Moses' in this book: **Deuteronomy 10:14-15**.

Love is not a human invention, it is an extension of the God who made us and, who through Jesus, has set forth to redeem us. **1 John 4:8-10**.

And to make this even more remarkable, his love is not pathetic and weak. Look at what he said to them about this love and God's rules and laws: **Deuteronomy 33:3-5**.

God's love is so effective that it actually sets out to rule us. It guides us and changes every aspect of our lives. That's what the law did for Israel and that's what the calls to holiness do for the Christian.

To be loved by this great God is to be placed under the reign of this God.

Jesus says something really similar in **John 14:15**.

And having a King who rules over us in loving direction is a huge grace. That might seem odd, but having a King who gives rules like this relieves our anxiety.

Can you imagine if you were required to love someone who refused to tell you what they liked? Imagine having a girlfriend or a spouse who would never tell you what they wanted. Where anytime you asked her what she wanted to do that evening, she would just stare at you and say, "Figure it out."

For many of us that's the anxiety we face when we think of following Jesus. We think it is a life of hopefully doing the right things in the right places just hoping that one day it's enough. But God in love has told us what he wants from us. The mystery is removed: Love the Lord your God with all your heart soul, mind and strength and love your neighbor as yourself.

God's love for us rules over us and brings us peace.

This is where Moses now turns for the vast majority of his song. Verses 1-5, and 26-29 are a sort of theological intro and outro to this blessing Moses gives to the tribes of Israel in verses 6-25.

So what do we, as New Covenant believers, take from a text which blesses the historic tribes of Israel? We take notice of what Moses wants the Israel to take notice of: God delivers (***He Delivers***).

I'm not going to spend time working through all these blessings, but by name Moses works his way through the tribes of Israel and he pronounces blessing on them, but in the blessings he assumes that they will occupy the land.

His point in all of this is that even though he is dying, God is remaining with his people. God promised them the land, and God is going to get them into the land even if it is without the comfort Moses brings them as leader.

Zebulun and Issachar are told that they will draw abundance from the seas which border the land. Joseph is promised the abundant produce in the land. Asher is going to be anointed and strong in the land, Naphtali will live by the lake in the south or the land.

But what Moses describes is not all roses. In the middle of this assurance of blessing also comes the assumption of trials. Ruben will endure, but his men will be few. Judah will have people contend with him, Levi will have victory over those who hate him, Gad will fight like a lion.

But in this season of transition Moses wants Israel to see that this holy God will fulfill his word to his people, they should continue to entrust themselves to him.

But even though Moses reminds them of God's promise to give them the Land, his concluding portion is where he really prepares them for what it takes to not miss out.

Read with me: **Deuteronomy 33:26-28**.

Here is the last reason God's people shouldn't miss out: ***He is our possession***.

Yes, says Moses, you're going to get the land. But the Land is not your dwelling place.

The eternal God is.

Do you hear the massive paradigm shift Moses is proposing here in verse 27? The whole of Israel's story was a return to the Land, but here Moses says that the Land is nothing. The Land is land. Your dwelling place is with this eternal God.

What made the Land special was the God who promised to be with his people in it. When it comes to the fears of missing out this is what we must learn to see.

Look at what Moses has said a couple times already in this book: **Deuteronomy 31:20, 28:47, 6:10-12.**

You see it takes a man who knows he is seemingly going to miss out on everything he ever wanted to be able to tell a people that sometimes our greatest danger is getting exactly what we want.

There are so many things in this world which call to us, "Don't miss out on this." To a degree this was what the very good Promised Land did for the people of Israel! God gave it to them. But the problem of our hearts is that we can very quickly fear missing out on the gift of God and instead miss out on God himself.

That's what Moses says would happen to Israel. It is very possible for them to get everything they want, but miss what they truly needed.

But here is the wonderful truth of this God: he is our possession. What you are after in this world is the God who is calling us back to himself through Jesus Christ. **Psalm 37:3-4.** Do you see the poetic bookends David creates here? Dwelling in the land, receiving the desires of your heart comes when we learn to trust in the Lord and delight ourselves in him. Why? Because he is our possession. We were made to delight in God.

And when we have made God our possession and our dwelling place, the eternal God who will never fade or fail, look at what encompasses our lives: **Deuteronomy 33:27.**

Did you feel the practical reality of this God? He not only is the place in which you dwell, he goes before you into the weight of battles unknown, and if even inside of his grace we fall, his everlasting arms are underneath us holding us from danger.

In God's salvation you cannot miss out on what you need because what you need is already holding onto you.

This is our last point: **Everything We've Ever Wanted.**

Moses didn't tread God as holy, but now he's held up the picture of a God which only a fool would refuse: a God who draws near to his people, a God who loves and rules over his people, a God who keeps his promise and a God who satisfies for all eternity.

And look at Moses' conclusion to his song: **Deuteronomy 33:29.**

Happy are you to be saved by this God. How happy?

Look at what happens afterwards: **Deuteronomy 34:1-12.**

So here we read the death of Moses. And by worldly standards, Moses is falling short in the worst of all ways. The land is right there. Earlier in Deuteronomy Moses pleaded with God to enter the Land but at this point in the story it doesn't read like a tortured man does it?

As we read of Moses' death we feel a sense of friendship between Moses and God. In fact Exodus says that God spoke to Moses face to face as if to a friend. And now look at how this played out in the moment where it seemed he was missing out on everything he ever wanted: **Deuteronomy 34:1-6**.

In Moses' death we don't read of a panicked and grief stricken man, though I'm sure it was undoubtedly sad. But instead what we read is a man who though dying, was with God. A God who showed him the land, and a God who it seems actually buried Moses himself.

The truth is, that it is very possible that here in the moment of his death with God that Moses had a greater reality of God's promise than the Israelites did as they entered the Land. For Moses I think he understood what he just preached, God was his possession. Happy was he to be saved by this God.

We will miss out on so many things in this world. Following Jesus is a call to say no to many of the idols the world holds dear. But we might also miss out on things that like the Promised Land seem like good things. There are people in here who might miss out on marriage, family, or good health. You might look around at all the other believers in this room with you today and only see what they have and you lack.

But if we are saved by Jesus Christ we miss out on nothing. Look at how the author of Hebrews puts it: **Hebrews 11:13-16**. God has something better for all of us than the pleasures of this world. He has an eternal city.

The only way to such a grace is through the one who came who is greater than Moses: **Hebrews 3:3-6**. For the Israelites it was hard to hold onto hope when they were losing Moses, but the author of Hebrews says that for those who hold onto Jesus, they will never miss out.

Jesus is the one who atones for our sins and brings us back to God and his promises.

There is this wonderful reality behind everything here which just makes the Bible so wonderful. In Deuteronomy 34, Moses dies without ever setting foot in the Promised Land because his sin kept him out.

But thousands of years later, a group of four men climbed to the top of a mountain in the heart of the Promised Land, and look at what happened. **Matthew 17:1-7**.

Eventually Moses finally made it to the Promised Land, but as if in some cosmic joke, he was there for a moment and then disappeared. And in that moment Moses didn't marvel at the Land, instead he spoke to his savior. But then he left. And as he left God made it clear how you too can get to where you've always wanted to be: This is my son, listen to him.

To miss out is ultimately to miss Jesus. Jesus came to die for our sins so that we can see clearly not only the weight of our sin, but the joy of being restored back to God. The life ahead of you today has much you cannot see. But to repent and believe is to receive the promise that Jesus will get you to where you want to be. He won't let you miss out. So that we might say, "Happy are we a people saved by the Lord."

