

The Ferociousness of Holiness

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[0 : 00] Well, now let's turn to our Bible reading. As you know, we're working our way through the book of Deuteronomy, and it's Deuteronomy chapter 7 today, and Willie will be preaching on this passage a little bit later this morning.

You'll find this on page 151 in our big church Bibles at the bottom of the page, page 151. Moses is speaking to the people and bringing the word and instruction of the Lord to them.

And before I start, let me just point out, you'll see two or three times during this reading the verb devoted to destruction. And there's a little footnote about that, which you'll see at the bottom of the page.

But that's something which I know Willie will be picking up in his sermon, devoted to destruction. So Deuteronomy chapter 7, verse 1, Moses speaks. When the Lord your God brings you into the land that you're entering to take possession of it, and clears away many nations before you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations more numerous and mightier than yourselves.

And when the Lord your God gives them over to you and you defeat them, then you must devote them to complete destruction. You shall make no covenant with them and show no mercy to them.

[1 : 25] You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons. For they would turn away your sons from following me to serve other gods.

Then the anger of the Lord would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly. But thus shall you deal with them. You shall break down their altars and dash in pieces their pillars and chop down their asherim and burn their carved images with fire.

For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.

It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love on you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it is because the Lord loves you and is keeping the oath that he swore to your fathers that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt.

Know, therefore, that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations and repays to their face those who hate him by destroying them.

[2 : 45] He will not be slack with one who hates him. He will repay him to his face. You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment and the statutes and the rules that I command you today.

And because you listen to these rules and keep them and do them, the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant and the steadfast love that he swore to your fathers. He will love you, bless you, and multiply you.

He will also bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock in the land that he swore to your fathers to give you.

You shall be blessed above all peoples. There shall not be male or female barren among you or among your livestock. And the Lord will take away from you all sickness.

And none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which you knew, will he inflict on you. But he will lay them on all who hate you. And you shall consume all the peoples that the Lord your God will give over to you.

[3 : 48] Your eyes shall not pity them, neither shall you serve their gods, for that would be a snare to you. If you say in your heart, these nations are greater than I, how can I dispossess them?

You shall not be afraid of them. But you shall remember what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt, the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, the wonders, the mighty hand and the outstretched arm by which the Lord your God brought you out.

So will the Lord your God do to all the peoples of whom you are afraid. Moreover, the Lord your God will send hornets among them, until those who are left and hide themselves from you are destroyed.

You shall not be in dread of them, for the Lord your God is in your midst, a great and awesome God. The Lord your God will clear away these nations before you little by little.

You may not make an end of them at once, lest the wild beasts grow too numerous for you. But the Lord your God will give them over to you and throw them into great confusion until they are destroyed.

[4 : 56] And he will give their kings into your hand, and you shall make their name perish from under heaven. No one shall be able to stand against you until you have destroyed them. The carved images of their gods you shall burn with fire.

You shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them, or take it for yourselves, lest you be ensnared by it. For it is an abomination to the Lord your God.

And you shall not bring an abominable thing into your house and become devoted to destruction like it. You shall utterly detest and abhor it, for it is devoted to destruction.

Amen. This is the word of the Lord, and may it be a blessing and a help to us. Well, if you'd turn with me to Deuteronomy chapter 7.

I think that's page 151 if you have one of the Blue Church Bibles. The opening words of the Institutes of the Christian Religion, the great tome by John Calvin, are these.

[6 : 09] Nearly all the wisdom we possess, that is to say true and sound wisdom, consists in two parts. The knowledge of God and of ourselves. And John Calvin goes on to say that we can't seriously aspire to him, that is to God, before we begin to become displeased with ourselves.

What he means is that it's only when we're humbled, truly, by a realistic assessment of who we are and what we are by ourselves, that we can see and hear God clearly.

We realize who we really are in relation to who he really is. And accordingly, says Calvin, the knowledge of ourselves not only arouses us to seek God, but also, as it were, leads us by the hand to find him.

