

# This Year...

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] Well, if we could, this morning, with the Lord's night and the Lord's enabling, if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read, the book of Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy chapter 11.

Deuteronomy chapter 11, and if we read again at verse 10. For the land that you're entering to take possession of, it's not like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and irrigated it like a garden of vegetables.

But the land that you're going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from heaven, a land that the Lord your God cares for. The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

And particularly the words of the end of verse 12. The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

What is your only comfort in life and in death?

[ 1 : 2 4 ] As you'll know from the intimations, that's the first question the Heidelberg Catechism asks. What is your only comfort in life and in death? And the Heidelberg Catechism, we've mentioned it before, it was compiled in 1563 in order to express the reformed doctrines of the Christian faith.

And it expresses these fundamental doctrines in the form of questions and answers, much like a shorter catechism, which many of us will be familiar with.

But the Heidelberg Catechism, it's set out in 52 Lord's Days in order that some of the questions would be considered each Lord's Day throughout the entire year.

In fact, many of the Dutch Reformed churches, they still use the Heidelberg Catechism and they preach through the series of 52 Lord's Days every year. But the first question that's asked on the first Lord's Day of a new year is the question, what is your only comfort in life and in death?

And you know, what better question to be asked on the first Lord's Day of this new year than this question, what is your only comfort in life and in death?

[ 2 : 3 9 ] My friend, on the first Lord's Day of a new year, this is the most important question you could be asked today. What is your only comfort in life and in death?

Who are you trusting with your life? And who are you trusting with your death? And you know, the Heidelberg Catechism, it gives to us this beautiful answer, which is the testimony of everyone who's trusting in Jesus Christ for their salvation.

What is your only comfort in life and in death? The Heidelberg Catechism says that I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong unto my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ, who with his precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins and delivered me from the power of the devil, and so preserves me that without the will of my heavenly Father, not even a hair can fall from my head.

And yea, and all things must be subservient to my salvation. And therefore, by his Holy Spirit, he also assures me of eternal life and makes me sincere and willing and ready henceforth to live unto him.

You know, don't you just love that Catechism? It's so beautiful. Because as we stand on the threshold of a new year, and as we come together to worship on the first Lord's Day of this new year, what better comfort is there in life and in death than to be reminded that we are purchased by Jesus Christ, we're protected by our heavenly Father, and we are assured of all the promises in the Bible by the Holy Spirit.

[ 4 : 22 ] And you know, it ought to be the greatest comfort to us, because we just don't know. We don't know what this year will hold for any of us.

Of course, as some approach a new year, they come with excitement and enthusiasm, and rightly so, because as they look at 2020, they're thinking about the prospect of living in a new house, or they're thinking about enjoying the blessing of a newborn baby, or getting married, or starting a new job.

And that's a good thing. But you know, for many others, as they contemplate 2020, they know that what's before them is the continued reality of old age and infirmity.

It's the progression and deterioration of an illness, or even another year missing a loved one. Friends, needless to say, bringing in the new year is happy for some.

But as we've discovered in the past week, it's heartbreaking for others. But you know, as we come to the beginning of a new year, and the first Lord's Day of a new year, I'm reminded of the Lord's promise to his people, from this passage in Deuteronomy 11.

[ 5 : 33 ] And the promise is there in verse 12, that in this coming year, the eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year, to the end of the year.

And what better comfort to have as we go into a new year? And you know, that was the word of comfort that Moses gave to the Israelites, as they stood on the threshold of a new chapter in their lives.

In fact, the word of comfort that Moses gave was threefold. Because in it, there was the possession of land, the promise of the land, the promise of the Lord, and the path of life.

A threefold word of comfort. That's what he gives here in Deuteronomy 11. The possession of the land, the promise of the Lord, and the path of life.

So we'll look first of all at the possession of the land. The possession of the land. We're told in verse 11, But the land that you're going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from heaven.

