

MARCH 28

Deuteronomy 9-10

This morning I read Romans 11:25, *Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.* Apparently, the response of the Gentile Christians to the grace they had received was pride and arrogance. Paul needed to remind them that they were no better than the Jews. God had simply shown them love and grace. Here in Deuteronomy, Moses and God didn't want Israel to forget who they were either. What was about to happen to them was all grace that they didn't deserve. That's good for us to remember as we follow in the harvest. This isn't about our morality or who knows more about God. Knowledge puffs up. Love builds up.

Deuteronomy 9

Vs. 1-3 Moses mentions that there were fortified cities, great armies and huge men (targets) to fight. These were the things that the ten spies had said to discourage the people and make them bitter. But this generation had already seen that it would be God who would fight for them. It's hard to fight *a consuming fire*.

Vs. 4-5 The reason God would thrust these people out was because of their wickedness and because of the promise to Abraham. It had nothing to do with the righteousness of Israel. Moses will now tell a little story.

Vs. 6-29 In fact, Israel was a very stubborn and rebellious people. The generation standing there listening to Moses wouldn't be rebellious, but they had the benefit of living through the results of their parents' sins over the past 40 years, living in the camp of death. These words would fall on fertile soil. That wouldn't be the case in the next generations.

Vs. 6-12 This should have been a great moment for the nation. Moses was on the mountain confirming the covenant. God, Himself, the Creator of the universe, was actually writing on the stones Himself. No other nation in the history of the world had ever experienced this. That is the point here, I think.

Vs. 13-21 Yet, at that very moment during their greatest privilege and God's revelation, the people had already broken the covenant and put themselves in mortal danger before God. Moses is trying to make them see the irrationality of what they did by making that calf. These people might have looked to Kadesh-barnea as the best example of their rebellion, but God and Moses led them back to the first and most irrational act they committed. This sin was still a part of them, and it has been a part of every heart, including ours, since Adam and Eve.

V. 17 That covenant was broken, illustrated with Moses smashing the tablets. God would reestablish the covenant with them.

V. 18 This is the first time I've noticed that the reason Moses went without food for those 40 days was out of deep concern for the people.

V. 19 Moses had to plead for their lives.

V. 20 This is the first time we have heard that God was ready to take out Aaron.

V. 21 Their sin had been so vile, they couldn't even reuse the gold of the calf. Moses made them drink it, which also was ironic since God, not the calf, had given them the water.

Vs. 22-24 Now, Moses parenthetically relates the sin with the calf to the sin at Kadesh-barnea.

Vs. 25-29 Back to the calf. Moses went up on the mountain again to beg for God's mercy for Israel. Notice that the basis for God's mercy was the covenant with Abraham. This would have shown the people that they needed to put their faith in what Abraham had put his faith in. They

would break the Mosaic Covenant but their hope was in the grace of God as seen in the promise to Abraham.

Deuteronomy 10

Vs. 1-5 On the basis of Moses' pleading, God's mercy and His remembrance of His promise to Abraham, God allowed new tablets to be cut and the covenant was reestablished. Verse 5 is a summary since the ark hadn't been built yet.

Vs. 6-9 This seems to be parenthetical, showing that even Aaron's death and the selection of the Levites to guard the tabernacle were a result of the sinfulness and rebellion of the people.

Vs. 10-11 It was when Moses came down off the mountain (and the tabernacle was built and the people were numbered and put in order) that God commanded Moses to lead the people into Canaan. You would think that after that fiasco with the calf, the people would have been obedient. This generation knew exactly what happened at Kadesh-barnea and had been suffering under it for the past 38 years.

I think the people got the idea. They had not been an easy people to lead. So much of what is written here testifies to the honesty and accuracy of this reporting. No great nation would ever air their dirty laundry like Israel is doing here. This isn't a testimony to them as a great people. It is a testimony to the love and forgiveness of their God.

Vs. 12-22 What things stand out to you in this section? I don't know about you, but this stirs my heart. What does God seek? At the top of His list is love. Love is a relationship. Even in marriage this is the key. You can break love down into actions or responsibilities like communication, faithfulness and service to one another; but these only help us try to grasp what love really is. What God really gives to us and wants from us is love. There are many religions and misrepresentations of "god" on earth, but none of them come close to the reality being expressed here. God is deeply clear and straightforward about wanting a relationship with us that is first and foremost a bond of love. This is the consistent message of the Bible, from Genesis to Revelation.

Luke 8:4-21

It is interesting that Jesus began to tell these parables after He was very popular. The Pharisees and scribes were beginning to explain His power by saying it was from Beelzebub, and His family thought He was out of His mind. This parable would have been a challenge to the people and it would have been instructive to the disciples, letting them know that there would be four kinds of people who would hear their messages too.