And in these next chapters, Deuteronomy 7 to 9, Moses pulls no punches in facing Israel up to the reality about who and what they really are by themselves.

So that they will indeed go on seeking God and not drift away from him. And they need, he says, they need to remember that they are a humble people who were taught by many years in the wilderness that they live not just by bread, but by everything that comes from the mouth of the Lord.

[7 : 32] That's chapter 8. And they must go on repenting that they are, in fact, a hardened people. That's the message of chapters 9 and 10, because they're rebellious right down to their pores.

And so they need to live lives of ongoing heartfelt repentance. Penitence, never pride, is to be their hallmark, if they're to know and follow God.

But first of all, here in chapter 7, Moses teaches Israel that they need to realize that they are a holy people, with all that that entails.

And what it means to be holy, according to this chapter, is to be called to a life of holy warfare. To love God truly, with heart and soul, with all your might, means to hate sin and evil.

You can't love God and be treating sin casually. You must be killing it. You must be utterly and determinedly devoting it to destruction. That's the ferocious language Edward pointed out in verse 2.

[8 : 41] In verse 25. Destroy sin, says God. Or, verse 4, do you see? It will destroy you.

That's why this is a chapter all about the ferociousness of holiness. Now, that might shock you. But we must be honest about these commands here in verses 1 to 5.

About the furious destruction of the nations and their peoples. They are given, says verse 6, because, for, you are a people holy to the Lord your God.

In other words, this is what holy people do. To be called to a life of holiness is to be called to a life of holy warfare. That's something the whole Bible testifies to, including the Lord Jesus himself.

There is a fragrance to the holiness of Christ and his people, as Paul says in 2 Corinthians 2, but there's also a fierceness to it. To some it is the aroma of life to life, he says, but to others it is indeed

the stench of death.

[9 : 50] And we have to come to terms with what this means if we're going to grasp what it means to be the people of this God and not lose our way. And so a chapter like this, although it's very hard for us, and believe me, it's a hard one to preach on, it's very important for us.

I think you can see that the structure is fairly clear. It begins in verses 1 to 5, and it ends in verses 17 to 26 with the complete destruction of all false and idolatrous worship and all the evil that flows from it.

And in the middle there, verse 16 is like a pivot reminding us of that fact. But at the heart of the chapter, verses 6 to 15, explain why that is to be so.

4, verse 6, for God's people are called to be holy. There are people beloved by him, there are people blessed by him, and that's why they must do battle with him for light and for righteousness and not against him for darkness and for wickedness.

So let's look first at these central verses, 6 to 15, where the message is clear. God's people are called by a holy God. They're called by a holy God to be, therefore, characterized by his holiness.

[11 : 10] You are a people holy to the Lord, you are God, says verse 6. Well, how did that come about? Because God has chosen you out of all the people on the face of the earth.

In other words, it's only by God's sovereign electing choice that they're holy. Well, what does that mean? It means you're chosen to be beloved of God, verses 6 to 8.

He chose you, verse 6, and set his love upon you, verse 7. He loves you, verse 8, and is keeping the oath that he swore to your forefathers. And it means that you're chosen to be blessed by God. Look at the abundance of blessing there in verses 13 to 15. Abundant blessing in family life, in size, in significance, in health, in welfare, in everything. God's call of electing grace is to be beloved and blessed by him in abundance.

But it can never be a call to be boastful, can it? That's very plain here. There's absolutely no presumption, no sense of superiority at all. In fact, the very opposite is emphasized here.

[12 : 25] It's worth saying that because sometimes people who make a very great deal about God's election and God's sovereign choice and the doctrines of grace and so on, sometimes they can do it in rather a superior way.

As though they themselves have something special, although they are something special in their knowledge of God. But of course, you see, if you really grasp the truth about God's electing grace, then it will do the very opposite in you, won't it?

It will utterly humble you into the dust. That's surely the important point here. There wasn't anything at all in Israel that made God choose them. It was something in God.

Verse 7 is plain. It was not because you were bigger and better than other people's. In fact, you were the least impressive of the lot. No, he loves you because... Well, because he loves you.

