

Carried by the Father

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[0 : 0 0] All right, good afternoon church. How are we doing? Very good to see all of you. Yeah, it's a lovely afternoon, eh? Yeah, the storm has passed and everyone looks very happy today.

! All right, so, well, today's sermon is titled, Carried by the Father. Maybe at the end we'll truly understand how and why. And yeah, I just want to say thank you to Pastor William, you know, for giving us the overview of Deuteronomy last week. Hang on. Boom. Is it working? Yeah, turn it on. Okay. Right. Yeah, for some reason the clicker. Okay. Maybe another clicker. Okay. So, I guess one of the highlights of the entire book of Deuteronomy is the Shema, which is in chapter 6, verse 4. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your hearts and with all your soul and with all your strength. Right? Sounds familiar, eh? Right? Because Jesus quoted this exact verse. So, now, Shema means to hear. So, let's calm our hearts and get ready to hear what God has to say through his word in Deuteronomy.

But first, let me tell you a story. So, there's a guy called John and he loves surfing. And one day he heads out to the beach that's basically deserted, right? Only him and this beach.

But there's another guy who's as tall as a Goliath, right? Has the build of, you know, a giant man, right? And he's not swimming, but he's actually doing taekwondo on the beach. Weird. But after a little while, right, on the sea somewhere, a tiny weenie kid pedals over on a surfboard, right? Flows himself next to John.

And just started chatting away like their old mates. So, John was like, hey, what's your name? My name is Shane. And how long have you been serving?

[2 : 3 2] I've been serving for seven years. And how old are you? I'm eight. So, he's so tiny that John was thinking inside, you know, his mind, maybe we could have just given him a frisbee, you know, and he can still serve. Now, what do you love about serving? And Shane goes, it makes me feel really peaceful inside.

And also, the bonus is that you get to meet a lot of nice people. And John was like, yeah, of course, because you're so nice. Of course, you're attracted to nice people. And they keep chatting and chatting. And John asked, well, how did you get to the beach then? And Shane says, oh, my dad brought me here.

And then he waves towards the shore. And that Goliath doing taekwondo, that's his dad. And then it all clicks for John. Why is this little kid so calm out in the ocean? He's only eight.

Not because he's, you know, some kind of prodigy. It's because someone is watching over him from the shore. And with a dad of this size and this build, Shane has never been afraid.

And what about us? What about our father? And what do we need to be afraid of? Our heavenly father in Deuteronomy is absolutely mighty.

[4 : 0 0] But did his children, the Israelites, realize that? Did they remember his mighty acts of saving them from Egypt? They didn't. They didn't even believe it.

And the consequences were devastating. Let's have a look at the map here. So the story started at Horeb, where they received the Ten Commandments.

And if you follow the purple line, this is where they ended up at the, you know, the entrance of the promised land called Kadesh Barnea, right?

In the middle arrow. You see that? Yeah? But that was 40 years ago. So Deuteronomy chapter 1, verse 2 says, It takes 11 days to go from Horeb to Kadesh Barnea by the Mount Seir Road.

But the Israelites took 40 years to get into the promised land. That's, if you do the math, that's 1,300 times longer. Why?

[5 : 0 9] Why? And that is the question of the whole chapter sets out to answer. And where are they now? If you look at the right, upper right corner, that's where they are right now.

So east of the Jordan in the territory of Moab. That's where, you know, 40 years has passed. Now Moses is reflecting and is explaining the laws to them again.

So Moses is retelling the story. And you can hear a little bit of heat in his voice at times. But he's not tracking up the past to guilt trip anyone.

He's doing it so his new generation will remember what kind of God is your Heavenly Father really. Now a little bit more background about Deuteronomy.

So in the Hebrew Bible, it's called Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy is the word taken from, you know, our English translation. These are the words, right? Deuteronomy means words.

[6 : 12] And then many, many centuries after the original Bible, the ancient Greek translated it as Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy means second. Nomos means law.

Meaning it is basically a restatement of the commands that they experience, you know, in the first few books of the Bible.

The whole book is essentially Moses' farewell sermon collection. As a prophet, as a pastor, and as a law interpreter, all rolled in one.

