

## Sermon Outline

### **“GOD THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH”: FINDING OUR CONTENTMENT AND HAPPINESS IN GOD**

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#### “DO NOT BE IN DREAD:” FIGHTING DISCONTENTMENT (DEUTERONOMY 1:19-33)

#### **I. Introduction**

#### **II. “Go Up, Take Possession” (Dt 1:19-25)**

- A. In Deuteronomy 1, the prophet Moses re-counts the history of Israel after they had left the vicinity of Mount Horeb.
- B. In verse 19, Moses documents the journey from Mount Horeb (cf. Num 10) to Kadesh-barnea.
- C. When they arrived at this region, Moses said to Israel: “See, the LORD your God has set the land before you. Go up, take possession, as the LORD, the God of your fathers, has told you. Do not fear or be dismayed” (v 21).
- D. Upon hearing this instruction, the Israelites ask Moses if they could send a reconnaissance team to explore the land, so as to discern how best to enter the territory (v 22).
- E. Moses selects twelve men for the mission (v 23).
- F. When the spies returned, they brought with them “some of the fruit of the land.” The report they gave was that “It is a good land that the LORD our God is giving us” (v 25) (see Num 13).

#### **III. “Because the Lord Hated Us...” (Dt 1:26, 27)**

- A. But not all the spies thought positively of taking the land. While they all agreed that the land was good, they noted that the inhabitants of the land were strong and their cities were large and well-fortified (cf. Num 13:27-29).
- B. That thought of engaging far stronger warriors filled the Israelites with fear. In the face of this threat, Israel lost sight of God and shrank away from the task at hand.
- C. “Yet you would not go up, but rebelled against the command of the LORD your God” (v 26).
- D. While a complaining spirit is bad enough, blasphemous complaining is far, far worse.

1. Israel began to accuse God of dark motives: “And you murmured in your tents and said, ‘*Because the LORD hated us* he has brought us out of the land of Egypt, to give us into the hand of the Amorites, to destroy us’” (v 27).
2. Israel reasoned that God freed them from slavery in order to kill them, to have them die at the hands of their enemies.
3. In their minds, God never really loved his people.

#### IV. Hard Thoughts about God

- A. When we hear Israel’s complaining, we are brought back to the Garden of Eden.
1. “But the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup> For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil’” (Gen 3:4, 5).
  2. Satan wanted Adam and Eve to question God’s goodness.
- B. When God calls us to do hard things, we may wonder about his love for us.
- C. The mere presence of negative thoughts about God does not mean that we have sinned. Sin begins when we *identify* with those thoughts and *agree* with them.
- D. Because Israel allowed doubts about God’s goodness to control their hearts, they were not able to be satisfied in God and trust him for their needs.
- E. This is true for us also.
- What prevents us from being able to live one-day-at-time, trusting in God’s goodness every step of the way?
  - What hinders us from living the holy life that God calls from us?
  - What prevents us from developing the virtues of holiness and compassion that we see in our Lord Jesus Christ?
- Too often, it is because we believe that following God’s way would cause us to lose out in life. (“Because the LORD hated us...”)
- F. A major lie that the Devil uses in getting Christians to sin or to leave the faith entirely is by suggesting to them that God does *not* love us.
1. When we believe Satan’s lies, we weaken our ability to enjoy God and live for him. Such was the case with the Israelites in the desert. It continues to be the case with Christians today.

#### V. “Do Not Be in Dread” (Dt 1:29-31)

- A. We do not have to let bad ideas grow in our minds.
1. The Scripture calls us to make our ideas subservient to Christ: “We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the

knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ” (2 Cor 10:4).

- B. How do we prevent unbelief from taking root in our hearts? *We do so by clinging to God’s Word; by recalling God’s glory and commitment to us.* Which is what we see Moses doing.
1. First: Moses speaks a command of comfort to Israel, “Do not be in dread or afraid of them.” When afraid, the very first thing we must do is choose not to be afraid.
  2. Second: Moses explains why Israel shouldn’t be afraid (vv 30, 31).
    - a. Moses calls Israel’s attention to the LORD God and his commitment to them: “The LORD your God who goes before you will himself fight for you...”
    - b. Moses amplifies what he said by re-calling what God has done for Israel thus far.
      - i. He reminds Israel that...
        - (A) God fought for them in Egypt before their very eyes (v 30).
        - (B) God fought for them in the wilderness (v 31).
      - iii. Moses likens God to a father who carries his son over a long journey.

## VI. “Abba! Father!”

- A. As New Testament believers, this truth—that God is like a father—carries even more weight for us than it did for the Old Testament believer. —Through Jesus, we enter more fully into the experience of being sons and daughters of God.
- B. While the Israelites had the presence of the Holy Spirit at a national level, and certain special individuals in Israel had the Holy Spirit (e.g. kings, prophets), Israel did not have the Holy Spirit in them at a widespread, individual level.
- C. In John 7:39, we read that “the Spirit had not been given [to believers in Jesus], because Jesus was not yet glorified [i.e. resurrected, ascended].” How God relates to his people turns on Jesus.
- D. This connects with Paul’s teaching in Galatians 4:

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law,<sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law [those like Israel under Moses], so that we might receive adoption as sons.<sup>6</sup> And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our

hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” <sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave, but a son, and if a son, then an heir through God.

- E. Since Jesus fulfils the Law for his people, he opens the door for the Holy Spirit to descend on each one of God’s people.
- F. If you have believed in Jesus the perfect Son of God, you have become a child of God. God the Father loves you with inexhaustible love and grants you the Spirit of his obedient Son, Jesus.

## **VII. The Courage of Beloved Sons**

**If God is our heavenly Father in Jesus Christ; and if we accept God’s own testimonies of how he has loved us through the ages (in Egypt, in the wilderness, in our daily lives, and ultimately in Jesus himself), we can truly trust in him for all our needs. We don’t have to be overcome by fear and rebel against God as Israel did. Instead, we can say to ourselves, “God really is sufficient for me. His steadfast love is what I ultimately need. I want to live in him and not in fear. I want to stay with him and not run from him. I want to keep his commandments, because all his commandments shine with his glory.”**

### **Questions for Further Reflection**

1. Is there anything about today’s sermon that blessed and encouraged you?
2. Looking at Israel’s blasphemous complaints about God, what is one of the major lies that the Devil uses in getting Christians to sin or to leave the faith entirely?
3. When do bad thoughts become sin?
4. What does Moses say to help Israel not to doubt God?
5. How is the experience of God’s fatherhood greater for the New Testament believer? Consider John 7:39 and Galatians 4:4-7 in your response.
6. How does the love of God (in this case, God’s love for us) weaken our love for sin?
7. “We delight in God, because we have become passionately convinced that God loves us far more than the world will ever love us, far more than our company or organization can ever love us, far more than we can ever love ourselves.” Discuss.