There's no reason at all in you. Only reasons, in fact, for God not to love you. But he chose to love you nonetheless. Perhaps if we remember nothing else at all today, we should remember that.

[13 : 34] It's something the whole Bible presses home to us all the time. Moses does it here. Three times we're told, aren't we? Verse 1 and verse 7 and verse 17.

Three times that other nations were far bigger, far greater than Israel, but God chose you. That's Paul's emphasis in Ephesians 1 and 2. God's people were chosen in Christ before even the foundation of the world.

So it's not of your doing, he says, but it's the gift of God. It's not as a result of works so that no one can boast. He says to Titus, it's not by our works, but it's by God's mercy.

Not because of works, but because of God's call, he says in Romans 9. Not because of human will or understanding, but because of God who has mercy.

And on and on and on it goes all through the Bible. God has chosen his people to be holy, not because they, certainly not because we, are lovable, but because he is love.

[14 : 40] And he calls his people to reflect his love and to live his mercy, his beauty, his righteousness among the peoples. Remember the great emphasis in Deuteronomy chapter 4.

God's people are called to that great responsibility, to shine for him in the midst and in the sight of all the nations to lead them to the true God.

That's the point of their calling. And so as one scholar puts it, a wrong concept of election will have disastrous results.

Look at verses 9 to 12. That's why they're here, isn't it? Being God's holy and chosen people is never about saying, oh, we are God's special people. It's about understanding we are God's servant people.

We are redeemed, he says, from servitude to Pharaoh to serve God, to obey him. God's beloved people will know the blessing of his covenant only through obedience to his covenant.

That's what verse 12 says. Because you keep covenant with him, he will keep his covenant of love with you. Now don't mistake, don't think, oh, that's legalism, that's the law of Moses.

[15:53] That's different from the covenant of promise to Abraham. The covenant of promise in Jesus Christ. Not at all. God's promises always demand response.

God's grace always calls for obedience. Go back and read Genesis. Read what God said to Abraham. Genesis 17, verse 1. I am God Almighty. Walk before me, therefore, and be blameless that I may make my covenant between me and you and multiply you greatly.

It's a challenge to obedience, isn't it? After Abraham's lapse in chapter 16 with Hagar. Genesis 22, after Abraham shows his willingness to offer up Isaac at God's command, God says to him, because you have done this and not withheld your only son, I will surely bless you.

God's people can never presume on their calling. We'll know the blessing of God's covenant promises of grace as and only as we are obedient to his personal command.

That's what the Lord Jesus constantly reminds us. John 14, whoever has my commands and keeps them, he it is who loves me and I will manifest myself to him and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him.

[17:15] God gives his Holy Spirit to those who obey him, says Peter in Acts chapter 5. So there can never be any presumption about God's call, never any boasting, that is utterly excluded, says Paul, by the law itself, which is a law of faith.

It's about obedient faith in response to the sovereign grace of God. Rather, there must be great humility and indeed great fear because God takes his covenant very seriously.

Look at verses 9 and 10, it's so plain. Never think you can say, oh, I'm an Israelite, I'm okay. Never think, oh, I don't need to take God's commands too seriously because he's chosen me.

Never say, as somebody says in Deuteronomy 29, verse 19, I'll be safe even if I walk in the stubbornness of my heart. No, Moses warns so clearly against that there.

And here in verse 10, God will not be slack with those who show that in their heart they really hate him. In that way lies destruction, says Moses.

[18:20] Now, we are to be careful to hear and to do the commandment, verse 11. We are therefore to take God's words very, very seriously because therein alone lies the way of blessing.

And it's because, you see, our hearts by nature are so stubborn. It's because we are not better than any other people that we have to take sin so very seriously.

because if we don't, it can lead us into a face-to-face encounter with the wrath of God. Look at verse 10. He repays to their face those who hate him.

And so Moses says to us, be clear, if you are not killing sin, it will be killing you. Three times in the chapter, the warning rings out, doesn't it? Verse 4. Because then he would destroy you quickly.

