

THROUGH THE BIBLE STUDY

DEUTERONOMY 9-11

A man was visiting his elderly parents when he noticed his father using these intimate and tender terms of endearment toward his mother. The old man would call his wife, “Baby”, and “Sweetie”, and “Honey”, and “Darling”, and “Sugar”.

The son was impressed that after 60 years of marriage his dad still called his mother by these private and personable names. At one point in the evening, after his mother had left the room, the young man commented, “Dad, it’s wonderful the way you speak to mom. You’re always calling her by these tender pet names.”

Suddenly, a troubled look came over his father’s face. He explained, “Son, I’ve got to... For the last couple of months I can’t remember her name.”

Memory loss can be troublesome...It can harm a relationship... especially our relationship with God. Forget *the lessons God taught* – and *the blessings He brought* – and *the miracles He wrought* - and you’re headed for trouble.

This is the central theme of the book Deuteronomy. “*Deuteronomy*” means “*second law*”. And in it Moses reminds Israel of the Words and works of God.

He wants the generation of Israelis who will enter the Promised Land to remember the experiences of the generation of Israelis who exited Egypt.

Chapter 9 begins, "Hear, O Israel: You are to cross over the Jordan today, and go in to dispossess nations greater and

mightier than yourself, cities great and fortified up to heaven, a people great and tall, the descendants of the Anakim, whom you know, and of whom you heard it said, 'Who can stand before the descendants of Anak?' Goliath of Gath will be a later version of the Anakim.

At the time, a race of headtoppers – a horde of hulks – lived in the fortified cities of Canaan. Palestine was like Flowery Branch... It was a land full of NFL type, super-sized people. No invading army was a match for these Anakim.

And they had a reputation. Israel had heard, “Who can stand before (them)?”

But in verse 3 Moses explains *the difference maker*... “Therefore understand today that the LORD your God is He who goes over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and bring them down before you...” On their own Israel was no match for the giants, but they had a giant God greater than their enemies.

It’s like the elderly lady accosted in the parking lot by a huge, mean man.

It looked ominous. The old woman was no match for this brute... Until she reached into her purse and pulled out of a Smith and Wesson revolver. Instantly, the tables were turned. There was a difference maker the attacker didn’t see...

Israel too had a difference maker. God will fight for them as “a consuming fire.”

Hey, this is still the way God works. He challenges His people with tasks that go beyond their own efforts - with

missions impossible to tackle on our own.

He creates scenarios where *if He doesn't come through we're destined to fail...* God will call us to a task that forces us to rely on Him as *the difference maker*.

Verse 3, “**So you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly, as the LORD has said to you.**” Notice, God had quick destruction in mind for the Canaanites.

Remember, these people were so perverse God knew they would influence His people in negative ways... that's why He ordered a total and speedy annihilation.

In his writings, archaeologist William Albright describes the lewd culture of the ancient Canaanites. He says that of the hundreds of idols found from this period most are of nude females in sexually suggestive forms - as well as male idols associated with homosexual cults. Canaanite culture was terribly immoral.

God promises to drive out the enemy, but He warns Israel... “**Do not think in your heart...**” Notice before a boast comes off your lips – a pride begins in your heart... “**Do not think in your heart after the LORD your God has cast them out before you, saying, '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 driving them out from before you.**” God gave the nation Israel a land of prosperity not because she was so moral - but because the Canaanites were so evil. God's blessing was granted more *in spite of Israel* than *because of Israel*.

And this is always the case...

Never assume when God blesses you... that it was earned or deserved. None of us are good enough to merit God's favor. *His gifts* always flow from *His grace*.

“It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

Israel will inherit the land for two reasons... *and neither has to do with them*.

God gives Israel the land as judgment on the Canaanites, and as payment on a promise He made to Abraham. Neither has anything to do with Israel's goodness.

“Therefore understand that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people.”

“*Stiff-necked*” means “*obstinate or stubborn*”. In the beginning, Israel was just a little less stubborn than the Canaanites... Sadly, overtime she became more so.

