

MARCH 29

In Deuteronomy 8:3 we read why God gave Israel the manna. This is also the portion of Scripture Jesus used in His confrontation with Satan. I remember a time last year when there was snow on the grass, but it wasn't a solid blanket, but patchy little puffs all over everything. I wonder if that's what the manna looked like. As I thought about it and what God was teaching Israel, I was thinking how much I need all those lessons today in my life. Here's some of what struck me.

God could still do today what He did for Israel then, and He could meet all of my needs instantly if He chose to. So, I'm really very secure, whether I feel secure or not. In the wilderness, the people weren't allowed to gather the manna and store it up for security. They had to be secure in God, every day. They couldn't work the fields or make gardens because they never knew when they would be moving. Their lives were focused each day on the mercy of the Lord, learning of Him, waiting each day for His provision. God intentionally fed them like this, little by little, showing His power and showing that their security was in Him. They were to learn that man doesn't live by bread alone, nor by savings, nor by work, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Being secure in God's daily care and eternal power seems to be what God was also teaching David as he was living in caves and running from Saul.

How does God teach that same thing to us without taking us through similar experiences? It makes me appreciate my present situation and makes the day seem like something God has designed rather than a random mess. Life might not look "normal," but I am totally secure and taken care of by God's daily provision. Our Lord is an amazing teacher, and His Word is strength and health to the heart.

Deuteronomy 11-12

Deuteronomy 11

It seems to me that this chapter concludes the introduction of the sermon. Moses restates 6:1-9 in vs. 18-21.

Vs. 1-7 Notice how often it talks about loving the Lord. The people were not slaves; they were saved. Their salvation should have made them grateful. They were to follow and obey out of that love for God. Moses tells them to consider what they saw. This was God's teaching and discipline. They were now to pass this on to their children who didn't see what God had done. They had seen how God used His power to free them from Egypt and destroy Pharaoh's army. God also disciplined a family of the Reubenites. Both events showed God's great power. One instance was deliverance and the other punishment. They needed to lay this to heart, as do we. They also needed to pass these things on to the next generation. In a sense, they were to make disciples.

Vs. 8-12 These instructions are being given out of love so the people will be strong, and not only win the land, but hold on to it. Notice again in v. 9 that the promise to Abraham is mentioned. The fact that God's eyes were on this land was a good thing, if they obeyed. If they obeyed, God would water the land and they wouldn't have to irrigate it like they had to in Egypt. That would be a good thing if they obeyed.

Vs. 13-17 This seems like it should have been an easy thing to have loved the Lord. Loving the Lord was in contrast to worshiping other gods. That would have been a "no-brainer" except that the worship in Canaan was very sexually oriented. And too, even for us, worshiping other things is easier than we think. I was reading Ephesians 5 this morning where Paul says that a person who is covetous is really an idolater. Even the Corinthian church had fallen into idolatry. We can all understand the cause/effect relationship here. Why would God bless the people if they were worshiping something else? The real question is, "How could they worship anything else when

God was so big and real?" But now they had visual help. They had the manna each morning and the pillar of fire and pillar of cloud. Once they were in the land, they would have the feasts and the worship at the tabernacle. They would have to follow God by faith in the promise to Abraham and by obeying the law.

Vs. 18-25 There is a lot of restatement here, but it is very passionate, both from Moses and from God. God really, really, really wanted to bless them. Notice that when He tells them to *lay up these words* in their hearts, Moses also tells them how to do this in vs. 18-20.

V. 22 Notice again the restatement of loving the Lord and the promises that follow. It is obvious that we are nearing the end of a very important and passionate argument.

Vs. 26-32 In the context of the Mosaic covenant, there would be these blessings and curses. We'll read about this event later in Deuteronomy and we'll see it done in Joshua. It will be a testimony to the people. Actually, the people will testify to their need to obey and what will happen if they don't obey. The words will come out of their own mouths. This generation will obey, but apparently not in teaching their children.

V. 30 As Israel is receiving this command, Moses reminds them that in order for them to get to these two peaks, God will already have brought them into the land.

Though we are not under the blessing and curses, as disciples, there is something for us to learn here too. Even the best of us fall, and sometimes we have a hard time recovering. Sin and discouragement have an incredibly acidic effect on our hearts and minds. Not only that, Satan is the accuser, standing before God telling Him we deserve judgment. Satan shares this with us too. In fact, Satan, like Balaam, lures us into sin so that God will have to punish us, knowing that God would never punish us if we didn't bring the punishment on ourselves.

So, how do you know if it is God humbling, teaching, or chastening you, or if it is Satan and your own fallen nature tearing you apart? Satan and self always tell you there is no more grace for you and that you are a failure. God never does that. This is why reading your Bible through is so important. Did Jacob deserve grace? Does Israel deserve grace? Wait until we get to Judges. Will David, the murderer, deserve grace? Or will Solomon, the idolater, who sacrificed his children, or Manasseh, who did worse than all of them and brought irrevocable judgment on his people, deserve grace? But they all received it. After repentance, even after falling into sin for the millionth time, God looks on us as a Father, encouraging our next step in obedience with His grace. And He will use us, just as God used all of those men after their repentance. Satan and self will destroy you and make you unfit to be used by the Lord. God will restore you. There may be consequences that you'll have to deal with, but you couldn't be loved more, and you will never be shunned by Christ. Look at Paul, the murderer, who remembered what he did right up to the end of his work in the harvest. Paul was an example of how Jesus will lift the fallen and bless them for His glory, just like us. *But I received mercy for this reason, that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.* (1 Timothy 1:16)

If you had a child who had done everything wrong and made every mistake, as a parent, would you condemn them to failure and self hate, or encourage them to health and obedience? And if they obeyed, would you rub their noses in their past failures or lead them on to restoration and success? This is what the Pharisees couldn't stand about Jesus, blessing a woman who had been a terrible sinner, or asking a tax collector to be His disciple.

