

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Deuteronomy: Moses' Great Appeal For Israel To Obey God For Blessing Part V: Specific Treaty Stipulations Of The Great King, Deuteronomy 12-26 K. Heeding God's Wisdom In Productively Handling Conflicts With Evil Parties (Deuteronomy 20:1-20)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We need wisdom on handling conflicts with ungodly parties that are being forced upon us in today's world:

(1) We need wisdom to handle the conflict with atheists over prayer in public meetings: Mark Sherman (AP), in his article, "Justices wrestle with prayer at New York town's meetings," Republican-American, November 7, 2013, p. 4A reported the U. S. Supreme Court is deciding "the appropriate role for religion in government in a case involving prayers at the start of a New York town's council meetings." Religious conservatives want all barriers to such prayers removed while liberal groups say "a captive audience should not be subjected to sectarian prayers," Ibid.

(2) We need wisdom to handle the conflict of possibly having to pay for government-supported abortion in our businesses: the "Seventh U. S. Court of Appeals in Chicago . . . has issued a ruling preventing the federal government from" forcing "employers to provide birth-control coverage in employee insurance." (Joe Palazzolo, "Court Blocks Health Law's Contraception Requirement," The Wall Street Journal, November 9-10, 2013, p. A2)

However, "(f)ederal appeals courts in Philadelphia and Cincinnati have sided with the Obama administration" as the "Justice Department" argues "that for-profit companies have no religious rights." (Ibid.) A clear conflict over abortion that affects religious faith in businesses has thus been set up for the Supreme Court, Ibid.

(3) We need wisdom to handle the conflict of tolerating government-supported immorality in business: on November 7, 2013, the U. S. Senate "passed legislation . . . banning workplace discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender workers" that bars "private employers with more than 15 employees from" decisions on "hiring, firing, promotions or other matters based on sexual orientation or gender identity," Ibid., Kristina Peterson, "Senate Approves Ban On Gay Bias at Work," November 8, 2013, p. A4. This law exempts "houses of worship and religiously affiliated organizations," but believers may be forced by law to tolerate immorality in their businesses!

(4) On the personal level, we often must face conflicts with ungodly parties: hardly a week goes by but that some believer tells me of some conflict he has seen forced upon him by godless entities in some form.

Need: So we ask, "How does God want us to handle conflicts with evil parties that are being forced on us today?!"

- I. Deuteronomy 20:1-20 taught Israel to submit to God's way of wisely handling conflicts with evil nations that indulged in idolatry to preserve the nation Israel herself from idolatry (as follows):**
- A. This passage is part of the Deuteronomy chapters 12-26 specific treaty stipulations (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 260) that were not an exhaustive list of God's laws, but instructed Israel on specific spiritual challenges she would face upon entering the land of Canaan (Ibid., p. 283; Deuteronomy 4:10).
 - B. As such, Deuteronomy 20:1-20 taught Israel to submit to God's way of wisely handling conflicts with evil nations to preserve the nation Israel from idolatry herself:
 - 1. If Israel saw the enemy's army was humanly superior to hers, she was not to fear and surrender to the foe, adopting its gods for personal security, but to recall God's faithfulness in rescuing her from the vastly superior pagan, idolatrous forces of Pharaoh's army at the Red Sea, Deut. 20:1 with Ex. 14:17-18, 23-25.
 - 2. Then, Israel's priests were to encourage the army, proclaiming God's truth that they were not to fear the pagan foe since the Lord was with them to fight for them and to save them, Deut. 20:2-4; Ibid., p. 298-299.
 - 3. In Deuteronomy 20:5-7, God directed that those soldiers in Israel who had built new houses, planted new vineyards or taken new brides but had not enjoyed the fruits of such investments were to be exempt from fighting so they could partake of those fruits. This taught God would give Israel victory without her having to put the battle above productive edification of home life like pagan idolaters did, Ibid., p. 299.
 - 4. To avoid hurting the faith in God that Israel's army was to have, the officers were to remove those in their ranks who were faithlessly afraid of fighting the pagan foe before Israel entered battle, Deut. 20:8-9.
 - C. Once the army began to fight, God directed that Israel's men wisely function in that conflict, Deut. 20:10-20:
 - 1. In facing idolatrous foes from outside the land of Canaan, Israel was first to offer them terms of peace were they to submit to Israel as a servant nation, Deut. 20:10-11, 15; Ibid. Thus, unlike the pagan world, Israel was not to eradicate their foes in godless brutality, but use just enough force to subdue them.
 - 2. If the foe refused to surrender, Israel was to destroy its men while saving the rest as spoil, Deut. 20:12-14.

