

## Am I Good Enough?

*The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. (Deut. 7:7)*

### The First Human Question

The first day we become self-aware we start asking the question, “Am I good enough?” The answer from Scriptures is simple: No. I am not good enough, \_\_\_\_\_.

### Taking the Land of Promise (Deut. 7:1-26)

- **Deut. 7:1-2. Seven nations.** Probably a symbolic number meaning something like “a great number of people.” **No treaty, no mercy:** Israel was to destroy the evil nations of Canaan because Israel was God’s means of judgment against them (cf., Deut. 9:5). God judges nations for wickedness, and some cultures are so corrupt that they require destruction. This principle is still true, and it is a warning to any nation today. The people of God today make war against structural strongholds through \_\_\_\_\_ (Matt. 28:19-20) not through physical war.



*Brick makers in ancient Egypt, 15<sup>th</sup> century BC, from the tomb of Rekhemire. The Israelites were simple brick makers when God made them into a nation (Ferrell Jenkins, www.ferrelljenkins.blog)*

- **7:3-5. Do not intermarry.** Another reason Israel was to destroy the occupants of the land was to avoid their corrupting influence. Peer pressure is real, and it’s not just for teens.
- **7:6-10. A people holy to the Lord.** Israel was *not* chosen because of its greatness (cf., 9:4-6). Rather, it was chosen because God loved Israel. God called Israel to be separate from the world: to be God’s holy people. **Love.** God’s love is serious enough to punish evildoers, as well as to call us to be a light to the world. Leaving people in their sin is *not* love. **Pharaoh king of Egypt.** Perhaps Ramses the Great (d. 1213), although others argue that Thutmose III (d. 1450) was the Pharaoh of the Exodus.

- **7:11-15. Your grain, new wine and olive oil.** Obedience to God brings prosperity and a rich life—physical for Israel, spiritual for Christians.



*Ancient Israelite temple at Arad: the idol in the highlighted box demonstrates Israel’s failure to eradicate Canaanite influence (dmy)*

- **7:16-24. How can we drive them out?** God reassures Israel that, though Israel is not good enough or strong enough to drive out the inhabitants of the land, God is. We depend on the power of God, which comes through obedience.

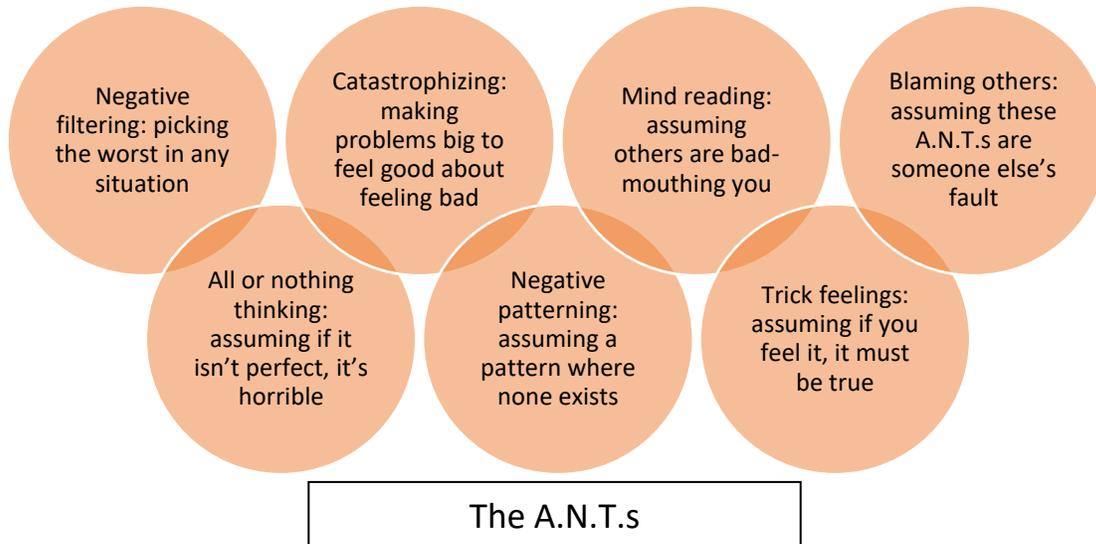
“Obedience is the key that opens every door” (C. S. Lewis).