You also, if you do that. Verse 16. If you do that, it'll be a snare to you, a snare to trap you and destroy you. Verse 25.

[19:25] Lest you become ensnared. And verse 26. You become devoted to destruction also, like it. Hence, all these ferocious commands to absolutely renounce in totality everything that would snare you and would destroy you.

As the apostle puts it in Hebrews 12, to lay aside every sin which so easily entangles us and run the race set before us, striving for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

Or to use the language here in Deuteronomy 7, to take that sin and devote it to complete destruction. So we better face up to these words in verses 1 to 6 and verse 16 and verses 25 and 26.

Because they tell us that because we are called by a holy God, God's people must be committed to holy war. Committed to holy war.

I think we've got to admit, don't we, that we find that language very difficult. Especially today when we live in a world of global terrorism with the horrors of the Islamic State and the Middle East, the horrors of what's done in the name of God and in the name of holy war, jihad.

[20 : 54] So we mustn't be confused and we mustn't confuse in any way the holy war of the true and holy God with the perversions of this by false religion, by hideous ideology which is what Islamist terrorism springs from.

There's all the difference in the world between the honorable martyr who would gladly die for his faith and the horrible so-called martyr who would kill for his doctrine.

There's all the difference in the world between a just judgment on evil and wickedness and what is just wanton destruction of what is good and wholesome and peaceful.

The Christian martyr throughout history has given his life in order to bring the message of life and the salvation to others, even his enemies like the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Islamist martyr today will give his life only to maim and kill and destroy life of his enemies. Of course, the root of the matter lies in the fact that the Islamist worships the wrong God.

[22 : 10] Indeed, he worships no God for there is no other God than the one true God, the God of Israel, the God of Scripture, the maker of heaven and earth who reveals himself ultimately and completely to us in the person of his Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is no other God. But, the true God who is the maker of heaven and earth is also the judge of all the earth. And he does judge evil and wickedness perfectly and truly.

And that is what these verses here demonstrate to us. If we find it makes us squeamish, if we find it makes us very uncomfortable, as C.S. Lewis commented on some of the similar language in the Psalms, it is not because of our greater Christian sensitivity, but rather it is probably because of our appalling moral apathy.

It's because we simply have not yet considered the real seriousness, the sheer weight of the problem of human sin against the Holy God. But what that means really is that we are actually a deeply uncaring people.

We're discussing at our staff meeting this week how in our modern liberal culture, the ideas of care and harm are top of people's lists in terms of how they make moral judgments.

[23 : 33] If something does no harm to anybody else, why shouldn't I do it? There's nothing wrong with it. By contrast, things that do seem to do harm are things that we must be against and are a great concern and our care is for people's needs.

Whatever they need, they must get. Although what it usually means is whatever they think they need, they must get. That's how our morality is working in our modern liberal West. But in fact, you see, the truth is that the chief sources of harm for our world and for the people of this world is from the sin and the wickedness and rebelliousness against God and all the evil that flows out into our world from that.

And according to Jesus, the great reservoir of evil in this world of ours lies where? In the human heart. Out of the heart, says Jesus, come evil thoughts, immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, envy, pride, slander, and so on.

And if we're to show real care for this world and its people, love for its people, we must want an end to all harmful evil that blights this world.

Care for the world really means valuing true justice. And these verses force us as people of God to come to terms with two things.

[25 : 01] Firstly, that God judges wickedness. And he must do because he is just. There's no judge on the bench in this country today who could hear a return verdict from the jury saying, my lord, the verdict is unanimous.

Guilty. Against the heinous child rapist and murderer. There's no judge who could hear that victory and then say, but I'm feeling loving today so I'm going to let you go home.

There would be uproar in the court. There would be outrage in the nation and rightly so. How much more must and will the judge of all the earth do justly in punishing wickedness?

And he must do so to be true to his promise to rid the world of the curse of man's sin, to undo the tragedy of the rebellion in the human heart. That was the very first promise in Genesis 3.15 that God would do that through what?

