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The Death of One for the People

by T. Austin-Sparks

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Reading: Deut. 1:35-38; 3:23-26; 4:4-5.

"The Lord was angry with me for your sakes" (KJV). You will notice that phrase is repeated by Moses in several connections, and it is very interesting and very instructive to note those connections, for they have a very living New Testament counterpart.

Death to the Power of the Flesh

In Deut. 1:35 you see that the nation, the whole nation, is being spoken to. "Surely there shall not one of these men of this evil generation see the good land, which I swore to give to your fathers... also the Lord was angry with me for your sakes." That is the first connection, a nation in the flesh which could not come into the inheritance, and yet it was the Lord's full and settled intention that the nation should come in, and as we know, eventually He did bring them in. But here we see how and upon what ground. There is a sense in which it is true that the Lord had to abandon that nation, that generation, and be no longer with them, hand them over to death. When the Lord leaves, forsakes, hands over, then there is no hope and there is no prospect. The Lord's presence is essential to the Lord's purpose, and in these words used by Moses these several times, we can see the ground upon which the Lord is present to realise His purpose, and the ground is typified in the words of Moses: "The Lord was wrath, was angry, with me for your sakes."

There is no reference made in these connections to Moses' failure, his speaking unadvisedly with his lips, which brought this penalty upon him. That is not referred to here. That is there in the background, indicating that Moses was a fallible man, showing that he was a man of like passions with ourselves, but here in the book of Deuteronomy that is not mentioned. It is kept out of sight,

because Christ is so much in view. With Christ there is no background of failure and grieving God, and He is kept here in view, and we can almost hear the Lord Jesus saying concerning the whole race in sin: "The Lord was angry with Me for your sakes" - because of you. The only way in which the Lord can be with us and fulfil His purpose to bring us in, is on the ground that someone has borne the wrath of God, someone has fallen under the anger of God which was due to us. That is very simple and very elementary, but it gives a new poignancy to the life of Moses.

The fact is, that in order that a people might come in, Moses must die. It seems cruel, unkind, on the part of the Lord after all those years of suffering, endurance and faithfulness, as the New Testament says, "Moses was faithful in all his house" (Heb. 3:2). When Moses appeals to the Lord, the Lord says - "Thou shalt not go over" (Deut. 34:4). The Lord was doing something very much deeper. We cannot always read at once what the Lord is doing in His seemingly hard, harsh, unkind dealings with His servants. It is not always possible to read God's full meaning in the experiences of His people in their sufferings. He might be writing some very deep history. Moses did not understand at the time, but the Lord here is simply saying in His act with Moses, "You wanted a people in, you have sought to bring a people in, but they cannot come in except on the ground of a death under My wrath, My anger".

On the Mount of Transfiguration, there appeared with our Lord Moses and Elijah, and then Moses understood. The cross was in view; they spoke to the Lord of His exodus which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem, and in that moment probably what was said was this, that God can only really commit Himself and bind Himself eternally to a race on the ground of someone dying under His wrath for a race that cannot come in. How big a thing there was in this refusal of the Lord to let Moses go in, and His demanding his death at that point, on the border of the land. The two things are these: God binding Himself to a people to be with them in order that He might bring them into His holy habitation, and realise in them all His purpose. Those are the two things, and that is only possible if that one has died under His anger because of them, for their sakes, in their stead.

Then you notice the Lord says, "Not one of these men of this evil generation shall see the good land... save Caleb the son of Jephunneh". "Not one", indicating so clearly what we know very well in the New Testament, that Christ's death is our death. It is very wonderful to remember and I want you to try and get hold of this because this is the foundation of our Christian life, of our faith. If you want to know what is the foundation upon which we stand and upon which the Lord is with us and the only way in which Divine purpose can be realised in us, here it is to begin with. It is only possible for God to be with us abidingly and to fulfil all His purpose which He has purposed concerning us on the ground that, as a part of an evil generation, an evil race, a sinful nation in Adam, there has been One Who has taken us in His own death into death.

Now note: Israel's death comes first, the death of that nation, "Not one of these men of this evil generation shall see the good land", not one! What a desolating thing that would be; that would be an end without any future, without any prospect, if it were a thing in itself. Get this point whatever you miss, for the Lord said to this whole race of men in Adam to which we belong: "Not one shall go in! I demand the death of every one, and I bring every one to death!" Well, there is nothing, there is no prospect, it is the end. That would simply be wiping out the creation with nothing left.

