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Some Shall Tremble

#1370-A

Series: Possessing the Land:

The Process of Mentoring



Note: Russell wrote each of these lessons in a manner that would enable him to clearly communicate them to his weekly class. The grammar or punctuation you encounter may not be technically perfect, but you will certainly "hear" his unique gift for making the message applicable to the common man in everyday situations.

It's been said of him that he was really a writer who read his stuff. And that's a very accurate statement!

May you be richly blessed as you "hear" as you read.

There seems to be no logical explanation for it. That's good, because logical explanations often come from man. There seems to be no simple, straightforward explanation as to why God sometimes equips the believer in such a way that he seemingly demolishes the enemy in one fell swoop, leaving behind little more than a pile of ashes and a rousing testimony. You've probably experienced such victories.

On other occasions, however, the battle seems to be a lifelong struggle. An inch at a time; a day at a time, the battle goes on. Sometimes it seems like one step forward, two steps back. Sometimes, there seems to be victory guaranteed in advance; other times there is nothing more than the guarantee of grace and strength; still other times we are told not to so much as encounter the enemy at that time and place, lest we be defeated. There doesn't seem to be a simple answer to the complex questions of spiritual warfare. There is a good reason for that. We are not to make a formula out of our walk with God; we are to walk by faith, and faith means there are always some unknowns, for faith is "the evidence of things not seen".

There are, however, some basic principles we can learn, and I believe that a look at God's picture book of war as expressed by His relationship with Israel helps us uncover some of the hidden truths about our day to day encounters with the enemy. For that reason, we need to look carefully at His instructions to the Jews through Moses and try to make the "spiritual switch". We continue that process as we open the pages of Scripture to Deuteronomy, chapter two, and continue our search for relevant truth.

Moses is addressing "Generation Two" in the wilderness, preparing them for their trek into the promised land; a land promised to their parents, but about to finally be inhabited by them and their children after them. The Israelites do not have to earn it; indeed they can't. The land is free and it is a gift. You

cannot earn a gift. They do, however, have to possess it, and that must be done by faith. One thing, however, stands between them and the promise. The land is inhabited by enemies and in order to possess it, the Jews must first face those enemies and watch God defeat them. He will win each battle; indeed each was already charged to His account as a victory.

Unless, however, the Jews believed Him enough to march into the battle shouting the victory cry, *God could not act on their behalf.* And so the challenge was not in their *strength*, but in their *faith.* Truly, the battle belonged to God.

With that in mind, we tune in once more to the original "history channel", channel seventy-seven, and watch and listen as Moses tells what they can expect and what they must do regarding each and every encounter with the enemy troops. Interestingly enough, it wasn't a cut and dry set of rules. Each encounter had to be handled differently, so each time they had to listen to the heartbeat of God as He shared His word with them. Through listening to His word, they knew when to do battle and when to walk quietly without conflict through the enemy camp. Listen to the scope of God's counsel through His man, Moses:

Then we turned, and took our journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea, as the LORD spake unto me: and we compassed mount Seir many days.

And the LORD spake unto me, saying,

Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward.

And command thou the people, saying, Ye *are* to pass through the coast of your brethren the children of Esau, which dwell in Seir; and they shall be afraid of you: take ye good heed unto yourselves therefore:

Meddle not with them; for I will not give you of their land, no, not so much as a foot breadth; because I have given mount Seir unto Esau *for* a possession.

Ye shall buy meat of them for money, that ye may eat; and ye shall also buy water of them for money, that ye may drink.

(Deuteronomy 2:1-6)

Thirty-eight years in one verse. Thirty-eight wasted years, if you will. There is no detailed account of those thirty-eight years anywhere in the Bible. Moses passed over them by simply saying, "Then we turned and took our journey into the wilderness by the

way of the Red Sea, as the LORD spake unto me." Moses then skips to the present time and shares God's current command, "Ye have compassed this mountain long enough". God's timing is perilously slow by man's standards. He takes an eternity because He has eternity to take. When He speaks, however, and the time is right, the curtain rises and the story begins a new chapter. Such was the case here. It was, indeed, time to move on. Here the message takes on the format of a narrative, as Moses talks to them about where they are to go, and how they are to progress as they pass through territory that doesn't yet belong to them. The instructions vary, but they are, without a doubt, crystal clear.

