

“Lessons to Learn and Mysteries to Accept When Life Is Perplexing: Part 1”

Deuteronomy 2:1-23

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Faith Presbyterian Church – Morning Service

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We continue this morning with our fall series in the book of Deuteronomy, as Moses speaks to the second generation of Israel after the exodus, at the edge of the promised land.

This morning Moses recounts their travels. But he does it in a way that includes a lot of insight into God’s work in the world.

With that in mind, we turn now to our text: Deuteronomy 2:1-23.

Please do listen carefully, for this is God’s word for us this morning.

Moses says:

^{2:1} “Then we turned and journeyed into the wilderness in the direction of the Red Sea, as Yahweh told me. And for many days we traveled around Mount Seir. ² Then Yahweh said to me, ³ ‘You have been traveling around this mountain country long enough. Turn northward ⁴ and command the people, “You are about to pass through the territory of your brothers, the people of Esau, who live in Seir; and they will be afraid of you. So be very careful. ⁵ Do not contend with them, for I will not give you any of their land, no, not so much as for the sole of the foot to tread on, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as a possession. ⁶ You shall purchase food from them with money, that you may eat, and you shall also buy water from them with money, that you may drink. ⁷ For Yahweh your God has blessed you in all the work of your hands. He knows your going through this great wilderness. These forty years Yahweh your God has been with you. You have lacked nothing.”’ ⁸ So we went on, away from our brothers, the people of Esau, who live in Seir, away from the Arabah road from Elath and Ezion-geber.

“And we turned and went in the direction of the wilderness of Moab. ⁹ And Yahweh said to me, ‘Do not harass Moab or contend with them in battle, for I will not give you any of their land for a possession, because I have given Ar to the people of Lot for a possession.’ ¹⁰ (The Emim formerly lived there, a people great and many, and tall as the Anakim. ¹¹ Like the Anakim they are also counted as Rephaim, but the Moabites call them Emim. ¹² The Horites also lived in Seir formerly, but the people of Esau dispossessed them and destroyed them from before them and settled in their place, as Israel did to the land of their possession, which Yahweh gave to them.) ¹³ ‘Now rise up and go over the brook Zered.’ So we went over the brook Zered. ¹⁴ And the time from our leaving Kadesh-barnea until we crossed the brook Zered was thirty-eight years, until the entire generation, that is, the men of war, had perished from the camp, as Yahweh had sworn to them. ¹⁵ For indeed the hand of Yahweh was against them, to destroy them from the camp, until they had perished.

¹⁶ “So as soon as all the men of war had perished and were dead from among the people, ¹⁷ Yahweh said to me, ¹⁸ ‘Today you are to cross the border of Moab at Ar. ¹⁹ And when you approach the territory of the people of Ammon, do not harass them or contend with them, for I will not give you any of the land of the people of Ammon as a possession, because I have given it to the sons of Lot for a possession.’ ²⁰ (It is also counted as a land of Rephaim. Rephaim formerly lived there—but the Ammonites call them Zamzummim— ²¹ a people great and many, and tall as the Anakim; but Yahweh destroyed them before the Ammonites, and they dispossessed them and settled in their place, ²² as he did for the people of Esau, who live in Seir, when he destroyed the Horites before them and they dispossessed them and settled in their place even to this day. ²³ As for the Avvim, who lived in villages as far as Gaza, the Caphtorim, who came from Caphtor, destroyed them and settled in their place.)

This is the word of the Lord. (Thanks be to God.)

“All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord endures forever.” [1 Peter 1:24-25]

Let’s pray ...

Lord, you are our portion,
and so we commit ourselves to keep your word.
We ask you with all our hearts to show us your favor,
and be gracious with us according to your promise.
When we consider our ways,
turn our feet to your testimonies.
And as we hear your word now,
give us a sense of urgency to conform ourselves to it,
so that we act on it without delay.
Grant this we ask, for Jesus’s sake. Amen.
[Based on Psalm 119:57-60]

Introduction: The Perplexing Situation

We have before us another one of those texts that is easy to just pass over, but which actually contains a great deal of theology in it.

