

Sunday, March 4, 2018—Deuteronomy 13-16

When God called Israel out of Egypt to make them a kingdom of priests, He did what He had never done before—put His calling on an entire people. He gave them laws, therefore, to teach them how they were to live before Him and with one another. Because He was the one, true God, His expectations for His representative nation were high.

Being His people did not mean they would be isolated from the influences of the world. Yahweh simply expected them to compare His greatness with the relative emptiness of other gods and to reject those idols and powers outright. If they did not, however, His anger would burn against them. There was no other option. He would not share His glory and the worship of the people He chose with a worthless deity. If someone urged others to worship idols, the Hebrews were to stone that person. If an entire village turned from Yahweh, the people were to die, and the village was to be destroyed. Some might question whether sin is a capital offense, but God was demonstrating the incalculable significance of choosing Him. Choosing Him leads to real life. Anything else ultimately leads to death.

Moses instructed them about what to eat, the forgiving of debts, and the annual festivals they were to celebrate. Everything they did was to be a reflection of who God was, what they used to be, and what He was doing to cause them to flourish. He had set them free, so they could live differently and turn others to Him. Pray you will do the same.

Saturday, March 3, 2018—Deuteronomy 10-12

“That was a close call!” Those words follow a variety of events—almost having a fender-bender, almost being discovered in a hiding spot, almost spilling a secret. Almost. The realization that failure, danger, or death was nearby can be sobering, exhilarating, and humbling.

Moses continued preparing the new generation of Hebrews for their life in the Promised Land by recapping their journey. He talked of his conversation with Yahweh on Mt. Sinai. “The LORD listened to me on this occasion; he agreed not to annihilate you” (10:10). That was close. Rather than destroying Israel, He called them on mission. “And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you except to fear the LORD your God by walking in all his ways, to love him, and to worship the LORD your God with all your heart and all your soul? Keep the LORDS’ commands and statutes I am giving you today, for your own good” (10:12-13).

God called them to obedience, promising their obedience would give them strength to fulfill His calling and give them long life in the land (11:8-12). Disobedience, on the other hand, was the mistake the previous generation had made and lived in 40 years of mediocrity as a result. God gave them the clear choice of living under His blessing or curse (11:26-32).

Deuteronomy 12 says the people would daily live in a world looking to entice them to sin through idol worship. Every day, the people of God are to be aware how close they are to evil and how important is the choice to worship Him alone.

Friday, March 2, 2018—Deuteronomy 7-9

God calls His people to impossible tasks so that He alone will receive the glory. He simply asks for His people’s faithfulness in order to bring the impossible into reality. He does the work. They provide worship, and the world sees His worth and majesty.

Moses told the people of their impossible task—they were to invade a land inhabited by seven nations larger than Israel. Yahweh was going to drive the nations out before them. Their task was tear down the idols and altars to the gods and goddesses of the land (7:5, 25). God was going to bring judgment on the people for their sin, so His people were to have nothing to do with their culture and its consequences. His people were to be holy—different from the world and set aside for His use.

God had been humbling His people throughout their journey to see whether they would trust Him and obey Him in lean times (8:1-5). This obedience would be critical as they enjoyed the bounty of the Promised Land because of how easily people can walk away from dependence on Yahweh when they feel relative peace and have plenty to eat (8:11-20). What God was giving to Israel was not the result of their righteousness (9:6). They had proven repeatedly to be stiff-necked. He was acting in grace to fulfill His promises and bring Himself glory.

Pray for a daily dose of humility which stirs you to remember His goodness and live in faithful obedience.

Thursday, March 1, 2018—Deuteronomy 4-6

In Hebrew the word for “hear” or “listen” is the same word for “obey.” When God spoke, there was implicit understanding that they would obey. This lack of obedience was the very reason the nation had wandered for 40 years. Moses was leading the next generation to the very cusp of the land and reminded them of the call of Yahweh on their lives and their opportunity to avoid the mistakes their fathers had made.

