

Warning A Stiff-Necked People

I have always had a deep respect for my elders, those older and wiser than me, who have lived longer, learned more and possess a wealth of knowledge, earned through the years of life they have experienced that I have not. In social settings I naturally gravitate toward those who are older than me. Sadly, so many flippantly dismiss the older generation as “irrelevant.” But for me, it’s just the opposite. The stories they have to tell are fascinating to me, and the accumulated wisdom that comes with their advanced years is, to me, priceless and precious.

So it really is no surprise that one of my favorite books of the Bible is Deuteronomy. This is the last book of Scripture that was penned by Moses, containing the last, most important and precious wisdom he needed to impart to his people before he died and they moved forward, without him, into the Promised Land. Moses was aware that his days were numbered. And so it stands to reason that he placed the most important wisdom of all his years into this one volume, and it remains just as important and precious for us today, if only we would read it. Sadly, today, it seems to be one of the least studied books of the Bible in our modern American churches.

While Moses was speaking and writing to the wandering Israelites, right before his impending death, and right before they were to go across the river and take possession of the land the Lord had promised them, he took the time to remind them of God’s Holy Law, the Ten Commandments. He reminded the people how the LORD Himself had done incredible miracles for their parents and grandparents, rescuing them from a life of bondage in a foreign land, leading them out in freedom – to a NEW country, all their own.

Moses then warned the people in Chapter 8 about becoming proud and complacent when things were going well and they were prospering in the land the Lord was going to bless them with.

First, he reminded the people that all the wonderful things they would enjoy were GIFTS, directly from God Himself, and he warned them, “You may say to yourself, ‘My power and my own ability have gained this wealth for me.’ But remember that the LORD your God gives you the power to gain wealth, in order

to confirm His covenant He swore to your fathers, as it is today. If you ever forget the LORD your God and go after other gods to worship and bow down to them, I testify against you today that you will perish.”

In chapter 9, Moses reminds the people that although they will become exceedingly wealthy in the Promised Land, it would only be by God’s mercy and grace; certainly not because they were entitled to it, or deserved it in any way. In Chapter 9, verse 6, we read, “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!” Stiff-necked and unappreciative indeed, as most people are, sometimes especially those most blessed by God.

But today, I would like to focus in on the words of Deuteronomy 28, which speak of blessing and cursing... blessing when a nation follows the Lord and His commands, and horrific cursing when a nation turns it’s back on God. Moses KNEW this was going to happen – after all, it had happened many times before, and being wise in his old age, he knew human nature as well. He knew that eventually, the people would forget their history and their heritage, and the many times God rescued them from certain doom.

As I read the words of this one chapter, I understand Moses was speaking to Israel... but these truths are timeless, and the blessings and cursings are the same for EVERY nation, tribe and tongue. And as I read the message contained here, I find it hauntingly prophetic, as I watch our nation of America suffer under the sure judgment of God Almighty... for the very same reasons. Indeed, we have been greatly blessed by God in this country, but we have forgotten Him, turned our backs on Him, spit in His face and denied Him, and now, we are certainly experiencing His judgment and wrath. Of that there can be no doubt.

Let me just share some particular pointed verses from this chapter, and I think you will see what I mean. I won’t recite the entire chapter; you can read that for yourself, but let me just highlight some of the most poignant portions that I believe will strike a chord with you.... So listen now, and see if you recognize our own nation in these ancient words of warning from Moses:

“If you fully obey the Lord your God and carefully follow all

His commands I give you today, the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations on earth. All these blessings will come on you and accompany you if you obey the Lord your God:

You will be blessed in the city and blessed in the country. The fruit of your womb will be blessed, and the crops of your land and the young of your livestock...You will be blessed when you come in and blessed when you go out.

"The Lord will grant that the enemies who rise up against you will be defeated before you. They will come at you from one direction but flee from you in seven. The Lord will send a blessing on your barns and on everything you put your hand to. The Lord your God will bless you in the land He is giving you.

"The Lord will establish you as His holy people, as He promised you on oath, if you keep the commands of the Lord your God and walk in obedience to Him. Then all the peoples on earth will see that you are called by the name of the Lord, and they will fear you. The Lord will grant you abundant prosperity... The Lord will open the heavens, the storehouse of His bounty, to send rain on your land in season and to bless all the work of your hands. You will lend to many nations but will borrow from none. The Lord will make you the head, not the tail. If you pay attention to the commands of the Lord your God that I give you this day and carefully follow them, you will always be at the top, never at the bottom. Do not turn aside from any of the commands I give you today, to the right or to the left, following other gods and serving them."

Does this not sound like the America many of us grew up in?

The America of our parents and grandparents, that "Greatest Generation" who fought evil enemies around the world and turned back the tide of socialism, communism, and fascism? We celebrated and enjoyed the blessings of our freedoms, American ingenuity, productivity and prosperity. And we were united, together, One Nation, UNDER GOD, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. Most every American knew and revered the Lord God. We worshiped Him. He was welcome and WANTED in our homes. We sought His wisdom, His righteousness and His blessings. We kept the Sabbath day holy; it was not a day of football, cursing and drinking; it was not a day of casual carousing and indulgence of carnal appetites. It was a day of reverence, and rest, and remembrance of the blessings bestowed upon us by God, our Heavenly Father. Young women sought a

"Good Christian Man," and young men yearned to find a "Good Christian Wife." "CHRISTIAN" was the key. It was something to be desired and sought after. But those days are gone.