Esau's dependents were the first group they would encounter. They had settled in the region of Mount Seir, a country of high hills and deep valleys, also known then as Edom. It was probably the area near Petra, about fifty miles south of the Dead Sea. These were, indeed, relatives of the Jewish people, and God's command to them was clear: "Meddle not with them". If you look in a concordance, you will find that this Hebrew word, translated "meddle" (הרב) garah {gaw-raw'}) literally means: "Don't stir them up." Don't do anything to make them feel threatened or potentially in danger. Let them know they are not on your list of nations to strive with. This wasn't to protect the Jews, mind you, it was to prevent needless infighting among God's people and their relatives. God had gone before them, and as a result, He said, "They shall be afraid of you".

Notice that though they were afraid, God was not going to give their land to the Jews. Their fear would not lead to defeat, but to the absence of conflict. That would not always be the case as the Hebrew warriors found their way into the land of the promise. But as for this group and this time, they were not to meddle with Esau's descendants. Knowing when to fight and when to seek peace is a struggle that has troubled many nations, many individuals, and many Christian groups through the years. It has been particularly true for believers through the centuries, as Satan has tempted Christians to devote their energies and their resources towards either competing with or trying to discredit other believers or Christian groups because of doctrinal differences or simply because of jealousy.

The result has been a wasted testimony and a distraction to the body of Christ from its primary objective: to win the lost and edify the saved. Churches tend to vie for the affections of

believers from other fellowships, trying to win them over to their camp, or win them into their family. The result is a caravan of Christians wandering from one church to another seeking better facilities, more flamboyant preaching, more aggressive programs. Pity. We've largely forgotten who the enemy is. And we have largely forgotten what the calling of the church is. We think if we have lured 1,000 members away from other flocks, we're fulfilling the great commission. We may be fulfilling the "great omission". We may be simply falling for Satan's ploy, focusing on numbers rather than on spiritual fruit and spiritual reproduction.

We've got to remember who the enemy is, and we've got to remember that, when we're dealing with other parts of the family of believers, even those who don't doctrinally agree with us, we've got to "meddle not with them". The Moabites (vs 9) and the children of Ammon (vss18-19) were also descendants of Lot, Abraham's nephew, and therefore were related to Israel. This is what God instructed concerning them:

And the LORD said unto me, Distress not the Moabites, neither contend with them in battle: for I will not give thee of their land *for* a possession; because I have given Ar unto the children of Lot *for* a possession.

Thou art to pass over through Ar, the coast of Moab, this day:

And *when* thou comest nigh over against the children of Ammon, distress them not, nor meddle with them: for I will not give thee of the land of the children of Ammon *any* possession; because I have given it unto the children of Lot *for* a possession. (Deuteronomy 2:9,18,19)

These were long-lost distant relatives of the Jewish family, but still God said, "Meddle not with them. Distress them not." That word "distress" had more than one meaning. It meant, "Don't beseige them or attack them". It also meant, "Don't show hostility towards or treat them as enemies". God was saying, "I've got enough land on planet earth for all my descendants. Don't be too possessive or you'll miss the land I've got staked out just for you". Oh, that the church could learn that lesson. "There's plenty of room at God's table" goes the song, and yet we live as though God's going to give us trophies for how many of someone else's people we can drag in and hold onto. The body of Christ is so much broader in scope than any of us realize.

We are to seek and to save that which is lost. Dear God, let's

remind ourselves of that objective and make that our primary mission until God calls us home. Whether or not we had 200 or 20,000 in our church may not matter at all when we get to heaven, but those who heard the truth and came to Christ will matter. Oh, will they matter. And we have that opportunity today. Tomorrow, we may be home and the opportunities will be over. We must labor while it is day, for the night cometh when no man can work.