But bring in one who takes up that race representatively and dies as with that nation, and then lives again, and there is hope. It is not a death unto death, it is a death unto life. You notice in Chapter 4 it is that. That is why I read verse 4 of that chapter, "But ye that did cleave unto the Lord your God are alive *every one* of you this day." That comes in connection with the destruction that went on before of that race. You are alive, *every one*! And yet the Lord said, "Not one!" Not one - every one. How is

that? Because there was one there who died and rose again, speaking in type; died with them, died as them, but not dead to live no more. He triumphed; Moses is found on the Mount of Transfiguration. It is a type. He has triumphed, and he is speaking to the Lord Jesus of the triumph which is going to be His through death.

Now the nation is to die. Will it die a death unto annihilation or will it die a death unto a new hope? That depends on the representative one. The Lord demands our death as a part of the old creation. The cross of the Lord Jesus does represent our death. That is where the Lord says to every member of the Adam race, "Not one of the men of this evil generation shall inherit." But then there comes in another into our death under the wrath of God, and goes down with us into that death and He triumphs over our death and rises, and so the word is - "If we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection" (Rom. 6:5).

We come back to that again in another connection. That is the first time. It has to do with the whole race under sin having to die, and a representative coming in and, while going into that death with them, triumphs and makes possible a new generation, a new race, a new creation, "...alive every one of you this day".

Death to the Power of the World

"But the Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and hearkened not unto me; and the Lord said unto me, Let it suffice thee; speak no more unto Me of this matter" (Deut. 3:26).

What is this connection? If you just look around this second statement, you will find it has to do with the power of the enemy. The Lord's people were moving on, and there were enemies. Among those enemies were Sihon and Og, mighty kings, and while certain others took account of Israel's progress and objective, and did not interfere, Sihon and Og did. They represent the power of the enemy working in this world against the progress of the life of the Lord's people in a special way; that is, they have no appreciation whatever of God, of Christ. They don't take account of the value of the Lord, His things and His people. These two simply regarded Israel as something ordinary among the peoples of the world, to be destroyed. They entirely missed the great reality that God was bound up with this people, that Christ was bound up with this people, that this was the people of God. All that was dismissed from their consciousness. They had no appreciation at all of Divine things, and so this lack of appreciation of Divine things shows the nature of spiritual antagonism.

What is it that seeks to step across our path to hinder real spiritual progress? It is not necessarily an objective Sihon and Og, not necessarily something outside of ourselves. It may be even found in ourselves again. It is the spirit of the world in ourselves which underrates and undervalues Divine things. Our spiritual life, our spiritual progress, will be retarded, hindered and limited, if there is anything like this that is represented here in us or about us, that is influencing us, which is a lack of true appreciation of Divine things. That is Sihon and Og - no taking account of God, of Christ, of the people of God, of the purpose of God, of the inheritance. All those Divine and holy things were accounted as nought, and so they took hold of the land, they took possession, and they stood in the way of the Lord's people inheriting. Do we not find this so often about ourselves, that there is a loss of the keen sense of the greatness of Divine things, a loss of appreciation of the things of the Lord? So often we drop down on to a level of the common things with which we are so familiar. We have heard this and heard that and we know all about that. That is a certain realm in which certain people live and think and talk, but with us it is not alive, it is not potent.

You find this very thing coming inside of Israel, when the Psalmist says, "They despised the pleasant land" (Psa. 106:24). That was the charge laid against Israel, which resulted in their missing the inheritance. How did they despise the pleasant land? They said, "It is better to be back in Egypt having a good time, not having the bad time we are having. There is food in plenty in Egypt; there is a certain measure of certainty about things in Egypt. This land we have heard of, it may be a real one, a true one, but it is so unreal to us, so remote, it seems so far off, we never seem to be getting there. After all, it will be better to have what we can have!" They despised the goodly land and God's thoughts and intentions and purposes. So they sought Egypt over against Canaan and said, "Egypt is better than Canaan"; they despised the goodly land and lost it. That is in principle Sihon and Og getting inside, saying, "Oh, these Divine things! We will treat these people as ordinary people, we will rule out the idea of God... of Christ, of inheritance, of Divine purpose; that is all nonsense". They despised the things of God.

You and I can get there, where the things of God can lose their grip, their vividness, their appeal, and if so, something has come in that is absolutely inimical and antagonistic to God's intention in our lives.