Through destroying evil and the source of evil in this world. And God will judge and destroy all evil.

[26 : 09] He will consign it, banish it forever to eternal punishment to the place that Jesus unashamedly calls hell, the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

We don't like that talk either, do we? But here's the truth. The Lord Jesus spoke about hell more than anybody else in the whole Bible. And the book of Revelation depicts vividly something far more

terrible even than this chapter here in front of us.

The return of the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and the Lord of lords riding on his white horse covered in blood swinging his sword of judgment destroying men great and small throughout the earth like grapes being crushed in what he calls the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God.

That's what it means when we sing Jesus is King of kings. That's what it means when we sing Jesus is Lord. That's what it means when we recite the creed. We believe he shall come to be our judge.

God will judge all evil ultimately and forever. Make no mistake because he cares for this world that he has made. And he hates the harm that is brought upon humanity by the sin that comes from the human heart.

[27 : 42] And because he cares so much for this world he has had to step in at times throughout human history in order to preserve this world from its sinfulness.

He said to step in in times of particular judgment to stop man's self-destructive wickedness.

Sometimes and some cultures have sunk so low that they have warranted summary judgment in advance by God himself.

That's what the flood was in Genesis 6. That's what the judgment of the scattering of Babel was in Genesis 11. The destruction of Sodom Genesis 19. And that is what this chapter is about.

And we need to understand that this was a heinous culture this Canaanite culture and it had to be destroyed. Think back to Hitler's Nazi Reich.

A heinous culture that had to be destroyed. Even today 70 years on when some of these war criminals are unearthed even in their 90s they're taken to court they're convicted.

[28 : 48] So great was the heinousness of their crimes. And so great is the cry of their victims for just retribution. And this Canaanite regime was utterly depraved.

It was a horrible culture. Centuries of evil violence of sexual perversity of child murder child sacrifice going all the way back hundreds of years to Abraham's day God said to Abraham all about it.

But he said then in Genesis 15 that the sin of the Amorites had not yet reached its completeness.

Only then would he judge it hundreds of years later through the return of Abraham's seed to the land.

God had been patient therefore. He'd given room for change room for repentance room to turn away from that iniquity. But instead the time had only hardened them until they were ripe for judgment and Israel was God's instrument of that divine judgment.

And that's why this special term is used in verse 2 and verse 26 herem devoting to destruction giving over into God's hand of judgment.

[30 : 04] This wasn't ordinary war there's plenty of ordinary war and we'll see the rules for that later on different but this is God's judicial execution of judgment upon sin and evil. It wasn't Israel's judgment but God's.

And it was to mercifully protect them from this terrible culture and it was to mercifully ensure that God's whole purpose of ongoing redemption for all peoples of this earth would not be threatened by this evil engulfing Israel.

And so secondly you see this message of herem this total handing over of destruction it meant also a total and a radical separation and a removing of God's people from everything to do with that sin and evil.

That's why verses 2 and 3 forbid any mixing of any kind any marriages any political mixing any social any sexual mixing they must be radically separate for verse 6 there are people separated to God that's what holiness is separation to God and it was for their own protection God's mercy to them and it was for the preservation of the truth of God in the world it was God's mercy for the world and God's mercy and salvation comes only by his triumph over sin and evil see between Israel and the Canaanites there was a total clash of culture a total clash of worldview of ideology Canaanite culture was a totally sexual culture I suppose in that way there's a lot of similarities isn't there to our culture today in the West since Freud but for the

Canaanite sex made the world go round Baal religion was a religion of sexuality Baal was the male fertility God Asherah was his female consort it was their frenzied orgasms that made the world go round made your crops grow made your land fertile and so religion was all about frenzied sexual orgies with prostitutes at the temple male and female the more you did it the more Baal and Asherah looked on got excited and did it themselves and then you would have fertility in your land that's what it was and that kind of culture cannot but spill over and infect and corrupt God's people

living in the midst whether it's by open embrace of that religion alongside the religion of the truth which happened all the way through Israel history or whether it's covert through mixing in marriages and business and social and so on and that was so dangerous God knew that it would wound them and hurt them that he warns them verse 4 it will destroy you and so you must destroy them first that's the only way verse 5 it's shocking isn't it it's brutal break down their altars dash dash in pieces their pillars their phallic male symbols tear down their asherim the female genital symbols burn their images ferocious is the right word isn't it to describe that maybe we're quietly saying to ourselves thank God we don't live in those days thank God we don't really listen now to

