

Deuteronomy 09 - A Warning Against a Spirit of Self-Righteousness

II. Second sermon: What Israel must do for God (Deut 4:41—26:19)

(2) The Law, its essence, and application in light of the impending conquest of Canaan (Deut 5:1—11:32)

(C) Application in light of impending Canaanite conquest (Deut 7:1—11:32)

(c) God's blessings are a result of His grace (Deut 9:1—10:11)

(i) Conquests due to God's grace (9:1-6)

(ii) Israel's historical sinfulness (9:7-29)

(a) At Sinai (9:7-21)

(b) In the wilderness: Taberah, Massah, Kibroth-hattaavah, Kadesh Barnea (9:22-29)

Deuteronomy 9

(c) God's blessings are a result of His grace (Deut 9:1—10:11)

(i) Conquests due to God's grace (9:1-6)

1 "Hear, Israel! You are crossing the Jordan today, to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, cities *that are* great and fortified to heaven,

1 "Hear, O Israel! You are crossing over the Jordan today to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, great cities fortified to heaven,

1 "Listen, Israel! Today you are about to cross the Jordan to enter and dispossess greater and mightier nations than you, who live in large cities that are fortified to the sky.

1 Hear, O Israel: Thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven,

2 a people *who are* great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know and of whom you have heard *it said*, 'Who can stand against the sons of Anak?'

2 a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know and of whom you have heard *it said*, 'Who can stand before the sons of Anak?'

2 The Anakim are strong and tall, and you know them. You've heard it said, 'Who can stand up against the Anakim?'

2 A people great and tall, the children of the Anakims, whom thou knowest, and of whom thou hast heard say, Who can stand before the children of Anak!

- Moses remembered the shock when they heard the original report of the 12 spies on the size, strength, and number of the inhabitants of Canaan (Num 13:26—14:4)
- He did not want them to be surprised again or to underestimate the enormity of the task that lay before them
- Therefore he emphasized that, from a purely military and human point of view, their victory was impossible
- The enemy had superior strength, fortifications (large cities with high walls), experience, and numbers
- And they had gained a terrifying reputation: Who can stand against the children of Anak?

3 So be aware today that it is the LORD your God who is crossing over ahead of you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and He will subdue them before you, so that you may drive them out and eliminate them quickly, just as the LORD has spoken to you.

3 Know therefore today that it is the LORD your God who is crossing over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and He will subdue them before you, so that you may drive them out and destroy them quickly, just as the LORD has spoken to you.

3 But know today that the LORD your God is going ahead of you as a consuming fire. He will destroy and subdue them before you. He will dispossess and destroy them quickly, just as the LORD told you.

3 Understand therefore this day, that the LORD thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the LORD hath said unto thee.

- In each of these three verses Moses warned against the danger of developing a self-righteous spirit by telling them that their victories were not a result of their righteousness
- Though the Canaanites had all these things in their favor, they were doomed before the battles began
- Just as in the desert the Lord went before the Israelites in a pillar of cloud and fire so now He would go before the Israelite army as a devouring fire to destroy the enemy
- This principle is stated in Prov 21:31: "The horse is made ready for the day of battle, but victory rests with the Lord."
- But God's people could not remain passive
- In faith they had to begin the battle and to annihilate the enemy with the strength God would supply as He promised

4 "Do not say in your heart when the LORD your God has driven them away from you, 'Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to take possession of this land.'

Rather, *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the LORD is dispossessing them before you.

4 "Do not say in your heart when the LORD your God has driven them out before you, 'Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,' but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the LORD is dispossessing them before you.

4 After the LORD has expelled them before you, you are not to say to yourselves, 'The LORD caused me to enter and possess this land because of my righteousness.'

4 Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee.

- In fact Moses gave three reasons why Israel would be victorious in the Conquest:

(1) The wickedness of these nations (v4-5) was so great that it demanded God's judgment. He is the God of Israel but He is also the God of all nations. They are all accountable to Him.

