

# Deuteronomy 2 & 3

*Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.*

Date: 12 October 2014

Preacher: Stuart Cashman

[ 0 : 00 ] We've sung a number of songs this morning that remind us of our need, our desire for courage and confidence to live a Christian life in this world, to not fear things.

And there's certainly plenty of things to fear, aren't there? Perhaps in our own lives, circumstances and situations that look beyond our control. Perhaps in the bigger picture, we see conflicts around the world, we see a rising tide of atheism in this country, and more on that later on.

So we need courage and confidence. It's helpful to remember that these words in Deuteronomy 2 and 3 are spoken by Moses to God's redeemed people, to give them confidence.

By looking back on their history, he is calling them to have faith in this great God, to have courage and confidence in facing the challenges ahead. But before we look at his words in detail, we also need to acknowledge that hearing what he says are some words that provide a big problem for many people in our culture.

One of the big objections people have to Christianity is that the God of the Bible is not a God of love, but in the Old Testament is, in the words of Richard Dawkins, a malevolent bully.

[ 1 : 12 ] Now where do they get that from? Look will you please, at Deuteronomy chapter 2, and verse 33, or verse 32.

Then Sion, one of the two kings, he gets beaten in this chapter. Then Sion the king came out against us, he and all his people to battle at Jehaz. Now look at this.

Now many people will read that and say, well hang on, God is here commanding Israel to do what Boko Haram are doing.

In Nigeria. What Islamic State are doing in Iraq and Syria. How can you possibly claim that this is a God of love? Religion is an evil thing, and you Christians have got as much to answer for as any other religion.

Well, face it, that's a fair question, isn't it? How do you feel as that question is posed? Is God of the Old Testament a malevolent bully? As Richard Dawkins says. Well, we could talk about this for hours.

[ 2 : 30 ] Let me just say three things briefly. In response to that, if you want to talk more about it, we'll ask more later. Please do come and talk to me. And the first thing to say is, God is not here commanding or endorsing random genocide or ethnic cleansing.

This is God's just judgment. This God of the Bible is the God who created everyone and everything. We are all accountable to him. People don't like the idea of being accountable to a higher being these days, do they?

That is what the God of the Bible is. He's the one to whom we are accountable. And this is not ethnic cleansing. This is judgment. So back in Genesis chapter 15, when the Lord had promised this land to Abraham and his descendants, that he'd explained that they wouldn't come and get the land straight away.

They'd be slaves in Egypt for 400 years. And then eventually come to this land. Why? This is the Lord's words. Genesis chapter 15, verse 16. They, your descendants Abraham, shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.

I'm not going to give you the land any earlier, Abraham, because their sin, their iniquity is not yet complete. I'm going to wait till then for the judgment to fall.

[ 3 : 48 ] So this is not ethnic cleansing. This is the just act of judgment against some evil, terrible people. Now what were the Amorites doing? What was so bad? Well, we look on in the book, in Deuteronomy chapter 12, verse 31, we see some of the reasons they were being judged.

There the Lord says that the Amorites had done every abominable thing that the Lord hates. They have done for their gods. For they even burned their sons and their daughters in the fire to their

gods.

So these nations were guilty of the most horrendous child abuse. Burning their own children. Because that's just the tip of the iceberg. The kind of culture that does that, there is all sorts of other evil things going on.

So this is God's just judgment against them. And you notice it was specifically against them. It wasn't just anyone lying in Israel's way who they were allowed to conquer.

It was specifically the Amorites. So here in Deuteronomy chapter 2, we see the other countries that they couldn't go and beat up. So if you look at the very end of the chapter, the last verse, verse 37, Deuteronomy 2, verse 37.

[ 4 : 57 ] Moses reminds them, only to the land of the sons of Ammon, you did not draw near. That is, to all the banks of the river Jabbok, the cities of the hill country. Whatever the Lord our God had forbidden us.

So Israel didn't just have carte blanche to attack whoever they wanted. It was specific. It was God's act of judgment against the evil Amorites. That's the first thing to say.

The second thing is to say, there was no favoritism here. It wasn't like God was just looking after Israel and then not doing anything for the other nations. No, the Israelites were warned time and time again.

