

Progress – Deuteronomy 7:17-26

I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Overcoming Fear*

1. Some years ago before all of the security was installed at the airports, a psychiatrist was flying to a convention on the East Coast when he took his seat in first class next to the window.
2. A few minutes later another man took the aisle seat next to him.
3. Once airborne, they made their acquaintances.
4. The man on the aisle told the psychiatrist that he'd had a terrible fear of flying ever since the first hijacking a couple years earlier, but had finally overcome it.
5. The psychiatrist asked him how he'd overcome his fear.
6. The man replied he'd taken a special course for people who are afraid of flying.
 - a. He said, "The instructor told us there was only 1 chance in 10,000 that someone would be on board our flight with a bomb."
 - b. "That didn't make me feel much better. The odds were still too close."
 - c. "But then I reasoned that if there was only 1 chance in 10,000 that 1 bomb would be on the plane, there was only 1 chance in 100,000,000 that 2 bombs would be on board."
 - d. "I figured I could live with those odds."
7. The psychiatrist was puzzled by the man's reason & asked, "What good does that do you?"
8. The man replied, "Ever since then, I carry 1 bomb myself just to improve the odds."

B. *Irrational*

1. Fear often causes us to make irrational choices.
2. We do & say things we later regret & realize were *unnecessary* because the thing we feared didn't happen after all.
3. In our study today we're shown how to deal with fear.

II. TEXT

A. *Set The Scene*

1. As always, we need to set the scene – understanding where we are in our study in Deuteronomy.
2. The whole book records Moses' last words to the nation of Israel as they're preparing to make their conquest of the Promised Land.
3. 38 years before, their parents had *balked* at the task of conquering Canaan, *fearful* of the Canaanites.
4. So Moses speaks to this *new* generation & cautions them against the paralyzing effect of fear.

B. *Vs. 17-19*

17 "If you should say in your heart, 'These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?'— **18** you shall not be afraid of them, *but* you shall remember well what the LORD your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt: **19** the great trials which your eyes saw, the signs and the

wonders, the mighty hand and the outstretched arm, by which the LORD your God brought you out. So shall the LORD your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid.

1. Archaeology & history have given us a pretty clear picture of what the ancient Canaanites were like.
 - a. they were a cruel, vicious, & blood-thirsty people.
 - b. they'd sunk to a level of existence that was little better than brute beasts.
 - c. they practiced wide-scale human sacrifice & the depths of their immorality are beyond description.
2. God intended their conquest by Israel as a form of **judgment** for their hideous rebellion against Him.
3. But as ripe as Canaan was for judgment, conquering the land would not be a cakewalk for Israel.
 - a. the Canaanites were a **fearsome** people, their violence & brutality well-known.
 - b. they had a well developed warrior-class & lived in heavily fortified cities.
 - c. and as if the Canaanites themselves weren't enough, living in the middle of the land were the **Anakim** – giants who inspired dread in all who encountered them.
4. Israel, on the other hand, was a nation of **nomadic shepherds**.
 - a. just recently they'd been **slaves**, serving the Egyptians.
 - b. there was no warrior-class in Israel; they had no traditional military background.
 - c. while the Canaanites had the latest & greatest weapons, Israel was decades behind.
5. Moses knew Israel would be tempted to fear as they considered the task of conquering Canaan.
6. As he says in v. 17, this fear would seek to grip their very hearts and move them to **give up** before the first shot was fired.
7. But in v. 18 – He **commands** them to **NOT** fear!
 - a. instead, they're to **remember** what God had done for them in the Exodus.
 - b. Egypt was the world's most powerful empire at that time.
 - c. Pharaoh was the pre-eminent ruler & worshiped as a god by those he ruled.
 - d. but God had broken Egypt's might in the plagues & had defeated Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea.
8. If God could **deliver** Israel **OUT OF** Egypt, He could certainly **deliver** Canaan **OVER TO** them.

B. Parallel

1. Do you realize what Moses says here to Israel, applies to us too?
2. In 1 Corinthians 10:1-11, we read that the story of Israel in their **Exodus** from Egypt and **Entrance** into Canaan is a lesson & example for us.
3. Our lives in Christ are a spiritual journey that **parallels** ancient Israel.
 - a. just as Israel was delivered from bondage in Egypt by the blood of the Passover lamb,
 - b. we've been delivered from bondage to sin & death through the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God who takes away our sin, and who was crucified on

Passover.