So God's command to the Israelites when it came to passing through the territory that belonged to those who belonged to His family, even remotely, was: "Meddle not with them". In other words, leave them alone. You've got bigger fish to fry. There's a real enemy out there, and God is going to reveal Himself as He defeats them.

Then we come to the territory that genuinely belonged to the enemy. They came to the region where the Amorites and the children of Bashan lived. Quite a different set of instructions:

Rise ye up, take your journey, and pass over the river Arnon: behold, I have given into thine hand Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land: begin to possess *it*, and contend with him in battle.

This day will I begin to put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations *that are* under the whole heaven, who shall hear report of thee, and shall tremble, and be in anguish because of thee. (Deuteronomy 2:24,25)

Moses goes on and the story continues:

And I sent messengers out of the wilderness of Kedemoth unto Sihon king of Heshbon with words of peace, saying,

Let me pass through thy land: I will go along by the high way, I will neither turn unto the right hand nor to the left.

Thou shalt sell me meat for money, that I may eat; and give me water for money, that I may drink: only I will pass through on my feet;

(As the children of Esau which dwell in Seir, and the Moabites which dwell in Ar, did unto me;) until I shall pass over Jordan into the land which the LORD our God giveth us.

(Deuteronomy 2:26-29)

Not all nations will respond the same. But, beloved, God is saying: When those nations which I have prepared to encounter the Living God hear your name, "Some shall tremble". Why?

Because you are such "hot stuff"? Because you are such a well-trained, regimented band of military perfection? No. Because God has "put the dread of thee and the fear of thee upon the nations that are under the whole heaven, and when they hear the name "Israel" they will tremble and be in anguish because of thee."

That word "anguish" is the same root word that is used to describe "whirling" or "dancing" or "writhing". It means that the very name of God's people is enough to cause them to flinch in pain or begin to wail and weep as though defeat is imminent. They will tremble in fear at the thought that tiny little Israel, one of the least significant, most unlikely superpower nations in the world might be coming after them. How strange. And they won't even know why they are so afraid. Moses knew. The children of Israel knew. God had put the fear of Israel in their hearts.

And it is still true today. Even their most hated enemies treat Israel with kid gloves. They are not, by man's standards, a superpower, nor are they even of such import humanly speaking as to warrant newspaper coverage in the journals of the world. But all Israel has to do is sneeze and the nations respond, either in anger or in fear. Why? God has put the dread of His people in their hearts. They don't know it. They don't recognize it. But it's there. One day soon, everyone will know why. Until then, Christians around the world ought to stand in awe at every move Israel makes, be it right or wrong by man's standards. God is moving His people, like chess men, into place for the world's great "check-mate" that will come at the end of the age.

Mark it. Pray for tiny Israel. When God chooses to, He will raise their banner once more, and the earth shall tremble. Indeed, the nations will know that the Lord, He is God, and that the hated, persecuted Jews are His people. He has allowed them to be beaten, dispersed and abused. But one day, they will hold the banner of Messiah and every knee will bow. May God have mercy on the nations and the kings and presidents who have scorned the Jew, taken advantage of Israel, or refused to acknowledge that they were, indeed, the people of God. When Messiah comes for the final time, they will know, but it will be too late. The clock of fulfilled prophecy will have struck midnight and its chimes will be the death knoll for the enemies of His Kingdom. The King will have come. That will be the final chapter, and as the skies darken over the horizons of life, that chapter may well be in the process of unfolding before our very eyes. In the meantime, whenever

Israel moves on the battlefields of planet earth, nations will take note, *And some shall tremble*. Indeed.