[ 6 : 40 ] A land that the Lord your God cares for. The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year, to the end of the year. Now when we come to the book of Deuteronomy, the Israelites, they have gathered together at the banks of the river Jordan.

Forty years have now passed, since they were delivered from their bondage and slavery, in Egypt. And their 40 years of wandering through the wilderness has now come to its conclusion.

As the Israelites, they now stand on the border of the promised land. And as they gather together, they're gathering in a number about two and a half million people.

And they're on the threshold of a new beginning. They're on the verge of a new start in their life. Slavery in Egypt and wandering in the wilderness, it's all behind them. And the promised land is before them.

And all that stands between the Israelites and the promised land in front of them is the river Jordan. But of course, the promised land was unknown, and it was uncharted territory for the Israelites.

[ 7 : 46 ] They didn't know what lay ahead of them as they crossed over into the promised land. And so as all of the Lord's people stood on the threshold of their new beginning, they gathered together to listen to Moses, the man of God.

And the Lord commanded Moses to gather all the Israelites together in order to remind the Israelites of all the blessings that they had received from the Lord in the past.

But Moses was also to remind the Israelites, this congregation of Israelites, of all that they'd been through and all that they'd been taught and remind them that the Lord had been with them all the time.

And you know, in many ways, that's what the whole of the book of Deuteronomy is about. The book of Deuteronomy is Moses' sermon to the Israelites, where he reminds them of the Lord's faithfulness to them in the past and the assurance and the promise that the Lord would continue to be faithful as they moved forward into the promised land.

And as you can imagine, it was a poignant moment for the Israelites because when you read their history, their past was filled with sin, sickness, sorrow, and suffering.

[ 8 : 59 ] And as they set their face towards this new beginning in the promised land, the future was unknown to them. They didn't know what was ahead of them, but they sought to move forward in the promise that the Lord was, the Lord who was with them in the past would be the Lord who was still with them in the future.

And you know, my friend, we can cling to the same promise today because despite all the changes that takes place in our circumstances and situations from the beginning of a year to the end of a year, the Lord never changes.

His promises, they remain the same for us yesterday, today, and forever. And like the Israelites, you might look back to the year that has just ended and even the decade that has just gone by.

And when you look back, you can see sins, you can see sicknesses, you can see sufferings, you can see sorrows, the sorrows of the past, and the heartache and the hurt that it's caused you.

And yet, despite all that you've been through and all that has changed in your family and maybe even in your own health, despite all that, you know that the Lord has been faithful.

[ 10 : 09 ] You know that his promises have been through. You know that he has made his presence known to you and granted to you that grace to help in time of need. And today, as you stand on the threshold of another year, you know that the Lord who was with you and faithful to you in the past is the Lord who will continue to be faithful and with you in the future.

He hasn't changed. And his promises towards you haven't changed. And he's still assuring you today from his word, come to me and I will give you rest.

He's still reminding you, ask and you shall receive. Seek and you shall find. Knock and it shall be opened to you. He's still promising to you all those fear nots.

Fear not because I will never leave you and I will never forsake you. You know, my friend, do you know the promises of God's word for yourself?

As you come to worship on the first Lord's Day and the new year, are you clinging to the promises of God's word? Because there are so many of them.

[ 11 : 25 ] There are so many of them. And as you stand on the threshold of 2020, are you listening to what God is saying to you in his word? Because, you know, it was in the knowledge of God's promises and the assurance of God's faithfulness that the Israelites were enabled to move forward and possess the promised land.

And even though what lay before them was unknown and uncharted territory, it was promised to them. It was the promised land. And it was called the promised land not just because it was promised to the Israelites 40 years earlier.

It was the promised land because it was promised to Abraham 700 years earlier. You'll remember that the Lord made a covenant with Abraham way back in Genesis 12.

And in that covenant of grace, the Lord promised Abraham to your offspring, I will give this land. And throughout the passing of all the generations of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and the 12 tribes of Israel and the years of bondage and slavery in Egypt, as well as their years of wandering through the wilderness, through it all, through all these experiences of sin, sickness, suffering and sorrow, the Lord remained faithful to his covenant promise.