- c. Israel was forever liberated from Pharaoh's rule in the waters of the Red Sea,
 - d. just as we're liberated from Satan's tyranny by the waters of baptism when we identify with Christ.
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- e. then Israel traveled to Mt. Sinai where they were given the God's Word & realized they could never obey God through their own effort alone; they came to depend on the sacrifices
 - f. the first lessons we learn as Christians are --
 - 1) the importance of God's Word -&-
 - 2) that our strength to live it comes not from ourselves, but from Christ.
 - g. after Sinai, Israel traveled to the border of Canaan where they grew fearful & refused to go up & take the Promised land. For this act of defiance against God they were condemned to wander the wilderness for nearly 40 years, until all those 20 & older died off.
 - h. in the same way, God has an incredible future of blessing & spiritual abundance for us, but *before* we can enter in & enjoy it, all that which doubts & hangs on to the past life of bondage in the world has to die off.
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4. Here is Moses now, encouraging the new generation to not stumble as their parents had.
 - a. the time has come to cross over and take possession of that which God was giving them.
 - b. the Canaanites could not stop them, but *fear* of the Canaanites *could*.
 - c. so Moses commands them – **DO NOT BE AFRAID!**
 5. Canaan is not a picture of heaven, it's a picture of the *Spirit-filled life*.
 - a. Canaan can't be a symbol for heaven because Israel had to *conquer* it;
 - b. there were enemies to be defeated there.
 - c. no, Canaan is a picture of the Spirit-filled life --
 - d. and crossing the Jordan River isn't a symbol for death, but for the baptism of the Holy Spirit by which we're empowered for service.
 6. Christian, listen! God has *more* for you; more blessing, more spiritual territory, more growth & maturity in Christ.
 7. But laying claim to all that will be no cakewalk.
 - a. just as there were Canaanites that stood between Israel & possession of the land,
 - b. there's a host of spiritual adversaries who will attempt to thwart your spiritual progress.
 - c. these adversaries are well fortified behind entrenched lies, habits, & attitudes.
 - d. and they have generations of experience at spiritual warfare.
 8. Just like ancient Israel, it would be easy for us to look at the enemy & grow fearful, then give up making progress in spiritual things.
 9. But what Moses declared to them the Spirit *shouts* to us – **“Do not be afraid!”**
 10. The antidote to Israel's fear was to *remember* what God had already done for them.
 - a. Moses reminded them of the Exodus, of God's might demonstrated in the

- plagues and at the Red Sea.
- b. what He'd done before, He would do again!
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11. Oh how *we* need this word today!
- there are people here who are stalled in their progress in spiritual things.
 - you've come so far in Christ but now seem stuck.
 - there's a battle with the flesh you've not won; some habit, some attitude that has you defeated.
 - you've failed at overcoming that thing so many times you've given up against it.
 - and now it casts a long shadow of fear across your life.
12. This is the day God would have you take up the fight once again and overcome that thing.
13. Do not fear! Rather *remember* what God has already done.
- if He can save you from Satan's dominion, which He *already* has
 - can He not deliver you from sin's grip? Of course He can!
 - He's already *won the war* – our task is merely to enforce the victory.
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14. That's what Israel needed to keep in mind as they entered Canaan – that God had *already given* them the land.
- there was *no way* the Canaanites could stop them.
 - oh, they would try! They would dress up in their armor & set themselves in battle array against Israel.
 - but none of that had ANY effect whatsoever on the outcome because God had already given Israel the Land, and so the victory.
 - Israel's one task was to go forward and take what God had given them.
15. Friends, that's what faith is – it's taking hold of what God has already given.
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16. There's a show on TV called "*Fear Factor*."
- contestants have to perform all kinds of stunts in order to win a huge cash prize.
 - the one who can overcome his/her fear wins.
 - some of the stunts are simply dangerous *physical* challenges,
 - others are *psychological* & count on the element of the "gross & disgusting" to create fear.
 - no matter what the stunts are, because the show's producers don't want to get sued, there are all kinds of safety measures.
 - the contestants are completely padded & harnessed & there are lots of people standing off-camera ready to come to the aid of anyone who gets into real trouble.
 - it's interesting watching people attempt some stunt;
 - there they are securely strapped to a massive harness & tethered to a huge leash,
 - yet they act as if there's no safety gear whatever.
 - it's all about *perspective* –
 - the *TV audience* sees them with all the gear on, standing in the larger context of the challenge.
 - but the contestant only sees the challenge *itself*; they don't see all the safety gear they're wearing.

- 3) their eyes are locked on the one thing that is meant to *create fear*.
 - 4) if only they could see themselves from the audience's perspective.
17. How often *we're* like those contestants.
- a. *all we see* is the challenge, the obstacle, the thing that stands in the way of the goal God has set before us.
 - b. what we *don't see* is that God's got us covered.
 - c. we're harnessed in grace & tethered to an unbreakable bond of love.
 - d. Romans 8:31-39

31 . . . If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? ³³Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? *It is* God who justifies. ³⁴Who is he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? . . . ³⁷In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

C. Vs. 20-21

20 Moreover the LORD your God will send the hornet among them until those who are left, who hide themselves from you, are destroyed. ²¹ You shall not be terrified of them; for the LORD your God, the great and awesome God, is among you.