Be sure you understand what God is doing. He is demonstrating on the blackboard of history how He deals with the enemy. The children of Israel were instructed to contend with Sihon, the king of Heshbon. The word "contend" means to "meddle" or "stir up strife". They were supposed to do the opposite of what they had done before. They were to expect a battle and expect total victory because the word of God had gone forth and guaranteed it. Look, however, at the key ingredients of this battle and the ensuing victory:

1- Victory was assured (vs 24). God said, "Behold, I have given into thine hand Sihon the Amorite." The battle was over, though it hadn't begun. They had not so much as seen one soldier bearing the armor of Sihon. Not one shot had been fired. Not one arrow drawn. But the battle was over. The news staff of the Jerusalem Times could already frame the headlines for next Monday's paper: "Jews Demolish Sihon. Battle Won in Minutes" The news team on channel seven could begin to write their lead story for the ten o'clock news. It was history. Why? Because the God who was leading them into battle and challenging them to enter the fray by faith had already guaranteed the outcome. When God fights your battles, the outcome is never in doubt. That is why understanding the difference between "living for God" and letting "Christ live in you" is so crucial. It is why Paul could cry out:

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)

It is also why Paul could shout:

Now thanks *be* unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. (II Corinthians 2:14)

Defeating the enemy is not the task of the Christian. The Christian has been crucified with Christ. He is dead. Dead men don't make good soldiers. The believer who becomes preoccupied with Satan's taunts and tactics, seeking to focus on him rather than on Christ will soon become shell-shocked and weary of looking for the enemy under every blade of grass. Defeating Satan is God's business. We who have been crucified now only

live because *Christ lives in us.* Not as a theological concept, as a living Person. When the Holy Spirit came to live in you at your conversion, He came to inhabit your body, exercise control over your soul and renew your spirit. He came to make you a brand new person, and to do that He had to live inside a dead man's body while He prepared you for real life. Many Christians never quite come to grasp that fact, experientially. We gather all this information about Christianity and think it's our job to go out and "live for the Lord".

You can't "live for the Lord". That's like a five year old taking a basketball out on the court "playing for Tim Duncan". What a travesty. If you have a world champion waiting to demonstrate what he can do, why would you send an untrained child to take his place? And if you have the Living Lord Jesus Christ in your heart waiting to live in you and live through you, demonstrating the very same power that God used to raise Christ from the dead, why would you insult Him by trying to live in His place?

The victories in the Christian life are won by God and God alone. You and I cannot so much as win a tiny skirmish in the spirit realm. We can be obedient and free God to be Himself, but we cannot do anything for Him but get in His way. That is why, both for the children of Israel and for us, the key is not our strength but our willingness by faith to accept His strength as our only key to victory. To whatever degree we relinquish claim to our own abilities and rest in His, we enter, to that degree, into the victor's circle. And as easy as that sounds, the flesh so hates it that it concocts thousands of ways to avoid giving God the full responsibility and thus the full glory. We limp through life sharing God's claim to victory when we could be breaking the tape at the end of the race, joyfully entering the victor's circle.

2- Though the battle was God's, the process of possession involved contending with the enemy (verses 24). God could easily bypass the process of warfare. If the battle is already His, why doesn't He just give us the victory on a silver platter? Answer: We would never understand or appreciate the spoils of victory if we did not pass through the battlefields of the spirit and feel the heat of the conflict. Without dodging the landmines and stepping around the wounded, we'd think it was just another party and we were invited. It's not a party, beloved, it's a fight to the finish, do or die struggle for spiritual dominance. It is a real war, and without contending, we are only pretending. We are not really

engaged in the battle. The victory belongs to God; but the battle is for us to experience.

3- Make no mistake about it, when God puts the dread and fear of His people in the heart of the enemy, they shall tremble (verse 25). Sihon and his troops came out against God's people because they were blinded by God and did not understand the nature of the war they were fighting. They thought it would be won or lost on human terms. When you are fighting God's battles, that's not true. They were afraid because God made them afraid. He reached inside their hearts of stone and engraved a picture of an Israeli commando team that was unbeaten. When they turned on their prehistoric television sets they saw news clips of Jewish fighter planes swooping down and making mincemeat out of their enemies. Be careful that you do not buy the lie that Satan and his demonic host are prancing about with no fear of God or what God can do through you.

Satan is a manipulator, and he is the father of lies. He will sell his demonic host and even his own black heart on the fact that his is the force to be reckoned with and that spiritual victory is all but hopeless so long as he is on the scene. That's not true and he knows it. He knows that every battle he has had face to face with God, he has lost. Sihon himself seemed undaunted in the face of the Israeli war machine. His people, however, knew better. God had put the fear and dread of them upon all the nations under the whole heaven. And like tiny Israel today, it may not have made sense, humanly speaking to be afraid of such a seemingly harmless bunch of wilderness wanderers, but when God puts His fear in man, man is fearful.