Now, Pastor William just mentioned, Moses even gave us a response song at the end, which is chapter 32. Now chapter 1 opens Moses' first addresses, where he uses history as a mirror to show us how God was faithful, how his people were faithful, what it caused them, and how God's grace kept going anyway.

So I briefly break chapter 1 into four to five sections. So first, what God has already prepared.

[7 : 23] What has God set up for Israel? And then the wisdom of organization. How does God's word guide us in building healthy communities? Giants and high walls.

What giants and obstacles do we face in our own lives? And what is the cause of rebellion? And finally, is our Heavenly Father a loving father or a strict father?

So let's dive into the first section. Moses quotes what God said at Mount Herod decades earlier. You have stayed long enough in this mountain. Let's break camp and advance to the hill country. That's verse 6 and 7. Verse 8, God uses a crucial word here.

See, I have given you this land before you. Go in and take possession of the land. And the Lord swore he would give it to your fathers.

[8 : 25] Have given. That's perfect tense. Before the Israelites had taken a single step, God had already prepared the promised land for them.

It wasn't like, well, give it a crack and see whether you can, you know, fight off the inhabitants there. And if you win, you take the land. No. It's like, look, I have already signed it off for you.

Go and collect what is yours. Now, Deuteronomy is a renewal of covenant between God and his people, right? So maybe the word have given carries a bit of legal weight here.

Think of it like buying a house. You have signed the agreement. Settlement hasn't happened yet. You haven't got the keys. But you know that the house is yours.

So when God says, I have given, the title has already been transferred. And of course, the Israelites are not walking into just an empty house.

[9 : 31] There are some really seriously intimidating squatters living in it. And receiving the promise won't be easy. It's full of challenges. But will we shrink back?

Will we chicken out? Verse 33 says, It's God who went ahead of you on your journey. God is ahead of us.

So friends, what are you facing right now? Would that be like a career change? Perhaps a new job, starting a new business, going back to study?

Maybe you hesitate a little bit whether you should go or not. You have been praying about it. But this hesitation comes from wisdom or comes from unbelief.

Wisdom seeks God's guidance and then acts accordingly. Unbelief just delays and delays indefinitely. God doesn't want us to charge in anything blindly.

[10 : 36] But he also doesn't want us to camp at Horeb forever. Sometimes the hesitation isn't about work at all, right? It could be the next step of faith in your life.

It could be, you know, coming back to church, you know, after drifting away. It could be about forgiving someone who hurt you deeply. It could be about handling a burden to him.

And God says, I have already prepared a way for you. What we need to do is to stay close to him and take the first step. Maybe at the church level.

What is our church theme, by the way? From generation to generation. How are we feeding the spiritual needs of our next generation?

Are we raising them up to become leaders one day? How are we leading them from the wilderness into the promised land? Now, this church belongs to everyone here.

[11 : 39] So let's think deeply onto how to lead all these beautiful young people into the promised land, shall we? And God says, I have already entrusted the future of this generation to you.

What we need to do is to stay close to him and keep walking faithfully. Because God has already walked in front of us. And we have nothing to fear.

The question is how? Now, second section is the wisdom organization and leadership. Now, after talking about how God had prepared the promised land, Moses thinks back to the practical challenges of the time back then.

He couldn't manage everyone on his own. So he selected wise, respected, and experienced people as leaders. And charged them, Now, I want to give us a sidebar here.

How many people was Moses actually managing? How many back then? Any numbers? What does the Bible say?

[13 : 10] Any estimates? Hmm? 200,000. Yay! Getting pretty close. Sorry? Over 9,000.

Hmm, a little bit colder. Okay, anyway. The book of Exodus tells us that there were about 600,000 men. Right?

If we include maybe women and children, it can be adding up close to 2 million. But, interestingly, numbers says there were only about 22,000 firstborn males.

Now, imagine if the total number of males, including little children, were about, say, 900,000. But firstborns were only 22,000.

That means every mom would have had to raise about 40 sons to make the mats work. Right? Not even counting the daughters.

[14 : 11] Which is obviously unrealistic. So, some Bible scholars have re-examined the original text. Exodus 12, 33 literally reads 600 elif.

Elif is usually translated as thousand in our translations in the Bible. Right? But elsewhere in the scripture, it can also mean clans. Or a military unit of about 9 to 14 people.