3. However, if facing Canaanite nations in war, Israel was not to offer them terms of peace, but to destroy every living thing to protect Israel from their vile, invasive idolatry, Deut. 20:16-18; *Ibid.*, p. 299-300.
4. In battle, Israel was not to be senselessly destructive, cutting down fruit trees to wage war: such trees were valuable for man's food, so Israel was not to be unnecessarily destructive, Deuteronomy 20:19-20.

II. Thus, Deuteronomy 20:1-20 supplies wisdom on handling conflicts forced upon us today by evil parties:

- A. Before getting into conflicts forced upon us by evil parties, we must prepare for such conflicts (as follows):
 1. First, we must recall God's faithful help in past conflicts to alleviate anxiety in the present, and to avoid turning to false idols or "crutches" that replace dependence upon the Lord, Deuteronomy 20:1.
 2. Second, we must rely on God's Word in Scripture for encouragement and direction in conflicts, especially as it relates to the angelic conflict, Deuteronomy 20:2-4 with 1 John 2:14b and Matthew 4:1-11.
 3. Third, we must not let ourselves get overly concerned by the conflict(s) forced on us lest we cease being productive in God's assigned duties of our lives: He is big enough to give us "room" to stay productive at those duties that we not turn to false "crutch" idols for solutions opposite trusting the Lord, Deut. 20:5-7.
 4. Fourth, we must weed out debilitating discouragement and unbelief in our hearts to keep a firm faith in God in the conflict(s) that are forced upon us, Deuteronomy 20:8-9 with Ephesians 6:12-13, 16 NIV, ESV.
- B. Once we engage in conflict(s) forced upon us by godlessness, we must function wisely there, Deut. 20:10-20:
 1. First, we must seek peace with foes who are potential allies, Deut. 20:10-11. If our effort for peace does not succeed, we must stand our ground, but only to the degree needed to end the conflict, Deut. 20:12-15.
 2. Second, some parties are so corruptively evil that reconciliation with them is unbiblical, folk whose evils are named in 2 Timothy 3:1-5a; Deut. 20:16-18. We must have nothing to do with them, 2 Tim. 3:5b NIV.
 3. Third, in all such conflicts, we must use no more destructive force than is absolutely necessary, Deut. 20:19-20. God wants us to be self-controlled in conflict, never becoming senselessly hurtful of others.

Lesson: *In facing unavoidable conflict with evil foes, God directed Israel both to prepare before fighting how to handle it, and then to engage in such conflict with wisdom to avoid giving ground to idolatrous foes or their evils.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ as Savior to obtain God's salvation, John 3:16. (2) Then, may we (a) rely on the indwelling Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16) to (b) prepare our inner man for potential conflicts from evil parties that will inevitably be forced upon us, following the directives of Scripture (section "II, A" above). Then, (c) upon entering such conflict, may we follow the Biblical directives in "II, B" above for victory in God's will.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

As an example in applying this message, we refer to a story in the November 7, 2013 Waterbury Republican-American, p. 4A about "a Chicago-area Bears fan" who "won a bet with his Packers fan wife at a bar in Wisconsin." The man, "John M. Grant, 42 of Tinley Park Illinois, and his wife watched the Bears beat the Packers on Monday night at Sidelines Tap in Mayville, Wisconsin. Grant told police he and his wife made a bet that he could use a Taser on her if the Bears won." (*Ibid.*)

After the game, "Grant used the Taser 'two times on her . . .'" so his wife called the police, *Ibid.*

Now, applying this sermon would have avoided or solved this incredible and ungodly marital conflict!

(1) First, it is not godly for anyone to get so involved in a sports team as a fan that it comes to risk his marital tranquility! Neither is it godly for either a husband or a wife to enter a bar where their brains' decision-making faculties can be easily negatively impacted by their consumption of alcohol while watching a Bears-Packers game especially in view of their feelings about the teams that are playing on the bar's TV set! (Deuteronomy 20:2-4)

(2) Second, upon entering the bar and becoming absorbed by the game they were watching there, both Grant and his wife should have kept in perspective the value of their marriage over the outcome of the Bears-Packers game to have avoided making a wager on the game that could lead to her bodily harm. (Deuteronomy 20:5-7) John in particular should never have considered using a Taser on his wife, for common sense indicates that doing so would only risk hurting his marriage opposite Ephesians 5:22-33 that teaches a husband should cherish and nurture his wife!

(3) Third, after winning the bet, John foolishly used excessive force on his wife, repeatedly shocking her with an instrument that I have seen Nebraska ranchers have to use almost always only once per cow to spur it to charge into a banding chute to be branded! (Deuteronomy 20:19-20) Instead of settling the conflict by his repeat use of the Taser on his wife, John got himself into deeper trouble both with his wife and with the police.

May we trust in Christ to be saved, John 3:16. Then, relying on the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16), may we heed Deuteronomy 20:1-20 to prepare for and to function wisely in conflicts forced upon us by godless parties.