

God's Miscalculation

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, it's a great delight to see you again and we're back in Deuteronomy and you had Dave Dewart last week if you were here and he's a great man and I understand he did a great job and it's a great risk having somebody come and talk when he knows what he's talking about.
- It's a dangerous position for me to get in. Well, we're looking at this passage from Deuteronomy chapter 1 and I've talked to, I told you about it and I mean I've entitled it.
- What have I entitled it? God's miscalculation, yeah, okay. Well, that's what it is and I'm not sure that it's God's miscalculation but that's what it's made to look like.
- What happens is this, you see, you know that is, that's the Nile River that goes down there.
- That's the Mediterranean Ocean, that's the Sea of Galilee there, that's the Jordan River there, that's the Dead Sea there, and that's Kadesh Barnea where today's story takes place.
- [1 : 3 0] Right there. And the children of Israel had come across through the Red Sea which came here. They had visited Horeb which was down there where the Ten Commandments were given to them.
- They had wandered, they'd come up to here, eleven days to walk that if you wanted to walk it. They got there and there for the first time they saw the land, the promised land to which they were to come.
- And so that's where they are when today's story opens. And if you look at the story it says, all of you came to me and said, let us send men ahead to spy out the land for us and bring back a report about the route we were to take.
- There's a few spelling errors in this. The way it works is that there is a good and gracious lady who typed stuff out for me and I asked her if she would merely do a copy of the book of Deuteronomy.
- And so instead of photocopying it she said she really enjoyed just writing out so she wrote the whole thing out. And you can see how in the course of history certain errors have crept into the Bible as various scribes have taken it upon themselves to write it.
- [2 : 5 0] So you can see that that's taken place here. The one sort of Freudian slip is about being intense I think.
- There's maybe a guided miscalculation there. Anyway, this is where they are. They've come to this land.
- They decide to send out spies. Moses says, all right, we'll take one of you from each of your tribes so that he can come back and report to you and you will at least trust him because he's from your tribe.
- Well, they went out and they went. You see, where they were right here was at Kadesh Barnea and there were wells of water there.
- This was a terrible and waste land through which they'd come. I mean, you can imagine sort of 140 degrees in the shade without any shade and with rock and barren waste.

[3 : 53] And they'd wandered through that. They'd come to the wells there. But when they looked up from there, they could see the hill country of the Amorites.

And in the Amorites, Hebron was one of the cities that was somewhere around there. And they were, this was the first view they had after their crossing of the desert.

This was the first view they had of the promised land. So there it was. And they sent out spies because they figured, well, we've got to find our way into it.

And we've got to, we've got to see what towns we're going to come up against. And they wanted to get a kind of reconnaissance report. So they sent somebody out to do it.

It would be interesting for you if you looked at verse 33, where it says that God had done the reconnaissance formerly.

[4 : 53] He went ahead of you on your journey in fire by night and a cloud by day to search out places. They were spying out the land. God had searched out places for you to camp and show you the way you should go.

So here they were taking it upon themselves to explore the land. And one of the great pictures from this particular adventure is two people here like this with a pole between their shoulders and then a bunch of grapes that took two men to carry.

And that was the evidence they brought back to the children of Israel at Kadesh Barnea that it was indeed a very good land. And apparently in the valley of Eshkol, somewhere in the area of Hebron, they still produce magnificent grapes.

But all over Israel today, modern day Israel, you see this picture. It's in walls and it's in clay tiles and it's everything. The two men carrying the huge bunch of grapes, which comes from this.

And this was the evidence they brought back to the people. Well, they had God's promise that this was the land that they were to go into.

[6 : 13] And they had good reports of it so that it sounded like a great land. And then you get to verse 26. Because, you see, what had happened here was that they sent a probe up into this land.

Like that, you see. That was the probe they sent up into the land. But there was another probe going on at the same time. And that was God was probing in their hearts.

So while they probed the land, God probed their hearts. And look what He found. You were unwilling to go up. There was a settled unwillingness to go into the promised land.

That's what He found in their hearts. And that, of course, is the way most of us live our lives. Without discovering that the problem is not the land up there.