5 *It is* not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart *that* you are going in to take possession of their land, but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the LORD your God is driving them out from before you, and in order to confirm the oath which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

5 It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the LORD your God is driving them out before you, in order to confirm the oath which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

5 On the contrary, it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is dispossessing them before you to confirm what the LORD promised by an oath to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

5 Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

(2) God would give Israel victory because He had sworn this to the patriarchs (Cf. Gen. 15:13-21 which speaks of both God's judgment of the wicked Amorites and the promise of the land to Abraham)

6 "Know, then, that *it is* not because of your righteousness *that* the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people.

6 "Know, then, *it is* not because of your righteousness *that* the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people.

6 Know that it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving to you this good land to inherit, for you are a stubborn people."

6 Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people.

(ii) Israel's historical sinfulness (9:7-29)

(a) At Sinai (9:7-21)

7 **Remember, do not forget** how you provoked the LORD your God to anger in the wilderness; from the day that you left the land of Egypt until you arrived at this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD.

7 Remember, do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness; from the day that you left the land of Egypt until you arrived at this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD.

7 "Remember—and don't ever forget—how you provoked the LORD your God in the desert. From the day that you came out of the land of Egypt until you came to this place you have been rebelling against the LORD.

7 Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the LORD thy God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the LORD.

(3) The Lord was giving the land as a pure gift of grace, for the Israelites were a stiff-necked people, stubborn and unresponsive (Deut 9:6; Cf. v13; 10:16; 31:27)

— Later Moses pointed out that the Israelites actually deserved to be destroyed (9:13-14) rather than blessed with the gift of the land

- "Remember, do not forget" underscores the absurdity of Israel ever supposing that the land was given them as a reward for their righteousness

— Moses used one incident from their past, the worship of the golden calf, to illustrate that Israelite history has nearly always been one of rebellion against God's grace

8 Even at Horeb you provoked the LORD to anger, and the LORD was so angry with you that He would have destroyed you.

8 Even at Horeb you provoked the LORD to wrath, and the LORD was so angry with you that He would have destroyed you.

8 At Horeb you continually rebelled against the LORD, so that he was angry enough to destroy you.

8 Also in Horeb ye provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry with you to have destroyed you.

9 When I went up to the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the LORD made with you, then I remained on the mountain for forty days and nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water.

9 When I went up to the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the LORD had made with you, then I remained on the mountain forty days and nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water.

9 Then I went up to the mountain to receive the two stone Tablets of the Covenant that the LORD had established with you. I stayed on the mountain for 40 days and nights without eating food or drinking water.

9 When I was gone up into the mount to receive the tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant which the LORD made with you, then I abode in the mount forty days and forty nights, I neither did eat bread nor drink water:

- This section and what follows (v22-10:11) are a well-argued commentary on the meaning of the statement "you are a stiff-necked people" (9:6)

- This incident, perhaps more than any other until that time, illustrates Israel's sinfulness on the one hand and God's grace on the other

10 The LORD gave me the two tablets of stone written by the finger of God; and on them *were* all the words which the LORD had spoken with you at the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly.

10 The LORD gave me the two tablets of stone written by the finger of God; and on them *were* all the words which the LORD had spoken with you at the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly.

10 Then the LORD gave me the two stone tablets on which God inscribed with his own finger all the words that the LORD spoke to you on the mountain from the middle of the fire that day when you were all assembled together.

10 And the LORD delivered unto me two tables of stone written with the finger of God; and on them was written according to all the words, which the LORD spake with you in the mount out of the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly.

11 It came about at the end of forty days and nights that the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant.

11 It came about at the end of forty days and nights that the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant.

11 At the end of 40 days and nights, the LORD gave to me the two stone Tablets of the Covenant.

11 And it came to pass at the end of forty days and forty nights, that the LORD gave me the two tables of stone, even the tables of the covenant.

12 Then the LORD said to me, 'Arise, go down from here quickly, because your people, whom you brought out of Egypt, have behaved corruptly. They have quickly turned aside from the way that I commanded them; they have made a cast metal image for themselves.'