What is going to happen? It is strange and interesting that Moses used this phrase a second time in that connection. He is speaking about those very things: the destruction of Sihon and Og, putting them right out and the possessing by the Lord's people of the territory that they had taken hold of. Moses comes right in there with this repetition, "The Lord was wroth with me for your sakes". Bring Christ in again and put Him in the place of Moses. The only way in which this underrating, weakening, vitiating of Divine things in our hearts, this persistent thing represented by Sihon and Og, can be destroyed is by the death of Christ. The cross of the Lord Jesus again meets that, and the effect is that if we have really known, and do know the meaning of our death with Christ to that side of our natures which does not sufficiently value Divine things, we have a tremendous concern for Divine things.

If we have died to the world, we have a tremendous concern for Divine things and a great estimation of Divine things. If we are still living on that side in touch with the world, influenced by the world, the spirit of the world, the great kings Sihon and Og, their influence results in this, that we have not a mighty appreciation of the things of the Lord. The coming of the death of Christ to the world in that sense in us, results in a real sense of the greatness of the things of the Lord to which we are called. This inheritance is tremendous; it is bigger than the world, it is bigger than Egypt, it can brook no interference, it is a mighty thing.

So, in effect, what is said here, if we take it over to the New Testament and put it there, is this. The death of the Lord Jesus as it applies to our hearts means the death to everything that takes away from the greatness of Divine things in our lives, and makes a way for the real sense of how great those things are. We all know this battle, we all know how true this is. These two kings are very real in our experience; they are not just Old Testament figures. Take what they stand for and they are alive today and they are very near to us. They are ever seeking to undermine in our hearts the value of the things of the Lord, of being called, of being saved, of being led out, of being chosen of God and of being in the great eternal purpose. For these things to lose their keenness and their tremendous influence and power upon our lives is the influence of Sihon and Og, and they have to die.

The interesting thing here is that when Israel came up against these kings and their forces, the Lord simply said to Moses, "Look here, do not bother", in a sense, "Do not worry; I have begun to deliver them into your hands!" And there is no story of how Israel arrayed themselves to meet those forces,

how they prepared for battle. All the account gives is that the Lord did it and that says to me a very real thing as I read it in the light of the New Testament. When we are up against these things, it is no use struggling and organising our forces against these subtle influences of Sihon and Og. It is no use trying to suppress, or to manufacture in ourselves some great concern about Divine things. We know it is useless. What is needed? Well, it is just Romans 6. Romans 6 says in effect, "Do not try and kill the flesh; you reckon yourself dead to it and then the Spirit will do the rest". You take a position in Christ that you are dead to the world, the sin that comes through this world system. Reckon yourself to be dead. Say, "I am dead to that, I am not accepting that, I decline to be drawn out on to that ground. I take a position in Christ", and then you know that Romans 7 follows Romans 6. "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death" (Rom. 8:2). That so closely corresponds to this. "I have begun to deliver." There is no organising for battle. The Lord does it because the people are seen to take a position, what we might call "reckoning".

Now, if only we will recognise and accept that the cross of the Lord Jesus does mean that His death is a victory over what is represented by these two kings, that is, the thing in our own hearts that does not appreciate Divine things; He has died to that under the wrath of God. The wrath of God is against that. In Israel's case, His wrath meant that generation did not go in because they despised the goodly land. The Lord Jesus stepped into that, died to that despising in our hearts, and we take the position, "In Christ I died to that" - and then the Holy Spirit comes in to give the victory. It is the Spirit's victory where our position is taken as to the death of Christ. That may sound involved and complicated. I want it to be quite clear. We find ourselves assailed, up against this thing from time to time, a sense of unreality, feeling that these Divine things - "Oh, well, they may be very wonderful and to some people they are, but I don't seem to have much interest, there is not much life about them, they do not seem to grip me!" And then we may get worried about it, as we ought to do because it is an evil thing. It is against the inheritance, against God's purpose.

Are we going to give it all away and let it go, despise the goodly land, the things of the Lord, because we do not feel a keen interest in them? No, if we are the Lord's, if we have accepted Christ, if we have borne testimony in baptism, this is your identification with Him. When you are doing this, you are saying: His death was my death, I died to sin, to self, to the world; I died to all that to which He died, and I live only unto that to which He lives. You said that, that is your position. That is not a theory, that is a fact, you have taken that position before God, you are committed to it. Even so, I do from time to time feel this awful inertia, lack of interest, of keenness. If you were saying it in this typical language, you would feel that Sihon and Og have got a position, you have your position in Christ. You have to re-assert your position saying, "I died to that, I reckon myself dead to that, I am not accepting that; I cannot conjure up keenness, I cannot make myself keen". You take your position anew, affirm it in the death of Christ, for His death was a mighty death to that. I take my position in the death of Christ to that and all that that means, and I count upon the Holy Spirit to do the rest.