The problem is the willingness here. And God has to probe our hearts. And we have to, I think, be brought to the place where we acknowledge and recognize the unwillingness that is in our hearts.

[7 : 25] The condition of our hearts. And it's a magnificent sort of little portrait here that you get. You were unwilling to go up. You rebelled against the command of the Lord.

Of the Lord your God. The command was all that God had told them. It wasn't just do it. It was because I have. Remember? Because I brought you out of slavery.

Because I brought you through the Red Sea. Because I've given you the Ten Commandments. Because I kept you. Because of that, I command you. I have reason to command you. And you have reason to obey me.

Because you have prospered in every way when you've done that. So the Lord commanded them. And they grumbled in their tents.

Now, what happens, you see? And this, I think, invariably happens. And just let me illustrate it to you in this way.

[8 : 25] Because this is a road across here. And this is a seed that is on the road. And this is the bird that comes down and snatches the seed away.

Now, this is one of the basic pictures of Jesus. And here is where it's happening. You see that as soon as the word is planted in our hearts, the grumbling and the complaining and all the unwillingness of the rejection which comes from our hearts is there so that the seed never gets into the ground and never takes root.

And Satan comes and snatches it away. So, you see, they come to this precipitous moment in their lives when their promised land was right in front of them and they were grumbling and complaining.

And, you see, the wonderful thing about it is, I mean, if you look at it, what does it say? It says, first, that the Lord hates us. Secondly, if you look again at the text, you'll see he brought us out to betray us into the hands of the Amorites.

That's what he wanted to do because ultimately what he wants to do is to destroy us. Now, that was what happened as a result of this probe into the hearts of people.

[9 : 47] Instead of being inspired by faith and trust in the God who had led them thus far, they had turned the whole thing upside down and were out to prove that God didn't love them, he hated them.

That God was not trying to create a people out of them, he was trying to betray them into the hands of their enemy. And that ultimately God wasn't out to save them, he was out to destroy them.

Now, you can see how this, for its day, considering it 3,000 years ago, does quite a lot to probe what goes on in the hearts of people, like you and me, how we respond and how we react.

He probes in our heart, and down in there he finds that there is a whole lot of sense that God does not love us, he hates us, that God is prepared to betray us, and that God ultimately wants to destroy us.

And that's part of, I mean, that's part of the, of the, of the culture that we live in, because, of course, we, we have this antipathy, profound antipathy for God, and, and when we've had to take over the running of our lives, because, if there is any God, if there is any destiny, if there is any fate, if there is any reality, it means that we are in an alien universe, where our lives are not regarded as having any ultimate importance, and where destruction and death is the end, that that's where we're leading, that's where we're heading for.

[11 : 26] And that, that is the, the profound, basic, perhaps unarticulated conviction of most of us, that we are caught in that situation.

So there you see the, the rebellion and the hatred that was, and, so in verse, 28, they say, our brothers have made us lose heart.

And, and the reason that they, they lost heart was, because, they, they regarded themselves, as grasshoppers.

There you are. About to be stamped on, you know, of no value. They, they looked at themselves. They saw, they saw, this situation.

So, they had an extremely low sense of self-worth. You see how, I mean, we describe it all in psychological terms these days, but they had an extremely low sense of self-worth.

[12 : 32] They felt that God hated them, that God had betrayed them, that God was out to destroy them. And there were these huge people, that lived in the land of the Amorites. And some of them, you see it says, the Anakites were there.

We even say, the Anakites there. I think it means, we even saw the Anakites there. And, the Anakites were, some ancient race of people, remnants of which still existed in the land.

And, Goliath of Gath was one of them. A huge man, nine feet tall. And of course, they saw them. They saw all the obstacles. So that, they thought of themselves as being, very small and insignificant.

And the enemy as being, great and powerful. So that, what they, and what they saw further, was they saw the fortified cities, of the hill countries of the Amorites, with walls going as they saw it, up to the sky.

They came to these hills, and at the top of the hills, were the cities. And the cities were surrounded, by these huge walls. And they thought to themselves, how could we ever, conquer this land?

[13 : 41] So, you can see how, how the process worked. They got smaller, and smaller, and smaller, as they saw themselves, apart from God. And the enemy got bigger, and bigger, and bigger.

