

## THOU ART A STIFFNECKED PEOPLE >>>

### DEUTERONOMY 8:1 – 9:6

~ Religious and social regulations, ordinances and statutes for the nation Israel are the topics we will cover in this leg of our Spiritual Safari expedition through the entire Word of God. We are still in a section of Scripture that began in chapter one, where Moses began restating the Mosaic System of Levitical Law for the second generation of the children of Israel as they prepare to enter the Promised Land. LOVE and OBEDIENCE are the themes of this final book in the Pentateuch. The only promise I can make to you is that our consideration of Deuteronomy will become increasingly difficult; to the point of becoming almost unbearable. Most people erroneously believe this section of the Bible is LAW and OBEDIENCE - but it most assuredly is LOVE and OBEDIENCE. You can write those two words over this entire book of the Bible.

Remember, chapter seven brought a sobering reality when God said He did not choose Israel because they were more in number than the others. They were, in fact, fewer than any other people. They were certainly much weaker and vulnerable wandering around the desert. Numerically, they were nothing compared to the Chinese or Indian's – or any other nations of the world. No, friends, God chose the nation Israel because He loved them when they cried out to Him for deliverance. God made an oath to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob - and God intends to keep that promise. God made it more than clear that when He heard their distressing cry from the slave ovens in Egypt, He responded for one reason and one reason only: He loved them. By leading them out He demonstrated the sincerity of His grace, mercy and pity towards them.

Well, the children of Israel should have responded to the love of God with OBEDIENCE. God said through Moses in chapter seven verse nine, “know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations....” That was the entire theme of our previous report. God will bless any people who respond to His love with OBEDIENCE unto Him. God simply cannot bless a disobedient man,

woman – or nation. God asks us to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. That's where we begin with God. If you decide you're going to believe in Christ, then God has many things to say to you. Only when we respond to the love of God in obedience can true and genuine blessings ensue.

So, here we see the new generation of the children of Israel gather on the east banks of the Jordan River and are preparing to cross over and into the land God has given them. They have high anticipations and high hopes. Moses has been, and here he is continuing to, prepare them to enter the land and possess it. Of course, in every single section of Scripture we come to, I say it is a remarkable section, and this is no exception. Most people might think Moses is trying to tear them down, but Moses is really building them up. Remember, this is a stiff-necked people, and Moses is emphasizing to them the importance of OBEDIENCE to God....

## VIII

***1 All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers.***

***2 And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.***

~ This is a remarkable and uncanny revelation from God regarding His dealings with us today. God wants us to remember our past. That is so contrary to most people's thinking that they will have a hard time remaining oriented now. We must be confident that God, Who hath begun a good work in us, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. We are told to remember that God has led us and blessed us this far. I know most – if not all – of you reading this report can look back and see how God has brought you up to this moment. What do you say to that? Well, if God has brought you this far, He will continue to hold you and lead you. This is the way God encourages the children of Israel, and this is the way God encourages us today, too. When God tells them to simply remember what

He has done for them previously, He means remember how He revealed His blessed assurance of salvation to them when he led them out of the sin of Egypt and to this place at Kadesh.

See, friends, God's testing of Israel in the wilderness was to humble them – and to reprove them – and to expose the sin which was in their hearts. This will account for all the reasons God puts you and me through the fire, too. Sometimes, God places us in the furnace, and He cranks up the thermostat to two thousand degrees – or – roughly the melting point of pure gold. Don't think for a moment God is not going to test you. That testing either humbles us or it reveals us as fakes. I'll be honest – most of you need some real humbling today, my dear safari readers. Little pygmy man is proud and cocky; you know – self-confident – and let's just keep this real – all workers of iniquity are an abomination to God.

I see many people around this forum on which I teach boasting and bragging about the things they do – and the things they eat – and it's shameful, honestly. Some of you little Jesus people are so sickeningly proud of your walk on this earth it makes me want to throw up those pictures of food you post constantly. As true believers, this should not be the case; and if you wonder why you're experiencing overwhelming trials and difficulties in your life – well, it's no big mystery – you're just too pridefully ignorant to accept it. If the trials and troubles don't humble you, then I promise you one thing, God intends to kill you. I know most of you do not care for that talk – well, God says, TOO BAD – for YOU!