Today, even professing Christians are ashamed of their Lord.

SOME "put in their time" – an hour a week, but then, having done their compulsory "duty," return again to their carnal lifestyles, as a dog returns to it's vomit. Today, Christians fear to speak the Lord's name in front of friends, family or co-workers for fear of being ridiculed. And while almost every household has multiple copies of God's Holy Word, few are ever opened. We no longer even know what it says, though we have our favorite politically-correct verses, like "Judge Not."

And those charged with shepherding the flock are so cowardly, they refuse to preach the whole counsel of God, for fear of offending some in the congregation and thus they preach flattering platitudes; non-offensive "pabulum," practicing a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof; and theyby denying the sheep any form of counsel, guidance or instruction in righteousness. Instead of "rightly dividing the Word of Truth," they tiptoe around the tough subjects, avoiding at all costs any form of confrontation.

And what is the outcome? Let's go back to Deuteronomy 28, starting in Verse 15: "However, if you do not obey the Lord your God and do not carefully follow all His commands and decrees I am giving you today, all these curses will come on you and overtake you: You will be cursed in the city and cursed in the country...The fruit of your womb will be cursed, and the crops of your land...You will be cursed when you come in and cursed when you go out.

"The Lord will send on you curses, confusion and rebuke in everything you put your hand to, until you are destroyed and come to sudden ruin because of the evil you have done in forsaking Him. The Lord will plague you with diseases...The Lord will strike you with wasting disease...with scorching heat and drought...The sky over your head will be bronze, the ground beneath you iron. The Lord will turn the rain of your country into dust and powder; it will come down from the skies until you are destroyed.

"The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You will come at them from one direction but flee from them in

seven, and you will become a thing of horror to all the kingdoms on earth...The Lord will afflict you with madness, blindness and confusion of mind. At midday you will grope about like a blind person in the dark. You will be unsuccessful in everything you do; day after day you will be oppressed and robbed, with no one to rescue you."

Verse 33: "A people that you do not know will eat what your land and labor produce, and you will have nothing but cruel oppression all your days. The sights you see will drive you mad... The Lord will drive you and the king you set over you to a nation unknown to you or your ancestors..."

And it gets REALLY INTERESTING in Verse 43: "The foreigners who reside among you will rise above you higher and higher, but you will sink lower and lower. They will lend to you, but you will not lend to them. They will be the head, but you will be the tail." Does THIS sound familiar, America?"

Moses goes on: "All these curses will come on you. They will pursue you and overtake you until you are destroyed, because you did not obey the Lord your God and observe the commands and decrees He gave you. They will be a sign and a wonder to you and your descendants forever. Because you did not serve the Lord your God joyfully and gladly in the time of prosperity, therefore in hunger and thirst, in nakedness and dire poverty, you will serve the enemies the Lord sends against you. He will put an iron yoke on your neck until He has destroyed you.

"The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends of the earth, like an eagle swooping down, a nation whose language you will not understand, a fierce-looking nation without respect for the old or pity for the young...They will lay siege to all the cities throughout your land until the high fortified walls in which you trust fall down. They will besiege all the cities throughout the land the Lord your God is giving you.

"If you do not carefully follow all the words of this law, which are written in this book, and do not revere this glorious and awesome name – the Lord your God – the Lord will send fearful plagues on you and your descendants, harsh and prolonged disasters, and severe and lingering illnesses...Just as it pleased the Lord to make you prosper and increase in number, so it will please Him to ruin and destroy you...the Lord

will give you an anxious mind, eyes weary with longing, and a despairing heart. You will live in constant suspense, filled with dread both night and day, never sure of your life.”

Friends, we live in a time like no other in the history of mankind. The country most of us grew up in is gone forever.

The foreigners among us are growing greater and greater, and we are sinking lower and lower. We are suffering curses, confusion and rebuke in all we put our hands to. We're defeated by our enemies, and afflicted with madness and confusion of mind. Look around. It is OBVIOUS to all who have eyes to see. The nations rising against us have no respect for the old or pity for the young. Anxiety and depression and madness reign.

And WHO will have the courage to speak up and prophecy the ancient wisdom of God's Holy Word? Who will have the courage to rise up and remind us what God requires to return to us the incredible blessings He once graced us with? If you think Donald Trump is going to make America great again, you're sadly mistaken. It's not about the money. Not about the economy, fair trade laws or trusting in any fortified wall for our security. Our only hope, and our only security lies in the hands of God Almighty, our Creator, our Lord. If only we would turn to Him, in solemn, sorrowful repentance. But we are a stiff-necked people, and today, sadly, we are receiving just what we deserve, just as Scripture describes. Get in the Word, my friends! Study! And BE NOT AFRAID to sound the trumpet and warn those around you... while there's still time.

Audio CDs and transcripts of this message are available when you call me at Wisconsin Christian News, (715) 486-8066. Or email Rob@WisconsinChristianNews.com and ask for message number 197.

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