

June 26

Scriptures: Read Deuteronomy 1

Key Verse: “Your little ones and your children who you way will be victims, … they shall go in there; to them I will give it, and they shall possess it.” (Deuteronomy 1:39)

Overview

Moses was addressing these same “little ones: whom their parents feared would be victims. They were now adults and on the verge of possessing the very land their fathers had spurned. Moses taught them about the past that they might learn from the mistakes of their parents, gain knowledge of the covenant that had been broken, and learn more of their God. Although they were now physically ready to enter the land, they had yet to become spiritually ready. Moses’ speech was important for the people to take to heart, for if it failed they might once again be rejected from entering the Promised Land.

Moses began from the beginning of their journey from the mountain range of Horeb, of which Sinai is one peak (the area where the Law had been given and the covenant ratified), on their way to possess their God-given land. He mentions that it is an eleven-day journey from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea(1:2), and from there they were to enter the land that God had given them as a possession; all they had to do was take it as one would receive a gift, but because of rebellion against God, their short journey turned into a thirty-eight-year ordeal.

In the final few months before his death, Moses was concerned that his people learn lasting things of significance from him. He wanted to be sure they would respect those whom God had put in authority over them, like Joshua (1:38) and they judges. He confirmed their judicial office in recalling the wise advice of his father-in-law, and he acted upon it in appointing them to help him bear the burden of all the people (Ex.18:17-21, 24). This served as a reminder that it was really God who was their judge and sovereign, so they were to always promote righteous administration of justice to all. In recalling this same instance, Moses showed God’s faithfulness in keeping His promise to Abraham about multiplying his seed (1:10; Gen.12:2; 15:5). He thus encouraged the new generation to step out in faith and take possession of Canaan, for in this, too, God would keep His promise.

Moses reveled how God had guided and carried Israel as a loving parent to the land He was giving them. God would go before them, fight for them, and give them the victory. Yet, in faithless fear, they had requested spies to first enter the land (1:22). This led to discouragement, complaining, rebellion, God’s anger, and their punishment. How could they have been so ungrateful as to say, “Because the Lord hates us” Especially when the opposite was so evident? Would the merciful God deliver them from bondage in Egypt only to see their death at the hands of the Amorites (1:27)? Moses wanted this younger generation to see that this was impossible and he challenged their faith. In fact, their standing before Moses was in itself a testimony of God’s goodness. In their parents’ rebellion and breach of the covenant, they had complained to God that their little ones would be victims, but here they all were, listening to Moses and learning of God’s covenant faithfulness.

Moses taught them of God's grace and goodness, and it was illustrated by His renewing the covenant with them, even though they had been rebellious. Moses showed them that disobedience and rebellion against God can only bring disaster. This was evident in yet their second rebellion of going to fight without the Lord being with them (1:42-44; Num.14:42-45). Israel was to learn that God's presence was essential for victory, just as it is for victory in our lives today.

Their parents' disbelief brought God's judgment upon them in being excluded from entering their beautiful land and in dying in the wilderness. However, even in His judgment, God still showed mercy, for not only the godly men, Caleb and Joshua, would be allowed to enter, but also the whole second generation of Israel (1:39). This promise to grant a gracious new beginning was now being fulfilled, for the purpose of God cannot be topped.

Prayer

Lord God, You are the God of new beginnings. Grant that our children and our children's children, should You tarry in Your glorious return, will rise up to follow You more fully than we have.