We'll see this through the book of Deuteronomy. That if they went the same way as the Amorites and the Canaanites, that they also would get God's judgment. So if you want to turn over to chapter 9, verse 5, I'll read you what it says there.

The Lord speaking to Israel says, it's not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you're going in to possess their land. It's not that you guys are really good and morally superior.

[ 5 : 58 ] No, not at all. But it's because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God is driving them out before you. It's because they deserve his righteous fair judgment.

There's no favoritism here. As we read through the book, we see God warns Israel time and time again that if they are unfaithful to his covenant, if they disobey his word, if they reject him, then they will face the same consequences.

In fact, you can read Deuteronomy chapter 28 later, if you like. There God promises them that if they turn away from him, they'll get the same judgment that came to the Amorites.

They'll end up besieged, thrown out of the land, eating their own children in the disaster that will come upon them. This is not random genocide.

It is the just judgment of the almighty creator God. And secondly, he does not show favoritism.

Those who reject him will face judgment. And the third thing to say is this is a limited action.

[ 6 : 58 ] It was only for a limited period. If you read on through the story of the Old Testament, you will find, you will not find, that God always sends his people off to do the business of judgment for him. No, this is really just tucked away in the book of Joshua.

It's really just one generation. And here in Deuteronomy as well, I suppose. This is one generation where God sent his people to enact his judgment physically on the world around them.

It's not something that's repeated time again in the Old Testament. It's certainly not something we find in the New Testament. In fact, Jesus explicitly says that his kingdom is not of this world. He forbade his disciples from taking up arms to defend his cause.

No. This was a specific limited action. A specific period of time. But it was there as a warning for all time. It was like a sort of trailer.

You know when you go to the cinema, not like being to the cinema for years, because they've got young children and they never go to the cinema. You know what it's like? You go to the cinema and you get a brief preview of some film that's coming out soon. Well, that's what the judgment against the Amorites and the Canaanites was.

[ 8 : 04 ] It was a brief preview of what is going to come one day. Because God has set a day when he will judge the world. And it's not just cities and villages that will be destroyed.

But everyone who has not trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ. Everyone who has not obeyed the gospel message to repent and believe. And the judgment will be more serious. It won't just be the flattening of a village or a town.

It will be eternal separation from God and hell. Paul says in Acts 17 verse 31. That God has given evidence of this to all men. By fixing a day when he will judge the world in righteousness by a man

whom he has appointed.

And of this he has given assurance to all. By erasing him from the dead. The fact that Jesus is alive now shows us he is the king. Ruling over everything. And he is the one who will judge.

The judgment here enacted by God's people. In Deuteronomy 2 and in Joshua. There's a foretaste of the judgment to come. That will be enacted by the righteous and fair judge.

[9:11] The Lord Jesus. Our creator and king to whom all are accountable. So how can a loving God possibly command and condone this ethnic cleansing?

As people outside the church would see it. Well it's not ethnic cleansing. It is just judgment. There is no favoritism. And it's a warning. A warning of the judgment to come for all of us.

The question is not. How can God do this? The question is. How can I be right with a God who is holy and just? So having said all that.

The Bible does still use. Even in the New Testament. The language of warfare. So what do Christians have to learn. From the defeat of two Amorite kings. Over 3,000 years ago.

What's the message for us? Well where the New Testament talks about warfare. It doesn't talk about against people. It talks about firstly spiritual warfare. At Ephesians chapter 6.

[10:08] Paul tells us that every Christian believer. Is caught up in a big battle. And he says we do not wrestle against flesh and blood. But against the rulers. Against the authorities. Against the cosmic powers of this present darkness.

Against the spiritual forces of evil. In the heavenly realms. See our battle now is not against people next door. We're caught up in a battle against the evil forces. Against Satan.

The priests of this age. Or against a battle against our own desires. Peter talks 1 Peter 2.11. About abstaining from the passions of the flesh. Which wage war against your soul.

This internal battle as well. It's a battle that we wage as we preach the gospel. Paul says that our gospel is veiled to those who are perishing. So our war now is not against flesh and blood.

It's a war against our own desires. As Satan tempts us. It's a war in this world as we preach the gospel. As we seek to live out the good news. It's a war we wage. Not with physical weapons.