The overall arch of the text is to describe the wilderness wanderings of Israel up until they get to their battles with Sihon and Og. After their thirty-eight years of wandering, God, in verse three, formally announces the end of their time in the wilderness, and directs them towards the promised land. [Barker, 333]

On the way, they pass by several other nations: the Edomites, the Moabites, and the Ammonites. And as they do, God gives them directions on how to relate to these nations, and we get some parenthetical statements about them. Again – these are easy things to pass over, but as Christopher Wright notes, “more theology is tucked into these obscure notes” than we may at first realize. [Wright, 36]

If we stop, and really reflect in this passage, there is a lot for us to consider. The situation it

presents us with is a perplexing one, in which there are both lessons to learn, and mysteries to accept.

First, consider God's blessing of and protection of the Edomites, the Moabites, and the Ammonites.

The Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites all had some historic connection to Israel. The Edomites were the descendants of Esau, the brother of Jacob (who was the patriarch of Israel). The Moabites and Ammonites were descendants of Lot, a relative of Abraham.

But that doesn't mean that they are friends of Israel. In fact, if we know the events in more detail, as recounted in the book of Numbers, then we know that they are not.

In Numbers 20 Moses humbly petitions the king of Edom to let Israel pass through their land by the king's highway, assuring them that they will take nothing without paying for it, promising to be peaceful, and recounting their suffering in Egypt. The king of Edom refuses. When Moses asks again, the Edomites show up with an army, ready to fight if Israel should try to pass through the land. And then Israel, in obedience to Yahweh's command to be careful not to provoke Edom, travels around the land instead. [Num 20:14-21]

With Moab the case is even worse. In Numbers 22 we read of how the elders of Moab collaborated with the elders of Midian, under the leadership of Balak the king of Moab, to hire the seer Balaam to curse Israel. When this does not work [Num. 23-24] we read that certain women from Moab and Midian led the Israelite men astray, both into sexual sin and into idolatry. In Numbers 31:16 we learn that this was not just an incidental sin that occurred, but that Balaam advised the leaders of Midian and Moab to send these women in to Israel, and they did – they proactively sought to tempt the Israelite men away, both to sexual sin and then to idolatrous Baal worship, pimping their own women out in order to try to damage Israel's relationship to Yahweh.

Later on, after they were in the land, the Moabites and the Ammonites would both attack Israel [Judges 3:12-14], their false gods would be a temptation to Israel [Judges 10:6], and each would at times oppress Israel [Judges 3, Judges 10-11]. There was a reason why, in Deuteronomy 23 Moabites and Ammonites were excluded from the assembly of Israel.

The Edomites, the Moabites, and the Ammonites were not friends of Israel or faithful to Yahweh. They were enemies to Israel, and they didn't just not know Yahweh, but they actively rejected him, and tried to tempt Israel away from him.

And yet, what do we read in our text?

God says to Israel in verses four and five: "Be very careful. Do not contend with [Edom], for I will not give you any of their land, no, not so much as for the sole of the foot to tread on, because I have given Mount Seir to Esau as a possession."

He says in verse nine: "Do not harass Moab or contend with them in battle, for I will not give you any of their land for a possession, because I have given Ar to the people of Lot for a possession."

He says in verse nineteen: "When you approach the territory of the people of Ammon, do not harass them or contend with them, for I will not give you any of the land of the people of

Ammon as a possession, because I have given it to the sons of Lot for a possession.”

These nations, who have rejected God and who hate his people, God has blessed them with a land, and he is protecting them from harassment in that land.

This becomes more perplexing when we consider the plight of Israel in the midst of all this.

Israel has, of course, disobeyed the Lord – that is what led to their wandering. And even in their wandering there was sin – the book of Numbers attests to that as well. But at the same time there was faith. At the same time there was obedience.

Moses seems to highlight this in verse one, which emphasizes that now, at this point, Israel was obeying God’s command from Deuteronomy 1:40. [Wright, 35]

In any case, Israel is more faithful than the Edomites, the Moabites, or the Ammonites – that seems difficult to deny.

And yet, we read in verse fifteen, regarding the first generation of Israel, that at this time “the hand of Yahweh was against them, to destroy them from the camp, until they had perished.” That is language of pestilence – similar to the language used to describe the plagues that God brought on Egypt [Exodus 9:3, 9:15] and later the Philistines [1 Sam 5:6-11] [Barker, 333].

