



MONDAY 24 APRIL 2017

SERIES: DEUTERONOMY – CHOOSE LIFE

Read: Deuteronomy 2:1-7

Plug In...

Jacob grows into the nation Israel. Jacob's brother, Esau, enlarges to the nation Edom. God tells Israel that Edom will dread them, so be careful. The carefulness is not that Edom are super-dangerous (although they might be), but emphasises Israel's risk of being over-eager and going for a land-grab. God makes clear that Edom's land was allotted by Him and won't be given to them (*cf.* [32:8](#)). God calls Israel to look back at His caring and watching over them this last 40 years. These memories should give them confidence that they can by-pass taking land now, for God will give it in the future.

Chew It Over...

Jesus was tempted by Satan to by-pass the hard road and be gratified immediately should He bow down and worship the Devil ([Matthew 4:1-11](#)). Satan tempts by saying God is not good and holds out on us because actually God is mean! Israel would have thoughts like, "You can grab this land from Esau right now; you'd be able to settle down immediately". By-passing God's way is by-passing God! With Jesus, God says to us, you've been stuck in sin long enough, "turn north" but trust doing it my way.

Identify what looms ahead this week. Ask yourself what sin could you be tempted to enter into because you want to gratify yourself now? Think through scenarios where you could pick a fight or be arrogant and proud simply because you want to grab satisfaction now?

Prayer Suggestion

Pray for delayed gratification. Ask that when tempted to short-cut, we will remember and act upon the truth that God's way is better, wiser, and for our good.



The Lakes

TUESDAY 25 APRIL 2017

SERIES: DEUTERONOMY – CHOOSE LIFE

Read: Deuteronomy 2:8-15

Plug In...

The Israelites have turned north; now heading for the Land. They don't take a straight line. They skirt past Edom (Seir) and now Moab. This more complex journey past Edom and Moab are to teach Israel theological lessons. Verse 9 asserts God distributes the lands, even to those not of the promise. Israel have to be content to trust God. Here and again soon, there is a pause to explain that there were giants in the lands. This acts as a foil to highlight Israel's previous lack of faith and rebellion. For, nations not-of-promise received their land and even when there were giants in them!

"Now get up and cross the Zered Valley." Verse 13 sounds like the crossing of the Red Sea ([Exodus 13:17 – 14:31](#)). Israel is positively on the move again towards the Promised Land. Will they panic again?

Chew It Over...

We get nervous for Israel, thinking what if they get to the border again and falter. They do get in the Land. This happens despite their previous sin, and even with the forecast that they will sin even in the Land (see [Deuteronomy 31:15-18](#)). This teaches us we need something to happen that secures us in the presence of God. We might have some good moments – Israel did – but human nature

inevitably falters. There is plenty to fear in life, lots of so-called 'giants'. What lessons did Israel need to learn that we must learn as we journey with Jesus through our lives?

Have you been acting in a way that indicates you don't trust that power does sit with Jesus? (He distributes and assigns – see [Ephesians 1:22](#).) Press into what you've avoided or got involved with lately. What does it say about where you think power resides? The Israelites were to avoid tempting power-alliances, avoid the temptation to wrest power by fighting on their own terms. They had to trust that God had it right and journey past Moab in the manner He described.

Think about the politics of your workplace. Think over the politics of your relationships. We obey those we truly believe have the power to bless or curse us. Many times our obedience to God will look like a loss (while appearing like a win for the so-called powerful). But, these narratives of Israel passing Edom and Moab, the narratives of people receiving lands despite the powerful giants, the narrative that Israel receives the Land despite the giants (2:12), the narrative of Jesus rising from the dead and receiving all power and authority – these narratives show us that history always proves the apparent win for the giants is ultimately a loss.

Prayer Suggestion

Reflect on [Ephesians 1](#), where the ultimate power of Jesus shapes Paul's prayer. Let it move you too.



WEDNESDAY 26 APRIL 2017

SERIES: DEUTERONOMY – CHOOSE LIFE

Read: Deuteronomy 2:16-23

Plug In...

The lesson that God is the one who *gives* is experienced again as the Israelites pass the Ammonites. God underscores this lesson with the negative. He will *not give* the Israelites any land from the Ammonites.

Chew It Over...

The journey past another site where Israel might prematurely go for a land grab, and the stress that God controls what land will be open and what is barred, tackles any thought Israel may have that God might not be serious.

Just like Israel, the work God did to redeem us through Jesus is not free-floating. We're wrong to think saved by grace, but treat obedience as optional; or disobedience is not really a big deal with God. Rather, Scripture keeps teaching that all God's work is done in order that we be a people of obedience; a people who love God with all our heart, mind and soul ([Deuteronomy 6:5](#)). Likewise, Jesus does His work on the cross so that He can send the Holy Spirit to produce in us a willingness and an ability to fulfil Deuteronomy 6:5. Without this nature emerging through repentance and obedience in us, then Jesus Himself says questions are raised (see [Matthew 7:13-21](#)).

In very real and expressive ways repentance and obedience must be appearing all over our life, all through our life. We are saved by grace, but to be obedient disciples – worshippers – of Jesus.

Prayer Suggestion

If we are moved to repentance and asking for more of God's grace and work in our life it is because Christ's work on the cross has been applied to us; Christ is in us. The response has to be praise. The response involves prayer like [Romans 15:13](#) – "May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit".