[11:11] But with prayer. With dependence on our Lord. With his word. The sword of the spirit. Not a physical one. But a spiritual one. And like the Israelites.

If we can engage in this battle. If we can be fully committed. To living as God's people. Then we need courage and confidence. In this God. Don't we? For our battle is every bit as fierce.

As it was for those Israelites. Facing the Amorite swords and spears. So like them. We need to know we're not alone. We need to know that God is with us.

And that God holds the future. So how do we do? How do we know that? How can we have that confidence? As we speak to our neighbours.

As we head back to messy family situations. Messy financial situations. How can we have confidence that God will do his work? How can we have confidence God will do his work?

[12:06] As we look at the news. And see hideous things happening all around the world. Well. Have confidence for the same reason that Moses tells the Israelites. They can have confidence. As we look at these two chapters.

Relatively briefly. We're going to see that the Lord rules. Over the history and geography of the nation. That the Lord uses his enemies. To further his purposes.

And the Lord keeps his word. For blessing or for judgment. The Lord is big enough. Big enough to rule over nations. Big enough to use his enemies. Big enough to keep his word.

Let's look at those three things. Relatively quickly. After that very long introduction. Okay. If you did read through. Very quickly. Chapter 2. Verses 1 to 23.

You'll see time and time again. That the Lord is in control. Ruling. He's big enough to rule the history. And geography of the nations. Look at verse 9 for example. The Lord says there.

[13:03] As the Israelites. Are heading towards the promised land. The Lord said to them. Do not harass Moab. Or contend with them in battle. For I will not give you. Any of their land for possession.

For I have given R to the people of Lot. For possession. We see a similar command. In verse 10. Further on in the chapter as well. Back in chapter 5. Verse 5.

Further on. In verse 19. There were certain places. The Israelites could not attack. Why? Because the Lord had given the land. To these other people. And in fact. If you look at the detail.

He kicked out strong powerful nations. To give these other nations. The land. So verse 10. The Enim. Sorry. The Enim. Not Enim. She's an artist. The Enim. Formerly lived there.

A people great. And many. And tall as the Anarchy. In other words. The people of Moab. They had a problem Israel. But I dealt with it. I kicked out the big fierce giants. And I gave them the land.

[14:00] What's the Lord telling them? He's saying. I'm big enough. To rule over the history. And the geography. Of all the nations. I gave these other countries. Their land. I can do it for you.

And because I gave them the land. You can't take that land from them. I gave it to them as well.

This is how big. Our God is. He's big enough. To rule over the history.

And the geography. Of the nations. And so. We can have confidence. As we look out. At our world today. There is nothing on the news. Tomorrow night. That the Lord did not know about.

Last year. Indeed. Last decade. Indeed a thousand years ago. There is nothing about Ebola viruses. Or the Islamic State. Or anything else.

That the Lord did not know about. He's big enough. To control the history. And geography of the nations. He's big enough. To control. How. Even the six and a half million.

[14:57] Refugees. Who fled Syria. Or moving around the world. He is that big. So we can have confidence. We can engage in his word. Engage in his work.

With confidence. That he is in control. Teaches us humility as well. This was a lesson for Israel. He wasn't just working amongst them. Giving them the land.

He is working around the world. Doing things. And so he is for us. Sometimes we talk. Don't we.

About sending mission partners out overseas. As if. God wasn't doing anything overseas.

Before our mission partners got there. It's not true. He's big enough. To be in control. Of the history.

And the geography. Of the nations. We can have confidence.

And secondly. He's big enough. To use his enemies. For his purpose. Look down to chapter 2. Will you. And we'll look at verse 30 in a moment.

[15:53] Moses is recounting. How the Lord had sent them off. To do battle. With Sion. And king of Bashan. Oh. Sion king of. He wasn't Bashan. Sion king of wherever he was king of.

Heshbon. That's the one. Now. Moses is recounting this. Because these were significant victories.

For Israel. These were victories. That had just been won. That the present generation.

Had seen and fought in. So he's encouraging them with that. But look how it came about. Verse 26.

I. Moses. Sent messages from the wilderness of Kedemoth.

To Sion. The king of Heshbon. With words of peace. Just like he'd sent. To. The people of Seir. And to the people of Moab. But.

