

Date : 17 September 2023
Theme : Possessing our Inheritance
Topic : Retelling life's story as His Story
Passages : *Deuteronomy 1 - 3*
Key Verse : ...*Moses began to explain this law saying... Deuteronomy 1:5*

Introduction

Moses, (now an aged 120-year man), in narrating the ways of God in Deuteronomy, spoke from an intimate knowledge of a God of love. He revealed in Deuteronomy that it was God's love for Israel that motivated His every move on their behalf, through...

- God's faithfulness to deliver His people
 - God's laws to protect them as they obey
 - God's covenant to bless them in perpetuity
- (Deuteronomy is not merely repeating the events in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers; but an explanation behind what God was doing and why He did so).

Moses was seeking to convince the average Israelite they had misread God's kind intentions. They must learn how to remain blessed and be abundantly provided for, enjoying a joyous feast in Yahweh's Presence. God had offered them a wonderful relationship. He wanted them to possess the inheritance He had promised their forefathers; but they needed to stay in covenant relationship with Him on His terms.

God's love in Deuteronomy

- Deuteronomy is among the top 5 books of the Bible in its frequency of the word **love**.
...*the Lord loved you... Deuteronomy 7:8*
- The phrase ...**He blessed you...** is used far more often than in any other biblical book.
- ...**rejoice...** is third most frequently used in the Bible (tied with *Proverbs*).

Among the first 5 books of the Bible, the words...**love...rejoice...bless you...** are used most frequently. That's why we should spend time reading and understanding Deuteronomy. It is a book of love – God's love for you and how you should love Him in return.

As we come to the 5th book of Deuteronomy, how's your attitude in relating to the God of the Old Testament? How does the Lord's voice sound like in your head as your read His Word and instructions? Confidence? Confusion?

Your attitudes will determine your perception of God – either the goodness or severity of God.

Attitudes that determine God's Goodness	Attitudes that determine God's Severity
Humble	Proud
Submissive	Defiance
Forgiven	Punishment
Repentance	Indifference
Reverence	Contempt to God & His Word

(Among the Jewish survivors of Auschwitz concentration camps during the Holocaust (1933-1945, approximately 6 million Jews died), some narrated their ordeals, from the perspective of anger against an unjust God, while others with gratitude to God for His deliverance, experiencing one miracle after another, each time they called on *Yahweh Elohei Yisra'el* = Lord God of Israel).

Today, I will address, from God's perspective, the renewed opportunity God was offering the Israelites to succeed in gaining the Promised Land. The new generation must learn from the mistakes of the old generation as to why they had failed, so that they could succeed this round.

1. Identify the status of the new generation (use the 4 questions)

- a. **When?** The 40th year since the Israelites left their slavery in Egypt.
- b. **Who?** The old generation had all perished from unbelief in the desert. A new generation aged between 38 and 59 years was being prepared to take possession of their inheritance.
- c. **Where?** They were on the east bank of the Jordan River, across from Jericho.
- d. **What was going on?**
 - Moses explained the law (principles and values by which God worked) which defined Israel's covenant relationship with the Lord.
 - Moses revealed God's heart behind His actions.
It was God's love for Israel that motivated Him to bless them.
...The Lord your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this vast desert. These 40 years the Lord your God has been with you and you have not lacked anything... Deuteronomy 2:7
 - Throughout the book, Moses not only revealed God's love behind all that He did, but His desire what they would be.
 - The Lord had fought for them against Sihon and Og. He would do so when they crossed the Jordan if they remained faithful. Moses explained how and why.

2. What do we learn about God from His Story?

In Deuteronomy, God parts the curtain to give us a peek behind His actions in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. (Paul, in Ephesians, used the term for behind the scenes, the *heavenly realms* = the spiritual realm). What goes on in the invisible realm determines the outcome, paralleling the visible.

Deuteronomy 1 - 3 unveils God's invisible hand behind what is visible. Rather than merely a rehash of the book of Numbers, God is telling His Story behind history.

a) God is Owner

He has created all land and reserves the right to give it to whoever He wishes. He has chosen Abraham and his descendants on the basis of faith – the faith of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The Israelites must *...go in and take possession what He has given... Deuteronomy 1:8*

b) God is Generous with His inheritance

His inheritance is not earned – it is a gift.

