

Message #14

Deuteronomy 9:1-29

It is so easy for God's people to become proud and full of themselves and their successes. This is a threat to each of us. It was certainly a threat to Israel.

Think about this, you are about to be handed the Promised Land. God is about to actually part the Jordan River and you are about to walk into the Promised Land and be given it as a gift from God. The danger for Israel is that she would really begin to think she earned it and she deserved it and it was due to her faithfulness.

Israel is a proud nation but we are proud individuals. Just listen to people talk about themselves and their families. They want you to know what they have and what they have done. There is a pride that simmers within every one of us. Something good and positive happens and some want everyone else to know about it and experience it as if to say we earned it and we deserved it.

Moses knew the danger of that kind of pride. It can and will stifle the relationship with God and that will stifle the blessings of God. The danger would be that Israel would fall into the trap of thinking that they had become so righteous, which is why they were entering the land (v. 5).

God wants His nation to realize that their entrance into the Promised Land was not due to their greatness, but to His greatness. In fact, along their life journey route of traveling to the Promised Land, they made God angry many times. **Their entrance into the Promised Land was not due to their faithfulness, but His faithfulness.**

In fact, what Moses specifically says here is this:

GOD DOES NOT WANT HIS PEOPLE TO BECOME DELUSIONALLY PROUD OF THEIR SUCCESSES, BUT HE WANTS THEM TO REALISTICALLY REMEMBER THEIR FAILURES.

Moses wanted these people to always remember how they so angered God that He almost destroyed them. In doing that, they would keep a proper focus on God and His word.

Can you imagine talking with someone who would say to you there was a time when I so angered God that He almost destroyed me. God is so good and so gracious because I didn't deserve anything. In fact, in my life I made decisions so repulsive to God that He nearly destroyed me, which is exactly what I deserved.

For the fourth time in Deuteronomy, Moses begins by saying, "Hear O Israel" (4:1; 5:1; 6:4; 9:1). What Moses is saying by using these words is you need to pay very careful attention as to what I am about to tell you. There are six very important messages that you need to understand:

MESSAGE #1 – It is time for you to enter the Promised Land and you need to know God will give you victory over bigger and stronger enemies. **9:1-3**

Moses begins by informing Israel that when they cross the Jordan, they will come up against big enemies. They will be bigger and stronger. In fact, there will be Anakim, which are giants. Moses says you have heard about these giants and you know about them.

Moses says but I want you to know that as you obey God and cross over into that land, you may depend on God. God will go before you and He will destroy them and drive them out quickly.

Insurmountable size and numbers for God's people mean nothing to God. God is a Divine Warrior and a consuming fire who will fight and win for His people if they stay faithful to obey Him.

Moses stresses here that your success is not due to your military. You may drive them out of the land completely or destroy them, but it will be God who will do it.

Now the real danger for God's people would be after they experienced this. They could sit around the campfire and strut around the cities and proudly think they did it. When, in fact, it was God who did it. Moses never wanted that to happen.

We taught a course in this church on spiritual victory and, based on crawling through the Bible, we concluded that to have spiritual victory over sin, one must start with the realization that victory belongs to the Lord and that there is nothing good in us (Romans 7:18). Dr. Chafer said, "Probably there is no more subtle delusion common among believers than the supposition that the saved man, if he tries hard enough, can, on the basis of the fact that he is regenerate, overcome the flesh" (Bib Sac, Oct. 1935, p. 405). There is a pride in God's people, who think it is within them to win. Victory belongs to the Lord. Israel needed to learn that and so do we.

MESSAGE #2 – Do not think that God gives victory because of His people's righteousness, but because of the enemies wickedness. **9:4-6**

God did not drive out the other nations and give Israel her land because she was so righteous. He gave Israel her land because the other nations were so wicked. The Canaanite nations had become so depraved and wicked that God was going to drive them out of the land.

When God was giving His people victory, He did not want them gloating about their own righteousness, because that was not why God gave them victory. God gave them victory because of the wickedness of the nations and because He had entered into a covenant relationship with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

People tend to automatically think there is a correlation between their accomplishments and their righteousness. Moses makes it clear that in this case there is no such correlation. These people were a stubborn, rebellious people (**v. 6**).

That word “stubborn” means these people were completely unwilling to obey God’s word and do what He wanted them to do.

Salvation is a mystery. It is not given due to merit or righteousness; it is due to God’s elective grace. All have sinned and all have fallen short of the righteousness of God. There is none righteous no not one. So for a believer to strut around trying to convince people that the reason he is saved is because of his own goodness or merit is a delusional and deadly arrogance.

It is God’s sovereignty that determines who He will elect, save and bless. It is not based on merit or what is earned or deserved; it is all of God’s grace.

Israel had a history of being a rebellious nation and she would not get the land because she deserved it for her righteousness; she got it as a fulfillment of a covenant and because of the evil and wickedness of the nations.

MESSAGE #3 – Remember and do not ever forget how you provoked God to such anger that He wanted to destroy you. **9:7-17**

Moses doubles up on this point by saying, “remember, do not forget.” **Moses says what you really need to remember has nothing to do with your righteousness, but it has everything to do with your rebellion.**

Moses wanted God’s people to remember and never forget that they did horrible things and they have the potential of doing horrible things again. In fact, in the past that is exactly what they did. Moses says you did such horrible things that you were nearly destroyed by God.

Moses says in **verse 7** that from the time they left Egypt until the time they arrived to Horeb (Sinai), they had rebelled against God and provoked the Lord. According to **verse 8**, they so provoked the LORD and angered God that He almost destroyed them.

