



Deuteronomy 9:1-6
“All of Grace”

NKJ Deuteronomy 9:1 "Hear, O Israel: You are to cross over the Jordan today, and go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourself, cities great and fortified up to heaven,

2 "a people great and tall, the descendants of the Anakim, whom you know, and of whom you heard it said, 'Who can stand before the descendants of Anak?'

3 "Therefore understand today that the LORD your God is He who goes over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and bring them down before you; so you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly, as the LORD has said to you.

4 "Do not think in your heart, after the LORD your God has cast them out before you, saying, 'Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land'; but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out from before you.

5 "It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

6 "Therefore understand that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people.

The formidable defenses – walled towns that would normally have required a long siege to reduce.

The Anakim are literally giants, Goliath for instance was one of these giant warriors. They were hugely feared. Each one was as valuable as a helicopter gunship is to a modern army.

The Lord does not say, you can do it! He says, I will do it. The victory will be His and that as He will later say to Zerubabel - *'Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,' Says the LORD of hosts.*

Now what is interesting is that the report the Lord gives to His people in verses 1 and 2 is almost exactly the same as the report of ten of the spies who had gone over into Canaan that is recorded in Deut. 1:28 ***“Where can we go up? Our brethren have discouraged our hearts, saying, “The people are greater and taller than we; the cities are great and fortified up to heaven; moreover we have seen the sons of the Anakim there.”***

But while the report of the spies was meant to dissuade and discourage the people, God is speaking these things in a *see what I am about to do for you* sense, designed to encourage them. Even though the towns are fortified, and the land filled with fearsome giants, they will all be as nothing before the God who had humbled Israel and parted the Red Sea.

The Lord’s encouragements are most often like that. When men want to encourage they most often belittle the opposition and tasks ahead of them, the Lord on the other hand doesn’t downplay the

difficulties, Jesus for instance told his disciples that “Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves.” (Matt. 10:14a) Not exactly a comparison that would encourage most people. But again and again, the Lord tells them not to fear their opposition, “do not fear” is one Christ’s most commonly occurring encouragements. And we are not to fear, not because the enemy is weak, but because Christ is with them. He will be with His people and he has overcome the world.

But why is the Lord going to do this for them? It is not because Israel is *righteous*. The Lord doesn’t want them to think that is the reason, not even in the conceit of their own hearts. Don’t go puffing yourself up, as their descendents the Pharisees who thought in their hearts that they were righteous did. but because the sin of the Amorites is now full and their time of judgment is at hand. God had said in Gen. 15:16 “16 *But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.*” They will lose this good land because of their unrighteousness.

God is acting here according to His covenant promises to their ancestors and in accordance with His own plan of redemption which will affect not only Israel but all the nations of the world. As he had said hundreds of years earlier to Isaac:

Gen. 26:3 "Dwell in this land, and I will be with you and bless you; for to you and your descendants I give all these lands, and I will perform the oath which I swore to Abraham your father.

4 "And I will make your descendants multiply as the stars of heaven; I will give to your descendants all these lands; and in your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed;

The phrase “Stiff Necked” is an agricultural analogy it comes from the fact that a stubborn animal resists being turned in the direction that the farmer wants it to go. Normally, for instance, a horses head would be pulled by the rider to one side and the animal would turn, but a stubborn horse digs stiffens his neck and resists all efforts to turn him even if it is to avoid disaster.

In all of this the situation is very much like what Paul points out to us in Romans. Their inheritance is not going to come because of their self-righteousness, but rather salvation is by grace alone through faith alone.

Your enemies are formidable, if you are in Christ you stand opposed to the big three, *the world, the flesh and the devil*. And the Lord does want you to know YOU CAN’T overcome them, but he can and He has.

It’s funny how when you ask most people if they are good, they’ll answer “yes,” even the worst of men. The majority of people in prison when asked if they are a good person answer “yes.” And so it only makes sense to people that when you ask people why God should let them into heaven they’ll answer “because I’m a good person.”

Now, if the righteousness of the people of God of old could not merit for them Canaan, which was but a type of heaven, how can the righteousness of the world now obtain heaven itself? I say again, if godly men, as these were, could not by their works purchase the type of heaven, then must the ungodly be justified, if ever they be justified from the curse and sentence of the law, while sinners in themselves. The argument is clear; for if good men, by what they do, cannot merit the less, bad men, by what they do, cannot merit more. – John Bunyan

Jesus of course frequently spoke of the foolishness and conceit of the Pharisees who thought they could merit heaven by their self-righteousness.

Luke 18:9 Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

11 "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men -- extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.

12 'I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'

13 "And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'

14 "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

But beware of reversing the application: Today the Pharisee and Tax Collector have traded places, and men generally have a very low view of the holiness of God, the importance of the law, and the seriousness of sin. As TW Manson put it:

'It is one of the marks of our time that the Pharisee and the publican have changed places; and it is the modern equivalent of the publican who may be heard thanking God that he is not like those canting humbugs, hypocrites and kill-joys, whose chief offense is that they take their religion seriously.

Many today think therefore that we will be justified, simply because they aren't hypocrites and they sin openly. Well, brothers and sisters, the message of the parable isn't don't worry about sin, don't take it seriously, you'll be alright as long as you don't act Pharasaiical.

Rather the application of this parable is that if we are going to be justified before God and be saved, it can only be by acknowledging that we are sinners and that we can only be through Faith alone in Christ alone. The grace of God to the unworthy is the key to this parable and to salvation generally.

God let the people know that they were not intrinsically better than the Canaanites and that the difference between them and even the worst idolators was His grace, but as He has told them again and again, they did not receive his grace in order to continue on for centuries in sin and idolatry, but rather acknowledging his mercy they should respond in love and obedience.

Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?

2 Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?

3 Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

4 Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.

So Christian I hope you will see in these verses 2 things:

- 1) **The severity of His Judgment:** In the judgment of the Canaanites we see that if a man persists in sin and idolatry he will not only not be saved, he will lose all that he formally had. I was reading yesterday a grim remembrance of Somerset Maugham written by his nephew Robin. At 91 the

man lived in great opulence on the Riviera. “He was staring towards the floor. His face was contorted with fear, and he was trembling violently.... Suddenly he began to shriek. “Go away!” he cried. “I’m not ready. I’m not dead yet...I’m not dead yet...I’m not dead yet I tell you...” His high pitched terror-struck voice seemed to echo from wall to wall.”

- 2) **The greatness of His Grace:** Brothers and sisters, what makes us different from the Canaanites around us is not that we are so good, but that God is so merciful. He has won the victory against our own enemies and converted us to himself, not when we were his friends but his enemies.

Romans 5:6 For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly.

7 For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die.

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.

10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Example: Staffordshire Bill