Look what a victory! They made very complete work of these two kings and their kingdoms, but the Lord came in. "I have begun to deliver"; "I am doing this". The Spirit comes in by way of the cross. Do put it to the test.

Power to Come into the Inheritance

"Furthermore the Lord was angry with me for your sakes, and swore that I should not go over the Jordan... which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance" (Deut. 4:21). What is the connection? "But the Lord hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, out of Egypt, to be unto Him a people of inheritance, as at this day" (verse 20). "Furthermore the Lord was angry with me for

your sakes." This is the third repetition of this phrase, and in another connection which is a people taken by the Lord for His inheritance. How are the people to come into the inheritance? The Lord has chosen them, the Lord has taken them. But how will they come in? "The Lord was angry with me for your sakes." It is impossible for the Lord to get that for which He has chosen us, that is, to bring us into the inheritance, only on the ground of the death of One. The death of Christ is our only ground of coming into the great inheritance for which the Lord has chosen us. It is remarkable that Moses used this phrase three times in three different connections. You look at the connections and you see why he repeats this.

In every new situation he seems to bring that in. What has that to do with Sihon and their kings? "The Lord was angry with me. The Lord chose you, brought you out of Egypt to bring you into His inheritance; He was angry with me". It sounds like a man obsessed with his own misfortune. Oh no! The repetition is divinely controlled in these different connections. It is the basis of everything, that One has died for our sakes under the wrath of God. We could turn to the New Testament and see these three connections.

The first one corresponds to 2 Cor. 3 and 4. Deut. 5 refers back to Deut. 1 where Moses first uses this phrase. In chapter 5 we are taken back to the beginning. Then we get the giving of the law at Horeb, closely corresponding to 2 Cor. 3 and 4. Paul is speaking about Moses with a veil over his face reading the law. He goes on to say, "Ye are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in tables that are hearts of flesh." "God... shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Moses speaks about God being angry with him as he comes up to this situation. It seems to say this: Now, for our inward knowing of the Lord's mind, the writing upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit, the revelation of Christ within, it is essential that we shall know our death with Christ, the values of His death and our death with Him. That is necessary.

The second one corresponds to Romans 6, where the power of the world, the world ruling through the flesh in us, Sihon and Og, is brought to nought. In the death of Christ, we were crucified with Him, we were buried with Him in baptism, "that like as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we also might walk in newness of life".

Then the third corresponds to Ephesians, where the word is "that we may know... what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints". He chose you. He brought you out of your iron furnace, out of Egypt, to bring you into His inheritance. He chose them because He had an inheritance in them. Ephesians is just that - His inheritance.

Now, whether it be the power of the flesh, or whether it be the power of the world, or whether it be the power of the evil one, whether it be the great purpose of God in the inheritance, all is made possible on the ground of the death of Christ. His death opens the way for it and secures it all, and our accepted union with Him in that death is the way of this threefold victory and realising of all the Lord's purpose.

That is perhaps too much for you to grasp and remember, but there may be fragments about it that will help when you read of these old kings, Sihon and Og, and remember that one of them had to have an extra big iron bedstead made for him. Yes, we know all about that fellow who is out to destroy the sense of the value of the things of the Lord. He is a monster and he is very fond of his bed. It is interesting that a man like this comes up in history as associated with a big bed. Why say anything about his bed? Simply say that he is a big fellow. But in history he and his bed go together. He represents that inertia where Divine things are concerned, that death to appreciation of the

things of the Lord. He does not care about God and Christ. He is dealing with things on an ordinary level. That is the mind of the flesh, losing all real sense of the greatness of Divine things, robbing of energy and vitality in the things of God. The Lord said, "These men have to be destroyed and dispossessed". That can only be by the energy of the Spirit, not by your effort. The Spirit is over against that sort of thing.

How much we need the Holy Spirit to destroy in us the influence of Sihon and Og, the inertia and lack of the sense of the greatness of the things of the Lord and our holy calling.