12 Then the LORD said to me, 'Arise, go down from here quickly, for your people whom you brought out of Egypt have acted corruptly. They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them; they have made a molten image for themselves.'

12 "Then the LORD told me, 'Get going! Go down from here at once! Your people whom you brought out of Egypt have become corrupt. They have turned quickly from the way that I commanded them, and have cast an idol for their use.'

12 And the LORD said unto me, Arise, get thee down quickly from hence; for thy people which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt have corrupted themselves; they are quickly turned aside out of the way which I commanded them; they have made them a molten image.

- As the Lord had given the covenant to Moses, the people had become corrupt and turned away quickly

— Even God Himself proclaimed that the people were stiff-necked

13 The LORD also said to me, 'I have seen this people, and indeed, it is a stubborn people.

13 The LORD spoke further to me, saying, 'I have seen this people, and indeed, it is a stubborn people.

13 "Then the LORD told me, 'I have examined this people, and they⁵ are stubborn indeed.

13 Furthermore the LORD spake unto me, saying, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people:

- While Moses was fasting for 40 days and 40 nights and therefore was completely dependent on God, the people were feasting

- While Moses was receiving the Ten Commandments by the finger of God (Ex 31:18), the people were breaking several of them by worshiping the golden calf

14 Leave Me alone, that I may destroy them and wipe out their name from under heaven; and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they.'

14 Let Me alone, that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven; and I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they.'

14 Let me alone! I will destroy them and blot out their name under heaven. Then I'll make you into a nation that will be mighty and more numerous than they are.'

14 Let me alone, that I may destroy them, and blot out their name from under heaven: and I will make of thee a nation mightier and greater than they.

15 "So I turned and came down from the mountain while the mountain was burning with fire, and the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands.

15 "So I turned and came down from the mountain while the mountain was burning with fire, and the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands.

15 "So I turned and went down from the mountain while the mountain was on fire. The two Tablets of the Covenant were in both of my hands.

15 So I turned and came down from the mount, and the mount burned with fire: and the two tables of the covenant were in my two hands.

- Their rebellion was so great that He wanted to destroy the nation and start all over with Moses (Cf. Ex 32:9-10)

16 And I saw that you had indeed sinned against the LORD your God. You had made for yourselves a cast metal image of a calf; you had quickly turned aside from the way that the LORD had commanded you.

16 And I saw that you had indeed sinned against the LORD your God. You had made for yourselves a molten calf; you had turned aside quickly from the way which the LORD had commanded you.

16 Then I saw how you had really sinned against the LORD your God! You had made for yourselves a calf, a cast idol. You had turned aside quickly from the way that the LORD your God had commanded.

16 And I looked, and, behold, ye had sinned against the LORD your God, and had made you a molten calf: ye had turned aside quickly out of the way which the LORD had commanded you.

17 So I took hold of the two tablets and threw them from my two hands, and smashed them to pieces before your eyes!

17 I took hold of the two tablets and threw them from my hands and smashed them before your eyes.

17 So I grabbed the two tablets and then threw them out of my hands, breaking them before your eyes.

17 And I took the two tables, and cast them out of my two hands, and brake them before your eyes.

- These verses record Moses' reaction to the people's sin

— The fact that he mentioned they had turned aside quickly emphasized the people's fickleness and the gravity of their sin

— When Moses broke the two tablets to pieces before the people, he graphically illustrated what they had done to their covenant with the Lord - broke the Law

— They had violated their agreement with Him (Ex 24:3). Therefore the Lord had the right to do away with the covenant of Law made at Sinai.

18 Then I fell down before the LORD like the first *time*, for forty days and nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you had committed by doing what was evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.

18 I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and nights; I neither ate bread nor drank water, because of all your sin which you had committed in doing what was evil in the sight of the LORD to provoke Him to anger.

18 I fell down in the LORD's presence, just as I had the first 40 days and nights. I did not eat food or drink water because of your sin. You had sinned by committing this evil in the sight of the LORD, thereby provoking him to anger.

