

FIGHTER GOD

Deuteronomy 1:1 - 4:43
Key verse 3:22

“Do not be afraid of them; the Lord your God himself will fight for you.”

The book of Deuteronomy is the repetition of God’s law and a restatement of the law for the next generation. In chapter 1-4, Moses reviews the past 40 years of life in the wilderness. In chapter 5 to 26, Moses gives the Israelites God’s decrees and laws for the present time. Chapter 27 to 30 focuses on Moses who gives God’s commands for Israel’s future life in the Promised Land. Chapter 31 to 34 includes the leadership transition from Moses to Joshua.

Deuteronomy lesson 1 is Moses’ first message and one of the historical records of wars that summarizes the 40-year-period of Israel’s wandering in the desert. When Moses expounded the law, he reminded the next generation of what God had done for them. Remembering God’s leading and grace was the foundation of hearing and living according to God’s commands in the Promised Land. May God bless us that we may remember his grace and personally meet our God who himself fights for us.

Part 1: God who himself fights (Ch. 1-3)

Look at verses 1-8. The time was in the 40th year, on the 1st day of the 11th month since Israel left Egypt. All Israel camped in the wilderness east of the Jordan in the territory of Moab. They just defeated Sihon king of the Amorites and Og king of Bashan and were about to enter the Promised Land. It took 40 years for them to get to the Mount Horeb although it usually takes 11 days to go from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea by the Mount Seir road. This is because the 1st generation all had to perish in the desert because of their unbelief and disobedience. Now Israel could enter the land and take possession of it.

Let us look at verses 9-18. 400 years before the time of Moses’ message, the number of the Israelites was only 70 but they multiplied as numerous as the stars in the sky as it was promised to Abraham. When Moses was not able anymore to bear the burdens of his people all by himself, he took some wise and respected men from each of their tribes, who would support Moses’ leadership.

Verses 19-46 describe the incident of sending spies out to Canaan and its failure due to unbelief and rebellion of God’s people. Caleb’s and Joshua’s report about the land was very good. (1:25; Num 14:7) But the Israelites rebelled against God’s promise and command and were unwilling to go up. (1:26) Moses was a shepherd and leader for he bore all their grumbling and fear by encouraging them: “Do not be terrified; do not be afraid of them. The Lord your God, who is going before you, will fight for you, as he did for you in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the wilderness. There you saw how the Lord your God carried you, as a father carries his son, all the way you went until you reached this place.” (1:29-31) As Moses confessed, God raised and carried Israel. They were supposed to thank and serve God. But they grumbled when they were told to go up and fight. God showed them the way they should go, but they refused to trust in him. God’s anger was burned when he heard their grumbling and they had to die in the desert. Even Moses, who did not trust in God enough to honor him (Num 20:12), could not enter the land. The

consequence of the unbelief of God's people was their death. However, God was faithful in giving the next generation a new chance to enter the Promised Land.

The Lord, our God is going before the UBF next generation. He will fight for us, as he did for us up until now. Before our very eyes, he revealed his word and Jesus to us through Bible study. The Lord our God carried us and brought us here to the GLEF to personally accept his hope to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. God wants us to remember his grace and leading. Let us learn from the unbelief of Israel's 1st generation and trust in God who will fight for us until we reach the Promised Land, the heavenly kingdom of God. Because God will fight for us, we are confident to boldly proclaim the gospel on each campus.

Chapters 2 to 3 are about God's obedience training. God told them not to fight against the descendants of Esau (2:5), the Moabites (2:9) and the Ammonites (2:19), because they were relatives from the Israelites. The descendants of Esau were Jacob's brother's descendants. (Gen 25:30; 36:1), Moab and Ammon were Abraham's nephew Lot's descendants (Gen 19:36-38). God gave them the land as their inheritance, and they took the land by driving the people out. Therefore, they should not fight against them. Let's read 2:7: "The Lord your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He has watched over your journey through this vast wilderness. These forty years the Lord your God has been with you, and you have not lacked anything." The Israelites learned to obey God's command not to fight against their brothers by fully trusting in God. He was with them for forty years and they did not lack anything. They were to remember God's leading in order to trust and obey his command.

2:24 to 3:11 covers the defeats of Sihon and Og. God fought for his people by giving these two kings of the Amorites into Israel's hands. The conquest of Canaan meant inheritance for Israel, but it also meant God's judgment to the people of the land. God helped Israel to destroy them and even conquer 60 cities of Bashan. (3:4) Eventually, the land became a good and spacious inheritance for Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh. God already gave all the campuses of the world as an inheritance to us. We only need to obey God's command by taking possession of the campuses and destroy the stubbornness and false teachings with the word of God. Jesus commanded his disciples: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." (Mt 28:19)

Let us look at 3:12-29. The territory east of the Jordan was given to Reuben, Gad and the half-tribe of Manasseh as their inheritance before they entered Canaan. God ensured his promise to deliver all the lands of Canaan to their hands by letting them have the land as a foretaste. He also directed them to cross over ahead of the other Israelites in the conquest of Canaan. God wanted them to come back to their inheritance only after finishing the conquest. Let us read 3:22: "Do not be afraid of them; the Lord your God himself will fight for you." Moses encouraged Joshua to trust in God who would do the same to all the kingdoms as he had done to the kings of the Amorites.

