

MARCH 27

Deuteronomy 7-8

Deuteronomy 7

Vs. 1-5 In reading this section you might want to review the post for March 20 where we addressed the issue of God ordering the death of the Midianites in Numbers 31. Hundreds of years of mercy had been shown these people. Men like Abraham and Melchizedek had been witnesses among them, yet their cultures became incurable cesspools of idolatry and sexual perversion. For those who didn't relocate, God was calling all who stayed in their towns into His presence. The innocent (children below the age of accountability) would go into a place of comfort, but those who had been idolaters and not responded to God's messengers, would be put into punishment. Remember what Abraham said to the Lord in Genesis 18:25, *"Far be it from thee to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous fare as the wicked! Far be that from thee! Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"*

Vs. 3-4 Note that God speaks of the inhabitants of the land as if they were a danger to Israel, danger by spiritual / cultural infection. This is the same thing that the Spirit tells us, not to be conformed to this world. It would be like asking what the acceptable level of growing cancer should be in your body. Yet all of us are far more tolerant of sin and hindrances than we should be.

Vs. 6-11 Notice how often love is mentioned in these verses. Anyone who says that you don't find love in the Bible until you get to Jesus in the New Testament has never read the Bible. Even though these verses are written to Israel, there is something in every disciple that should respond to these words.

Vs. 12-16 In the last section and here, there are some interesting things going on. The relationship with God, like any relationship, needs trust and maintenance. In all times in history, for all people, obeying God meant pleasing Him and receiving His blessing. Disobeying God meant displeasing Him and, at some point, receiving punishment. In the last section it mentioned that God was blessing Israel because of the promises made to their fathers. The promise to Abraham was unconditional and will be fulfilled completely in the future by Israel in the Millennial Kingdom. The blessings being promised here are very conditional. They are a part of the Mosaic covenant, the covenant made at Mt. Sinai. This covenant, the Old Testament, is built on obedience to the law. According to Romans 7, the law was given to reveal the sin that is a part of our nature. The law couldn't get rid of sin and it couldn't save. So, this covenant with Moses under the law has nothing to do with salvation. Salvation was always through faith in the promise to Abraham. But obedience to the law from a heart of faith would bring blessing of such a nature that it would become a testimony to the world. Any outside nation, witnessing the blessings described here, would want to come to Israel and "drink from their well," and receive the same blessings.

Vs. 17-26 Here again, there is a mixture of the promise to Abraham and the covenant under Moses. God would drive the nations out before Israel just as God humbled Pharaoh in Egypt. This was based on His promise to Abraham. Faith in that promise would enable Israel to boldly worship God only according to the Mosaic covenant. They would also know, because of their faith in the promise to Abraham, that God was doing this and that the idols of these nations were trash to be destroyed. Israel would also have patience to obey and allow God to slowly give them the land, knowing that God would certainly fulfill His promise to Abraham.

Deuteronomy 8

If you need something to underline, look for *Lord your God*. Literally this is "Yahweh Elohim," Elohim being in the possessive; that is, "your Elohim." Elohim means the mighty, all powerful

one. Yahweh is the ever living One, who faithfully loves and keeps covenant with His people. What a combination. It reminds me of the Lord's Prayer, *Our Father, who art in heaven*. Eternal love and power are combined in one person who cares for us.

Vs. 1-5 Notice in v. 1, that the commandment is to be obeyed in view of God's grace in fulfilling the promise to Abraham. Faith would empower them to obey.

God educated and disciplined the people out of grace and love. Not only did God care for them, but in v. 3 He humbled them with need and let them hunger so that they would see that He could take care of them. You may have noticed that v. 3 was quoted by Jesus in His temptation.

According to what God has said in the New Testament, this is also how He disciplines and prunes us.

Vs. 6-10 In obeying the commandments, God would lavish His blessing on them and in turn they would praise Him.

Vs. 11-20 Notice how this warning is mixed with God's reminder to them of their deliverance and salvation. God also reminds them that He is the One who fed and sustained them for 40 years in the wilderness.

V. 16 Notice again the reference to the *manna*. He used their hunger and need, and the supernatural provision of this food to humble them. This, too, is why God allows us to "hunger." He needs to humble us and show us His power and provision.

I guess what speaks to me in all of this is that the glow and joy of our salvation in Christ needs to be present in all we do and all we are. We live only because of Him. How can we ignore Him or not follow Him into the harvest? How can we not surrender everything and take up our cross? How can we withhold the love and grace we have received and not tell it and share it with those who are lost?

Why did God choose us to become followers of Christ? Love. If you witness to people, you understand the miracle of someone who will listen and open their heart. Why? Because they're smart or sensitive or good? No. Somewhere in there, I believe there is a molecule of will, so small as to be nearly inconsequential. The rest is pure grace; God choosing the foolish and the weak and low and despised to save and make followers of Christ in the harvest. Given this privilege and calling, we need to keep our love for Christ alive by treasuring our salvation, as we follow Him in the harvest making disciples, who make disciples.

Luke 7:36-8:3

One of the things we see in the Gospels is that Jesus was very sensitive to accepting and responding to the things the Father and Spirit put into His path. For us disciples, Jesus becomes the model of being a disciple, walking in the Spirit and abiding in God. One thing I constantly wonder about is that Jesus accepted so many invitations from Pharisees to dine with them. Holy heartburn! Every one of them became a conflict, and a divine opportunity to present people with the truth of God and the person of the Messiah.