...See, I have given you this land. Go in and take possession of the land that the LORD swore he would give to your fathers – to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – and to their descendants after them. Deuteronomy 1:8. (God had promised Abraham ownership of the plot from the Nile to the Euphrates, a land flowing with milk and honey).

c) God is Lord – *Yahweh* Deuteronomy 1:3

The name *Yahweh* occurs more than 200 times in Deuteronomy and presents God as the Lord we would gladly obey.

d) God Appoints leaders for His people. *Deuteronomy 1:9 - 18*

Leaders are appointed, not voted in.

God's authority would be transmitted to them, through Moses.

e) God Commands His people to... *Deuteronomy 1:6 - 46*

- Complete the journey - no more delays ...*you had stayed long enough...* *Deuteronomy 1:6*
- Be Courageous to engage the enemy. ...*break camp and advance...* *Deuteronomy 1:7*.
(God would fight for them even though their enemies were far larger and stronger).
- Cast the vision ...*see, I have placed the land before you...* *Deuteronomy 1:8*
 - Legal expression (God's part) = property transferred from one party to another (official)
 - Take possession (Israel's part) ...*go in and take possession...* *Deuteronomy 1:8*
- Co-operate with God as God's covenant partners.

While God had given Israel the land (a gift), it was not a gift forced upon Israel.

Israel only received the land if she stepped out in faith to take possession of it.

God is not pleased with people who refuse to trust Him; we cannot win if God is not with us.

(The old generation tried to 'go up' on their own; rebelled against God and failed miserably).

- God, on His part, had helped them all the way ...*in spite of this, you did not trust in the Lord your God...* *Deuteronomy 1:32*
- How had God helped them?
 - The Lord fought their battles for them before their very eyes; but did they see it?
...*The Lord your God, who goes before you, He will fight for you, according to all He did for you in Egypt before your eyes...* *Deuteronomy 1:30*
 - The Lord carried them along all the way, as a father his son; but did they sense the Father's love?
...*in the wilderness where you saw how the Lord carried you, as a man carries his son, in all the way that you went until you came to this place.* *Deuteronomy 1:31*
- God was angry by their evil words of unbelief.
...*the Lord heard the sound of your words, and was angry...* *Deuteronomy 1:34 - 37*
(He decided they would not possess the land. Instead, they had to wander round and round for the next 38 years. Only Caleb and Joshua who followed God faithfully could enter).
- The Lord refused to be with them temporarily to register His displeasure. When they decided to fight their battle on their own, they were defeated. *Deuteronomy 1:42 - 46*
The Lord refused them because they had refused to listen to Him. *Deuteronomy 1:43*
Relationships are not one-sided affairs.

Summary of God's love as shown in *Deuteronomy 1 - 3*

a) The Past : The Lord's faithfulness emphasized *Deuteronomy 1*

- The Lord had carried them through the desert despite their lack of trust. *Deuteronomy 1:31*
- The Lord had blessed them all the way.
...The Lord your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this vast desert. These 40 years the Lord your God has been with you, and you have not lacked anything... Deuteronomy 2:7
- The Lord's wrath was revealed when He heard their rebellious talk *Deuteronomy 1:34 - 40*
 - God had to stay faithful to His Word; their rejection of God's offer disqualified them from possessing the land.
 - They failed because the hand of the Lord was against them *Deuteronomy 2:15*

Unfortunately, God's people today often misjudge God's motives on the basis of circumstances, like the Israelites. We may conclude that God hates us when we experience disappointments, like sickness, shortages and sufferings.

b) The Present : The Lord's favour extended *Deuteronomy 2 - 3:11*

- The Lord God gave them all the cities of the Amorites *Deuteronomy 2:36*
- The Lord also gave them Og, King of Bashan *Deuteronomy 3:2 - 11*.

c) The Future : The Lord's future success promised *Deuteronomy 3:21 - 26*

*...The Lord will do the same to all the kingdoms over there where you are going.
Do not be afraid of them, the Lord your God Himself will fight for you... Deuteronomy 3:21*
Joshua would lead this people and cause them to inherit the land *Deuteronomy 3:28*.

Application

- a. How is God's love for us shown when He gives us His laws?
- b. Why does God withhold His favour when we disobey His instructions?