Sion wouldn't take the peace. Look at verse 30. Sion. The king of Heshbon. Would not let us pass by him. For. Why was this conflict provoked?

[16:48] For the Lord your God. Hardened his son. Spirit. And made his heart. Obstinate. Moses offered peace. But Sion.

Wouldn't accept it. Why? Because the Lord. Is big enough. To even use his enemies. For his purpose. Look at the purpose. Then. At the end of verse 30. Why did the Lord do it? That he might give him.

Into your hand. As he is today. And the Lord. Said to me. Behold. I've begun to give Sion. And his land. Over to you. Begin to take possession. That he may occupy it. See that's how big.

The Lord is. He's even using. His enemies. To do his purposes. To provoke a battle. For his. To further his own end. Now. Some people might complain.

At this point. Hang on. That's not fair. If God. Hardens Sion's heart. Then how can God. Hold him responsible. For rejecting the peace. That's not fair.

[17:44] Well. We can talk about that for hours. We don't have time. This sermon needs to end. At some stage. You'll be glad to hear. Paul answers that same. Same question.

In the New Testament. In Romans chapter 9. This is how Paul puts it. You will say to me. Why does. Why does God. Still find fault. Who can resist his will. But.

Who are you. O man. To answer back to God. What is. Will what is moulded. Say to the moulder.

Why have you made me like this. Has the potter.

No right. Over the clay. In other words. God is the creator. Who are we. To argue with him. Now we could go.

For a longer. Answer for that. But that's the bottom line. Isn't it. To recognise that we are creatures. He is the creator. I think another thing. We can say to this. Is. When. When. Zion the king of.

[ 18 : 43 ] Heshbon. Got the message. From Moses. Offering peace. He didn't sit there. Over breakfast. And say. You know what. I'd really love to agree. To that peace. I'd really love to. But I. I've got indigestion.

Or something. I just. Have to say no. I'm going to fight you instead. No. He did. What he wanted. To do. He did. What he wanted. To do.

It was his choice. But over and above. His choice. Was. The God. Who uses. Even his enemies. To fulfill his purposes.

And each one of us. Also has to look to God. To do something. With our hearts. Because what happened. With Zion. Naturally. Turning his heart. Against God. Is what would naturally happen. To every human being. If you and I. Are here today. Because we believe. That his God. Is loving. And gracious. And has shown us his mercy. Through Jesus Christ. That is not because.

[ 19 : 40 ] We are morally superior. To Zion. The king of the Amorites. Or we're nicer people. Or we're better educated. It's because. Our creator God.

And his mercy. Has softened. Our hearts. Rather than letting them. Be hardened. So this should give us. Humility. Without God's grace.

We'd all be in Simon's shoes. But also confidence. That where people. Turn away from God. He's still in control. He uses his enemies.

To further his purposes. We see that in the New Testament. As well. Even more clearly. Not just in the. The dusty pages. Of the Old Testament. We don't read. But in the New Testament.

What do the apostles say. Acts chapter 4. Verses 27 and 28. After the arrest of. Peter and John. And praying to God.

[ 20 : 35 ] They say this. Truly in this city. They were gathered together. Against your holy servant. Jesus. Whom you anointed. Both Herod and Pontius Pilate. Along with the Gentiles. And the peoples of Israel. The enemies.

Got together. They planned. What did they do? To do whatever. Your hand. And your plan. Have predestined. To take place. See God can use his enemies. To further his purposes.

He did that in the Old Testament. He did it in the New. As God's enemies. Put the Lord Jesus. On a cross. And thought they triumphed. What was God doing?

Bringing his greatest victory yet. We can have confidence in God. Because he's big enough. To rule the history. And geography of the nations. He's big enough. To use even his enemies.

To fulfil his purposes. And he's doing that right now. In the world. I was at a conference on Tuesday. At All Souls. Up in central London. Looking at. Dealing with the rise of atheism.

[ 21 : 34 ] In the western world. There's two of the speakers there. One was John Lennon. Who is a guy. With a brain the size of a planet. He's just been on a speaking tour. In many different countries. He's been in Australia.