18 And I fell down before the LORD, as at the first, forty days and forty nights: I did neither eat bread, nor drink water, because of all your sins which ye sinned, in doing wickedly in the sight of the LORD, to provoke him to anger.

- The second thing Moses did was fast and pray for 40 days and 40 nights (Cf. v25; 10:10)

— In the OT it was normal for people to fast in times of repentance (Cf. Judges 20:26; 2 Sam 12:16; 1 Kings 21:27; Neh 1:4)

— His fasting demonstrated his unity with the nation and his horror at their sin; their evil had provoked God to anger

19 For I was afraid of the anger and the rage with which the LORD was angry with you so as to destroy you; but the LORD listened to me that time as well.

19 For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was wrathful against you in order to destroy you, but the LORD listened to me that time also.

19 I feared the anger and wrath of the LORD against you, because he was irate enough to destroy you. But the LORD also listened to me at that time.

19 For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure, wherewith the LORD was wroth against you to destroy you. But the LORD hearkened unto me at that time also.

20 The LORD was also angry enough with Aaron to destroy him; so I also prayed for Aaron at the same time.

20 The LORD was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him; so I also prayed for Aaron at the same time.

20 It was as had been the case with Aaron, the LORD was very angry and about to destroy him, but I prayed for Aaron at that time.

20 And the LORD was very angry with Aaron to have destroyed him: and I prayed for Aaron also the same time.

- The contents of his prayer are recorded in v26-29
- This verse is the only place in the Old Testament record that says Moses also prayed for Aaron, thus saving his life too
- Moses' total destruction of the golden calf— called in satire that sinful thing of yours—put the gold of the idol beyond recovery
- Moses' demolishing the idol also illustrated that the people themselves deserved total destruction. Only God's grace invoked by Moses' intercession saved the people.

21 And I took your sinful *thing* which you had made, the calf, and burned it in the fire and crushed it, grinding it thoroughly until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the stream that came down from the mountain.

21 I took your sinful *thing*, the calf which you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it, grinding it very small until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the brook that came down from the mountain.

21 Now, when you made the calf that made you sin, I grabbed it, burned it with fire, crushed it, and ground it thoroughly until it was pulverized to powder. Then I threw the powder into the river that was flowing from the mountain."

21 And I took your sin, the calf which ye had made, and burnt it with fire, and stamped it, and ground it very small, even until it was as small as dust: and I cast the dust thereof into the brook that descended out of the mount.

(b) In the wilderness: Taberah, Massah, Kibroth-hattaavah, Kadesh Barnea (9:22-29)

22 "Then at Taberah, at Massah, and at Kibroth-hattaavah you kept provoking the LORD to anger.

22 "Again at Taberah and at Massah and at Kibroth-hattaavah you provoked the LORD to wrath.

22 "You provoked the LORD again at Taberah, Massah, and Kibroth-hattaavah.

22 And at Taberah, and at Massah, and at Kibrothhattaavah, ye provoked the LORD to wrath.

- This verse suggests that Moses could have continued indefinitely reciting other rebellious acts of Israel which angered the Lord

- For the incident at Taberah, where the people complained about their hardships, see Num 11:1-3 (Taberah means "burning")

- At Massah (which means "temptation") where the people complained about no water (Ex 17:1-7)

- At Kibroth Hattavah ("Graves of Lust") where Israel complained about the manna and devoured the quail (Num 11:31-34)

23 And when the LORD sent you from Kadesh-barnea, saying, 'Go up and take possession of the land which I have given you,' you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; you neither trusted Him nor listened to His voice.

23 When the LORD sent you from Kadesh-barnea, saying, 'Go up and possess the land which I have given you,' then you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God; you neither believed Him nor listened to His voice.

23 When the LORD sent you from Kadesh-barnea and told you, 'Go possess the land that I gave you,' instead you disobeyed what the LORD your God said. You didn't trust him or listen to his voice.