God is killing his people in the wilderness, while he blesses and protects those who openly reject him in the lands of Edom, Moab, and Ammon. God is bringing suffering on his people, while blessing those who reject him. That is the perplexing situation our text this morning confronts us with.

And it is a situation that God’s people have wrestled with throughout history.

False Conclusions

There are, of course, false conclusions that can be drawn from situations like this.

One is that God can have no good purposes for allowing such things. God either doesn’t care, or he is cruel, or he isn’t that powerful, or he simply doesn’t exist.

From this perspective, there are no lessons to learn from such perplexing situations, they simply serve as evidence against God’s power, his love, and his plans in this world.

A second false conclusion that can be drawn is that we can see exactly what God is up to in these kinds of situations. We can see the plan, we know his purposes, and we know and understand all the secondary causes he is employing to bring about his purposes.

Both of these conclusions are wrong.

The truth is that there are both lessons to learn from these perplexing situations, and mysteries to accept. And we must rightly embrace both if we are to walk as God calls us to.

At the risk of separating two elements that God holds together in this passage, we will look at the

first aspect today, and the second aspect next week, when we return to this passage again. So this week we will consider the lessons we are called to learn from these kinds of situations, and next Lord's Day we will focus on the mysteries we are called to accept from them.

Contrary to the view that such situations prove God's lack of love or lack of power or lack of existence, the Bible tells us there are things about God we should understand from situations like the one described in our text this morning.

And so, with that, we will consider God's purpose in blessing those who reject him, God's purposes in bringing suffering on those who trust him, and God's lessons for the faithful when we see the rebellious blessed.

God's Purpose in Blessing Those Who Reject Him

So first, we consider God's purpose in blessing those who reject him.

That is, after all, the pattern we see here.

God has blessed those who have rejected him. He has given land to the Edomites, the Moabites, and the Ammonites. In verses five, nine, and nineteen God uses the same rare expression to describe giving land to them, as is used in verse twelve to describe the land he will give to Israel – saying that he has given it to them “as a possession.” [Barker, 333; see also Wright, 35-36]

And that should be a bit shocking. There has been such an emphasis on the gift of land to Israel, and that gift has been connected with their relationship with Yahweh. But now God speaks in similar terms of his giving land to Edom, Moab, and Ammon, even though these nations reject Yahweh – even though they are actively hostile to Yahweh and Yahweh's people – even though they will instead attribute their victories and their blessings to their patron deities Chemosh, and Milkom. [Block, 83, 84] Yet still, Yahweh honors that gift of land so that he will not give any of it to Israel. [Wright, 34-35]

God blesses and cares for people who reject him.

That's what we see here.

Why does he do that? What is his purpose or his goal?

We get help in answering that question from the Apostle Paul, in Romans 2. There Paul addresses those who are in rebellion against God – who are not taking seriously God's calling on their lives. He says to them: “Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” [Rom 2:4]

God's kindness and patience towards those who reject him is supposed to lead them to repentance.

God's good gifts in creation point to God's character – a character that is different from the false gods of the pagans, and the false gods of our secular society. As God gives good gifts that reflect his character, he testifies to those he blesses concerning who he is. He gives testimony that he is neither like Chemosh, nor like Milkom, nor the distant secular gods of our culture. He is a

powerful, loving, holy, and personal God, who shows kindness and patience towards his creatures. And as he does that, by his good gifts, he calls those who are estranged from him to repentance. He calls them to turn from their rebellion and from their imagined gods, to him, the true God.

God's kindness is overwhelming. He gives wonderful gifts to people, just as he gave the land to the Edomites, the Moabites, and the Ammonites.

His patience can be remarkable. Remember: God promised the land of Canaan to Abraham, but then told him in Genesis 15:16 that his descendants would have to wait over 400 years before they would receive it, because, he told Abraham, the "iniquity" of the people in the land was "not yet complete." God was patient, and gave the Canaanites centuries to repent.

God was patient ... but that patience did have an end point. Which is why God's blessing on those who reject him is not just a casual call to repentance, but an urgent call to repentance. For when people respond to God's kindness and patience with persistence in sin, it actually increases their guilt.