Here we learn that "God himself fights!" The work of restoration and expansion of God's kingdom is carried out by God himself who fights and gives victory. God himself will fight for sending 100,000 missionaries to all the world by 2041. God himself will fight for using us – the next generation leaders – as messenger trainers and disciple makers for world mission. Our responsibility is to obey God by preaching the gospel to all nations (Mk 16:15) and making disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19). God is our leader who gave us the campuses as our inheritance. He himself fights for us and gives us victory.

My gracious God fought for me and gave me victory against the evil desires of youth. I misused all the time and energy given from God to live a double life. God did not abandon me but fought for me through Deuteronomy 6:5 and Luke 23:34a, showing me his love and helping me to repent of my ego worship. God has already given me the land of German campuses to take possession of them. God healed me from my inner fear of people and through the serving of my shepherd, he helped me to go to campus every day and preach the gospel to many students. One of them finished 12 lessons of Bible study and God opened his eyes and heart to get to know God personally. I thank God for calling me as a next generation missionary to Germany to make disciples among German students and cowork with other next generation leaders for world mission.

God fought for Israel and gave them victory against their enemies whenever they obeyed. The same God fought for us by raising native students as Bible teachers and leaders for his salvation work. He himself is fighting now by raising the UBF next generations as global spiritual leaders and Bible teachers for world mission. God fought for Frank, saved him from the power of darkness and gave him the Ryerson campus as his inheritance. God freed Paul Choi through his unconditional love and gave him the Moscow State University as his inheritance. The Lord won for Lydia Oh and promised to use her as a shepherdess for Belarus students. Our God will fight for them and use their love and devotion for God for bringing numerous students to his kingdom. May God use the GLEF to make us spiritual warriors who can always testify: "The Lord our God himself will fight for us."

Part 2: The LORD spoke to you out of the fire (4:1-43)

Chapter 4 contains Moses' message that has power like the words of God. Look at 4:1-14. Verse 1 says: "Now, Israel, hear the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land the Lord, the God of your ancestors, is giving you." God commanded Israel not to add or subtract anything but take it as it is and obey it with all their hearts. When they absolutely obeyed the words of God, they became wise and understanding people. Let us read 4:9: "Teach them to your children and to their children after them." Moses commanded them to teach the words of God to their descendants—to obey and keep it generation after generation. It is God's command for us, too, to teach his words to our children, grandchildren, and our friends and sheep to obey and keep it with all their hearts. When Israel forgot the words of God, they quickly got corrupted, worshipped idols and were destroyed. The 1st generation that had a large army of 600,000 who forgot the words of God were completely destroyed. The 24,000 people who left the words of God, followed Moabite women and committed adulteries with them, were killed all at the same time. (Num 25) Only those who did not leave the words of God but held on to it to the end survived. Anyone who is captured by the words of God will live. The power of the words of God created the universe and saved enslaved Israelites. The word of God works even now in each person's heart so the dead may rise and prodigal sons may change. Thus, we believe and rely on the power of the words of God to make disciples by training them to live according to the Bible.

Please look at verses 15-31. Verses 23 and 24 say: "Be careful not to forget the covenant of the Lord your God that he made with you; do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the Lord your God has forbidden. For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God." God hates idolatry the most. This is because the Creator can make creation but the creation cannot make the Creator. Ultimately, all the things that we human beings make and worship, are idols. Idolatry grieves the Lord the most because it is rebellion against God. Israel perished because they had other gods before God. Only when they repented and came back, God forgave them by his love and mercy.

What was the purpose of God's revelation to his people through his word and all the signs and wonders and victories in wars? Let us read 4:35: "You were shown these things so that you might know that the Lord is God; besides him there is no other." Israel did not perish but survived after hearing the message of God that was spoken out of the fire. Israel became the only surviving nation who received special love of God and served him. It is God's special grace to us that we can hear his words, obey him and witness his living work. The way of life is to have the Lord and keep his words. It requires our constant struggle against relativism and atheism to repeatedly deliver the word of God for only God's word can change people's lives and make them a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Let us read 4:41-43. Three cities east of the Jordan (Bezer, Ramoth in Gilead, Golan) and three cities west of the Jordan (Kedesh in Galilee, Shechem, Hebron) were set apart as cities of refuge. (Joshua 20:7-9) It was a refuge for those who killed another person. They could flee if they had unintentionally killed a neighbor without malice. But our true city of refuge is Jesus. Jesus is our true refuge, shelter and resting place. (Mt 11:28)

Moses' first message from chapter 1 to 4 was based on "looking back on Israel's past," which he gave to the next generation before his death. He especially plants faith that "The Lord himself fights" for the conquest of Canaan. It emphasizes that victory is guaranteed in the battle of the conquest of Canaan. Now the next generation would only have to believe God's promise, obey and take the land. Thank God for giving all campuses in the world to us as an inheritance! We will surely win the spiritual battle if we trust in our Lord Almighty and obey the amazing power of the words of God who spoke out of the fire. Thanks be to God our Father who himself fights for us and gives victory to us!

It is God's heart for all of you to keep God's commands for only God's word use your lives as a blessing and use you as a vast army for world mission. May God bless our obedience to live as Bible teachers and leaders like Moses. May he fill us with absolute trust and faith in him who fights for us by spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Let us read the key verse 3:22: "Do not be afraid of them; the Lord your God himself will fight for you."