23 Likewise when the LORD sent you from Kadesh barnea, saying, Go up and possess the land which I have given you; then ye rebelled against the commandment of the LORD your God, and ye believed him not, nor hearkened to his voice.

24 You have been rebellious toward the LORD since the day I knew you.

24 You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day I knew you.

24 You have been rebelling against the LORD since the day I knew you.

24 Ye have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you.

25 "So I fell down before the LORD for the forty days and nights, which I did because the LORD said He would destroy you.

25 "So I fell down before the LORD the forty days and nights, which I did because the LORD had said He would destroy you.

25 I fell down in the LORD's presence for 40 days and nights, because the LORD said he was ready to destroy you.

25 Thus I fell down before the LORD forty days and forty nights, as I fell down at the first; because the LORD had said he would destroy you.

- After God displayed His grace in the incident of the golden calf by not destroying the nation, one might have expected a significant change in the people's hearts

— But again they collectively rebelled against their God by refusing to go up from Kadesh Barnea and begin the battle for the land

— So Moses was completely justified in concluding that at every significant turn in their history the Israelites had been rebellious

Christians too need to beware of the danger of rebelling against God as did Israel (1 Cor 10:1-12) by failing to trust Him or obey Him

— They are every bit as much indebted to God's grace as were the Israelites of the wilderness generation

26 And I prayed to the LORD and said, 'Lord GOD, do not destroy Your people, Your inheritance, whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand!

26 I prayed to the LORD and said, 'O Lord GOD, do not destroy Your people, even Your inheritance, whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

26 So I prayed to the LORD and said, 'Oh LORD my God, don't destroy your people and your inheritance whom you redeemed by your power.⁶ You brought them out from Egypt in a powerful way.

26 I prayed therefore unto the LORD, and said, O Lord GOD, destroy not thy people and thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed through thy greatness, which thou hast brought forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

27 Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; do not turn Your attention to the stubbornness of this people, or to their wickedness, or their sin.

27 Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; do not look at the stubbornness of this people or at their wickedness or their sin.

27 Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Don't pay attention to the stubbornness, wickedness, and sinfulness of this people.

27 Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin:

- These verses record one of the model prayers in the Old Testament

- The mention of the 40 days and 40 nights recalled Moses' fasting (v18) and indicated his sincerity as well as his understanding of the situation's gravity

- He was totally concerned with God's glory and reputation on the earth

- This prayer contained no self-seeking on Moses' part. Instead it was out of concern for God's reputation and a desire for Him to demonstrate once again His grace by forgiving the stubbornness, wickedness, and sin (v27) of God's people, His inheritance, whom He delivered out of Egypt by His power (Cf. v26) and outstretched arm.

28 Otherwise, the *people of the* land from which You brought us will say, "Since the LORD was not able to bring them into the land which He had promised them, and since He hated them, He has brought them out to kill them in the wilderness!"

28 Otherwise the land from which You brought us may say, "Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land which He had promised them and because He hated them He has brought them out to slay them in the wilderness."

28 Otherwise, the people of the land from which you brought us will say, "The LORD wasn't able to bring them out of the land that he had promised them. So he brought them

out to kill them in the desert because he hated them."

28 Lest the land whence thou broughtest us out say, Because the LORD was not able to bring them into the land which he promised them, and because he hated them, he hath brought them out to slay them in the wilderness.

29 Yet they are Your people, and Your inheritance, whom You brought out by Your great power and Your outstretched arm.'

29 Yet they are Your people, even Your inheritance, whom You have brought out by Your great power and Your outstretched arm.'

29 But they are your people and inheritance, whom you brought out by your mighty strength and awesome power.'"

29 Yet they are thy people and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest out by thy mighty power and by thy stretched out arm.

- He did not plead for Israel on the basis of any merit of theirs; rather he "reminded" God that Israel was His own inheritance

- Therefore in the light of His promise to the patriarchs, God's destruction of Israel would call into question His ability to fulfill His promise (v28)