Hear the rest of Paul's words in Romans 2. He says: "Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed." [Romans 2:4-5; see also Acts 17:26-31]

Jesus himself taught that the more that is given to someone, the more testimony they receive of God's nature, the greater their judgment will be if they persist in rejecting him. [Luke 12:47-48] And such was the case with the Canaanites. Their judgment increased in part because of their persistence in rebellion despite the blessings they received. And the same would be the case for the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites who persisted in their rejection of God.

And the same is true today for those who continue to resist God despite the blessings he has given them. Does that describe you this morning? Do you resist the God of the Christian Scriptures? Maybe you resist the idea of God altogether? Or maybe you have fashioned a god after your own image – a secular god who likes what you like and dislikes what you dislike, and disagrees with you about nothing, but takes all his or her directions from you. That is a god a lot like Chemosh and Milkom. It is a god who is subordinate to you and what you want. It is a god who must be pretty weak since it lacks the strength even to confront or contradict you.

And if it is a god that weak, then it is surely too weak to deliver the kind of blessings you have received in your life.

Every gift you have, from the material goods you have to your very existence, is testimony to a God who is more powerful than you are, wiser than you are, holier than you are, and therefore above your power to dictate his opinions to him. He is a God not to be ordered around, but to be honored and submitted to. He is a God who has shown you kindness and patience. And in that, he is a God who is urgently calling you to repent, and to turn to him, and submit to him.

In Christ he offers you forgiveness for your past rebellion, if you call on him, and submit to him, as he has revealed himself to be, and not as you would make him.

God has been patient with you. But there is an end to that patience. There was for the Canaanites. There was for the Edomites, and the Moabites, and the Ammonites. And there will be for you as well. And the more you have heard of this God, whether from the testimony of the good things you have received, or the words you have heard from his word or his people, then the more responsibility you will bear for your persistence in resisting him.

Instead, he urges you to turn, and embrace him, and bend the knee to him: your kind and patient King.

And so, the first thing we see is that God's purpose in blessing those who reject him is to urgently call them to repentance. Their response will lead either to their salvation, or to their greater judgment.

God's Purpose in Bringing Suffering on Those Who Trust Him

The second thing for us to consider is God's purpose in bringing suffering on those who trust in him.

And here it is helpful to briefly review the four main causes of suffering that the Bible presents to us. We've talked about these in more detail before, but they are worth briefly reviewing this morning as we consider Israel's suffering in the wilderness. [See my 4/5/20 sermon "Four Causes of Suffering" for a more detailed discussion. The following also draws from Delitzsch, p.104-109]

First, God may bring suffering on the godless because of their sins. This suffering may be used to bring them to repent and embrace him, or it may be a prelude to the judgment that is to come if they persist in their sin.

In this way, God uses suffering among those who reject him to the same end that he uses blessing: it is an urgent call to repent.

And this purpose was at work as God brought suffering on Israel in the wilderness because what is revealed in the wilderness is that even among Israel, there are those who have not embraced Yahweh from the heart. For those individuals, their suffering in the wilderness was a call to repentance, ending either in their conversion or their condemnation.

That is one purpose of suffering.

Second, those who have trusted in God may suffer his fatherly discipline for their own good. Here we have not the godless suffering because of their sin, but the faithful. And this is very different from suffering that is a prelude to judgment. This is suffering that doesn't grow out of God's wrath, but out of his love, as its aim is the good of his children.

This too was at work among Israel, as the faithful sinned against God, and he lovingly disciplined them for their spiritual good, leading them back to repentance through that discipline.

Third, the faithful may suffer because God has chosen to use a trial to prove and to reveal their faithfulness towards him. Here the purpose of suffering in a believer is not to correct them, but to

reveal just how deep and genuine their faith is. God may be displaying their faithfulness to others around them, or he may be revealing it to the believer themselves, or he may be revealing it to the heavenly hosts. That was the case with Job – Job suffered not as a corrective, but as a means of revealing before Satan and the heavenly hosts just how genuine and deep his faithfulness to the Lord really was.