1. Though God had already given the land to Israel, they would have to enter in to take possession of it.
 2. Every gift has to be received to make it one's own.
 3. In vs. 17-19, God was calling them to not stall through fear in taking possession of the land.
 4. In these verses He lets them know that while they're faithfully doing their part, *He* will be at work behind the scenes to make sure the victory is theirs.
 5. When the enemy tries to hide, He will drive them into the open.
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6. God reminds them the reason they will be victorious is because *He is with them*.
 7. In the same way, Christian, as it says in 1 John 4:4; "Greater is He Who is in you than he who is in the world."

D. Vs. 22-23

22 And the LORD your God will drive out those nations before you little by little; you will be unable to destroy them at once, lest the beasts of the field become too numerous for you. ²³ But the LORD your God will deliver them over to you, and will inflict defeat upon

them until they are destroyed.

1. The land God had promised Israel was extensive, far more than their initial numbers could properly occupy.
2. If they'd driven off the Canaanites from every acre of the Promised land in just a short time, the fields and towns would fall into disuse & decay.
3. Their conquest of Canaan would be progressive; they would **grow** into the land.
4. The same is true for us as we grow spiritually.
 - a. we don't arrive at spiritual perfection the moment we're born again.
 - b. maturity comes one step at a time, as we move forward by faith,
5. Maturity *is* what we God has in store for us – that's why v. 23 says –
... the LORD your God will deliver them over to you, and will inflict defeat upon them until they are destroyed.
6. Christian, keep pressing forward to lay hold of all of that for which Jesus has laid hold of you!
7. Don't do as Israel did; they grew weary of war & instead of defeating the Canaanites, settled down **among** them.
8. Israel then learned the ways of the wicked Canaanites and ended up **becoming even worse.**
9. There can be no compromise with sin – no settling down alongside it.
10. Look at how Moses told Israel they were to deal with the Canaanites . . .

E. Vs. 24-26

24 And He will deliver their kings into your hand, and you will destroy their name from under heaven; no one shall be able to stand against you until you have destroyed them. 25 You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire; you shall not covet the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it is an abomination to the LORD your God. 26 Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house, lest you be doomed to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest it and utterly abhor it, for it is an accursed thing.

1. As I said earlier, the Canaanites had become so perverse God intended Israel to be the agents of His judgment on them.
2. Their cultures had become so hideously gross & corrupted, there was no reclaiming them; there was only one recourse – annihilation.
3. They were like a rabid dog destined to die, but could inflict a lot of harm on the way to its death.
4. So God called Israel to make a clean sweep and erase every trace of their wickedness.
5. This has to be the way we go about rooting out evil from our lives.
 - a. there can be no compromise with sin.
 - b. no pet affection we hold on to, no lingering lust we nurture.
6. I'll never forget the day I tossed my record collection in the dumpster.
 - a. I was living in San Jose & it was a period of intense spiritual growth in which God was making some huge changes in me.
 - b. things I'd battled with for years were finally being defeated.

- c. but there were still some strongholds I could make no headway against.
 - d. one evening the Spirit spoke to me about the music I was listening to.
 - 1) I had a huge collection of rock records that was always on at home.
 - 2) in the car I listened to secular music.
 - e. the previous Sunday my pastor had talked about the influences we allow into our lives and how they effect our minds and steer our hearts.
 - f. the Spirit laid a simple challenge before me – would I give up my records?
 - g. if so, those inner strongholds I wanted victory over would fall.
 - h. I stacked up my records, walked out the front door of my apartment, over to the dumpster, and tossed them in – several hundred dollars worth.
 - i. that was a turning point in my life.
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- 7. I have to tell you there have been times I regretted tossing those albums.
 - a. some of them were classics & would fetch some serious cash today,
 - b. and there have been times when there was a song I wanted to hear again.
 - c. but the regret passes quickly when I look back over the territory God has given because of that simple act of obedience to do what He was calling me to.
 - d. I would do exactly the same thing today, without a moment's hesitation.

III. CONCLUSION

A. *Jettison*

- 1. Is there something God is calling you to jettison from your life?
- 2. Is there some trinket, some item that stands as a symbol of your life in the world you've held on to because of the memories it holds?
- 3. Are those memories *of sin*, of things Jesus died to save you *from*?
- 4. If so, then do what Moses told Israel to do with the symbols of the Canaanites sin – get rid of them.
- 5. Don't compromise with sin.
- 6. Don't tolerate its presence in your life.

B. V. 26

- 1. Look at v. 26 as we close . . .

Nor shall you bring an abomination into your house . . .

- 2. Is the Spirit speaking to you?