And now as they're standing on the banks of the river Jordan with the promise of the promised land coming up before their eyes, they know that it's now within reach.

[ 12 : 59 ] The promises of God are within reach. The Israelites, for the Israelites' possession of the promised land is now within grasp. And they know that as they go forward into the unknown to possess this promised land flowing with milk and honey, they know that they don't go forward in their own strength.

No, they go forward standing on the promises of God. And my friend, that's how we ought to go forward into this new year.

We have to go forward. We can't stand still. We have to go forward standing on the promises of God. Is that not how someone once said that when he considered all the sins, sicknesses, sufferings and sorrows of this life, he said, standing on the promises that cannot fail.

When the howling storms of doubt and fear assail, by the living word of God, I shall prevail. Standing on the promises of God.

My friend, how are you standing today? How are you standing? Are you moving forward into a new year?

[ 14 : 12 ] Standing in your own strength? Or are you seeking to move forward into 2020? Standing on the promises of God. Because the promises of God, as we read there in God's word, they are from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

They are from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. That is the promise of the Lord. That is what I want us to see secondly. So as Moses gave the people a word of comfort, he spoke about the possession of the land.

Then he spoke about the promise of the Lord. The promise of the Lord. He says in verse 11, The land that you're going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water by the rain from heaven.

A land that the Lord your God cares for. The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. You know, as the Israelites stood on the banks of the River Jordan, listening to Moses' comforting sermon, Moses, he not only assured the Israelites that they would go over and possess the land that was promised to them.

Moses also assured the Israelites that as they went forward into the unknown, the eyes of the Lord would be upon them. And the eyes of the Lord would be watching over them, just like a shepherd who watches over his sheep.

[ 15 : 37 ] That's the image that's been given here. My friend, Moses, the servant of God, he assured the congregation that the Lord's presence would go with them and remain with them from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

And you know, it's a wonderful promise that as the Israelites looked ahead, they had the promise of the Lord that from the beginning to the end of the year, the Lord would be with them and the Lord would be watching over them.

And that's the promise of the good shepherd, that he's always with his flock and watching over his flock. Is that not what Jesus said? I am the good shepherd.

The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. My sheep hear my voice and I know them and I give to them eternal life and they will never perish. Neither shall they be plucked out of my hand.

That's the promise of the good shepherd, that he's always with his flock and he's always watching over his flock from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. And that's the promise of the Lord that we were singing of in Psalm 23, that the Lord, our shepherd, he will lead his flock.

[ 16 : 47 ] He will lead his flock to lie down in green pastures and beside still waters. And that's what Moses was reminding the Israelites, that the shepherd of Israel would be with his people and watch over his people as they moved forward over the river Jordan into the promised land.

That the Lord would be with his people and watch over his people from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. But more than that, even as we sang in Psalm 23, Psalm 23 reminds us that even though the shepherd promises to be with us and watch over us from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, it doesn't mean that everything's going to be okay in our life.

It doesn't mean that we're going to be immune from sin and sickness and suffering and sorrow. My friend, it doesn't mean that we're going to avoid facing the valley of the shadow of death. Just because the shepherd is with us.

But it does mean that, what it does mean is that at the beginning of 2020 to the end of 2020 and even beyond, even if we're faced with sins, sicknesses, sufferings and sorrows, and even if we're confronted with the valley of the shadow of death, we have the promise of the Lord our shepherd that he will be with his flock and he will be watching over his flock every single day.

day. And you know, is that not a well-known poem about God's faithful promises? And it just reminds me of what Moses was saying to the children of Israel.

[ 18 : 25 ] God has not promised the sky is always blue, flowers through and pathways all our lives through. God has not promised sun without rain, joy without sorrow, or peace without pain.

But God has promised strength for the day, rest for labor, light for way, grace for the trials, help from above, unfailing sympathy, undying love.