4- On their way into the fulfillment of God's promises, His children had to live in the real world (verses 27-29), So Moses sent messengers saying "We want to pass through your world on the way into ours. We don't expect something for nothing as we pass through. We want to pay our way. We would like the privilege of walking the same highway your people walk, but we won't steal food or take anything that doesn't belong to us. In fact, we'll even pay for the water we drink." (And we thought bottled water for sale was a new thing)

That is the mentality the believer ought to have as he lives in this world. This is not home. This is a land we journey through on the way to home. We mustn't get too attached here. We mustn't

get too mesmerized by the goodies we see along the roadside. Whatever we need, we ought to expect to pay for. This world is not a welfare state for Christians. We shouldn't think that because we're God's children we don't have to work as hard or have the tough times with the rest of the citizens of planet earth. We ought to work harder than anyone and expect tribulation and pain because we are in the midst of an intense spiritual battle and this world is the domain in which the enemy reigns.

Look now at the next verse:

But Sihon king of Heshbon would not let us pass by him: for the LORD thy God hardened his spirit, and made his heart obstinate, that he might deliver him into thy hand, as appeareth this day.

And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have begun to give Sihon and his land before thee: begin to possess, that thou mayest inherit his land. (Deuteronomy 2:30,31)

5- Sihon wouldn't cooperate because God had "hardened" his heart (verse 30). Don't let that phrase frighten you. It is not in contradiction to man's free will. You can take two different materials and put them under extreme heat and one will harden; the other will melt. God can take two different people or nations and place them in His divine broiler and the same thing is true: one will eventually melt as the thermometer rises, the other will only harden his heart further. The choice was theirs. God the Omniscient one, however, knows what heat will produce what results in what people. Look at just one illustration from Scripture:

And the LORD said unto Moses, When thou goest to return into Egypt, see that thou do all those wonders before Pharaoh, which I have put in thine hand: but I will harden his heart, that he shall not let the people go. (Exodus 4:21)

So God told Moses that He (God) would harden Pharaoh's heart so that he would not let them go. But we read in I Samuel 6:6:

Wherefore then do ye harden your hearts, as the Egyptians and Pharaoh hardened their hearts? when he had wrought wonderfully among them, did they not let the people go, and they departed?

(I Samuel 6:6)

First, we read that God hardened Pharaoh's heart; now we read that Pharaoh hardened his own heart. Which was it? It was

both. God applied the pressure, knowing what the pressure would produce. Pharaoh made his own choice and became stiff-necked and unbending. God allowed it, knowing it would produce His sovereign will. There are no contradictions in Scripture. There may be passages we do not understand, but there are no passages that conflict with one another. "All Scripture is God-breathed" and therefore for Scripture to conflict with itself God would have to be other than omniscient, and less than perfect truth. In this case, the answer seems clear: God brought circumstances into Pharaoh's life and into Sihon's life that He knew would cause them to harden their hearts. They made the choice, but God brought about the choice He knew would bring about His will.

6- Warfare, then, is the normal prerequisite for possessing what God has promised you (verses 24). Mark it. Make no mistake about it. The entrance to the gate of glory for Jesus was a cross. The path to spiritual victory for Stephen was an armload of stones. The path to possessing the role God had staked out for Joseph included prison, persecution, and rejection, even by his own family. When the storm clouds darken and Satan seems all over you, rejoice. You must be near the gate, and he will at that time do anything to divert you from obtaining clear title to the land God has given you. It may be a certain ministry. It may be a step of great faith for your family. It may be a turning point in your personal walk with God. It may be a point of total abandonment when you are about to relinquish once and for all the compromises that have held you captive and kept you from entering by faith into the land of the promises. Whatever it is, when you begin to sense spiritual warfare that is so intense you are tempted to flee, do this:

- 1- Praise God (II Chronicles 20:22)
- 2- Seek prayer from those you trust to pray (John 17:9,15,20)
- 3- Humble yourself before God (II Chronicles 7:14, 34:27) and
- 4- Begin to meditate on Scripture (Psalm 119:28)

It is a time for prayer, praise, humility and meditation. It is not a time for discouragement, depression, or despair. Satan knows that, and he will do anything he can to get you to focus on either him or his tactics. You may be reaping to some degree what you have sown. Don't dwell on that too long. Search out God's heart for what you need to confess, lay it before Him in utter humility, thank Him for His cleansing power, and move on.