So, if we use that reading instead, the estimated total population comes down to roughly 22,000.

That's not, you know, Pastor Barry's saying is, you know, some other scholars who have kind of like a consensus about this.

So, maybe it's a little bit helpful for us to imagine and to reframe how we picture the scene here.

But, anyway, whether it was 2 million or 20,000, there's still a lot of people.

Right? They need a structure. A school of 2,000 students need administration. Right? Yeah?

You've been there? And so does a church of 200.

[15 : 25] Being organized is not about power. It's about carrying justice and fairness under the big umbrella of love and grace and putting God's heart into practice.

And how? The method is to learn to delegate and empower others. So, thank you for, Eva, you know, sharing that, yes, there are many, many gaps, many, many holes that we can fill.

Now, another sidebar here. We are a Baptist church, right? Which means the congregation holds the highest decision-making authority. And this is why we regularly elect deacons and ministry leaders to manage church operations.

So, what kind of leaders should we be choosing? Moses gives us three criteria. First, wise. These people would be relying on the Holy Spirit.

They would be able to think deeply, and that's depth. They would be discerning and understanding. Having a broad perspective on the world, that's about breath.

[16 : 46] They would be experience with a proven track record, whether in ministry or in workplaces. Now, leaders serve carrying the trust of the congregation.

And the day-to-day decisions and details should be confidently handed over to them. That's biblical delegation. But if we take the highest decision-making authority to the extreme, and start, say, in a ridiculous case, right, voting on what kind of brand of toilet paper we shall use, or what kind of brand of coffee bean we shall use, and we take that into a members' meeting and vote and discuss, that's ridiculous.

That's just a waste of everyone's time, eh? So, let's pray for, you know, more and more brothers and sisters to step into our serving role, especially those who are more experienced in life.

And you might be thinking, hey, I don't have any of those three qualities. I only have a heart to serve because I want to serve God out of love. I thank God for your heart.

And because that's humility. And with that humility, you can start to learn. You can start reading books. You can listen to podcasts. Listen to YouTubes.

[18:06] You can keep going until it all clicks spiritually. And don't stay still because staying still is where complacency kicks in. Pride and insecurity actually have something in common.

They both make you stop growing. But true humility keeps you learning and stepping up. And may God stir everyone's us to serve out of love for Him.

And you don't have to start as a leader. And God will guide you every single step. Now we come to the third section. Giants and the high walls.

Next, Moses looks back at the turning point where the whole operation, the whole journey derailed. And the reason why 11 days turns into 40 years.

And by this stage, the Israelites already are stepping at the doorstep of the promised land. And Moses tells them, do not be afraid. Do not be discouraged.

[19:13] That's verse 21. But people suggest, hey, maybe we should send spies first, you know, to scout the land out. And Moses was, yeah, that's fine.

The spies come back and report, you know what? The land is really good. The grape is very juicy and yummy. But the people living there are much bigger and taller than us.

The cities are massive. The walls are up to the sky. We even saw the anarchites. Verse 28. Who are the anarchites?

The anarchites are descendants of the Nephilim mentioned in Genesis 6-4. They are enormous, powerful people. The spies said in the book of Numbers, we seem like grasshoppers in our own eyes and we look the same to them.

They are scared. I don't know how many of you have ever watched an anime series called Attack on Titan. Anyone? Oh, I can see some fans over here.

[20:21] That's great. Right? And you've got a rough idea of what it feels like to face those human eating giants. Right? Obviously, animes are exaggerated.

But the sense of overwhelming dread, that's real. And how do the people respond? They grumbled in their tents, saying, the Lord hates us, so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the MRIs to destroy us.

Now, just let that sink in for a moment. Did you catch it? They said, God hates them. They took God's love and twisted it into hatred.

They reinterpreted his guidance as a setup. And that's what fear does to us. Fear distorts how we see God.

So, Moses responds with three things. Look, God goes ahead of you. He will fight for you. And he carries you like a father carries his son through the wilderness.

[21:28] And verse 31 says, there you saw how your Lord, your God carried you as a father carries his child all the way you went until you reached this place.

But tragically, the older generation only see the giants in front of them. They couldn't see the ultimate giant standing behind them, which is the Lord himself.

so, now the ultimate giant gets angry. In verse 35, he says, no one from this evil generation shall see the good land I swore to give to your ancestors.