My friend, the promise of the Lord our shepherd is that from the beginning of the year to the end of the year, he will be with his flock and watching over his flock.

But you know, the question is, as it is always left with us, do you know the Lord as your shepherd? Do you know the Lord as your shepherd?

Are you part of his flock? Or are you still to come into the fold? Are you still a lost sheep wandering aimlessly through life? My friend, on the threshold of a new year, are you standing on the shepherd's promises?

[ 19 : 27 ] And are you assured of the shepherd's presence? Because, as you know, only too well, a lot can change in our circumstances and our situations from the beginning of the year to the end of a year.

How many people do you know who were with us at the beginning of 2019 and are now no longer with us at the beginning of 2020?

My friend, it's an awful thing to wander aimlessly through life. Without the Lord as your shepherd. Because as you stand at the beginning of a new year, without the Lord as your shepherd, the reality is you have no safety.

You have no security. You have nothing to cling to. When everything else is stripped from you, you will have nothing left. That's why you need the shepherd.

shepherd. You desperately need this shepherd. And you know, I was reading the other day the sermon J.C. Ryle preached to his congregation at the beginning of a new year.

[ 20 : 41 ] And he urged and reminded his congregation about the need to be ready for the coming year. He said, it's a solemn thing to part company with the old year.

It's still more a solemn thing to begin a new one. It's like entering a dark passage. We know not what we may meet before the end. All before us is uncertain.

We know not what a day may bring forth, much less what may happen in a year. And he says, are you ready? Are you ready for sickness?

Because you can't always be well. Are you ready for affliction? Because troubles, annoyances, anxieties may surround you on every side. Are you ready for bereavements?

No doubt there are those in the world that you love. But they are all mortal. Any one of them may die this year. Before December you may feel terribly alone. Are you ready for death?

[ 21 : 36 ] Your own death? It must come someday. It may come this year. You can't live forever. This year might be your last year, he says. These are solemn questions, says Ryle.

They ought to make you examine yourself. They ought to make you think because it will be a terrible thing to be taken by surprise. It's a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. Are you ready?

Make ready without delay, he says. For all things are ready on God's part for your salvation. The Father is ready to receive you. The Lord Jesus is ready to wash away your sins.

The Holy Spirit is ready to renew and sanctify you. The angels are ready to rejoice over you and the saints that surround you they're ready to hold out their right hand to you. My friend, are you ready?

Are you ready for this coming year? Because a lot can happen from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. Therefore, the only way to be ready is to know the promises and the presence of the Lord our shepherd by walking in the path of life.

[ 22 : 50 ] You have to know him by walking in the path of life. And that's what I want us to consider lastly and just briefly. That on the threshold of a new beginning there's a word of comfort.

The possession of land, the promise of the Lord and the path of life. The path of life. The land that you're going over to possess is a land of hills and valleys which drinks water by the rain from heaven.

A land that the Lord your God cares for. The eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it from the beginning of the year to the end of the year. And if you will indeed obey my commandments that I command you today to love the Lord your God and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul, he will give the rain for you for your land in its season.

the early rain and the latter rain that you may gather in your grain and your wine and your oil. You will indeed obey my commandments that I command you today to love the Lord your God and serve him with all your heart and with all your soul.

And as the Israelites stood on the threshold of a new beginning and as they listened to Moses' sermon they knew that possession of the land was just within their grasp. They also knew the promise of the Lord that he would be their shepherd he would be with them and watch over them as they moved forward into an unknown year.

[ 24 : 15 ] But what's key to the Israelites' relationship with the Lord as their shepherd was that they walked in the path of life. What's key to their relationship with the Lord as their shepherd was that they walked in the path of life.

But in order to walk in the path of life as they were commanded there the Israelites were to love the Lord their shepherd. They were to confess the Lord as their shepherd.

They were to follow the Lord as their shepherd. And they were to serve the Lord as their shepherd. And they were to do it as we read there with all your heart and with all your soul.

