

Peace through Discipline

(Deuteronomy 34)

Yearly Theme: “Peace is...”

Series Title: “Peace in the Wilderness”

February 28th, 2021

Something to think about:

Our actions have consequences, for good or for bad.

Continuing in this vein of thought, we conclude this month’s theme, entitled: “Peace in the Wilderness.”

In the last chapter of the last book of what is commonly called “The Torah” (the first five books of the Old Testament), we read about Moses’ last days. Sadly, those days are not marked out as was initially planned because of the consequences of disobedience to God. Let’s pick up this final story, of Moses’ final days and see what we can learn.

Deuteronomy 34:1-12 (NLT)

¹ Then Moses went up to Mount Nebo from the plains of Moab and climbed Pisgah Peak, which is across from Jericho. And the LORD showed him the whole land, from Gilead as far as Dan; ² all the land of Naphtali; the land of Ephraim and Manasseh; all the land of Judah, extending to the Mediterranean Sea; ³ the Negev; the Jordan Valley with Jericho—the city of palms—as far as Zoar. ⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, “This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when I said, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I have now allowed you to see it with your own eyes, but you will not enter the land.”

⁵ So Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab, just as the LORD had said. ⁶ The LORD buried him in a valley near Beth-peor in Moab, but to this day no one knows the exact place. ⁷ Moses was 120 years old when he died, yet his eyesight was clear, and he was as strong as ever. ⁸ The people of Israel mourned for Moses on the plains of Moab for thirty days, until the customary period of mourning was over.

⁹ Now Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. So the people of Israel obeyed him, doing just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

¹⁰ There has never been another prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. ¹¹ The LORD sent him to perform all the miraculous signs and wonders in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, and all his servants, and his entire land. ¹² With mighty power, Moses performed terrifying acts in the sight of all Israel.

Though our tendency is to elevate the characters of Scripture to divine status, we must remember that they were men and women just like you and me. They followed God faithfully, but were also prone to wander a time or two. They were used of God in spite of their failures, and oftentimes, because of their failures.

So, what is it that we can learn from this passage today about consequences and discipline? Let’s take a look:

Key Point: “There is peace through godly discipline.”

What happened to Moses because of his disobedience to God?

- He was not allowed to enter the land, but...

Deuteronomy 34:4 (NLT), ⁴ Then the LORD said to Moses, “This is the land I promised on oath to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob when I said, ‘I will give it to your descendants.’ I have now allowed you to see it with your own eyes, but you will not enter the land.”

- He died in the land of Moab, but...

Deuteronomy 34:5-7 (NLT), ⁵ So Moses, the servant of the LORD, died there in the land of Moab, just as the LORD had said. ⁶ The LORD buried him in a valley near Beth-peor in Moab, but to this day no one knows the exact place. ⁷ Moses was 120 years old when he died, yet his eyesight was clear, and he was as strong as ever.

- Joshua replaced Moses, but...

Deuteronomy 34:9-12 (NLT), ⁹ Now Joshua son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him. So the people of Israel obeyed him, doing just as the LORD had commanded Moses.

¹⁰ There has never been another prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face. ¹¹ The LORD sent him to perform all the miraculous signs and wonders in the land of Egypt against Pharaoh, and all his servants, and his entire land. ¹² With mighty power, Moses performed terrifying acts in the sight of all Israel.

Something to take home:

Though consequences for sin exist, so does God’s grace.

As he come to the end of his life, Moses learned as much about God’s love and grace toward His people as he did of his discipline and judgment because of their disobedience and sin; and even God’s discipline was a result of His love for them because God disciplines those He loves. Thus, love is God’s very nature.¹

Today, we can take solace in the fact that not only does God discipline those He loves, but there is grace and forgiveness in spite of the consequences we face when we surrender everything to Him.

Before we leave this somber aspect of the story, Raymond Brown suggests that,

“...We must remember that God is merciful; the man who was excluded [Moses] was only kept out for a time. The epitaph or obituary at the end of this book is not the final sentence in the story of Moses. A day came when he entered the land. Centuries after the invasion of Canaan, Jesus stood on the Mount of Transfiguration and Moses was there too, along with the prophet Elijah. That day, both Old Testament leaders, representative of Israel’s law and prophets, had a greater privilege than inspecting a new land; they heard about a new life. They talked with Christ about the unique saving event he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. Moses’ longing to see the unfolding purposes of God was fulfilled far beyond his highest dreams. He actually spoke with God’s Son, that unique ‘prophet’ whose coming he had predicted. As they communed together on the mount Moses hung on every word; he was more than ready to ‘listen’ to all that he said (18:18–19).²

Again, though there are consequences for sin...

Key Point: “There is peace through godly discipline.”

¹ 1 John 4.

² Brown, R. (1993). *The Message of Deuteronomy: Not by Bread Alone*. (J. A. Motyer & D. Tidball, Eds.) (p. 329). England: Inter-Varsity Press.