

THRESHOLDS

Deuteronomy 30:15-20

INTRODUCTION

- A. Tale of Two Cities (*Charles Dickens*).
 - 1. ****It was the best of times, it was the worst of times,***
It was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness,
It was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity,
It was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness,
****It was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair,***
We had everything before us, we had nothing before us,
****We were all going direct to heaven,***
we were all going direct the other way...
 - 2. The beginning of Dickens' tale of courage and love, of death carts and howling mobs, of the privileged few and the deprived masses, of the guillotine and the social unrest – the French revolution.
 - 3. One of the great transitions in history.
- B. Standing on the Threshold.
 - 1. Not all transitions are made thoughtfully. Sometimes thrust into the future with little time to think.
 - 2. Sometimes we see the transition coming and we have opportunity to consider...
 - a. Where are we going...?
 - b. Why we are going...?
 - c. What do we hope to find when we get there?
 - 3. Looking back at the past with mixed feelings.
 - 4. Looking ahead to destiny with fear and excitement, doubt and faith.

I. THRESHOLDS IN DEUTERONOMY.

- A. Standing on the Verge.
 - 1. A new generation.
 - a. Not the same group of people God had rescued from the Egyptians.
 - b. Most had died during the last 40 years of wandering – except Caleb and Joshua.
 - c. These were their children and grandchildren.
 - 2. A new land.
 - a. Here was the culmination of 650 years of promises.
 - i. God had promised Abraham the land of Canaan.
 - ii. Then repeated the promise to Isaac and Jacob.
 - b. It was a good land.
 - 3. A new leadership.
 - a. Miriam and Aaron had died, Nu. 20:1, 28.
 - b. Moses is about to die atop Mt. Nebo, Dt. 34.
 - c. Joshua and Eleazer were ready to assume the mantle of leadership.
 - 4. A new chance.
 - a. They had been at this point once before.
 - i. But, because of a lack of faith, failed to go in.
 - ii. 40 years in the wilderness and a host of grave markers.
 - b. Here they were again with a fresh opportunity to enter the land.
 - c. Ready to make the best of their second chance.

5. Transition time – what Deuteronomy is all about.
 - a. Moses calls them to consider what is about to happen, peer across the Jordan and think about what the future holds.
 - b. They had the opportunity to stand on this threshold and think carefully about where they were going ... and why ... and what they hoped to find when they got there.
- B. Contemplating the Future.
 1. ***The Threshold Question: What kind of nation would they be?***
 - a. Deut. 28-30, blessings and cursings – alternatives for their future.
 - b. What kind of nation would they be? What sort of people?
 2. The easy answer: What they did not want to be.
 - a. Not strangers and pilgrims like the Patriarchs.
 - b. Not slaves and aliens like their grandparents.
 - c. Not wanderers like their parents.
 - d. They didn't want to be faithless and be kept out of the promised land.
 - e. They didn't want to be complainers and suffer the plagues.
 - f. **In a word, they did not want to suffer God's curses as their forefathers had so often done: Dt. 28:20-29.**
 3. If not that, then what?
 - a. Always easier to say what you do not want to be, than to state what you do want to be.
 - b. It is always easier to react to your heritage than to embrace your destiny.
 - c. The Israelites did want to be people of God's blessing: Dt. 28:3ff.
 4. The hard realities – Dt. 30:19.
 - a. How do you "choose life"?
 - i. The future – not determined by a vote!
 - ii. A consequence of present decisions!
 - b. Deut. 30:15-18
 - c. The connection between present and future, character and consequences.
 - i. The blessings based on obedience – Dt. 28:1-2.
 - ii. The curses promised for disobedience – Dt. 28:15.
- C. Counting the Cost.
 1. Could they sacrifice today to become tomorrow what they hoped?
 2. Could they be individually what they wanted to become as a community?

II. THRESHOLDS FOR US.

- A. Standing on the Verge (better for New Year...)
 1. A new generation.
 - a. Not the same group of people who establish the church 150 yrs. ago, or who built this building 60 years ago.
 - b. We are not even the same as 10 years ago!
 - i. Look around: new faces, new people, new needs, new dreams.
 - ii. *Number of folks in new location past 10 years.*
 - c. Not better or worse, but certainly different!
 2. A new land.
 - a. We stand at a Jordan and look to the future.
 - b. This is not the same world. Things have changed:
 - i. People, the community, the world in which we live, our culture and society.

- c. Not necessarily better or worse, but certainly different!
- 3. A new leadership.
 - a. Notice the changes which have occurred here.
 - b. No elders and only 2 deacons remain (from my hiring).
 - c. Not better or worse, but certainly different!
- 4. A new chance.
 - a. We have a new opportunity to accomplish the tasks God has given us to do, to be the people He wants us to be.
 - b. Ready to make the best of another opportunity!
- 5. Transition time for us. We are standing on a threshold, peering across our own Jordan, thinking about what the future holds for us.
- B. Contemplating the Future.
 - 1. ***The Threshold Question: What kind of church will we be?***
 - a. There may be a great deal of doubt in us right now.
 - b. *Is this the best of times or the worst of times? The spring of hope or the winter of despair? Are we all going direct to Heaven or going direct the other way?*
 - 2. The easy answer: What we do not want to be.
 - a. We don't want to be like the "nations" around us.
 - i. 1 Pet. 2:9, "A chosen people...called out of darkness into His marvelous light."
 - ii. 2 Cor. 6:17, "Come out from their midst and be separate..."
 - b. We may not even want to be like the church before us in certain respects.
 - c. But definitely, we don't want to be people of the curse.
 - 3. The tougher answer: If not that, then what?
 - a. We want to be bold and courageous, Eph. 6:10; 1 Cor. 16:13.
 - b. We want to accomplish great things for God and His kingdom.
 - c. We want to be people of God's blessing.
 - 4. The hard realities:
 - a. How do you "choose life"? Deut. 30, emph. vs. 20
 - i. The future is not determined by a vote!
 - ii. It is a consequence of present decisions!
 - b. The connection between present and future, character and consequences.
 - i. The blessings are based on obedience – Dt. 28:1-2; John 14:15.
 - ii. The curses promised for disobedience – Dt. 28:15.
- C. Counting the Cost.
 - 1. Can we sacrifice today to become what we hope to be tomorrow? Lk. 14:26-27
 - 2. Can we be individually what we want to become as a community?

CLOSING

- A. Crossing into the Promised Land – 3 Types:
 - 1. Those who stand ready to enter, accepting all the responsibilities and challenges that adhere to men and women of God who are part of God's community.
 - 2. Those who would enter without any personal ownership in this process, enjoying the blessings but making none of the sacrifices.
 - 3. Those who are not sure they want to enter:
 - a. The individualists who want little to do with the community.
 - b. The ones with baggage who are not sure they can trust this community.
- B. 2 Cor. 6:2, "Now is the acceptable time, now is the day of salvation."