Testing gold brings out nothing but the pureness of the precious metal. Our churches are literally packed with affluent people who repeatedly fail spiritual test after spiritual test. I can't tell if they're genuine or not, most of the time - but God can. The man who has been spiritually tested by God and has come out of the fire is the man you do well to look up to for your Bible teaching, friends. That's the only way you're ever going to know what is genuine. God says, "I test you for this reason." Say, this starts to hurt, doesn't it? ~

***3 And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.***

~ Here, we have the third quotation the Lord Jesus used when He was tempted by the devil in the wilderness as recorded in the Gospel accounts. Honestly, I could never have even dreamed the Lord would flip to this section of Scripture to refute Satan's claims. This is another holy spiritual lesson for us today. God has been good to us – every one of us – and He has blessed us in many, MANY ways. God may have blessed us with material things; but our treasures are in Heaven - our true wealth is found only in the spiritual realm. Only the Word of God can bestow spiritual wealth....

***4 Thy raiment waxed not old upon thee, neither did thy foot swell, these forty years.***

~ This is one strange, miraculous and marvelous statement. Imagine having a suit of clothes that didn't wear out in forty years. I know you ladies wouldn't like this to happen. Our fashion styling would be horribly outdated after just a few years. Well, the styles didn't change much out in the wilderness, so it didn't really make a whole lot of difference to them. Decades ago, a medical missionary in the Philippines pointed out that "... their feet not swelling" was a reference to a disease that came about from sameness of diet. When man eats the same thing over and over again, certain vitamins become deficient, and their nourishment becomes incomplete. There is a huge spiritual lesson in that for us. These people ate manna for forty years, friends – every day – only manna. God told them they were eating a miracle food. Once again, we have an illustration of the Word of God. The Bible will meet YOUR individual needs – whatever that need may be. We're dining on manna right now – if you've bothered to read this far. I love this chapter, but we have to keep moving now....

***5 Thou shalt also consider in thine heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the LORD thy God chasteneth thee.***

***6 Therefore thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to fear him.***

***7 For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills;***

***8 A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey;***

~ God promises temporal blessings to the children of Israel IF they obeyed Him according to His commands. However, friends, that is not the promise of God to the church today. We have a severely lop-sided notion that, if you are a faithful Christian, God will prosper you materially and temporally. Don't think for a moment God promises you prosperity with the things of this world - because you are way off base if you do. It is simply not true. I grant you that many Christians are successful in business; and I hear people saying they took God into their partnership and God blessed them as a result. Well, maybe; God does that sometimes. But that's not a promise. Not by any stretch of an imaginative theology.

We are promised all spiritual blessings in the Heavens. There is not a single verse in the New Testament where God promises to bless us temporally in this age of grace. The Lord Jesus DID tell us that in this world we WILL have trouble – that's a promise! The material blessing God bestows on some people IN NO WAY obligates God to bless YOU. Some of the sweetest, choicest saints I have ever known lived in abject poverty. They were sure blessed spiritually, though - no doubt about that. Interestingly, they always seem to be the happiest and most content people. The poorest people do more for God in five minutes than a rich believer does in their entire life. You can just write that down.

We do well not to confuse the temporal blessings promised to the children of Israel for their obedience with the spiritual blessings the church is promised today. They are two different things. This just happens to be one MAJOR distinction between Israel in the Old Testament and the church in the New Testament. Keeping that straight will prevent you from

experiencing tremendous confusion and heartache. Misunderstanding this truth can wreck your faith and send some dear sweet saint straight into a backslidden condition. I hope you can recognize the truth of what this all means....

***9 A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.***

***10 When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.***

***11 Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day:***

***12 Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein;***

***13 And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied;***

***14 Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;***

***15 Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;***

***16 Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end;***

~ These warnings and reminders of what God had done for the nation Israel will continue into the next chapter. God has made a promise to bring them through the millennium and into His eternal future in THIS world.

