

Consider a conundrum. Deuteronomy emphasizes the **past**. It also features Israel’s **future**. Yet “**today**” is used over fifty times! Followers of Jesus must be careful stewards of time! This is more than superficially “living in the moment”. Thoughtful remembering + faith-filled, forward thinking = obedient living today.

Proposition

Last Sunday we started “**Walking in the Way of God**”. The title is from references of the phrase “*walking in obedience*” (10:12). “*Deuteronomy is the mountain at the center of the Old Testament. Everything in the Pentateuch leads up to it, with its climactic renewal of God’s covenant relationship with his people. And everything in the rest of the OT flows out from it.*” (*Why Study the Book of Deuteronomy?* by Matthew Patton)

Deuteronomy is recited and recorded on the edge of the “Land” or “Canaan”. The Hebrew title, “*these are the words*” (1:1) highlights the three sermons of Moses which comprise the book. This **map** highlights Moab, where Israel camped (Deuteronomy 1:5). Here Israel was reminded of their rebellion. This **map** points to Kadesh Barnea, where Israel did not obey God’s command to enter Canaan (see Numbers 14).

Today’s sermon is titled, “**Finally Ready**”. Faith takes hold of God’s promises. Fear forfeits His blessings! In **Deuteronomy 2:1-37**. First, we will observe the structure; then we will see five principles for our journey.

Preamble

Reading Deuteronomy 2 is overwhelming in terms of all the names and places! But are part of the structure of the chapter which is in four sections. The first three sections (vv.2-23) record three “stand down” commands from God. In the fourth section (vv.24-37) God commanded Israel to “stand to” for battle.

Esau – vv. 2-8	Moab – vv. 9-15	Ammon – vv. 16-23
The Lord said to me	The Lord said to me	The Lord spoke to me
God’s instructions	God’s instructions	God’s instructions
Be very careful not to engage in battle	Do not harass Moab or engage them	Do not harass them or engage them
I will not give you...of their land	I will not give you any of its land	I will not give the land to you
I have given Mount Seir to Esau	I have given Ar to the descendants of Lot	I have given it to descendants of Lot

This **map** highlights the non-battles! Israel was not called to conquer these distant relations (Edom = sons of Esau). But more to the point, these were not the lands promised! This **map** shows Israel, **finally ready**, moving closer to Canaan! They were opposed by Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon (v.30). The battle at Jahaz gave Israel their first taste of victory (v.31)! “*This dominion of God over all nations has two sides to it...God’s sovereignty is reflected in God’s care for peoples beyond Israel*” and “*that other nations also will be punished for their transgressions.*” (*BCBC Deuteronomy* Gerald Gerbrandt, Herald Press, 2015, 75).

[1] God is speaking – vv. 1-2,9,17

Do we listen to God? Moses learned to hear God’s voice (*seclusion to submission*, Exodus 3; *isolation to intimacy*, Exodus 33). Did Israel hear or heed God? Initially, yes. But Moses said to Israel, “*to this day the Lord has not given you a heart to know, nor eyes to see, nor ears to hear.*” (Deut 29:4) Yet in His faithfulness, God did not give up on His people! “*The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our sons forever, so that we may follow all the words of this Law.*” (Deut 29:29)

[2] God is selective – vv. 5,9,19,37

God was selective about Israel's battles (see also Exodus 13:17-18). Walking in God's victory does not mean we engage in every battle. In our world today, many heavy needs cause Christians to have a "deer-in-the-headlights" response. We must see God's selectivity. After all, God rejected seven brothers before He said "yes" to David as the new king! Moses himself was forbidden from entering the Land (1:37). Are you far busier than God has instructed you to be? God calls us to a focused faithfulness, not just flailing.

[3] God is silent - vv. 1,7

Human wisdom tends to regard any period of waiting period as necessary, at best. At worst, we may view waiting as a waste of time. But God is still present in the waiting, even if it seems He is silent. God was very engaged in the thirty-eight years noted in verse 14. God directed (v.1) and watched over Israel (v.7). God remains gracious and good even though we feel that we are in a time where He remains silent.

[4] God is specific – vv. 13,18,24

God often leads us first generally and slowly gives greater clarity about His plans. He did not lead Israel from Moab to Canaan in one step. Think of the way Jesus led His disciples. First, "**come and see**" (John 1:38-39). Next, "**come and follow**" (Mark 1:16-20). Then, "**come be with Me**" (Matthew 9:37-38). Finally, "**remain in Me**" (John 15:7-8). Jesus did not call them to the top of the staircase immediately. He helped them progress step by step in their understanding of God's Kingdom and their place of service within it.

[5] God is secure – v. 31

Humans seek victory by power, wealth, or knowledge. Believers overcome by faith in God. All of Deuteronomy is anticipatory but based on a comprehensive review of the certainty and security of God's promises and purposes! When God promises us today, He has already accomplished it in the future!

- **Abraham** had no son, yet God promised "*To your offspring I will give this land.*" (Genesis 12:7)
- **Moses** was in wilderness; God said, "My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest." (Ex 33:14)
- **Disciples** in a storm; Jesus said "*'You of little faith, why are you so afraid?' Then he got up and rebuked the winds and the waves, and it was completely calm.*" (Matthew 8:26; see also Matthew 17:21).

Conclusion – Digging Deeper

Are you finally ready to enter the victory God has secured for you. Think of an **anchor**. To "drop anchor" is to secure a vessel in place. An anchor "a weigh" is no longer secured in the seabed. A "foul anchor" is caught on another cable or its own cable. To "swallow the anchor" means to retire from life at sea.

Hebrews 6:19-20 tells us. "*This hope we hold as the utterly reliable anchor for our souls, fixed in the very certainty of God himself in Heaven, where Jesus has already entered on our behalf, having become, as we have seen, 'High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek'.*" (Phillips) This includes His sinless life, sacrificial death, burial, victorious resurrection, and current **advocacy in heaven** on behalf of believers.

Just as certainly as God went before Israel in power and promise, Jesus is pleading and praying for His children before the Father, right now, in real time! When an anchor works best, it is unseen. Deployed correctly, an anchor is hidden below the water's surface, lodged securely in the seabed. This is the case for the Christian. We cannot see Jesus at the Father's right hand but we can be secure that He is for us!