This dynamic also seems to be at work among the Israelites: Even as Edom sought to provoke Israel, Israel refused, and accepted the hardships of a longer route to the promised land, all to prove their faithful obedience to the Lord. [Block, 82]

Fourth, the faithful may suffer for the sake of the kingdom of God – as a witness to God’s work. This is the sort of suffering we think of with the martyrs: those who suffer for their faith before others in a way that testifies to the Lord and advances the kingdom by helping others see the truth of their faith.

And we have the potential for that here as well, as God uses the struggles of Israel to testify to his power, as he mentions in verse seven. Israel’s suffering in the wilderness pointed to God’s sustaining power, which served as a testimony for his kingdom.

And so, we see that just as God has purpose in blessing those who reject him, so God also has purposes in bringing suffering on those who profess to follow him. We may struggle to know exactly what that purpose is – and that is some of what we will consider next Lord’s Day – but given the Biblical witness, we are not able to claim that there can’t be a purpose to it.

God can have good purposes for bringing suffering into the lives of his people, just as he has good purposes for bringing blessing into the lives of those who reject him.

Such situations may feel perplexing, but they do not contradict God’s existence, his power, or his love.

God’s Lessons for the Faithful When We See the Rebellious Blessed

Which brings us to our final question: When we, as God’s people, see suffering among those who are seeking to be faithful to the Lord, and comfort and ease and blessing among those who seem to reject the Lord, what lessons are we to learn from that?

Our text holds out at least five lessons for us to consider.

1) God Is Sovereign

The first is that God is sovereign. We have a tendency to limit God. Whereas the ancients limited a god’s power to the borders of his nation, and the rationalist deists limited God’s power to setting the world in motion, and the secular but spiritual modern person limits God’s power to their hearts, the God of the Bible insists that he is sovereign over every square inch of the universe.

That claim – that the Christian God is sovereign over every person, every heart, and every square inch of creation – is controversial today, but it was controversial back then too. The Moabites would have been baffled to hear the claim that Yahweh was responsible for the good things they

enjoyed. But it still was true. It was one of the things that made Yahweh unique in the ancient world, and it continues to make him unique today.

We must not shy away from it, even when the world around us is perplexing, even when the wicked are blessed, even when the righteous suffer.

Still, Yahweh, the God of Israel, the God of Jesus Christ, is sovereign. [Wright, 34, 36, 37; Block, 81]

2) All Is Gift

The second lesson from these truths is that everything belongs to God, and all we receive is a gift.

Nothing is yours by innate right. Nothing. God does not owe you anything. Everything you have is a gift. But we forget that. And when we forget that we begrudge God for giving good things to others – especially when he gives good things to the wicked.

At the end of the parable of the vineyard, when some become angry at the master for giving to others more than those others deserve, the master says this – he says: “Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?” [Matthew 20:13-15]

When you are angry or envious of how God has blessed others – even the undeserving – that is a question you must come back to: God asks you “Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge my generosity?”

God has already given you more than you deserve – both in this life and the next. He does no evil to you when he gives good things to others in this life – to the Edomites, the Moabites, and the Ammonites around us. He has a purpose in it, even if you cannot see it. Is he not allowed to use what is his for his purposes? Do you begrudge his generosity?

That is the second lesson for us to consider.

3) We Are to Love Our Enemies

The third lesson we are to take from these perplexing situations is the reminder that God – the God of the Bible – calls us to love our enemies, just as he loves his enemies.

Jesus, in the Sermon on the Mount, says: “Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.” [Matthew 5:43-45]

Jesus tells us that when God blesses the ungodly in this life, he is modeling for us what he wants us to be like. As his children, we are, after all, to reflect his character.

For the Israelites in our text, that meant extending patience to the Edomites just as God had. God was patient with Edom. He charged Israel to be patient as well – urging them in verse four to “be very careful” not to provoke Edom to sin. [Barker, 333] Israel obeyed. They extended grace to

those who hated them. And in so doing, they reflected the patience of Yahweh.

That sort of graciousness is looked down on today in our culture. It's viewed as weak. It's viewed as fearful. It's viewed as lacking conviction. You could easily imagine some in Israel decrying the decision of Moses to go around Edom, rather than boldly marching through it.