And of course, that's how we all live our lives, pretty much. And, that's, that was what was happening to them. And so, even so, even, even then, he goes on, and it says that, you have reason, to think, in verse 29, you have reason, not to be terrified, not to be afraid.

Because, always the great battle, and the great point of perception, as far as, as far as this, earthly life is concerned, is, is, is the great struggle, between, fear, and, and faith.

You know, you get, that, that tension right there. You, you know how insidious, fear is.

We had a little, crisis in the family, a couple of weeks ago. It wasn't, in, in retrospect, it was ridiculous. But once the seeds of fear, get into your heart, they get bigger, and bigger, and bigger, and you panic more, and more, and more, and fear just takes over.

[15 : 12] What a wonderful thing, it would be, if the opposite, could happen to you. Where faith, would take over. And how can you initiate, that process, in your life?

So that instead of, being easily, given over to fear, you find yourself, given over to faith, and to trust. And the more perilous, your circumstance, the more the faith is there.

Now that seems to happen. But most of us, are only familiar, with this side, of the process. Where, where, where fear, gets hold of us, and we, we don't know, which way to turn.

And it, it, it just grows, and, and consumes us, inwardly. That, that fear. And what process, do we know, whereby we could, turn that fear around?

Now it says it, over and, over again. They had been given, what turned out to be, a short course, in trusting God, so that they would have, nothing to be afraid of.

[16 : 17] They had experienced, God's dependability. They had reason, not to be afraid, not to be terrified, as in verse 29.

The reason was, that the Lord, will go before you, and he will fight for you, as he did for you, in Egypt, before your very eyes, and in the desert.

There you saw, how the Lord, your God, carried you, as a father, carries his son, all the way. And, you went, until, you reached this place.

I mean, it's a, it's a, it's a lovely, and compassionate picture, of, of a father, carrying his son, in an area, where, where, the son can't make, make a go of it himself, and he gets lifted up, and carried along.

And they had been lifted up, and carried along, by their God. So that in verse 32, it says, in spite of this, you did not, trust the Lord, your God.

[17 : 21] You did not put, your faith in Yahweh. You gave way to fear, instead of to faith. Now, you know that, we do quite a lot, to initiate fear, in our hearts, in the course of our lives.

I mean, we, we watch, we read terrible stories, which fill us with fear, and anxiety, watch movies, and television, that fill us with fear, and anxiety. We get out on the street, and it fills us, with fear, and anxiety.

So we get, a rather, a rather, well-balanced diet, of fear, every day. So that, at the end of the day, you, you have reason, to be terrified, and afraid, because you've nurtured, yourself, with things, that precipitate fear.

I, I love the story, of the senior executive, that came out, to work in Vancouver, from down east somewhere, and the first thing, they persuaded him to do, was to go up to Whistler, to ski for the weekend.

He went up there, for one weekend, and said, never again. He says, I'm terrified, from Monday to Friday, why should I go up there, and be terrified, from Saturday, and Sunday? So, I mean, you know, he had all the fear, he wanted to, without going up, to the top of the mountains, at Whistler, and coming, for you, whistling down.

[18 : 40] So, that one of the things, that has to happen, to us, is there's got to be, some place, in our lives, where we are nourished, with faith. Something, that inspires, faith in us, rather than, fear.

That, that has to happen, to us. And we have to do it, for one another. And some of you, are very good, at doing it. And I am grateful, to some of you, for the number of times, when I have been afraid, and you have helped, very much, to sow the seed, of faith.

They had reason, not to be afraid, because, the Lord is going, before you, the Lord will fight, for you, the Lord has, supported you, as a father, cares for his child, but in spite of this, you didn't put, your trust in him.

He went ahead. Their anxiety, blotted out, the memory, of God's, promise, and prove, faithfulness. I don't know, what Dave talked about, last week, and I haven't had a chance, to hear the tape, but one of the things, I think he said, was to remember, that that's one of the, great messages, of Deuteronomy.

And this is why, you remember. You remember, so as to nurture, and encourage, your faith, in, the God, who has met you, all the way, through your life, and the God, who has intervened, all the way, through history.