[33 : 40] Moses thank God it's Jesus that we listen to until we do listen to Jesus tear out your eye throw it away cut off your hand rip off your limb better to go limping into heaven than walking into hell devote to complete destruction the things that cause you to sin lest they lead you to hell isn't that what Jesus said throw yourself into the sea with a millstone around your neck rather than make somebody else sin and make them go to hell eternally that's pretty ferocious language isn't it and his apostles were no less ferocious put to death the deeds of the body says Paul so that you will live and not die that's what spirit-filled believers do he says in Romans chapter 8 put to death put to total destruction whatever is earthly in you sexual immorality impurity passion evil desire covetousness which is idolatry because on account of these things the wrath of God is coming destroy them totally he's saying because you are God's chosen ones holy and beloved in other words he is saying exactly what

Moses is saying here if you are holy you will be a vicious trained killer with a ferocious passion for holiness going at it with relentlessness with ruthlessness as if your very life depended on it because your life does depend on it and not only your earthly life but your everlasting life you see how the principle is just as true in fact it's even more true for us than it was for Israel then God's people are to be radically separate from sin we're to strive for that holiness without which the apostle says no one will see the Lord we must be killing sin in our lives or it will be killing us make no mistake we're at war Peter says that James says that he talks about the passions within us that are at war against our soul Paul talks like that in Romans 7 again and again we need to fight fiercely ferociously faithfully because we are a people holy to the

Lord there's a great fight within isn't there that each one of us are called to and it's going to go on until every remnant of sin is at last destroyed out of these bodies and friends that's not going to be tomorrow morning or next week or next year only when we are rescued from these bodies of sin and death at the coming of the Lord Jesus and until that day there's a great fight within and there's a great fight without because we too are instruments in the hand of God of both judgment and salvation we're not called in our age to be physical instruments of justice as Israel were then that age is gone but that isn't because God doesn't judge anymore no it is because God has judged evil radically forever completely in the death of our Lord Jesus Christ and because he in his body on the tree at Calvary has done that he has opened the door for mercy he's opened a day of mercy a day of salvation for the whole world so that before that last and great day of judgment when he will confine all evil and wickedness to hell until then there is a day of opportunity and we we are to carry his sword of justice in the word of the gospel into all the world and we're to wield it faithfully and ferociously that's

Paul's language in 2nd Corinthians 10 to use the gospel to destroy strongholds of ideology and of false religion to destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against thought captive to Christ the gospel of Jesus Christ is our weapon of salvation and also indeed of judgment Paul goes on to say that it's the gospel that will punish every evil and every disobedience because it is the instrument of God saving mercy we wield it we offer protection for those who come under its sway but you see by the same token friends every time the gospel is proclaimed those who refuse its word they are therefore placing themselves under the ban of herein putting themselves in the place of complete destruction of those who even though the

Lord has appealed in the person of his own son to them to repent have scorned his precious blood and thereby have proved that their iniquity also like the Amorites is complete it's too easy isn't it for us because we're so used to the New Testament language of warfare that we sort of left it just drift over us as a kind of vague metaphor it's not a vague metaphor that's why the apostles turn us back to these scriptures and say these things are written for you let this ferocious brutal language wake you up and make you realize how serious is the issue that we're involved in this is war it really is a matter of life and death eternal life and eternal death and we must fight ferociously without and

within for for that's our calling we're a people holy to the

[39 : 47] Lord and we know that there's a greater day a far greater day of judgment that is coming and from which none can escape not one and so we must be Christian soldiers the Christian life is a real holy war we might not like that language but that's the language of the gospel well it's very solemn isn't it why would you like to be preparing a sermon on this this week let's end with a word of encouragement God's people can be confident of a holy victory our fight our war against sin and evil sometimes can seem such an uphill struggle can't it both in the battles without with a culture all around that seems so deaf to God's word so deluded so focused on self destruction and in the battle within in our hearts which seems so prone to sin and disobedience and self destructiveness no matter what we do can seem can't as we're making no progress at all look at verse twenty one twenty two the

