**Deuteronomy Chapters 1-3**

The philosopher George Santayana wrote “Those who do not remember the past are condemned to repeat it”. We seem to have to relearn hard lessons from the past, often at great expense. Sometimes it’s not that we have forgotten the past, rather we fall for the line “this time it’s different” which reminds me of another famous quote “Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results”. It seems to me Santayana’s quote is pessimistic. The past is not all negative and it’s just as easy to rediscover something that had a positive result. As we begin our study of the book of Deuteronomy, we will find that much of this book is a repeat of what was recorded in Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers. As several writers note, Deuteronomy is essentially a series of sermons delivered by Moses.

Chapter 1 begins with Moses addressing the people on the plains of Moab in the 40th year after they left Israel. He recounts their journey beginning not when they left Egypt, but when they left Horeb (Mt. Sinai) where God had given them the 10 Commandments. He said that God told them they had stayed at Horeb long enough meaning they that He had prepared them spiritually and they were ready to go into Canaan. Next Moses told them that he had appointed leaders from among them to handle disputes among the people. This account was recorded in chapter 11 of Numbers when Moses appointed 70 elders to assist him after the people had complained about the monotony of eating manna. Moses then told of their response when God instructed them to enter into Canaan. In verse 22 we learn that the idea to send spies into the land was from the people instead of Moses and God. That makes sense because God had told them the land was good so there was no need to send men to assess the land. The remainder of the chapter addresses what happened afterwards; the people were unwilling to go into Canaan resulting in God’s judgment that no one 20 years of age or older would survive to go into Canaan with the exceptions of Joshua and Caleb. Hearing that, the people regretted their decision and went into Canaan to fight the Amorites and were soundly defeated because they went without God.

Chapter 2 describes their wanderings in the desert as God sent them back south toward the desert where they spent 38 years wandering from place to place in the deserts of Seir. Matthew Henry wrote that God used that time to prepare them for Canaan by humbling them for their sins, teaching them to mortify their lusts and to follow Him. At the same time He was preparing the Canaanites for destruction as their iniquities were increasing. Seir was home to the Edomites and God told them not to provoke those people because He had given them their land to possess. He said the same thing about the Moabites and Ammonites. They finally reached the gorge of the Arnon River where God began to send the Israelites into war against the inhabitants of that area. He did it so that the nations in the area would grow to fear the nation of Israel. Moses told of the defeat of King Sihon in a battle at Jahaz and the conquest of numerous cities as far north as Gilead.

Chapter 3 begins with the battle at Edrei against Og, the king of Bashan whom they defeated, capturing a large block of land from the Arnon gorge to Mt. Hermon. Moses then told of the decision of the Reubenites, Gadites and half tribe of Manasseh to settle in Gilead rather than taking their inheritance in Canaan as God had intended. The chapter ends with Moses pleading with God to allow him to go into Canaan but God refused telling him to climb to the top of Pisgah and look down on the land that the Israelites were about to enter. He then told Moses to commission Joshua to take his place as the leader of Israel.

As we have previously discussed, the older generation had died and Moses was addressing the younger generation. It was important to him that they learn from the history of their parents. He told them of their rebellion against God as well as their victories when the were obedient to God. I am sure that he hoped that generation would learn from the mistakes of the previous one. It is the duty of the older generation in the church to teach the younger generation the mistakes of the past as well as the victories. It should be a learning experience to both generations if the victories are in the distant past.