[20 : 02] He's the one, that you are to be, nurtured in, the knowledge of him, and the remembrance, of what he's done. So anyway, they, these people, having come, to this place, where they're, probing the promised land, and where, when they are ready, to walk in, what is found, in their hearts, is not the faith, which should have been there, but the faith, but the fear, which obsessed them, so that they couldn't, go in there.

And, there, there they had, come, what happened, was, that there was, in effect, a lost, generation.

You know, it's, the reason, I'm thinking about this, is because, it seems to me, that, with, with, with, that there's, some senses, in which, we made our, best effort, to try and put this country, together a year ago, I mean, politically, this is, and, we all, voted in the referendum, and various things, like that, and, it didn't come together, in spite of the fact, that we are the most enlightened people, that have ever trod this soil, in spite of the fact, that we know so much more, than our fathers ever knew, in spite of the fact, that we understand, human rights, and human dignity, far better, than anybody else ever did, in spite of the fact, that we have no conflicting loyalties, because we don't have any loyalties, and, in spite of all this, we couldn't put our country together, you know, we are in effect, a lost generation, as far as this country goes, we can't put Humpty Dumpty, together again, we just can't do it, somehow, well, this is what the promise, that God had, was that a people, should come here, and, enter into this land, and claim the promise, that God had made to them, but they couldn't do it, because of the fear, and the rebellion, and the faithlessness, that was in their hearts, so, what did the Lord, have to say to them, he says, back to boot camp, into the desert with you, for 40 years, and we'll try the next generation, when it comes along, and so there they went, they went back into the desert, for 40 years, from having been, on the very borders, of the promised land, they went back down, into the desert, and there they wandered around, for 40 years, and this book of Deuteronomy, is written, at the point, when up here, this time, they come to the Jordan River, and they're ready, to cross into the promised land again, but it took a whole generation, to learn, and I suspect, in Canada, it's going to take us, a whole generation, to relearn, what it means, to be a country,

I mean, on a political level, just as it took, a whole generation, this was the generation, which, if you're, I sang in a, choir, and, you know, for years, we sang, about God, who, who, who hated, this generation, and said, they shall not, enter into my rest, well, this was the generation, the generation, that, that failed, in terms of the promise, and had to spend their time, in, in the wilderness, well, that's, that's how the story goes, interestingly enough, though, look, in verse 35, there isn't one person, in the generation, shall see the good land, I gave to your fathers, except Caleb, Caleb, son of Jephunneh, he will see, and I will, give him, and his descendants, the land, he set his foot on, because, he followed the Lord, wholeheartedly, and that, that, that saying, that he followed the Lord, wholeheartedly, is a point, that I've been, trying to make, indirectly, all the way through, his heart, was full, of, the Lord, full, to overflowing, with who God was, what his promises were, what his grace was, what his sufficiency was, he kept it, full, of that, you know, we, in the experiences, of our lives, have our hearts, drained, of almost everything, and what, where do we get a refill, you know, and that we need, that fullness, that he had, but you see, what it means, is that for 40 years, in the wilderness, there was one man, whose foot, had been, on the promised land, one man, who had, eaten the grapes, from the valley, of Eshkol, one man, who had seen, the promise, of the city, and was anxious, and, then his great desire, was to go back, now, that I think, is a picture, of our society, today, that we are a society, that's wandering, in the wilderness, that we have, a promised land, and that we have, we have, among us, those, whose hearts, are filled, with a faith, and trust in God, that that is, that God does not hate us, he loves us,

God has not betrayed us, he has worked for us, God is not out, to destroy us, he's out to save us, and to bring us, into that land, that's the kind of faith, that belongs to us, as we wander, in the wilderness, but, the difficulty is, of course, that now we have moved, from, a geographical, location, of the promised land, to, a gospel, proclamation, of, an eternal kingdom, that's what belongs, to us, and that's what we are, to enter into, and that's the end result, of God's purpose, for us, did I tell you, about Germaine Greer, last time I was here, she wrote an article, in, the Manchester Guardian, and I, I don't know, Germaine Greer, very well, but I suspect, if I did, we mightn't get along, but I, and that would probably, be my fault, but, but, but, but, but you want to hear, what she said, this is just, to sort of, bring this idea, of the promised land, in front of you, in the words, of what, what must be, a very bright, and intelligent lady, but this is, what she said, she was commenting, in the paper, on a motion, in the British,

