

Second Baptist Church of Doylestown
Bible Study Notes
6-15-22

Deuteronomy 9

The Difficulty Of The Battles Ahead – Verses 1-3

¹ Hear, Israel: You are now about to cross the Jordan to go in and dispossess nations greater and stronger than you, with large cities that have walls up to the sky. ² The people are strong and tall—Anakites! You know about them and have heard it said: “Who can stand up against the Anakites?” ³ But be assured today that the LORD your God is the one who goes across ahead of you like a devouring fire. He will destroy them; he will subdue them before you. And you will drive them out and annihilate them quickly, as the LORD has promised you.

9:2-3 The Anakites were enormous people, some seven to nine feet tall. Goliath, probably a descendant of this race, was over nine feet tall (1 Samuel 17:4-7). Unfortunately, these great men used their stature as a means of intimidation rather than for noble causes. Their appearance alone frightened the Israelite scouts (Numbers 13:28), and their bad reputation may have been the deciding factor that kept the Israelites out of the land 40 years earlier (Numbers 13–14). Moses used all his persuasive power to convince his people that God could handle these bullies. He used the illustration of God as a devouring fire, for not even a giant could stand up to that.

9:3 God promised to go before the Israelites as a “devouring fire” to help them conquer their enemies. Fire was a symbol of holiness and purification, illustrating God’s desire to purify the land of its wicked people in order to make Israel a holy nation.

The Danger Of Pride When The LORD Gives Them Victory – Verses 4-6

⁴ After the LORD your God has driven them out before you, do not say to yourself, “The LORD has brought me here to take possession of this land because of my righteousness.” No, it is on account of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is going to drive them out before you. ⁵ It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations, the LORD your God will drive them out before you, to accomplish what he swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. ⁶ Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people.

9:5-6 If the Israelites were so stubborn, why did God make such wonderful promises to them? There are two good reasons: (1) A bargain is a bargain. God and Israel had made a treaty (Genesis 15; 17; Exodus 19–20). God promised to be faithful to them, and they promised to obey him. The agreement was irrevocable and eternal. Even though the Israelites rarely upheld their end of the bargain, God would always be faithful to his part. (2) God’s mercy is unconditional. No matter how many times the people turned from God, he was always there to restore them. It is comforting to know that despite our inconsistencies and sins, God loves us unconditionally. Eternal life is achieved not on the merit system but on the mercy system. God loves us no matter who we are or what we have done.

Remembering The Rebellion At Mount Horeb – Verses 7-10

⁷ Remember this and never forget how you aroused the anger of the LORD your God in the wilderness. From the day you left Egypt until you arrived here, you have been rebellious against the LORD. ⁸ At Horeb you aroused the LORD's wrath so that he was angry enough to destroy you. ⁹ When I went up on the mountain to receive the tablets of stone, the tablets of the covenant that the LORD had made with you, I stayed on the mountain forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water. ¹⁰ The LORD gave me two stone tablets inscribed by the finger of God. On them were all the commandments the LORD proclaimed to you on the mountain out of the fire, on the day of the assembly.

9:7 Remember and do not forget: God's purpose in reminding Israel of their rebellions against Him was not to discourage them or to make them feel defeated. The purpose was so that they would recognize their own weakness and trust in Him.

9:8 Also in Horeb you provoked the LORD to wrath: This recalls the events at Mount Sinai, where Israel worshipped a golden calf when Moses was gone a long time on Mount Sinai, receiving the law from the LORD (Exodus 19-32).

9:10 Written with the finger of God: The original tablets of the law Moses received on Mount Sinai were actually written by God Himself, and contained the Ten Commandments (all the words which the LORD had spoken to you on the mount from the midst of the fire in the day of the assembly, found in Exodus 20).

Remembering The Rebellion At Mount Horeb – Verses 11-17

¹¹ At the end of the forty days and forty nights, the LORD gave me the two stone tablets, the tablets of the covenant. ¹² Then the LORD told me, "Go down from here at once, because your people whom you brought out of Egypt have become corrupt. They have turned away quickly from what I commanded them and have made an idol for themselves." ¹³ And the LORD said to me, "I have seen this people, and they are a stiff-necked people indeed! ¹⁴ Let me alone, so that I may destroy them and blot out their name from under heaven. And I will make you into a nation stronger and more numerous than they." ¹⁵ So I turned and went down from the mountain while it was ablaze with fire. And the two tablets of the covenant were in my hands. ¹⁶ When I looked, I saw that you had sinned against the LORD your God; you had made for yourselves an idol cast in the shape of a calf. You had turned aside quickly from the way that the LORD had commanded you. ¹⁷ So I took the two tablets and threw them out of my hands, breaking them to pieces before your eyes.