Then Moses reminds them of how he went up on the mountain to receive the written word of God (**v. 9**). He was gone for 40 days and nights, during which time God gave him the two tablets upon which He literally wrote His words (**v. 10**). Nowhere else in the Bible does it say that God actually wrote the words.

At the end of the 40 days, God gave Moses the two tablets of stone, which gave His covenant word to Israel (**v. 11**).

But according to **verse 12**, the LORD said to Moses that he needed to get down the mountain fast because they have made an idol for themselves and are worshipping it. God said the people have become “corrupt.” The word corrupt is shachath, which means they had done something so wicked that God considered them to be criminals (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 816).

Moses then reminded them that God said I have seen enough of these stubborn, stiff-necked people and God said to Moses leave Me alone because I am about to blot out their name and I will start all over again with another nation (v. 13-14).

When God says, “let Me alone” (v. 14), it is a very serious prophetic warning that means one is dangerously close to being too late for grace and very near God’s wrath. God told Moses I am very near starting over with you and getting rid of these rebellious people.

According to **verses 15-16**, Moses quickly came down the mountain with the two tablets in his two hands and when he got down, he saw that they had sinned against the LORD your God and they had made a molten calf and you were worshipping that.

Moses said in **verse 17**, I was so mad I took those two tablets and threw them and smashed them before your eyes. I would love to get my hands on just a piece of those tablets. Just imagine having a piece of a stone tablet that had actually been written on by God, Himself.

Now I don’t think God wants us to spend the rest of our lives rehashing and grieving over our sins that have been washed in the blood of the Lamb. In fact, it was Paul who said, “forgetting the things that are behind I am pressing on for the prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 3:13-14).

But what God was after for Israel and for us is that we realize how important it is to stay committed to God and His word. We do not ever want to get to the point where we gloat about how great we are that we can do things our way. We always want to focus on how great God is with the goal of obeying Him and His word.

MESSAGE #4 – Do not forget how I interceded for you and for Aaron. **9:18-21**

Moses says you think that you are going into this land because of your righteousness. That is simply not true. Moses said I interceded for you because God was on the verge of destroying you.

Moses realized the danger Israel was in. God was about to destroy her. So he fell down before the LORD and prayed in behalf of the people asking God to be merciful in view of her sin. He was afraid that God would destroy her and not only the nation, but Aaron, too.

So Moses acted as a priest and he fell down before God for 40 days and nights and did not eat and drink because of their evil and sin (v. 18). They were on the verge of being destroyed (v. 19).

Moses said God was going to destroy Aaron, so he also prayed for him (v. 21).

Then he took that golden calf and burned it and crushed it and threw it into the brook and washed it away (v. 22).

Moses says you need to remember how close to extermination you came. Don't think for one moment that you are getting this land because you deserve it. The land you are getting is by God's grace.

We must not ever fall into the trap of thinking we deserve heaven or everlasting life. We don't deserve it. We are sinners who have fallen far short of the glory of God. We are wise if we keep that in mind and go to work on understanding and obeying God's word.

MESSAGE #5 – Do not forget that you again and again provoked God to anger by not believing Him and by rebelling against Him. **9:22-24**

God's people did not just have one little slip up. They rebelled again and again. Now one would think after the Golden Calf episode that almost got the nation destroyed, they would have learned their lesson. Well they didn't. It wasn't long until they had so angered God again that He was on the verge of destroying them.

Moses this time brings up four more places:

First, there was Taberah. At Taberah, Israel started bitterly complaining even though they had only traveled for three days from Mt. Sinai (Num. 10:35-11:1). As a result, God sent a fiery judgment.

Second, there was Massah. Massah was the place where Moses got so mad at the whining and complaining that he struck the rock twice producing water for the people (Ex. 17:1-7).

Third, there was Kibroth-hattaavah (graves of craving). Kibroth-hattaavah was the place where the people were grumbling and complaining about the manna God gave them (Num. 11:4-32). They stuffed themselves with quail like a bunch of gluttons with food stuck in their teeth (Num. 11:33).

Fourth, there was Kadesh-barnea, where they refused to go take the land but listened to ten deadbeat spies (Num. 13:1-14:10). God specifically told them to take the land—they would not obey God.

These people were never satisfied, never thankful, never content, but always grumbling and complaining. They were never obedient. They had a track record of rebellion against God and His word. They had a track record of never obeying God. So for them to think the reason they are getting this Promised Land is because of their faithfulness and righteousness, is a delusional trip to La La Land.

MESSAGE #6 – Do not forget that I fell down and interceded for days in order that God would not destroy us. **9:25-29**

God was going to destroy them again so again Moses says I fell down and interceded and asked God not to destroy His own people. There were nine points Moses stressed in the prayer.

Point #1 - Israel was God's people. **9:26a**

Point #2 - Israel was God's inheritance. **9:26b**

Point #3 - God had redeemed Israel. **9:26c** - by His greatness and might.

Point #4 - Moses asks God to remember Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. **9:27a**

God made the covenant with them and they were His servants.

Point #5 - Moses asks God not to look at the stubbornness of His people. **9:27b**

Point #6 - Moses asks God not to look at the wickedness of their sin. **9:27c**

Point #7 - Moses reminds God that if God destroys His people, other nations will question God's ability and power to do what He said He would—take them into the land.

9:28a

Point #8 - If God destroys His people, nations will think He brought them out of Egypt for the purpose of destroying them. **9:28b**

Point #9 - Israel is God's people and inheritance that He delivered by His great power. **9:29**

We must not ever lose sight of the fact that everything we are and have is from the Grace of God. We need to stay focused on Him and His word and never fall into the delusional way of thinking that we are so great and deserving.