

## Deuteronomy 7:1-11; 8:1-20 – Dependant Love

Most corporations have a mission statement that tells us who they are.

For example, Walt Disney's mission is "To make people happy."

Nike's mission is "Authentic athletic performance"

But my favourite at the moment is Wal-Mart's mission (which is America's version of K-Mart):

"To give ordinary folk the chance to buy the same thing as rich people."

Mission statements tell people who you are and what you're on about. What's important. What your hopes are. What you value. What you might notice about these missions is that they all have one thing in common. Their mission is to "DO" something. To make something. To provide something. To give something. it's all about "doing".

When people look at Christians, or the Christian church, I wonder if they know what our mission is? Or perhaps a more important question, I wonder if WE know what our mission is as God's people? Our church uses the statement "To know Christ, to grow in Christ, to make Christ known" to tell people about who we are. Sort of like a mission statement. But there's a mission far deeper and more universal than that for God's people.

Deuteronomy tells us what our mission is as God's people. It's the same today as it was thousands of years ago. Our mission is not to DO. Our mission is to BE. And what are we to BE?

We are to BE HOLY. Deuteronomy tells us that being Holy is our central mission as God's people.

Deuteronomy 7 are instructions from God for how his people, Israel, are to BE HOLY. From 7:1 – *"When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations... then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. 3 Do not intermarry with them. ...5 Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles<sup>1</sup> and burn their idols in the fire. 6 For you are a people holy to the LORD your God.*

Israel are to have nothing to do with these nations or their gods. They are to completely remove these nations and their gods and places of worship from the land they are about to possess. Israel's mission is to BE a holy people. That means **removing all unholiness**. Not some of it. All of it.

**III** – Imagine your house is on fire and the fire brigade comes and you say to them: "Just put out the fire on one side of the house. Don't worry about the rest!" That's ridiculous. Your aim, your mission, should be to put out the WHOLE fire! Not to put out HALF the fire!

Israel are **not** going into the land to say "We'll get rid of as much of these people and their false gods as possible! We'll remove at ***least*** 90%! We'll put out ***most*** of the fire!" No! Their mission is to completely remove ***everything*** that is unholy.

I wonder if sometimes you might find yourself saying something like: *"I'll try not to sin **very much** today"*. Our aim as God's people, just like the Israelites, is to BE HOLY. Our **aim** is NOT TO SIN AT ALL!

Now, we know, as sinful people, that we still sin. We can't help that. We aren't perfect. But isn't our ***aim*** still not to sin at all? For example, I can hardly ever hit the bullseye on a dart board. But I still AIM for it! That is the mission!

You don't go on the road in a car and say "my aim is not to hit too many other cars today!" Your aim is not to hit ***any***! Yes, we make mistakes. Yes, we may hit other cars. We may miss the bullseye. Yes, we do sin. Every day. But we still AIM for holiness, we still aim for the bullseye, because that is what God calls for from us.

And that means obedience. Because we sin, we never reach complete obedience. But we still aim for it. And we do that because, like the Israelites, God has SET US APART to be his holy people. Verse 7 tells us why God chose the Israelites as his holy nation:

*“ 7 The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. 8 But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers ”*

God LOVED Israel. And he made a COVENANT, an agreement, a promise, to **save** them. And God is faithful. He brought them out of slavery in Egypt. He brought them through 40 years in the wilderness. And as he brings them into the Promised Land, they are being reminded that they are to be faithful to him.

And today, 1 Peter 2:9 says of US:

*“9But **you** are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God...”*

Today, **we** are part of the new covenant. We are part of God’s chosen people. A people belonging to God. Not by being an Israelite. Hebrews 10:10 says:

*“we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.”*

Through Jesus, we have been able to become part of the holy nation of God. God’s promise was that he would bring salvation to all nations through his people of Israel. And he has done that for us through Jesus. Now WE are part of His Holy nation. And since we have been made holy, through the blood of Jesus, God calls us to **BE** what we **ARE**. God calls us to **BE HOLY**. And as holy people, how are we to live? As Deut 8:6 says: *“By obeying the commands of God, walking in his ways and revering him.”*

Holiness demands obedience. Obedience to God is now our WAY OF LIFE. And that obedience does not come easily. It comes through testing. It comes through us making mistakes. It comes through discipline. It comes through our sinfulness and repentance. It comes through God shaping us.

**III** – The Cold Chisel. I made this at school a long time ago. It’s a Cold Chisel. It’s made of tempered steel. It’s strong enough to cut through metal. Why is it so strong? Because of the way it was made. It went through a fire. It went through an extremely **hot** fire that forged it’s strength. It’s strength is in **how** it was made. Not in how shiny it looks on the outside!

A holy way of life, a strong and obedient faith, is not an easy road. It’s not always shiny and good looking. It can be rough. Because the strength to obey comes through the fire of testing. God says to Israel, as we come now to chapter 8, that they need to REMEMBER what He has done in them. He has forged them through the fire to make them his HOLY NATION.

From verse 2 in chapter 8:

*“2 Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, **to humble you and to test you** in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands.”*

God **tested them** in the wilderness. To see if their hearts would follow him and trust him. They had no food or water. They only had GOD’S WORD that he would provide for them. They had to learn to live on God’s word and promises. Many of them died in that fire of testing. Many of them failed. What the Israelites learned in the desert, we may still have trouble understanding today as God’s holy people: *“man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.”* In other words, to be holy doesn’t just mean being obedient, it means being dependent. We are HIS. We **belong** to him. Everything we have comes from him. But do we understand that God provides everything for us? Or do we forget?

*"11 Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, ... 12 Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, ... then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, ... 17 You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me."*

A life of holiness is not just about aiming to obey God's commands. It's about recognising our dependence on him for **everything**. The Israelites were FED in the wilderness. Not only that, but their clothes didn't wear out and their feet didn't swell. IN FORTY YEARS! I get new shoes every two years! God provided for them because they are HIS people. We're not only to be obedient to God, but dependant on him.

If our life is to be HOLY, then our world, the **space** that we live in, must be a holy space – a space that is obedient and dependant upon God.

Think about the SPACE that you live in. Your home, your office or workplace. Does it reflect a Holy life? Have you removed the false gods? The gods of money and of power, the gods of greed and immorality and drunkenness, of lust and self centeredness? Think about your relationships with other people. Are they HOLY relationships? Are they relationships where God is honoured? Whether at the bar with your friend (or in bed with your spouse), the TV that you watch, the language you use, the way you treat your neighbour – is your space HOLY?

Keeping holy space in our lives helps us to be obedient, and reminds us to be dependant on God. And, our HOLY SPACE also flows into other people's space.

I still remember one of my Christian friends at school who always carried around his Bible – and actually even read it on the bus sometimes. A bit of a loner. Not many friends. But he always used clean language, always outstanding in his character. Always respected by people. And one of the most influential people in my adolescent life. Because his HOLY SPACE walked into mine many, many times. And because of that, his character changed mine. His holiness impacted my life. Does your holiness impact the world around you? The world next to you?

Let me encourage you today to give your life HOLY SPACE. Space to read the Bible each day. Space to pray. Space to fellowship. Space to care for the sick and the weak. Ask yourself: have I left space in my life to learn obedience to God? Have I left space in my life to learn dependence on God? Have I left space in my life to learn holiness? Remember the LORD. Follow his way. Keep his commands. Leave space to learn obedience, dependence and holiness.

Let's pray.