Notice the word that starts verse 7, “**Remember!**” And this is our responsibility toward God. He commands us to recall *His Words, His work* - and *our wrongs*.

Often, we forget the lesson God teaches us as soon as it's been learned.

It reminds me of the lady late for an appointment who kept returning to her home because of items she had forgotten.

First, it was her keys, then her purse, finally her sunglasses. The third time she raced back into her kitchen she said to her son, “Well, pretty soon, I’ll be able to hide my own Easter eggs.”

It’s been said, “Memory is what tells a man his wedding anniversary was yesterday.” *Why is it, our memory alludes us when we need it most?*

Moses warns Israel, “Remember! Do not forget how you provoked the LORD your God to wrath in the wilderness. From the day that you departed from the land of Egypt until you came to this place, you have been rebellious against the LORD.

Also in Horeb (which was the region around Mount Sinai) you provoked the LORD to wrath, so that the LORD was angry enough with you to have destroyed you.” Moses is going to remind them of the infamous incident of the gold calf.

“When I went up into the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant which the LORD made with you, then I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights. I neither ate bread nor drank water.” They say the human body can survive at least 40 days without food, but only 8 days without water.

Obviously, the fast Moses undertook was supernaturally empowered by God.

Verse 10, “Then the LORD delivered to me two tablets of stone written with the finger of God, and on them were all the words which the LORD had spoken to you on the mountain

from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly.

And it came to pass, at the end of forty days and forty nights, that the LORD gave me the two tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant. Then the LORD said to me, 'Arise, go down quickly from here, 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 themselves a molded image.' Remember these were the same people who had witnessed miracle after miracle...

"Furthermore the LORD spoke to me, saying, 'I have seen this people, and indeed they are a stiff-necked people. 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.' This was quite a temptation. Moses also got frustrated with Israel. Now this was his opportunity to father and further a nation of His own.

Hey, out with the Israelites – in with the Mosesites. But Moses loved these people, and he interceded on their behalf. Moses begged God to spare Israel.

"So I turned and came down from the mountain, and the mountain burned with fire; and the two tablets of the covenant were in my two hands. And I looked, and behold, you had sinned against the LORD your God - had made for yourselves a molded calf! You had turned aside quickly from the way which the LORD had commanded you." They swapped a *miracle-working God* for a *medal calf*.

While *the mountain burned with fire* – *the people burned with lust*. Fire on the mountain represented God's holiness,

but while the people could see these fires they indulged not only in idolatry, but in the unholy acts that accompany idolatry.

“Then I took the two tablets and threw them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes.” Here’s a riddle: Who’s the only person in history to break all Ten Commandments at a single time? The answer: Moses.

Seriously, Moses broke the tablets to symbolize their broken covenant.

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

For I was afraid of the anger and hot displeasure with which the LORD was angry with you, to destroy you. But the LORD listened to me at that time also.

And the LORD was very angry with Aaron and would have destroyed him; so I prayed for Aaron also at the same time. Then I took your sin, the calf which you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it and ground it very small, until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the brook that descended from the mountain.” *Notice the two actions Moses took...* First, he crushed the idol and grounded it into dust. It showed the people the *total impotence of their idol*.

Second, Moses threw the dust into their water supply reminding them that *you become like what you worship*. An idol pollutes not only the body, but the soul.

Verse 22, “Also at Taberah (which means “burning” – this

was where God sent fire to judge the complainers) **and Massah** (this is where Israel grumbled about a lack of water) **and Kibroth Hattaavah** (or “*graves of craving*” – here the Hebrews longed for meat instead of manna). At all these places they “**provoked the LORD to wrath.**” Mount Sinai was just one chapter in a long story of rebellion...

Which finally climaxed at Kadesh... “**Likewise, 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 commandment of the LORD your God, and you did not believe Him nor obey His voice.**” Kadesh was the border town where fear overcame faith – where the people refused to enter the Promise Land.

Kadesh was the pinnacle of rebellion. Afterwards Israel died in the desert.

Faith takes courage. It involves risk. God’s best is attainable only if you’re willing to leave behind the familiar. But instead of God’s best, Israel chose the ease and familiarity of the wilderness to the challenges of the Promised Land.