Though these leaders were very young or unborn at the time of the first covenant, Moses said God had made the covenant with them (5:2). They were people with the opportunity to obey, so the covenant promises were theirs for the taking. He reiterated the 10 Commandments (5:6-22) and told them to obey them and pass them along to their children (6:4-9), and they would find prosperity. “The Lord commanded us to follow all these statutes and to fear the LORD our God for our prosperity always and for our preservation, as it is today. Righteousness will be ours if we are careful to follow every one of these commands before the LORD our God, as he has commanded us” (6:24-25).

Their obedience and prosperity would also be a testimony to watching peoples and nations. “For what great nation is there that has a god near to it as the Lord our God is to us whenever we call to him?” (4:7). Pray for a life of obedience which is pleasing to Him and influential to others.

Wednesday, February 28, 2018—Deuteronomy 1-3

As children grow into young adults, they begin to take on new responsibilities. The things adults once did for them are now theirs to do for themselves. Cooking, driving, working, voting, and countless other tasks require proper training and high expectations. Those young adults who have training-minded mentors in their lives are most blessed.

Moses shepherded Israel through the desert for 40 years, and the generation which received the Law in the early chapters of Exodus had died, so a new generation of leaders were in place, ready to take Israel into the Promised Land. God’s expectations remained the same, so Moses gave the Law a second time to train the new leaders. (“Deutero” means “second,” and “nomos” means “law.”)

Though the new leaders were merely children (or not even born) when Israel first left Exodus, God addresses them as “you” throughout Deuteronomy 1. He recounts how that generation of leaders rebelled against His call to enter the land and missed their opportunity to see His promises fulfilled. This new generation cannot make the same mistake. They must feel the weight of responsibility and choose to obey.

What God told Joshua was important for the entire nation now preparing to enter Canaan. “Your own eyes have seen everything the LORD your God has done to these two kings. The LORD will do the same to all the kingdoms you are about to enter. Don’t be afraid of them for the LORD your God fights for you” (3:21-22).

Thank God for His call, power, and expectation for obedience.

Tuesday, February 27, 2018—Numbers 34-36

Walking in faith means the people of God live in a continual state of “now and not yet.” God speaks of things as certain though they will find fulfillment in the future. Faith allows His people to live as if they are reality even though they are not reality until they become reality.

God gave Moses the survey of the land so they would know their borders. Moses told the people to divide the land according to the tribes when they entered. Neither of these were yet a reality, but they were certain. Their wandering would end one day soon, so they could live “now” with that assurance though it was “not yet” complete. That knowledge changes the way one thinks throughout the day, how one faces challenges and setbacks, and what one prepares for in the future. Faith is powerful.

When they divided the land, Moses told them to take two leaders—Eleazar, the priest, and Joshua, son of Nun. From the formation of Israel, there was a combination of leadership—the church and the state, if you will—to help lead the people and recognize the blessings of God. Each tribal leader would more fully understand the spiritual foundation this gift represented and the tangible privilege and responsibility arriving

with it. This combination of authority was also represented by the cities of refuge. An assembly determined innocence or guilt, and the innocent person then remained in the city of refuge until the high priest's death.

Thank God for genuine faith and good leaders.

Monday, February 26, 2018—Numbers 31-33

God was at work to bring His people into the Promised Land. He had promised Abraham generations earlier, and He was using Moses to bring them to the very precipice. The 500 years that passed between promise and fulfillment did not indicate a weakness on God's part but a wisdom and patience that far exceeds that of man.

Working with flawed people, God had to deal with their inconsistencies, impatience, and sin as He worked to fulfill His promises. The consequences of their weaknesses affected the people but did not weaken Him. For example, Moses had disobeyed God and was not going to enter the Promised Land, yet he continued to obey God and sent the people into battle against Midian for their sin against Israel, and all 12,000 troops returned (31:49).

Although he would not enter, Moses remained adamant about the peoples' holiness and obedience. When the tribes of Gad and Manasseh did not want to enter the land but settle on the east side of the Jordan, Moses chided them for disobedience akin to the 10 spies who would not enter initially. The tribes clarified their willingness to fight for the other tribes while living in the Trans-Jordan region.

God was continuing in His people what He had begun in Egypt—a clear repudiation of and judgment on the gods of the land (33:4). Idolatry of any kind would never be tolerated, and the greatest threat of idolatry lies within the heart. His people continually are to deny themselves.

Praise God for His call to holiness and the power to live as such.