Lord will clear these nations out little by little it won't happen all at once you wouldn't be able to cope with that he says and Derek Kidna says it's often God's way isn't it a way of gradual and modest conquest in the spiritual war at least that's how it seems and God loves doesn't he to turn man's ways upside down to turn our ideas of success and progress upside down and to use the weak and the foolish things in the eyes of the world to shame the wise and the strong the advance of God's kingdom so often feels feeble and looks feeble to the world but remember said Jesus the mustard seed remember the leaven looks like nothing's happening looks tiny pitiful but it's growing it's spreading and one day it'll be seen by the whole world and it'll fill the whole world so don't lose heart when the opposition seems so great and powerful when we say as the

Israelites said here in verse 17 it's too much for us how can we do this don't lose heart in your struggle against sin when you're first converted when you're young perhaps you think I'm going to make great strides leaps and bounds and before you know it I'll be in the place of almost perfection but you learn don't you quite soon that old enemy within is a lot stronger than you thought dug in much much better than you could ever have imagined and it's little by little battle by battle sometimes going back and having to retake lost ground isn't that right but God is doing it little by little look at verse 24 isn't that a great promise you will get there he's saying doesn't matter how long it takes keep on trusting keep battling on nothing will be able to stand against you until you've destroyed them keep battling on and verse 18 remember what

God has already done in your great redemption and how much more for us in our great redemption when Jesus Christ has disarmed principalities and powers through his triumph on the cross cast down the ruler of this world what he has begun will he not take it on to completion he will do it is what Moses is saying even though it be little by little how much more for us what does Paul say to the Philippians he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ and so you can go on working out your salvation because it's God who is working in you to will and to work his good pleasure and what is his good pleasure that you should shine as lights in this dark world in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation so don't lose heart in your struggle with sin and don't lose heart in your witness to Jesus Christ either God is calling us still to witness to him in this world

Peter quotes verse 6 from Deuteronomy 7 here in his first letter doesn't he when he says you are a holy nation and you are called to proclaim the light of and you are doing that he says so that even your enemies even those who speak against you will see the light of his glory and some of them will glorify God on the day of his visitation so don't lose heart keep battling on ferociously and faithfully our redemption is a great reality but the war isn't over yet and so we have a great responsibility to fight that holy war isn't the apostle Paul in Romans 6 let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body to make you obey its passions don't present your members to sin as weapons for unrighteousness but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life and your members to

[45 : 23] God as weapons for righteousness in holy war God will bring this war to an end he's doing it indeed it may seem little by little in your life but the promise here of Deuteronomy 7 verse 24 is echoed so wonderfully by Paul in Romans 6 14 sin sin sin shall not have dominion over you for you are under grace that is for you are a people holy to the Lord your God through the grace that is in Jesus Christ our Lord so friends let's be confident in his victory and let's be true to our holy calling and committed to keep battling on until the day when this earth shall be filled with the glory of God as the waters cover the sea keep battling on let's pray heavenly father there is so much in your word that we find so very difficult so troubling so disturbing so challenging because you are a holy

God and by ourselves we are so unholy so unconcerned with the terrible seriousness of sin with the rebellion against you we just have no idea what an affront that is to your great majesty what a scorn it is of your great grace but help us Lord we pray you've called us out of darkness and into light to be a people holy separated to you help us we pray to know the ferociousness faithfulness the fierceness of a desire for good for right for purity for wholeness that we should never be dragged back into the darkness from which we've come that we should be those who press on and who lead others on also into the light that they with us might glorify your son our great savior through whom we pray amen