I believe there are folks here tonight who are comfortable in the wilderness.

Israel managed a nice life in the wilderness... manna in the morning, water from a rock, their clothes never grew threadbare, their feet never swelled. And likewise, you too have food to eat, your bills are paid, your kids have clothes...

You too are at ease in the wilderness. You’re living a life of convenience...

There’s only one problem... God’s calling on your life is

about *conquest* not *convenience*. God's blessing involves battles. You know in your heart, God wants to win victories through your life. Thus, you too have a choice to make... you can continue to *survive* in the wilderness, or you can *thrive* in the Promised Land...

You can *stay put* or *step up* - *press on* or *pull back* - *enter in* or *opt out*... Sadly, Israel chose comfort instead of victory - *and ended up with neither!*

Israel's choice revealed what had been true from the outset. In verse 24 Moses sums up Israel's attitude with biting words, "You have been rebellious against the LORD from the day that I knew you." *Sometimes the truth hurts.*

"Thus I prostrated myself before the LORD; forty days and forty nights I kept prostrating myself, because the LORD had said He would destroy you. Therefore I prayed to the LORD, and said: 'O Lord GOD, do not destroy Your people and Your inheritance whom You have redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. Remember Your servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; do not look on the stubbornness of this people, or on their wickedness or their sin, lest the land from which You brought us should say, "Because the LORD was not able to bring them to the land which He promised them, and because He hated them, He has brought them out to kill them in the wilderness. Yet they are Your people and Your inheritance, whom You brought out by Your mighty power and by Your outstretched arm.'"

Moses is concerned about God's reputation among the Egyptians. He didn't want the pagan nations to assume that

God is unable to finish what He starts.

Chapter 10, "At that time the LORD said to me, 'Hew (or carve) for yourself two tablets of stone like the first, and come up to Me on the mountain and make yourself an ark of wood. And I will write on the tablets the words that were on the first tablets, which you broke; and you shall put them in the ark.'

"So I made an ark of acacia wood, hewed two tablets of stone like the first, and went up the mountain, having the two tablets in my hand. And He wrote on the tablets according to the first writing, the Ten Commandments, which the LORD had spoken to you in the mountain from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly; and the LORD gave them to me. Then I turned and came down from the mountain, and put the tablets in the ark which I had made; and there they are, just as the LORD commanded me." In a sense, the Ark was God's only treasure chest... and look at what God considers to be His treasure... *His Word*.

God kept His Word inside His treasure chest!

(Now the children of Israel journeyed from the wells of Bene Jaakan to Moserah, where Aaron died, and where he was buried; and Eleazar his son ministered as priest in his stead. From there they journeyed to Gudgodah, and from Gudgodah to Jotbathah, a land of rivers of water. At that time the LORD separated the tribe of Levi to bear the ark of the covenant of the LORD, to stand before the LORD to minister to Him and to bless in His name, to this day.

Therefore Levi has no portion nor inheritance with his

brethren; the LORD is his inheritance, just as the LORD your God promised him.) Rather than receive an allotment of land, the tribe of Levi lived in appointed cities... Levitical cities.

Verse 10, “As at the first time, I stayed in the mountain forty days and forty nights; the LORD also heard me at that time, and the LORD chose not to destroy you. Then the LORD said to me, 'Arise, begin your journey before the people, that they may go in and possess the land which I swore to their fathers to give them.’”

"And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you..." And this is a question we would be wise in asking ourselves... *What does God require of us?*

“But to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the LORD and His statutes which I command you today for your good? Here’s what God requires of His people – both then and now...

“To fear the Lord” – respect God and give Him the honor He’s due.

“To walk in all His ways” – adopt His attitudes - see life from His perspective.

“To love Him” – give God our attention and our affections.

“To serve the Lord with all your heart and soul” – passionately do His will.

“To keep the Lord’s commandments” – study, and obey, and apply the Bible.

Guys and gals, here is what God requires of you and me tonight...

Fear God... Walk with God... Love God... Serve God...
Obey God...