That is NOT a promise for the church today, friends. If you appropriate this for yourself, then you are making a huge mistake that will not work out. Jesus said He has gone to prepare a place for us, and He said He will come back and take us unto Himself. If you're a child of God, then THAT is your hope today. Our hope is to be taken out of this world, but the hope of the nation Israel is IN this world. That distinction just happens to be all-important to understanding the Word of God correctly. The attempt to blend the church and the nation Israel together causes utter confusion – and I see it happen ALL the time by those who are simply ignorant of the Word of God. The modern theologian seems to enjoy blending mixed drinks out of this principle; and they sure are mixed-up as a result. Once you get it confused like that, you can't tell what's in there. As a result, we have the total confusion we see today....

***17 And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.***

***18 But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.***

***19 And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.***

***20 As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.***

~ When you see the nation Israel prospering in safety, then you will know they are obeying God, friends. If they are not prospering IN SAFETY then they are not obeying God. Pick up your newspaper and check out some current events regarding Israel and you can make your own decision which is which. God is giving Israel a warning, and He is telling them that if they will be obedient, then He will bless them. If they are disobedient, God will treat them like any other disobedient nation. In fact, God treated Israel

much more harshly, because Israel had a responsibility that the other nations didn't have. The children of Israel were given the light; and that light creates responsibility before the Lord your God....

IX

***1 Hear, O Israel: Thou art to pass over Jordan this day, to go in to possess nations greater and mightier than thyself, cities great and fenced up to heaven,***

***2 A people great and tall, the children of the Anakims, whom thou knowest, and of whom thou hast heard say, Who can stand before the children of Anak!***

***3 Understand therefore this day, that the LORD thy God is he which goeth over before thee; as a consuming fire he shall destroy them, and he shall bring them down before thy face: so shalt thou drive them out, and destroy them quickly, as the LORD hath said unto thee.***

***4 Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee.***

***5 Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.***

***6 Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people.***

~ God knows Israel intimately; and God knows their history is not a good one. Even so, He is now prepared to lead them into the Promised Land at the time in which we are studying. In this section of Scripture, we see the report of God is ten times worse than the spies brought back. God knew



what was in the land, and He knew who was in there, too. Even so, God told the first generation to go in and possess it; but they would not. They refused to go in for one reason and one reason only: they just didn't believe God. Of course, the current occupants of the land were greater in strength and number than the children of Israel; not to mention they were giants. The difference was: God was with Israel; and God was against these other inhabitants....

One with God is a majority. As Christians, we belong to a minority in the world, you may be absolutely sure; but what the world doesn't know is that God transforms us into the majority. I want to be with Him, friends; how about you? God says He is going to destroy the other nations, and God assumes full responsibility for that reality. God just so happens to be the landlord, and God decides who the tenants will be. God is the Creator, friends; He has the right to do whatever He wants to do. Maybe you want to start a protest against Him? I would highly recommend you think twice about that. All you little pip-squeak atheists really need to allow your silence to be your wisdom today. If God says He is going to do it this way, then this will be the way it's done. There is nothing in the world you can possibly say or do to stop, alter or thwart His plans one iota. God said He is driving them out because they were wicked – not because the people He was putting in were righteous - because they were not.

I hope I have made it abundantly clear that God will save you – but not because you are good. None are good but God. You happen to be a sinner. God will save you, though, because Christ died for us, and God agreed to save those who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. And, by the way – He still does it all for Christ's sake – and for Christ's sake only. It has NOTHING to do with us. If you are reading this and you somehow mistakenly think God is looking for something in you that will merit salvation, then you can just forget about God, my beloved. You're heading for a huge disappointment; I most assuredly promise you that. God already knows your heart; and He finds NOTHING good in it. No righteousness at all. The heart is desperately wicked and deceitful above all things. God finds everything in Christ and nowhere else. I hope that is a great comfort to your heart as we examine this terrible wilderness called Deuteronomy in our Spiritual Safari; because

what we are encountering is the seed for the remarkable grace of God in some lost soul. If you recognize that you are a stiff-necked person and you lift your cry to Him and turn to Christ for salvation – He will hear you – but only for the sake of His Son, Jesus Christ ~

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