These were defeated foes. God had gone before His children and put the fear of Israel in their hearts and then promised Israel that once the battle started, it was over. There would be total victory because God is a God with total power. To whatever degree, however, they tried to help God out, or to whatever degree they did not believe victory was theirs based only on God's word, to that degree there would be less than a complete triumph. Total surrender to the Commander-in-chief would mean total surrender by the enemy. See for yourself:

Then Sihon came out against us, he and all his people, to fight at Jahaz.

And the LORD our God delivered him before us; and we smote him, and his sons, and all his people.

And we took all his cities at that time, and utterly destroyed the men, and the women, and the little ones, of every city, we left none to remain: (Deuteronomy 2:32-34)

Sihon was a type of Satan. He came out of hiding and approached God's people with everything he had. But God did something that day to Sihon. "He delivered him before us and we smote him...and there was total defeat." So much for round one. Their trek to the land of promise was underway, and all they had to do to enjoy the victory was let God tell them where to go, when to fight, and what to expect. They weren't to come up with a battle plan, muster all the troops they could, and tell God they would call Him if they got in trouble. They had already tried that. No, they were to let God do the planning, God do the explaining, God do the preparing, and God do the fighting. They, in turn, got to enjoy the victory and then move on to face the next enemy that God was waiting to demolish on their behalf.

Oh, that we Christians would learn that secret of spiritual warfare: *The battle belongs to God.* Had the Israelites attempted to take Esau's land or the land of the Moabites, they would have been defeated. Had they failed to engage King Sihon at God's command, they would have missed out on the victory celebration and the spoils that accompany seeing the enemy go down in defeat. The key to victory is staying at God's feet listening to God's word. *They knew what to do because God told them what to do.* God told them what to do because He did not want their *strength*, He wanted their *trust*. When He got that, the enemy was mincement.

Not every victory will be immediate. Some will not be won until that trumpet sounds or until that precious moment when death is swallowed up in victory and we are ushered triumphantly into the presence of the King. Those will be battlefields God chooses to allow us to remain on that we might remain in a trusting mode. The truth is: only He knows what is best and only He holds the key to victory. Spiritual warfare, then, is not a formula, but the result of a relationship, and the result will *always* be victory, either here or in glory. *The battle belongs to God.* Shout it! And praise God, because the battle belongs to God, *Satan shall tremble.* And well he should.

A Challenge to Further Study and Application

- 1- Why do you think some periods of time in Bible history are revealed in great detail while others seem to be passed over with a simple phrase or a few sentences? Can you give examples of both?
- 2- What reason can you think of that would cause God to approach the descendants of Esau and Lot differently than the inhabitants of the other nations they faced?
- 3- Can you think of four or five specific things the church in our age can do to overcome the competition and contention that seems so prevalent today? What can you do personally?
- 4- How do you think God "puts the fear and dread of Israel" in the hearts of world leaders today? Is there any reason, humanly speaking, why the rulers of the world should be so affected by Israel's every move?
- 5- Do you pray regularly for Israel and its leaders? Do you think God expects you to? Give a Scriptural reason for your answer.
- 6- Can you explain in simple terms what Paul meant in Galatians 2:20 when he said, "I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live; yet not I..."? On an experiential level, has allowing Christ to live through you become a reality to you?
- 7- Do you view spiritual warfare as a sign of weakness in your life or as a sign of strength? Are there some battles God seems to win quickly as you exhibit faith, while others go on and on? What do you think God is doing through those long, extended battles?
 - 8- Memorize Galatians 2:20.

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