

Day 202 - FRIDAY: July 7th

Deuteronomy 20

Deuteronomy 20:1-20 NKJV

"When you go out to battle against your enemies, and see horses and chariots and people more numerous than you, do not be afraid of them; for the LORD your God is with you, who brought you up from the land of Egypt. So it shall be, when you are on the verge of battle, that the priest shall approach and speak to the people. And he shall say to them, 'Hear, O Israel: Today you are on the verge of battle with your enemies. Do not let your heart faint, do not be afraid, and do not tremble or be terrified because of them; for the LORD your God is He who goes with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.' "Then the officers shall speak to the people, saying: 'What man is there who has built a new house and has not dedicated it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man dedicate it. Also what man is there who has planted a vineyard and has not eaten of it? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man eat of it. And what man is there who is betrothed to a woman and has not married her? Let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle and another man marry her.' "The officers shall speak further to the people, and say, 'What man is there who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, lest the heart of his brethren faint like his heart.' And so it shall be, when the officers have finished speaking to the people, that they shall make captains of the armies to lead the people. "When you go near a city to fight against it, then proclaim an offer of peace to it. And it shall be that if they accept your offer of peace, and open to you, then all the people who are found in it shall be placed under tribute to you, and serve you. Now if the city will not make peace with you, but war against you, then you shall besiege it. And when the LORD your God delivers it into your hands, you shall strike every male in it with the edge of the sword. But the women, the little ones, the livestock,

and all that is in the city, all its spoil, you shall plunder for yourself; and you shall eat the enemies' plunder which the LORD your God gives you. Thus you shall do to all the cities which are very far from you, which are not of the cities of these nations. "But of the cities of these peoples which the LORD your God gives you as an inheritance, you shall let nothing that breathes remain alive, but you shall utterly destroy them: the Hittite and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Perizzite and the Hivite and the Jebusite, just as the LORD your God has commanded you, lest they teach you to do according to all their abominations which they have done for their gods, and you sin against the LORD your God. "When you besiege a city for a long time, while making war against it to take it, you shall not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them; if you can eat of them, do not cut them down to use in the siege, for the tree of the field is man's food. Only the trees which you know are not trees for food you may destroy and cut down, to build siegeworks against the city that makes war with you, until it is subdued.

Daily Deep Dive:

Today's UCG reading plan for this chapter states: "Moses now discusses the principles governing warfare. These principles show that, despite the use of physical armaments, Israel was still to look to God for victory (Deuteronomy 20:1–9). One of the threats that Israel would face in war mentioned in verse 1 is "horses and chariots." Armies equipped in this manner were particularly intimidating to foot soldiers. The commandment was given in Deuteronomy 17:16 that Israel's kings not "multiply horses." And there is no evidence that Israel utilized horses

for war before Solomon's time (1 Kings 4:26; 1 Kings 10:26). If this is the case, it is particularly fitting that Moses assured Israel they need not fear even when armies came against them with chariots.

With Almighty God as commander, there was no room for fear in the ranks—and those who were fearful were to be excused (verse 8). Others excused from warfare—at least on a temporary basis—included a person who had just built a new house, one who had planted a new vineyard, and one who was betrothed to a woman to marry her (verses 5–7).

Deuteronomy 24:5 adds the further exception of a man who had just gotten married—he was permitted to stay with his wife for one year without having to go out to war. One of the reasons for these excuses from participation in battle seems to be that persons in such conditions would likely be thinking about what they were leaving behind rather than concentrating on the battle. No doubt, God's mercy and compassion are also shown in these regulations.

Furthermore, in these "excused absences," God was showing that it is not necessary to rely on numbers. With God fighting for His people (verse 4), very few people could easily overcome a force of many times their number (see

Leviticus 26:8), as often happened during the Israelites' history when they were obedient to God.

Before the Israelites attacked a city "very far" from them (Deuteronomy 20:15), they had to offer peace to it (verses 10–11). It is interesting that the offer was of peace—not enslavement. Such cities were to pay tribute, essentially a tax, and "serve" Israel—not in slavery but to remain in peace and harmony with Israel, thus promoting the safety, security and well-being of God's people. Moreover, in agreeing to keep Israel's laws and way of life, such cities would in fact enter into a much better way of life than they had ever known. If a city refused the offer and chose war instead, Israel was to "strike every male in it with the edge of the sword" (verses 12–13), while leaving the women and children alive (verse 14). In regard to the cities that were located within the Promised Land, however, Israel was to "let nothing that breathes remain alive" (verse 16), so that the evil inhabitants could not influence Israel with "their abominations...and you sin against the Lord your God" (verse 18).

Finally, God told Israel not to cut down fruit trees in a siege against a city. They were only allowed to destroy those trees that were not "trees for food" (verses 19–20). This

would especially make sense in a longer siege where food supplies could become an issue.” [END]

Verse 5 – John Gill’s commentary states a number of possible reasons for this command: “or perfected it, as the Targum of Jonathan, not quite finished it, has not, as that paraphrast says, fixed in it the door posts, or rather perhaps he means the Mezuzah, or writing, which the Jews thought themselves obliged to fasten to the door posts of their houses; see Deu_11:20 until this was done, an house was not thought to be completed; though Jarchi interprets this of inhabitation; of a man's having built a house, but has not yet dwelt in it; see Deu_28:30, so Josephus explains it, of its not having been used and enjoyed by a man a full year; but there seems to be something more than all this in dedication; for though it does not signify a consecration or dedication of it to holy uses, as the dedication of the tabernacle and temple, yet there was something done, some ceremony used at entrance into a new house; a good man entered into it, no doubt, with prayer and praise, as the thirtieth psalm was composed by David at the dedication of his house; see Neh_12:27 and perhaps it was usual to have their friends together, and make a cheerful entertainment on the occasion. Ben Melech on the place,

assures us it was a custom to make a feast and merriment at eating the first meal in a new house.” [END]

Verse 6 – In verse 5 and 6, the principle seems to be that God understands when someone has worked very hard on something and would like to see them receive some joy from their hard work. God gives them a time to enjoy the fruit of their labor before serving in the military.