

WRONG THINKING ABOUT RIGHT CIRCUMSTANCES
DEUTERONOMY 2:24-31

Introduction

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

➤ This was transition time for the Jewish nation.

1. *A new generation*
2. *A new land*
3. *A new leadership*
4. *A new chance*

➤ So here Moses speaks to them and to us about what happens when people think wrongly about right circumstances.

➤ You'll see that the circumstances were right.

➤ God had told them,

⁸ 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 descendents after them.
(Deut 1:8)

➤ But their thinking was wrong.

➤ They thought that the material circumstances would determine the outcome... We tend to do that, you know.

A. Hence, 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.

B. But before we get to chapter 2, let's remind ourselves of what's gone on in chapter 1.

1. The generation rescued from Egypt,
though armed with bows,
turned back on the day of battle
and because of that their bodies were spread across the desert.
 - Desert funerals were a commonplace occurrence.
2. It must have been a heart-wrenching time.
3. Imagine what it was like for this generation
to now be called to do what their parents
and grandparents failed to do.

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 think correctly during anxious moments.

1. I am sure they knew what God was asking them to do.
2. God was calling them to greatness.
3. Really this text is all about
how to be great in God's sight.

If we read carefully,
we catch a glimpse of what
God was asking the first generation to do
and by extension
what He asks all faithful people to do.

So as Moses recounts the events we see the spontaneity of God for...

II. **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 though, 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.

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.

1. There is a unique relationship between human belief and divine power.
2. In other words, if you want to see God's power, you have to believe and act.

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 to rely on God's goodness.

C. Israel didn't have a heart to trust God,
so God hardened the heart of Sihon King of Heshbon.

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 too afraid to fight.

**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!
4. The 78th Psalm was written, for instance, to remind people
of all ages that we have been armed for battle.

Let's not turn back on the day of battle!

5. Jesus tells us that the church will crash against the very gates of hell like a tank breaking through a concret 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.
3. Proverbs 29:18 says,

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

4. It takes a lot of effort to see the world correctly and live accordingly.
5. This happens only through the disciplined transformation of our vision.
6. 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. Just like Israel, we'd better be careful or we will resist our leaders.
 - b. They rejected Moses because he was calling them to greatness.
 - c. We have the same tendency as the Israelites:
To take it easy and be comfortable in our slavery.

d. This text in Deuteronomy is teaching us something powerful today:

- (1) That God will do whatever is necessary to reorganize this planet until we have no where to run and no where to hide.
- (2) The question is whether or not we'll make the hard decisions along the way.

VI. So how do we take Deuteronomy 2 and run with it?

A. First, Remember that God's tasks are beyond us.

- 1. Jesus shows us how to view our situations when the tasks are beyond us.
- 2. Certainly here in Deuteronomy the Israelites were asked to do something beyond their capacity.
- 3. Jesus, when He saw tasks before Him, never diminished the tasks, but rather always made the resources greater.
- 4. Like the feeding of the 5,000.
 - a. God didn't make the people smaller but the resources greater.
 - b. This is a great picture for all of us.

B. Second, God's purpose for his people reflects who He is.

The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob **is a missionary God.**

- 1. Just as God sent the Israelites into Canaan, he sends his Church into the world.
- 2. In fact, the New Testament depicts the Church as a "*sent people.*"

3. Jesus said,

“As the Father has sent me, so I send you” (John 20:21)

4. Therefore, the classical doctrine of the Mission of God is:

- a. God the Father sending the Son,
- b. God the Father and the Son sending the Spirit which is expanded to include yet another “movement”.

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit sending the church into the world.

C. Third, God’s method for his people is an extension of his personality.

1. He wants us to engage the world for Christ.
 2. He wants us to believe that He will keep his word...
 3. that He is committed to establishing his people as a people of his presence and power.
 4. But we have to want more than just survival.
 5. We have to possess hearts for God.
 6. That is, what is precious to God’s heart is also precious to ours.
 7. The Father sent the Son to redeem lost humanity.
 8. God has sent the church to be ambassadors.
- ²⁰ *We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. (2 Cor 5:20)*
9. Why do we do this?

¹⁴ *For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.* ¹⁵ *And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.* (2 Cor 5:14-15)

10. Jesus said to his disciples,

³⁷ ... *"The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.* ³⁸ *Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."* (Matt 9:37-38)

D. Fourth, God's message for his people remains the same.

1. God is all about salvation.
2. Here was there to rescue Israel.
3. He's here to rescue the lost now.

Conclusion

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

AND IT TAKES RIGHT THINKING ABOUT RIGHT CIRCUMSTANCES

Show me a man who believes his God is bigger than his circumstances, and I'll show you a man who thinks correctly about any set of circumstances.

Today is the day of salvation.

³⁷ *When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?"* ³⁸ *Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.* (Acts 3:27-38)

Today is the day to come to God.

Today is the day to make a difference for God's world.