“Indeed heaven and the highest heavens belong to the LORD your God, also the earth with all that is in it.” God could’ve chosen any of earth’s inhabitants, but “The LORD delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day.”

“Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.”

Male circumcision was a *minor surgery* with *major symbolism*. The operation cuts back a fold of flesh - but the symbolism speaks of the humbling of the heart.

To be circumcised was to make oneself weak, and vulnerable, and exposed. This was the attitude the Hebrews needed to maintain before God.

“For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe.”

Notice, here Jehovah God is called “**Lord of lords**”. In Revelation 19:16 Jesus is also referred to by the same title. Obviously, there’s only one Lord of lords – which means Jesus and Jehovah must be the same person... a proof of Jesus’ deity.

And our great God “**administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him food and**

clothing. Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.” Remember this command when we shake hands with our neighbor and greet each other to Calvary Chapel...

When you go out of the way to love a stranger you’re acting like God.

This is cool... the God of gods... the great God, mighty and awesome... is the fair to the fatherless, and loves the stranger. God is *the God of the underdog*.

“You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him, and to Him you shall hold fast, and take oaths in His name. He is your praise, and He is your God, who has done for you these great and awesome things which your eyes have seen.

Your fathers went down to Egypt with seventy persons, and now the LORD your God has made you as the stars of heaven in multitude.”

Chapter 11, “Therefore you shall love the LORD your God, and keep His charge, His statutes, His judgments, and His commandments always...”

That means at church, at school, at work, at home - in the light and in the dark - on weekdays and weekends – with buddies and with complete strangers - in the daytime and after midnight – in the real world and in cyberspace ...

“always”

“Know today that I do not speak with your children, who have not known and who have not seen the chastening of the LORD your God, His greatness and His mighty hand and His

outstretched arm..." God is not speaking to the ignorant.

He's talking to eyewitnesses of "His signs and His acts which He did in the midst of Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and to all his land; what He did to the army of Egypt, to their horses and their chariots: how He made the waters of the Red Sea overflow them as they pursued you, and how the LORD has destroyed them to this day; what He did for you in the wilderness until you came to this place; and what He did to Dathan and Abiram the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben: how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, their households, their tents, and all the substance that was in their possession, in the midst of all Israel - but your eyes have seen every great act of the LORD which He did."

Five times in verses 3-7 Moses uses the expression, "what He did".

When men write history books they focus on human achievements, but Moses sees history revolving around what God did. Only God's works are eternal.

And think of all the miraculous acts the Hebrews got to see firsthand and up-close. Israel had a bird's eye view! They witnessed unprecedented miracles...

And that's why *Israel had no excuse*. They were spiritual beneficiaries of so much. As the old saying goes, "With great privilege comes great responsibility!"

"Therefore you shall keep every commandment which I command you today, that you may be strong, and go in and possess the land which you cross over to possess, and that you may prolong your days in the land which the LORD swore

to give your fathers, to them and their descendants, 'a land flowing with milk and honey.'

"For the land which you go to possess is not like the land of Egypt from which you have come, where you sowed your seed and watered it by foot, as a vegetable garden;" Egyptian farmers used foot pumps that lifted the water from the Nile and irrigated their crops. "But the land which you cross over to possess is a land of hills and valleys, which drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which the LORD your God cares; the eyes of the LORD your God are always on it, from the beginning of the year to the very end of the year." God watered Israel.

Egyptian farmers irrigated their crops with water from the Nile - but Israel had no source of irrigation. The Jordan River is more a stream than a river.

The land of Promise was dependent on the spring rains and fall rains.

Verse 13, "And it shall be that if you earnestly obey My commandments which I command you today, to love the LORD your God and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul, then I will give you the rain for your land in its season, the early rain (which came in October / November) and the latter rain (which fell in April), that you may gather in your grain, your new wine, and your oil. And I will send grass in your fields for your livestock, that you may eat and be filled."

If Israel obeys Him, God will see to it they receive ample rainfall, but...