For example. In Australia. He was saying. That in the five biggest cities. The organisers have booked out. The biggest venues. In each of those cities. Lennox's title was. Cosmic chemistry. Do God and science mix. Each of those venues was full. 1,500 to 2,000 people. Many of them not believers. Why? Because. The way that new atheists are writing.

And stirring up controversy. And saying God and religion. Are all rubbish. And evil. And terrible. It's stirring up questions. God is using his enemies. To further his purposes.

People are coming to Christ today. In this country. And around the world. When the tour of John Lennon was on. Why? Because they've been watching. Programs. With Richard Dawkins. Or. Brian Cox.

[ 22 : 28 ] If those of you are watching. The Human Universe. On Tuesday night. On BBC 2. And it's making them think. It's making them ask questions. And God's truth. Triumphs. God is using his enemies.

To further his purposes. We can be confident. In him. On which note. If you have watched. The Human Universe. With Brian Cox. It does raise lots of questions. Maybe friends of yours.

Have as well. We'd love to do all those questions. I love talking about this sort of stuff. As you'll probably find out. And so. I'm hoping. We'll have an opportunity to do that. You've got friends. Who are.

Very into. Science. Explaining everything. Or who have questions. Arising from. What Brian Cox is talking about. At the moment. Or Richard Dawkins. Or any of these people. And last. I'll have an opportunity.

To get together. I hope you can talk to Rachel. I didn't manage to see Rachel. Before the service. Possibly do something. With international students. Soon. Which I'm sure you'll be welcome to join. Or possibly even.

[ 23 : 23 ] A Saturday Night Live. Sometime. There is an opportunity. There is an opportunity. Which we can take. Because the Lord uses. Even his enemies. To further.

His purposes. Which takes us on to the last point. The Lord is big enough to rule over the nations. So the history of geography. He's big enough.

To use his enemies. And he's big enough. To keep his word. He's big enough to keep his word. Both for blessing. Or for judgment. Last week we saw.

Or you may have seen. If you were here last week. That God passed judgment. On those who would not trust his word. And we see. The fulfillment of that judgment. If you look back to. Verse 14. Of chapter 2. At that time. At the time. From our leaving. Kadesh Barnea. Until we crossed over the brook of Zemarad.

[ 24 : 16 ] Was 38 years. Until the entire generation. That is the men of war. Had perished from the camp. As the Lord had swarmed them. For indeed. The hand of the Lord was against them.

To destroy them. From the camp. Until they perished. They were the first generation. To come out of Egypt. They had the opportunity. To go into the promised land. But they hadn't taken that opportunity.

Because they didn't trust. That God would deliver on his word. And so he promised them. They would die in the desert. He is true. He keeps his word. In judgment. And he keeps his word. In blessing as well. So we turn on to chapter 3. We don't have time to look at all this. We've seen how. God gave Israel a victory. Over Sion.

The king of Heshbon. And over Og. The king of Bashan. Isn't Og a great name for a king? Anyway. God gave them victory over that. So they conquered some land. They had some real estate. Two and a half tribes.

[ 25 : 12 ] Were given that land. The tribes of Gad. And Reuben. And half the tribe of Manasseh. And that was their inheritance. The Lord gave that to them. But they still had to.

The rest of the nation. Still had to cross over the river Jordan. And conquer the rest of the land. God had promised them. How was that going to happen? Well look at. Chapter 3 verse 21. Just over the page.

I commanded. Moses commanded Joshua. At that time. Your eyes have seen. All that the Lord your God. Has done to these two kings. So will the Lord do. To all the kingdoms. Into which you are crossing.

You shall not fear them. For it is the Lord your God. Who fights for you. Go on Joshua. You take them over. You can take that land. Because the Lord is going to fight for you.

As you have seen him do. The Lord is big enough. To keep his word. Of blessing. To give you that land. He is big enough to do that. In spite of discomfort.

[ 26 : 07 ] And in spite of disappointment. You see the discomfort. If you let back up a few verses. Sorry to jump around a bit. But these tribes. Reuben. Gad. And Manasseh.

They got their land. They got some villages to live in. They'd already got their bit of the promised land. What were they to do? They just sit back. And send nice text messages. Or nice Facebook posts.