That's how 11 days became 40 years. Now, how does the story end? Maybe you want some spoiler, don't you? Right?

I'll give you a minute. Look up Joshua chapter 11 verse 21. Have a look. Have a look. The book of Joshua chapter 11 verse 21.

[22:38] What does it say? Who is the main actor there? Joshua. Yes, thank you, Ken. Yeah? So, what did Joshua do?

Exactly. Joshua went and destroyed the Anarchites. Israel wins completely.

Now, listen again. Who actually took down the giants? Who? The text says Joshua. Right? Of course, we know that there's not him alone.

That's impossible. We're talking about Joshua leading the Israelites. But, we can also sense the hand of God, working at the background. Moses has said, the Lord, your God, who is going before you, will fight for you.

That's Deuteronomy 1.30. And in Joshua 1.9, the Lord says, do not be afraid, do not be discouraged, for the Lord, your God, will be with you wherever you go.

[23 : 39] God. Does having God on your side mean you just sit back and do nothing? No. You still have to face the giants yourself.

In God's strength, though, not your own strength, you will be able to bring it down. And friends, your giants today may not be anarchites.

What would they be? Would they be the housing markets or living costs? Saving deposits feels impossible nowadays, right? Also, balancing income and expenses feels impossible.

But in God's strength, we can live with discipline, financial discipline. We can cut back where we can and look for new opportunities. Maybe your giants is about studying.

And no matter how hard I try, it just wouldn't click. But in God's strength, you build routines. You set up a timetable and you keep showing up.

[24 : 48] Would your giants be health? Maybe a scary diagnosis, a long treatment plan. But in God's strength, you can walk it through one step at a time. Would that be a difficult relationship?

In God's strength, you can work at restoring it bit by bit. would your giants be a habit that you can't seem to break? Maybe in God's strength, you can put your phone down and stop scrolling and you can fight it one day at a time.

Now, what is the cause of rebellion? God hears the people scrambling and swears in anger. No one from this evil generation shall see the good land I swore to give to your ancestors.

Only Caleb and Joshua are the exceptions because they followed the Lord wholeheartedly. that's verse 36. So, more unfortunate episode happens afterwards.

After hearing the judgment, the people suddenly says, oh no, we have sinned against the Lord.

Now we'll go up and fight as the Lord our God commands us. But God warns them through Moses this time, you do not go up and fight because I will not be with you.

[26 : 16] and they ignore him. They charge up anyway and get absolutely smashed by the Amorites. So, they come back and weep before the Lord and the text says, the Lord paid no attention to your weeping and turned the deaf ear to you.

Let's just let us sink in for a moment. It's very heavy words, isn't it? God paid no attention. Why? Because their so-called repentance was all talk and no walk.

Before, they refused to go up because they didn't trust God. They didn't trust His word. And after, they rushed up recklessly because they didn't trust God's warning.

What they trusted was their own judgment, their own timing. So, both times was rebelling. It was just at the different opposite directions.

rebellion has a cause. When we refuse to listen to God, what basis should He listen to our prayers? Is it fair to God?

[27 : 29] Friends, is there a giant God has been telling you to face and you keep putting it off? While there is still time to correct things, don't delay because when the window closes, the cause becomes very, very dear.

Now, after reading the whole chapter, you might be wondering, is God a loving father or a strict father? Verse 31, it says, He carried His child through the wilderness like a dad carries his son. That's a loving father. father. Verses 34 to 35, He also swore in anger, you know, banning the entire generation from entering the promised land.

That's a strict father. Verse 39, He also promised to give the land to the next generation. That's a loving father again. So, what is it?

The answer could be both, eh? But, sometimes when we live as Christians for long enough, we lean towards describing God as a loving father.

[28 : 43] Yes, this is absolutely true. But, does the fact that Jesus has already borne our sins mean God has turned into like an only soft and gentle God with us?

You know that's not the heavenly father we expect. The book of Hebrews tells us in the New Testament, God disciplines the one he loves and he chastens everyone he accepts as his son. Endure hardship as discipline. God is treating you as his children. But what children are not disciplined by their father? Look, God loves us.