Deuteronomy 12

V. 1 This seems to be a key verse. So, after loving God, what did He want them to do?

Vs. 2-7 This would be very hard for Israel. First, they had to destroy all of the idols and places of worship. Some of the idols would be made out of precious metals. Some of these places might

look nice, like a place where you'd want to come and meditate. But second, they themselves could only worship and offer sacrifices at the tabernacle. This was one way God wanted them to love Him. They were to come to only Him and then to come to Him only where it was appointed. The people in Canaan worshiped their gods on every hill and under trees. It is interesting that later when we read about the kings who followed God, many of them still allowed the people to sacrifice and worship in the hills and not in Jerusalem. No one had the guts to say "No."

Vs. 8-14 This is sort of like the tree in the garden. They could do all sorts of other things, but worship and sacrifice needed to happen in God's presence in the place He designated. Notice in vs. 7 and 12, there was to be rejoicing in God's presence as they celebrated their sacrifices.

V. 8 This is the refrain at the end of the book of Judges.

V. 9 This is the "rest" talked about in the book of Hebrews.

V. 10 Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, quotes this.

Isn't it interesting that the phrases from Deuteronomy were used so extensively in the rest of the Bible and people actually knew these verses? Now you do too.

Vs. 15-19 Up until now, if any domestic animal was killed to be eaten, it had to be brought to the tabernacle. That wasn't far away since they all camped around the tabernacle. Once they were in the land, the tabernacle would be too far away. Now they could kill the animal at the house, but there was one act of paganism they were not to take part in, and that was the drinking of the blood or eating the bloody, undrained meat. God had been getting the people away from this during the wilderness wandering. Now they would just have to obey.

The offerings, on the other hand, had to be made at the tabernacle. Along with the offerings, they were to share with those who served at the tabernacle. They could always have feasts at home, but their worship was to be a celebration before the Lord at the tabernacle.

Vs. 20-28 Notice the repetition regarding the blood of life. This was a big deal for God, mentioned as far back as Noah. The repetition was important here. God was allowing them to slaughter their cattle for food, but with His guidelines.

V. 20 This verse links Jabez (1 Chron. 4:10) to this time of the conquest of the land.

Vs. 26-28 But here we are talking again about the sacrifices and worship. Notice that v. 28 brings them back to being careful to do what God is saying. They needed to obey for the sake of their children.

Vs. 29-32 This brings the chapter full circle. Again, these instructions seem like a no-brainer. Why would you want to understand why a pagan people offered their children in sacrifice? How could you be enticed to do that? And yet Solomon will.

I think Deuteronomy is incredible. And what is really interesting is that most of what God is saying to the people is exactly what we need to hear and apply to our hearts. We are not better than these people, and even with the Spirit, we are not above falling into the same traps. The Corinthians did. Maybe there are some innocent looking things in our culture that we don't need to become a part of. After all, we are here on mission, following Christ. As disciples in the harvest, we need to be careful how we walk, making the most of our time; because the days, as Paul said, are evil.

Luke 8:22-39

Vs. 22-25 Do you ever think about being totally awed by God to the place of fear? Me neither. We need the Lord to restore this sense of awe to our hearts, and I think the place we find it is in the harvest, not special meetings at church or boat trips on the Sea of Galilee. Jesus shows His power where His passion is, in reaching the lost and dying, and making disciples, who make disciples.

Vs. 26-39 Matthew has two men here. It is the same event and both Matthew and Luke are accurate, but Mark and Luke only quote the spokesman of the demonic duo.

V. 29 Apparently Jesus had commanded a spirit to come out and it did. Jesus saw then that the problem was deeper. A Roman legion would have been 6000, but that isn't to say there were 6000 demons in him. It is interesting that we are told in Mark 5:13 that the herd of pigs was about 2000.

V. 35 Luke tells us that the man was sitting at Jesus' feet when the crowds came.

Vs. 38-39 This is really all the Lord asks us to do on earth. So what has the Lord done for you?

Psalm 70

Once again, those who seek the Lord like this are driven to their knees by need, so that, after waiting for His deliverance and crying out in desperation, they see and are awed by the salvation of the Lord. Then they declare to all men, from their hearts, that God is great. This is how God taught Israel, how He taught David, the disciples in the boat, and the possessed man. Why should I expect anything different if the Lord loves me and wants to use me as His disciple?

V. 1 This is the cry for help. This morning I was reading in Luke 18:7-8, where Jesus said, "*And will not God give justice to his elect, who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long over them? I tell you, he will give justice to them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?*"

Faith cries out and keeps crying.

Vs. 2-3 This is the usual gang of those who were lying against David and seeking to kill him.

Vs. 4-5 Verse 4 happens because of a heart like in v. 5. David was humbled before God and didn't seek help anywhere else. He learned this through suffering and God vindicated His servant. Amen.

Proverbs 12:4

Seriously, I never go a day without realizing how blessed I've been since I gave my life to Christ. I have only known the first part of that Proverb, and that is pure grace.