"Take heed to yourselves, lest your heart be deceived, and

you turn aside and serve other gods and worship them, lest the LORD's anger be aroused against you, and He shut up the heavens so that there be no rain, and the land yield no produce, and you perish quickly from the good land which the LORD is giving you.” If they disobey, and turn to idols, God promises to turn off the rain.

This was true in ancient Israel. God’s kingdom was an earthly one, and divine blessing was measured in rainfall amounts and crop production.

But by the time of Jesus, God changed tactics.

In Matthew 5:45 Jesus says of God, “He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” Jesus came to establish a spiritual kingdom – and spiritual blessings are measured not in inches of rain, but in outpourings of peace, and love, and mercy, and grace, and power, and gifts.

In the Old Testament when Israel obeyed, God *blessed them with showers*. Today, God rains down upon His people *showers of blessing*. Old Testament Israel produced *citrus fruit* – New Testament saints can expect *spiritual fruit*.

Yet having said that let me also state that nothing should stop a believer in Jesus from praying for rain. God does bless us in tangible ways if we ask.

A pastor in Guttenburg, Iowa conducted an experiment where he put dirt in two pie tins, and planted soybean seeds. He then asked the children of his church to pray specifically for the seeds in one of the tins. The other tin received no prayer.

And Guess which tin produced the most soybeans? The one that had been the object of the children's prayer... This prompted Pastor Karl Goodfellow to start a prayer chain for farmers. Today 5000 people pray by name for 50,000 farmers.

A farmer named Frank Livingood use to scoff at the prayers, until the day his son fell into a grainer elevator and was miraculously delivered. Today Livingood says of the prayer chain's efforts, *"I'm not laughing about it anymore. I think the prayers are great."* Just because it rains on the just and the unjust doesn't mean God can direct a few showers now and then. God wants to bless us with tangible, as well as spiritual blessings - but first, He wants us to ask.

Verse 18, *"Therefore you shall lay up these words of mine in your heart and in your soul, and bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall teach them to your children, speaking of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. And you shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, that your days and the days of your children may be multiplied in the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers to give them, like the days of the heavens above the earth."* The idea is to surround yourself and your family with God's Word. Hey, *spiritual surround sound...* Let God's Word permeate your life.

The Jews obey these verses by strapping phylacteries around forearms and foreheads, and kissing the mezuzah nailed to the door. But these commands are much broader. God wants us His Word to influence our words, our ways, and

our walk - what we do in our prime time - our down time - our time with our kids.

Keep the Word as the target - between your eyes. Live it with your kids. Write it all over your house and gates. Base your whole life on the living Word of God.

"For if you carefully keep all these commandments which I command you to do - to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways, and to hold fast to Him - then the LORD will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess greater and mightier nations than yourselves."

Every place on which the sole of your foot treads shall be yours: from the wilderness and Lebanon, from the river, the River Euphrates, even to the Western Sea, shall be your territory." Today, this is most of the Middle East. "No man shall be able to stand against you; the LORD your God will put the dread of you and the fear of you upon all the land where you tread, just as He has said to you."

"Behold, I set before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you today; and the curse, if you do not obey the commandments of the LORD your God, but turn aside from the way which I command you today, to go after other gods which you have not known." If Israel obeys God will bless. If Israel disobeys God will curse.

"Now it shall be, when the LORD your God has brought you into the land which you go to possess, that you shall put the blessing on Mount Gerizim and the curse on Mount Ebal. Are they not on the other side of the Jordan, toward the setting

sun, in the land of the Canaanites who dwell in the plain opposite Gilgal, beside the terebinth trees of Moreh?” Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal were twin peaks west of the Jordan. Later Israel will camp there - and listen to the blessings and curses that God pronounces on His people - uttered from these mountains.

“**Gerizim**” means “*fruitful harvest*” – while “**Ebal**” means as “*barrenness.*”

Chapter 11 closes with a prediction of success for Israel, “**For you will cross over the Jordan and go in to possess the land which the LORD your God is giving you, and you will possess it and dwell in it. And you shall be careful to observe all the statutes and judgments which I set before you today.**” God will win the victory, but in return, Israel needs to be careful to observe all that God had commanded.