But faith in that situation didn't mean boldly confronting Edom. It meant being "very careful" not to provoke them – not because Edom was too strong for God to handle, but because Yahweh was showing Edom patience, and he called on his people to do the same.

The Apostle Paul issues the same command to the Church in Romans 12, when he says to us: "Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. [Romans 12:17-18]

And so the third lesson we are to draw from God's blessing on those who reject him is a reminder that our God calls us to love our enemies.

4) God Can Be Trusted to Bless Us

Fourth, when God blesses the ungodly, the godly are to be reminded that God will certainly give to them all that he has promised.

That was one of the conclusions that God clearly intended Israel to draw here. Israel was approaching the promised land. The previous generation had doubted that God would give them what he promised to give them.

And then, on the way, God shows them the land he has already given to the Edomites, the Moabites, and the Ammonites. The conclusion that Israel was to draw was that if God has so given land to these unfaithful people, then surely, he will give all he has promised to Israel, if Israel clings to him in faith and loyalty.

In the same way, when we see God give good things in this life to those who resist him or deny him or blaspheme him, then we should be assured that if he is so gracious and powerful to give such good things to his enemies in this life, then surely, he will give all he has promised to his children in the next life.

5) The Earthly Accomplishments & Rewards God Gives to Nonbelievers Should Admonish Us to Pursue the Heavenly Accomplishments & Rewards He Offers Us

A fifth and final lesson for this morning that the earthly accomplishments and rewards that God gives nonbelievers should admonish us to pursue the heavenly accomplishments and rewards God offers to us.

This last point can be both an encouragement and a rebuke.

The first generation of Israel refused to enter the land because the Anakim were there – those the Israelites regarded as giants. Israel doubted that God could really use them to defeat such powerful forces in the world.

But then, in verses ten and twenty-one we are told that such giants were in the land given to the

Moabites and the Ammonites as well. Yet the Moabites and the Ammonites went in. And by God's grace, they defeated them.

And that should have been both an encouragement and a rebuke to Israel.

It is an encouragement because it reminds Israel that God is not limited by the instruments he chooses to use, and so we need not worry about our strength if we are relying on his. [Barker, 333]

But it is a rebuke because if those who do not know the Lord and his power have the courage to tackle such challenges, then how could we, who do have the knowledge of and the promises of God, fail to do the same?

It is a rebuke as well because God was offering Israel so much more. For the risk and sacrifice of going to battle, the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites received a temporal reward, but they had no relationship with God, and would lose that reward at death. And yet, they took that risk and made that sacrifice for those temporal rewards, while Israel refused to take the risk or make the sacrifice that God had called them to, even though God promised to be with them both in the land in this life, and then for all eternity in the next.

Augustine, the fifth-century Church father makes this point in Book 5 of his work *The City of God*. Looking at Roman history, he points to all that the pagan Roman heroes were willing to sacrifice for earthly glory. He recounts men who had their sons killed in exchange for glory and honor in Rome. Christ does not ask that of us, Augustine points out, but when he calls us to give of our wealth in ways that may deprive our children of some comforts, and offers us in exchange unfading eternal glory, we often resist. He recounts other Roman heroes who gave of their wealth or their physical wellbeing or even their lives, all for the temporal glory of Rome ... but then he points out how Christians often resist giving up much less in exchange for much greater and eternal rewards. [Augustine, V.17-18 (p.167-171)]

Augustine identifies between the Church and the pagan world the same patterns we see in our text between the first exodus generation of Israel and the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites.

And, if we're honest, it's the same pattern we can see in our own lives as well.

Many nonbelievers around us are willing to sacrifice much of their comfort and their freedom and their labor all for temporal wealth and honor ... while many of us Christians are hesitant to make sacrifices for the eternal wealth and honor that comes with active service in Christ's kingdom.

And it's not only that – we can see it within our own lives. How much quicker are we to sacrifice our time for more money, compared with our hesitation to sacrifice our time for God's kingdom and a heavenly reward? How much quicker are we to sacrifice for our career success, or the worldly success of our children, than to sacrifice for our (or their) eternal success? We can each – myself included – just consider what we allow to push aside prayer, or Bible reading, or volunteering, or family devotions in our lives, to begin to get an answer to that question.