9:11-14 I will make of you a nation mightier and greater than they: God told Moses of His desire to wipe out Israel in judgment, and to start over again with a new nation, descended from Moses himself.

9:15 The mountain burned with fire: The burning fires on Mount Sinai were physical representations of the glory of God and His holy presence. The mountain began to burn when Israel first came to Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:18). Those fires had burned for 40 straight days, and they burned at the very time Israel made a golden calf and began to worship it.

9:17 I took the two tablets and threw them out of my two hands and broke them before your eyes: Moses broke the tablets, "Not by an unbridled passion, but in zeal for God's honour, and by direction of God's Spirit, to signify to the people, that the covenant between God and them contained in those tables was broken and made void, and they were now quite cast out of God's favor, and could expect nothing from him but fiery indignation and severe justice."

Remembering The Rebellion At Mount Horeb – Verses 18-21

¹⁸ Then once again I fell prostrate before the LORD for forty days and forty nights; I ate no bread and drank no water, because of all the sin you had committed, doing what was evil in the LORD's sight and so arousing his anger. ¹⁹ I feared the anger and wrath of the LORD, for he was angry enough with you to destroy you. But again the LORD listened to me. ²⁰ And the LORD was angry enough with Aaron to destroy him, but at that time I prayed for Aaron too. ²¹ Also I took that sinful thing of yours, the calf you had made, and burned it in the fire. Then I crushed it and ground it to powder as fine as dust and threw the dust into a stream that flowed down the mountain.

9:18 From the record of this event in Exodus 32, it seems as though Moses acted immediately, grinding the golden calf into powder and forcing the people to drink water mixed with it. But evidently, Moses had first spent 40 days and nights interceding for the people.

Remembering The Rebellions At Taberah, Massah, Kibroth Hattaavah, And Kadesh Barnea – Verses 22-24

²² You also made the LORD angry at Taberah, at Massah and at Kibroth Hattaavah. ²³ And when the LORD sent you out from Kadesh Barnea, he said, "Go up and take possession of the land I have given you." But you rebelled against the command of the LORD your God. You did not trust him or obey him. ²⁴ You have been rebellious against the LORD ever since I have known you.

9:23 Moses was reminding the people of the nation's unbelief 40 years earlier, when they had been afraid to enter Canaan. The Israelites had not believed God would be able to help them in spite of all he had already done. They refused to follow because they looked only to their own limited resources instead of to God. Unbelief is the root of many sins and problems. When you feel lost, it may be because you're looking everywhere but to God for your help and guidance. (See Psalms 81:6-12; 95:8; 106:13-20; Hebrews 3.)

Moses' Prayer Of Intercession For Israel When They Rebelled At Mount Horeb – Verses 25-29

²⁵ I lay prostrate before the LORD those forty days and forty nights because the LORD had said he would destroy you. ²⁶ I prayed to the LORD and said, "Sovereign LORD, do not destroy your people, your own inheritance that you redeemed by your great power and brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand. ²⁷ Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Overlook the stubbornness of this people, their wickedness and their sin. ²⁸ Otherwise, the country from which you brought us will say, 'Because the LORD was not able to take them into the land he had promised them, and because he hated them, he brought them out to put them to death in the wilderness.' ²⁹ But they are your people, your inheritance that you brought out by your great power and your outstretched arm."

9:25-29 Therefore I prayed to the LORD: This great prayer of intercession from Moses is described more fully in Exodus 32. Moses asked for mercy upon Israel because of God's past faithfulness to them (whom You have redeemed). We can seek the mercy and power of God through prayer by praying with the same heart and by pleading the same reasons before the LORD. Prayer on solid reasons like these is far more effective than merely casting wishes up towards heaven.

Keeping these things in mind is also a way to refine our prayers. When we pray only for the things consistent with God's glory, we have our hearts set on the right things.