He disciplines us because he treats us like his own children. Right? And theologically, let's think it through. It's after the fact that you are saved. We don't save by being a good children.

Right? We are saved by accepting the faith through Christ. But does that mean God will never discipline us after we become his children?

[29 : 51] Of course not. Good parents love their children unconditionally, but they also know when to discipline, sometimes letting their children bearing consequences of their mistakes.

Because without that, children grow. And sometimes, you know, this is how Deuteronomy works. How does God show his unwavering love and his serious reinforcement of the consequences? The consequence of rebellion is that an entire generation misses out on the promised land. That is strictly enforced. There's no room for negotiation. But what about the unwavering love? God continues to lead Israel with the pillar of cloud and pillar of fire for 40 years. We're talking about GPS system 4,000 years ago. He continues to provide, to protect, and to watch over them every single moment.

[30 : 59] love and strictness don't contradict each other. Think of a tough love doctor. She may tell you, you need to cut out sugar.

You need a surgery. Take some medication. It may feel harsh, even cold. But she's saying because she's seen your report. And she knows that doing nothing could be far worse.

And behind that strictness is a heart that genuinely cares. And that is the God of Deuteronomy in chapter 1. Discipline isn't about punishment.

It's about protection. His strictness exists because he doesn't want us walking towards something far more dangerous, which is to walk away from him. Because he is the source of protection and blessing.

Choosing to abandon him means choosing danger and curse. And now verse 39 is probably the most hopeful verse of the entire chapter, right?

[32 : 08] The little ones that you said would be taken captive, the children who do not yet know good from bad. They will enter the land. Maybe the previous generation has failed, but God's promise doesn't end with their failure.

His grace can start a fresh in a new generation. So, friends, we do carry regrets all the time, right? Well, some things, you know, when they are gone, they're done, they're done.

But let this verse sink in. They will enter the land. Our children, our grandchildren, they're not condemned by our past.

God's grace can begin anew in the next generation. What's needed is to pray earnestly for them and to trust that God's faithfulness is bigger than our failures and regrets.

Now, let me finish with a story that perhaps shows a glimpse of how our Heavenly Father is like. Maybe you know this story already. In 1977, a father named Dick Hoyt pushed his son, Rick, born with a cerebral palsy and unable to walk or speak in a wheelchair across the finish line of a five-mile road race.

[33 : 33] And that night, Rick typed on his communication device because he can't speak. Dad, when I'm running, it feels like I'm not handicapped.

And from that day onwards, Dick never stopped carrying his son. So over the next four decades, Team Hoyt, that's their name, completed more than 1,100 races together.

72 marathons, 32 Boston marathons, and six Ironman triathlons. Dick swarmed 2.5 miles pulling Rick on a boat, cycled 112 miles with Rick in a seat on the front of a bike.

And ran 26.2 miles pushing Rick's wheelchair. When people ask where Dick's strength comes from, and Dick replied, my strength comes from my son.

So a bronze statue of the two of them now stands near the starting line of the Boston Marathon in Massachusetts, United States. There's a father pushing his son forward together.

[34 : 53] Deuteronomy 1.31 says, the Lord your God carried you as man carries his son in all the way that you went.

Dick Hoyt carried Rick, not because Rick could earn it, but because Rick was his son. That's the heart of our Heavenly Father.

He doesn't carry us because we are strong enough, fast enough, or faithful enough. He carries us because we are his. Now the road may be long in your life, maybe 11 days will stretch into 40 years, but our Father who carries us will never put us down.

Isn't it amazing? Let us pray. Father, dear Heavenly Father, thank you for reminding us through Deuteronomy chapter 1 of who you are.

You're faithful, you're loving, and just. Your discipline doesn't come from hatred, but from love, because you don't want us walking towards greater danger.

[36 : 06] Lord, help us see our own giants, and don't let fear distort how we see you. Help us truly repent from rebellion, not just from words, but with a change of actions and attitudes.

Lord, help those of us who are parents to follow your footstep in balancing discipline and grace. And Heavenly Father, there may be friends among us who don't know you yet, but today they've heard that you are a father who carries his children through the wilderness.

Lord, reveal yourself to them. Let them know how deeply you love them, and that you're ready to embrace them at any moment. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we pray.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.