Luke 7:36-50

Vs. 36-39 Pharisees, I'm told, often gave dinners and people were invited to stand against the walls and listen in to the conversations. It seems that this woman might have already heard Jesus' teaching and was moved by it. The ointment suggests that she was a well-to-do sinner. This may have some connection to Luke 8:1-3.

V. 38 This definitely would have been scandalous for a rabbi to let a known prostitute do something like this to him.

Vs. 40-43 Either Simon's body language gave him away, or probably the Spirit revealed his thoughts to Jesus. Both of these debts were big. Fifty days' wages would be nothing to sniff at. 500 days' wages would be enormous.

Vs. 44-48 This comparison and contrast is all based on their perception of Jesus. Simon invited Jesus out of a feigned respect for Him. In fact, in terms of acts done, there was no respect shown to Jesus at all. Notice that Jesus acknowledges Simon's view of the woman, but in an ironic way. Her sins, *which were many*, were forgiven. The sinful woman, having heard Jesus and having understood God's forgiveness, lavished Him with respect and honor. When Jesus pronounced her forgiven, it was in response to her love that illustrated her faith.

Vs. 49-50 Again, the Jews (leaders) questioned Jesus' right to say this. Jesus ignored them and stated the reality of the case. Her faith had saved her. The result of her faith and salvation was to show Him love, respect and honor.

Just like in Deuteronomy, we are faced with the response of love again. Love doesn't save us, but it does and should issue from our faith and the reality of what we have been saved from. We love because He first loved us. The question for each of us is, were we really, really, really lost, or sort of on the border? This event and what it teaches cuts right to our hearts too. Those who follow in the harvest passionately are those who realize the miracle of their own salvation. They realize they were desperate, with no way to pay. They were lost, separated and hopeless. They love much and because of this love they follow their Savior in His mission, seeking the lost, working with the other redeemed, making disciples, who make disciples.

What does the Lord say to you in this story?

Luke 8:1-3

The connection between the story above and these verses is pretty clear. This woman may have been one of those who followed Jesus. It is actually suggested that the woman with the ointment may have been Mary Magdalene. It doesn't say it is. The woman who anointed Jesus' feet was a sinner, but it doesn't say she had been demon possessed. Although, obviously, He might have already cured her, and then, you wonder why Simon wouldn't have had a bigger fit if she had had demons. Who knows?

What we do know is that another Mary, the rich one who lived with Martha and Lazarus in Bethany, heard this story; and, just before Jesus was crucified, humbled herself and did the same thing for Him that this "sinful" woman did. (John 12)

At the end of this passage it mentions other women who became disciples. Why did they follow Jesus? Why do you follow Jesus? It wasn't just because He healed them. They followed out of love for the One who set them free.

Psalm 69:1-18

Today we just have the first half of Psalm 69. As you begin reading it, understand that this psalm is quoted often in the New Testament. The Spirit designed David's experience to mirror what Jesus would someday feel. It is pretty interesting that God can do that with us and our lives, to be an encouragement or lesson or model for others. And it's funny that He doesn't ask us first. He just does it. And since we know He loves us, and we love Him and know that we would have been dead without Him, we rejoice in His use of our lives, knowing that, *in everything God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose.* (Rom. 8:28, RSV) Read this psalm in terms of Jesus' suffering on the cross.

Vs. 1-3 Imagine, both David and Jesus felt this.

Vs. 4-5 Jesus quotes v. 4 in John 15:25. I'm sure v. 5 didn't apply to Jesus. David's accusers lied about him to make the people believe that King Saul's desire to kill David was justified. The Jewish leaders did the same to justify their killing of Jesus.

Vs. 6-8 Somehow I feel these verses. David was followed by men and their families who now shared the same reproach that David did. They were wanted men. Think of this too in terms of those who followed Jesus.

David had been anointed by God and told he would be king as a young teen. He was simply honoring God. Saul's jealousy wasn't David's fault. In the same way, Jesus' honoring of His Father became His reproach among the Jews.

V. 8 *For not even his brothers believed in him.* (John 7:5)

Vs. 9-12 *His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for your house will consume me."* (John 2:17) Isn't it interesting that David had a deep desire and zeal for seeking God at the tabernacle and that David was the guy who wanted to build Yahweh a temple in Jerusalem. So much of what we read in The Psalms shows David's desire to live in God's presence and be hidden in His sanctuary. David was zealous for God's house and was accordingly called an idiot by everyone who didn't share his view of God. I imagine that in Jesus' day, there were those who told "Jesus jokes" and that there were a couple bar-room songs dedicated to Him.

Vs. 13-18 This certainly was David's daily prayer as He ran from Saul for possibly a decade. This may also have been Jesus' prayer or feelings during His trials from His enemies. It may very well have been what Jesus felt on the cross.

More tomorrow.

By the way, just like Israel will be honored for God using them as an illustration to mankind, David will also receive great future rewards for God using him to teach us waiting, praying and the suffering of our Lord. In the days to come, both Israel and David will be humbled that God used them like this for the salvation of mankind.

Proverbs 12:1

There's that "L" word again. When you look at Psalm 69 and understand this is God's idea of discipline or "pruning," I'm not so sure any of us would willingly enroll in that course. However, when we first learn to love God through our Lord and His love, this isn't something that scares us because we know Him. This kind of discipline is what Romans 5:1-8 is all about.