

I. **In Deuteronomy 2, there is a peculiar story of God shaping his people and transforming them from *slaves to conquerors*.**

A. The context is the telling of the law to the 2nd generation because they are going to be asked to do the same thing their parents and grandparents were asked to do: **To be Courageous!**

B. But before we get to chapter 2, let's remind ourselves of what's gone on before.

1. The generation rescued from Egypt turned back on the day of battle and because of that they died in the desert.

2. We can just hear their children and grandchildren's bragging:

a. "If it had been us, we'd obeyed God and gone into fight."

3. We can also hear their complaining:

b. "I am so tired of eating this manna, this sand is driving me crazy, are we ever going to get these sand fleas out of our hair."

c. How many times do you believe they criticized their leaders for lack of vision and and being gutless?

C. So there, east of the Jordan in the territory of Moab, Moses gathers all of Israel together and tells them that just like their forefathers it would take heart to be free!

1. I am sure they were non-chalant about all this.

2. "Yeah, yeah, yeah. We've heard this before."

II. **Then all of a sudden the LORD says to Moses and his people:**

²⁴ *"Set out now and cross the Arnon Gorge. See, I have given into your hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his country. Begin to take*

*possession of it and engage him in battle.*²⁵ *This very day I will begin to put the terror and fear of you on all the nations under heaven. They will hear reports of you and will tremble and be in anguish because of you.*” (Deut 2:24-25)

A. This was Israel’s defining moment.

1. This was the battle in which God was going to establish them as his people.
2. Through this victory God was going to place the fear of God in all the nations that worshipped false gods.
3. His instructions were absolutely clear:

“Go pick a fight, engage them in battle, and today I’ll give you victory.”

B. Surprisingly enough, the very next verse tells us that Moses sent messengers to Sihon of Heshbon, with this message,

²⁷ “Let us pass through your country. We will stay on the main road; we will not turn aside to the right or to the left. ²⁸ Sell us food to eat and water to drink for their price in silver. Only let us pass through on foot— ²⁹ as the descendants of Esau, who live in Seir, and the Moabites, who live in Ar, did for us—until we cross the Jordan into the land the LORD our God is giving us.” (Deut 2:27-29)

III. If you read these two passages separately, you could hardly place them at the same event.

A. Israel’s *response* to God’s command that they *engage and conquer* was to offer a *compromise of peace*. Why?

1. *Because they simply wouldn’t or couldn’t believe that God would keep his word.*

2. While God was committed to establishing them as a people of his presence and power, they were more willing to settle for much less than that.
3. All they wanted was to survive. Does that sound familiar?

B. Verse 30 says,

³⁰ But Sihon king of Heshbon refused to let us pass through. For the LORD your God had made his spirit stubborn and his heart obstinate in order to give him into your hands, as he has now done. (Deut 2:30)

C. And then verse 31 says,

³¹ The LORD said to me, "See, I have begun to deliver Sihon and his country over to you. Now begin to conquer and possess his land." (Deut 2:31)

IV. **This passage teaches us a very peculiar thing about God.**

- A. His first approach toward us is to invite us to believe in him and move in his power. That's awesome isn't it?
- B. God's first choice is to search for a heart that is completely his and then strongly support it.
 1. But if that is not the condition of our hearts, many times God forces circumstances upon us so that we can do nothing else but rely on God's goodness.
- C. Israel didn't have a heart to trust God, so God hardened the heart of Sihon.
 1. Israel had become so satisfied with the status quo that God had to forcefully break in and disrupt their lives.
 2. God made Sihon's spirit stubborn and provoked him to go to war against Israel.

3. God did this so that Israel would **begin to conquer and possess** the land.
4. What God did was **ble**ss Israel by forcing them to engage in a battle they were afraid to fight.
5. It's a spiritual person's role to lead others to engage in a battle they are afraid to fight.
6. It's a spiritual leader's responsibility to be the first to draw his sword and engage the enemy.

V. Just like God called Israel to conquer and possess the land, He commands his church to go and make disciples and be witnesses in all the earth (Acts 1:8).

A. In other words, we are called to engage in the battle for which Jesus Christ died.

B. Matthew tells us that

¹² *...the kingdom of heaven is forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it. (Matt 11:12)*

1. Do you realize that the kingdom of heaven is forcefully advancing?
2. Do you realize that forceful men lay hold it?
3. Let's not be afraid to be forceful, to take the initiative! Let's not turn back on the day of battle!
4. Jesus tells us that the church will crash against the very gates of hell like a tank breaking through a concrete wall.

C. For two thousand years God has called the church to encounter culture through his presence and transforming power.

1. We are to challenge our culture's beliefs and values.

2. The most important moral choices are differences of vision, not of choice.

¹⁸ *Where there is no vision, the people perish* (Prov 29:18) KJV

3. It takes a lot of effort to see the world correctly and live accordingly.
4. This happens only through the disciplined transformation of our vision.
5. We can no longer retreat and hide behind our walls.

D. God has brought the battle to us. He has asked us to engage our culture and not to retreat like Israel did.

1. He will force us to engage in the battles at hand.
 - a. When this happens, He will put leaders among you that you will resist, speak evil of and whose efforts you will try to sabotage.
 - b. You will do this because it's easy and takes no effort just like the Hebrews who wanted to go back to Egypt and sit around pots of meat and be satisfied.
 - c. Don't be fooled!
2. God will do whatever is necessary to reorganize this planet until we have no where to run and no where to hide.
3. The question is whether we'll make the hard decisions along the way.

How does Duet. 2 apply to us?

1. If you think the leaders here aren't leading as you would like, don't spend your time complaining and criticizing.

- a. Prepare yourself because your time is coming.
 - b. Desire spiritual depth; a real hunger and thirst for God.
2. Leaders cannot lead when gripped by fear!
To lead in fear is not to lead at all!
- a. The battles others are too afraid to fight are the responsibility of leaders.
 - b. Leaders forfeit their right to lead in the minds of others when they are unwilling to think outside the box, take risks, and stand up to faithlessness.
 - c. Leaders must be willing to take criticism without losing their vision.
3. The congregation must be willing to think in new ways about old things.
- (a) You can think new ways about old things without changing doctrine.
 - (b) Look at the Israelites. They knew about war. They were a waring community.
 - (c) Yet they were afraid to think in new ways about old things even though it came directly from God.
 - (d) How can we not make this mistake?
 - a. Through a radical form of discipleship—truly living our life in a way that reflects the cross.
 - b. The cross is about laying our lives down for the good of the kingdom:
 - c. Jesus said, “Not my will but yours be done.”

Closing

God wants to shape and transform us from slaves to sin,
slaves to religion,
and slaves to our culture
to conquerors in Jesus Christ.

But it takes heart to be free!

Embrace the cross of Christ.

Give your life to Him today.

Believe, repent of your sinful life and be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins.

Come to Jesus today!

- E. God is inviting us to believe in him and move in his power.
- F. God's first choice is to search for a heart that is wholly his and then strongly support it.
- G. It that you?
- H. Are you the one he's looking for to encounter culture through his transforming power?
- I. Look at me! Believe that God will keep his word.
- J. God is committed to establishing you as his people of presence and power.
- K. Don't settle for the earth when you can have heaven.
- L. Remember, being a disciple of Christ happens only through the disciplined transformation of your vision.

M. I am convinced that many of the cultural trends that have brought us fear and concern for the contemporary church are the very act of God, in a sense, hardening the heart of Sihon, king of Heshbon.