To their fellow Israelites. As they headed off. To do battle over the sea. No. Because God. Is big enough. To keep his word. They had to join in the fight too.

Look at verse 18. Of chapter 3. Moses speaking. I commanded you at that time. You two tribes. Saying the Lord your God has given you this land to possess.

All your men of valor. Shall cross over armed. Before your brothers. The people of Israel. Only your wives. And your little ones. And your livestock. I know that we have much livestock. Shall remain in the cities that I have given you.

[ 27 : 04 ] Until the Lord gives rest to your brothers. As to you. They also occupy the land. That the Lord your God gives them. Beyond the Jordan. That each of you may return to his possession.

Which I have given you. Moses is saying. The Lord is big enough. To do for them. What he has promised. So you join in the battle. You commit to God's purposes. Commit to serving with God's people.

Yes. It is going to be uncomfortable. You have to leave your wives and children behind. You have to trust. That I am going to look after them. But my purposes. My promises. Are bigger than your comfort. Get going.

I am big enough to keep my word. Fight with them. And so for us. God's word. We can trust his word. He will do it. We can invest ourselves. Commit ourselves to his purposes.

Despite comfort. Despite discomfort for us. Imagine if these Israelites had been 21st century westerners. What would they have said? You know.

[ 28 : 02 ] I am not going with you. I have got my nice house. I have got to do it up. I have got to look after my sheep. I have got to get my satellite TV installed. You go and fight. I will keep up with you on the news.

No. The Lord says. My purposes are bigger than your comfort. Buy into them. Trust me. That I can keep my word. He keeps his word. Whatever our discomfort. Whatever our disappointment as well. If you go on to the. These last verses. Which we could spend ages on. But we won't do. Verse 23. What happened to Moses? I pleaded with the Lord at that time.

Say. Oh Lord God. You have only begun to show your servant. Your greatness and your mighty hand. For what God is there in heaven. Or on earth. Who can do such works. And mighty acts as yours.

Please let me go over. And see the good land beyond the Jordan. That good hill country. And Lebanon. But the Lord was angry with me. Because of you. And would not listen to me.

[ 29 : 04 ] And the Lord said to me. Enough. From you. Do not speak to me of this matter again. What happened there? Well. Back in Numbers chapter 20. The people had been grumbling.

There was no water. So Moses had prayed to the Lord. And the Lord said. Go to the rock Moses. And tell the rock. To produce water for you. But Moses so frustrated.

By the 40 years. The Israelites getting him down. Had gone up to the rock. And rather than just speaking to it. Had hit it twice. With a stick. And the water had come out. But the Lord said to him at that time.

To Moses and to Aaron. Because you did not believe in me. To uphold me as holy. In the eyes of the people of Israel. Therefore you shall not bring this assembly.

Into the land that I have given them. What was the issue? He didn't believe God's word. At that critical point.

[ 30 : 00 ] So despite his disappointment. The Lord was going to keep his promise. And Moses wasn't going to go into the promised land. Instead Moses had to encourage Joshua. Now none of that would have happened. If God's people hadn't grumbled.

They'd have been in the promised land by then. So Numbers 20 wouldn't have happened. That's how Moses can complain. If it wasn't for you I'd be there. For the Lord is big enough to keep his word. In judgment.

And in blessing. Now how does it make you feel. That Moses didn't get into the promised land. I've got to be honest. I've struggled with this over the years.

Moses is a great hero isn't he? He's a great rescuer of God's people. All he did was that one time. Not trust God's word. Isn't that a bit mean? But now I realise.

Why it's like this. To teach us. That none of us are good enough. None of our leaders are good enough. We can't put our faith in them.

[ 30 : 56 ] We need a greater rescuer. A greater deliverer. One who always trusted. His father's word. One who is perfect. One who can take us all the way.

To inherit all that God has promised. We don't need a Moses. We need a Jesus. A Jesus who died and rose again. Who trusted his father even in Gethsemane.

And who is even now. Big enough to rule over the history of the nations. Big enough to use even his enemies to fulfil his purpose. Big enough to keep his promise.

For blessing. Or for judgement. This is the Jesus we can have confidence in. Let's trust him. Let's pray. Let's pray.