Even though the promised land was unknown and uncharted territory the Israelites were to walk in the path of life by being committed to the Lord as their shepherd.

And you know my friend the same is true for us because as we stand at the beginning of another year and gather together to worship on this first Lord's day if you want to know the presence of the shepherd and the promises of the shepherd if you want the shepherd to be with you and to watch over you as you go into this coming year if you want to walk in the path of life then you need to love the Lord as your shepherd.

[ 25 : 36 ] But not only love him you have to confess the Lord as your shepherd. You have to say as it is in Psalm 23 the Lord's my shepherd. You need to follow the Lord as your shepherd day by day following him listening to the voice of the shepherd by reading his word by gathering with his people by praying to the shepherd.

You need to love the Lord as your shepherd confess the Lord as your shepherd follow the Lord as your shepherd and you need to serve the Lord as your shepherd. My friend if you want to walk in the path of life then you need wholehearted commitment to the Lord as your shepherd.

You know you can't go on wandering aimlessly through life. You can't keep this up because one day it's going to end. You need to walk in the path of life with wholehearted commitment to the Lord as your shepherd because there's one thing for sure and you know this is the beautiful thing about the Bible there's one thing for sure the Lord is committed to you as a shepherd.

He's the good shepherd who laid down his life for the sheep and he promises to each and every one of his sheep who come and follow him he promises that when we love him and confess him and follow him and serve him as the Lord our shepherd when we walk in the path of life we will be enabled to say with David in Psalm 23 goodness and mercy all my life shall surely follow me and then in God's house forevermore my dwelling place shall be.

You know my friend what better comfort comfort is there in life and in death what better comfort is there than to know that at the beginning of a new year and the first Lord's day of this year that you can entrust yourself into the care of the good shepherd and when you entrust yourself into his care you have his care from the beginning of the year to the end of the year all the days of your life.

[ 27 : 52 ] That's the promise the promise of the Lord for this coming year is that the eyes of the Lord your God are always upon it from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.

My friend who better to trust in than this good shepherd? Who better to look to who better to follow who better to love and who better to serve than this good shepherd?

make sure you are following him into this new year because without him we can do nothing but with him while all things are possible.

May the Lord bless these thoughts to us. Let us pray. O Lord our gracious God we give thanks to thee for the promises of the Lord our shepherd that he promises never to leave us and never to forsake us and that we realise day by day and year by year that everything is unknown to us that everything is but as shadows and as darkness but Lord we give thanks to thee that even though we walk in the valley we are able to know the presence of the shepherd with us even though things may be as darkness they are as light unto thee Lord bless us then we pray guide us and keep us keep us ever looking to the Lord as our shepherd that we would love him and confess him and follow him day by day year by year Lord go before us then keep us and do us good for Jesus sake Amen we are going to bring our time to a conclusion by singing the words of Psalm 84

Psalm 84 we are singing where we picked up just where we left off at verse 7 Psalm 84 page 339 in the Scottish Psalter singing from verse 7 down to the end of the Psalm so they from strength unwearied go still forward unto strength until in Zion they appear before the Lord at length Lord God of hosts my prayer hear O Jacob's God give ear see God our shield look on the face of thine anointed dear for in thy courts one day excels a thousand rather in my God's house will I keep a door than dwell in tents of sin we'll sing on to the end of the Psalm of Psalm 84 to God's praise so they from strength the weary still forward unto strength until in Zion they appear before the Lord

[ 31 : 11 ]    God of look on the face of thine anointed dear for in thy courts one day excels a thousand a thousand brother in my God's house will I keep adore the twelve intents of sin for God's for God's

God's Lord the Lord sas sun and shield heal grace and glory give and will withhold no good from them that up uprightly to live O thou that art the Lord of hosts that man is truly blessed who by assured confidence on thee alone doth rest the grace of the Lord

Jesus Christ the love of God the Father the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and forevermore amen is cannot bear CHAN the moon of physicians■■■■ in we matter