[27 : 01] House of Parliament, that certain money, should be laid aside, for people, who had emigrated, to England, who wanted to go back home, not, that people in England, wanted them, to go back home, but they themselves, wanted to go back home, they had this longing, for home, but they didn't have the money, to get there, and the British government, should provide them, with the money, to go home, if they wanted to, now this is, this is what she says, listen to this, this just blows me, right away, she says, the sinister part, of the message, is the exception, of the idea, of home, home, is not only, a fiction, it is a pernicious fiction, if you believe, there is a place, where you belong, you will break your heart, looking for it, the only unchanging place, where we really belong, and will be satisfied, is heaven, and heaven, cannot be brought about, on earth, failure to recognize, the fact, that, home, is really, a fiction, has given us, the anguish, of Palestine, the internecine, raging, of the Balkans, the ideology, of home, primes, the bombs, of the PPK, and the IRA, the rest, the rest, of us, must face, the fact, that our earthly journey, is away, from home, that this is, where we've gone to, and there doesn't, remain, that possibility, anymore, that's not, what God is doing, what God has done, is, to prepare, a place for you, and if I go, and prepare, a place for you,

I will come, and receive you, to that place, that the promise, of, the promised land, has been replaced, for us, by, the proclaimed gospel, the gospel, of the kingdom, of God, that's what, that's what, presented to us, Germaine Greer, ends up by saying, exile, is, the human condition, and no government, subsidy, can provide, the chariot, that will carry, us home, you know, there, doesn't matter, how many bombs, you let off, or how many, welfare packages, you build, the place, where we want to go, is a place, which God, has promised us, and has given us, the Lord Jesus Christ, as our leader, to lead us, into that promised land, let me pray, our God, and Father, thank you, for the loveliness, of this day, thank you, for the amazing, beauty, of this city, and thank you, that above, and beyond this, in a way, that we couldn't, possibly anticipate, you have prepared, a place for us, and that we are, to live our lives, having made, the commitment, to your kingdom, having, in a sense, tasted, the fruit, of your kingdom, having seen, the loveliness, of it, as is expressed, in your teaching, give us, both the patience, the faith, and the willingness, to live, in this temporary exile, and never, to lose sight, of the promise, which you have made, to us, in Jesus Christ, in whose name, we pray,

Amen. Amen. Amen. There we go. Why do you take, exception, what Germaine Greer wrote, that's the most, intelligent thing, that I've ever heard, her saying.

Yeah, me too. Oh, I thought, I thought you were, What? Oh, I thought you were, taking, you said, your preamble, indicated, that you were, taking exception, Thank you. Did what?

Your preamble. Well, I, no, I just, I mean, most of what she's written, I don't, I don't know, or don't understand, so I was, blown away by that. Yeah, that's the greatest thing. I thought you were, at odds with it.

[31 : 15] No, no, no. I mean, because she's bang on. Yeah, I think she's right on. For the first time. Well, I don't know her well. Hey there, look who's here. Nice to see you.

Since I was, last video, about a year ago now, I've been to the bottom line here. You've been where? I've been to the bottom line. Have you? And, I tell the nurses, and men of the pulpit, have confirmed that, many Christians, are afraid to die, afraid to go in.

Yeah. It's true. I guess, perhaps you found it. Yeah. They said, sometimes we have to. We shouldn't need to be. No, but they are. The nurses are telling me, somebody's going to go out, and scream, not because I've just...

Well, it's wonderful to see you again, this side of heaven. But still, I know. What? I learned that heaven was my home. Oh, that's wonderful. Harry, you're getting better and better, Harry.

Thank you, ma'am. You really do. Really. Oh, well, anyway, Kathy and I talked about you. Did you?

[32 : 15] Also, we talked about the treasure. The treasure, did you? The treasure. Oh, great. That was... Thanks, great.

I take your cup. Do you have to have fun ones? Oh, I see. You need them. Thank you for today.

Thank you. Yeah. I'm going to call it your conversations. Great. Thank you.