THURSDAY 27 APRIL 2017

SERIES: DEUTERONOMY – CHOOSE LIFE

Read: Deuteronomy 2:24-25

Plug In...

Israel has been told God distributes all lands. The root of the fall of king Sihon of Heshbon is traced solely to God *handing over* the Amorite country to Israel.

[NB: This area is east of the Jordan River. It is known in the Bible as the Trans-Jordan region. The Promised Land (which is Canaan proper) is on the west side of Jordan. However, this pocket of land ends up being included in the overall allotments to the tribes of Israel.]

The language of 'handed over' in the Bible, like here, is a phrase locked to God's absolute control over everything under heaven. The action of God handing over displays this power as He hands them over to experience His judgement.

[Cf. [Genesis 15:16](#). The country under Sihon was Amorite country. This is a different group to the Ammonites previously mentioned but easy to get the two groups confused given the spellings.]

Chew It Over...

Jesus' repeatedly said the Son of Man will be *handed over* (e.g. [Mark 10:33-34](#)). This is not arbitrary wording. If God handed Jesus over to His judgement, then the judgement we should expect to be handed over to has already happened for us. We no longer have the same terror and fear that all people under heaven have when confronted with God's judgement.

People feared Jesus because of what He said about God's judgement. If we tell the Gospel, people will fear us. We don't deliberately drum up fear and anxiety, but by simply relaying the truth about who God is should produce an anguish of sorts for people. We do this not to be mean. It is good to awaken people to this fear. We don't manufacture this, simply telling the Gospel inherently does this. We pray this fear gets people moving to respond to Jesus before they are handed over to God's judgement.

It makes us ask a challenging question. While we don't aim to cause needless offence, nor be rude and brash, are we in our social circles positioned as just about fun and giggles? It should be the case that due to what we believe and share with others there is a certain awkwardness that occurs in our relationships. Does this happen?

Prayer Suggestion

[Romans 8:31-39](#) helps us frame this awkwardness and pray for courage knowing that other people's fear can't terminally affect us.



FRIDAY 28 APRIL 2017

SERIES: DEUTERONOMY – CHOOSE LIFE

Read: Deuteronomy 2:26-30

Plug In...

Again this passage is like the Exodus experience once more. Pharaoh wouldn't let them go. Now, Sihon king of Heshbon won't let them pass. The Israelites are provided background information to build their confidence: "The LORD your God had made his spirit stubborn and obstinate *in order to give him into your hands*" (v.30).

Chew It Over...

For sure this verse raises a number of questions. However, despite the questions, which can't be explored here right now, don't let them dilute the forceful explicit statements about the nature of God. Make sure we notice:

- Whatever is happening in the background, the Israelites have been told the LORD is "your God". Jesus has all power too, (e.g. [Proverbs 21:1](#); [Luke 10:22](#)) that makes us quick to thank God that Jesus is *our* Lord and not against us.

- Whatever so-called 'giants' exist, or obstacles that appear, they are all part of God's good plan for His people ([Romans 8:28-31](#)).

- We can obey all of Jesus' commands because God has already begun the steps that will culminate in the end goal. We don't have to fear what others fear ([1 Peter 3:14](#)).

Prayer Suggestion

Thank the Lord that He has kindly used His ultimate power upon our hearts. Thank God that we see and trust Jesus. Ask that our perception of this world's giants changes; that they radically shrink as we trust it is all part of God's good plan *for us*.



WEEKEND 29-30 APRIL 2017

SERIES: DEUTERONOMY – CHOOSE LIFE

Read: Deuteronomy 2:31-37

Plug In...

At first read, this passage is hard. It too raises questions. Though, remember there is a context – [Genesis 15:16](#). If we accept this context and what else Scripture teaches (that God is holy, righteous, and always just), then we notice this passage is all about the LORD giving Israel success! There is a bunch of similar verbs repeated: God *delivered*; the LORD *gave* us all of them. This is a record of God giving success. This is a record of the Israelites obeying (v.37) and God fulfilling what He promised to them should they obey.

Chew It Over...

The Israelites are on a journey to the Promised Land, one that has been full of failures, disobedience, and frustration. Now, because God is a God who fulfils His promises, He has told them to turn north and head again to the Land. This time He gives them a mini-success in Heshbon, prior to Canaan, to bolster their confidence. God is merciful. For a people who previously sinned because they lacked confidence, God address this lack of confidence by providing them with a successful mini-battle before facing the big ones again in the Land.

Although obedience is required to live with God in the Land, the story of Israel makes us doubtful of that ever being a *continuing* reality. There are some good moments for Israel, some positives, but we don't trust human nature's resolve. With this story we already get a picture that God is not a God that just lets that stay the case. He intervenes. God builds faith, God motivates, God gives us tastes of blessing to get confidence of future blessing. We know in time that He decisively intervenes to reverse our propensity to balk at God's goodness. God, thankfully, *intrudes*. He infiltrates right at our heart level. He battles our wills there and *succeeds*. In that place, He atones and lives there.

What about your history can you look back on which maps the future of how God will be with you and help you?

Prayer Suggestion

Count your blessings, name them one by one; thank the Father for every one.