Vs. 4-8 This was said for the crowds and there were probably some people who got it.

Vs. 9-10 This is the blindness of the nation that was predicted in Isaiah 6:9. Oddly enough, Paul quotes this in Romans 11:8 and follows it by quoting Psalm 69:22, which is in our reading for today. You only get this by reading The One Year Bible.

The parables were meant to show who was seeking God and who really didn't care.

Vs. 11-15 Note that the real focal point of the parable and need for bearing fruit is expressed in what Satan seeks to prevent in v. 12: *believe and be saved*. People differ on their interpretations of the seed in the shallow ground and seed in the thorns. I have met professing believers in both soils. Who knows? The goal of the Word is not only faith, belief and salvation, but fruit that bears more fruit, or as we would say, disciples, who make disciples, who make disciples.

Vs. 16-18 These verses, for me, show that bearing fruit has something to do with declaring the truth publicly, treasuring it in our hearts and growing in the truth we have been given.

V. 18 was said to the disciples and Jesus used this illustration with them a couple of times. I think Jesus is saying to all of us disciples, when the Spirit shares something with us, if we don't use it, we lose it.

Vs. 19-21 I don't think Jesus thought His family would show up here, but He used the situation to show the importance of what He had just said. To be in relationship to Jesus was not to be a blood relative or even a Jew. Those closest to Jesus, male or female, Jew or Gentile, Greeks and those who wish they were Greeks, are those who hear the Word of God and do it.

Just to say it again, as disciples, our "doing" of God's Word is following the Lord in the harvest. His commandments are not primarily so we can live morally pure lives on earth and get to heaven with a clean score card. We are to obey His commission and glorify the Father by bearing much fruit and so proving we are His disciples. We are to labor in the harvest making disciples, who make disciples, who make disciples.

Psalm 69:19-36

Remember, as you read this section, David's own suffering was given to him from God, to allow David to express some of what Jesus would feel in His last days in Jerusalem and on the cross.

Vs. 19-21 When I read this, I think of the Pharisees and Sadducees trying to humiliate Jesus. I think of Judas betraying Jesus. I think of Peter, James and John falling asleep as Jesus was praying in the garden.

Notice v. 21. Jesus was offered wine mixed with a narcotic, and then later, He was offered vinegar as He hung on the cross to keep Him alive until Elijah came to rescue Him. The people were hoping to see a miracle.

Vs. 22-28 This is David asking God to judge these people who were lying and pursuing him. Interestingly, Paul says that this happened to all of Israel in the form of hardness of heart and spiritual blindness. Verses 22-23 are quoted by Paul in Romans 11:9-10. Spiritual blindness led Saul and others to resist God, kill the priests, and pursue David. That same spiritual blindness led the nation of Israel to resist what God was doing in Christ and the church. The height of this blindness would have been seen in the crucifixion of Jesus. That generation was punished for rejecting their Messiah, as seen in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 70 A.D. and the scattering of the Jews.

Vs. 29-33 David became *a witness to the peoples, a leader and commander for the peoples* (Isaiah 55:4). God disciplined and made David a great man through his suffering. He became proof of the grace and mercy of God.

Vs. 34-36 God had probably given David the idea of making Jerusalem, Zion, his city. And I'll bet in those years of running and hiding, David dreamed of the day he would bring the ark to Jerusalem. Yet this section has the hint of millennial glory. A day will come when Jesus will reign from Zion, and all nations will worship Him. Israel will glorify their Messiah and testify to His greatness and love.

Proverbs 12:2-3

Again, sometimes you can get a lot more out of a proverb like this, especially if you're using it for a short message for a group, if you take it apart and put the parallel pieces together. Take time to notice the couplets and the parallelism in the verses. The second verse usually advances the image of the first verse. In The One Year Bible they do a pretty good job of keeping these couplets together.

²*A good man obtains favor from the Lord,*

(and in all the storms of life the branches might get beaten by the wind and he may be refined by

fire)

but the root of the righteous will never be moved.

but a man of evil devices he condemns.

(and although he might look successful and God might use this man for His purpose)

³*No one is established (takes root?) by wickedness,*

Especially in hard times or hard circumstances, it costs something to follow Christ in the harvest and to remember we are here on mission. Our witness is often shown most powerfully in honoring God where others don't, and facing the consequences. It is more important that the lost see Christ than for us to get a "deal" or a promotion. I know a guy from the Ukraine who came to Christ, because a fool took a beating for Christ in the Russian army in Siberia. The guy's branches definitely got broken, but his root never moved and God gave him unknown fruit. My friend Peter watched and thought, "It would have been so easy to have lied. What would possess a man to take a stand like this in such a dangerous place?" Peter found out.