- **7:25-26. It is detestable.** We must remove the temptations in our lives. As James Clear (*Atomic Habits*) argues, environment is more powerful than motivation. Ex: removing the cookie from your house is more effective than using your willpower to ignore it.

### I Am Who You Say I Am

- Accept yourself for who God says you are, not for what others may say. God says you are His beloved child. (Eph. 1:5; Rom. 8:17) Who are you to \_\_\_\_\_?
- Kill the A.N.T.s.—Automatic Negative Thoughts. (Phil. 4:8) The negative voice in your head is your own. Tell yourself to \_\_\_\_\_. Tell yourself a new story.

- Where possible, make past wrongs right. This may require nuance, but it brings amazing peace.
- Practice patience. God is up to something \_\_\_\_\_ . (Isa. 12:2)
- If God has forgiven you, forgive yourself. (Col. 1:14)
- Trust that God will use your failures for good. (Rom. 8:28)
- Recognize the \_\_\_\_\_ of the soul: eat healthy and exercise; in serious cases, talk to your doctor about medication.
- Recognize the social dimensions of the soul: surround yourself with positive people, join a small group and CR, find a small D-group where you can be open and transparent.



### Legalism v. Obedience

Many Christians grew up in churches that felt oppressive, legalistic, judgmental, and harsh—offering rules that seemed impossible for the ordinary person to keep. This disposition sank deeply into the souls of many people as a form of perennial guilt, self-doubt, and discouragement, and leads many to shudder at the word “obedience.”

Legalism is the belief that we must earn our salvation—that we must be good enough before God will love us. And as such, legalism is roundly condemned in the Bible as a heresy. None of us will ever be good enough; God loves us in spite of our sin.

Further, we are not saved by works, and to teach that we are is to engage the original sin of pride. We are saved by grace through faith. (Eph. 2:8)

Obedience is not a matter of earning God’s love. Rather, obedience is the proper response to God’s love. As Augustine notes: when we obey without love, we become slaves. When we obey because we love, we show we are children. As Paul says, we are saved by faith in order to do good works, not because of good works. (Eph. 2:10) In this way, obedience does not negate faith. Rather, it demonstrates the faithfulness of faith. Obedience is not a form of legalism. Rather, it is a way of living in the grace God has given us.

Obedience matters not in order to be saved, but because it gives the best possible life for those who are saved. We show each other grace while on the thrilling journey of obedience.

*Answers: but God is, prayerful disciple-making, argue with God, shut up, better than you can imagine, physical dimensions*



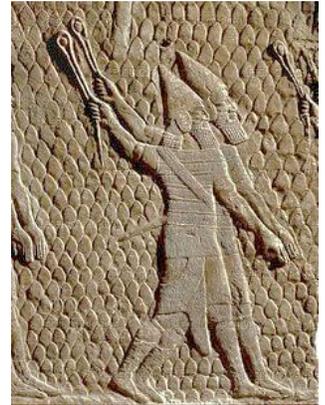
Deuteronomy & The Beauty of Obedience

## Holy War in the Old Testament

*Break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles and burn their idols in the fire. For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. (Deut. 7:5-6)*

### Holy War: Accept What the Bible Says

God commanded Israel to destroy the Canaanites by making war against them. In a world of violence, it can be difficult to understand why God gave this command. It is good that this bothers us, for it shows that, unlike many cultures where war is glorified, we have internalized the Christian message of peace and love. But we must remember that, though war is never ideal, it is not always wrong—sometimes it is necessary for defense or to destroy evil regimes (slavery in the Civil War, Naziism in WW2). In the OT, God used Israel to destroy the Canaanites because the Canaanites were profoundly evil. God specifically commanded Israel to destroy the Canaanites, and He did not bless Israel when they fought without His direct command (cf., Deut. 1:40ff). God no longer commands nations to go to war. Instead, we must use wisdom to guide us when we fight, based on such Christian principles as just war theory. We should not downplay God’s commands to Israel to wage holy war. But neither should we assume that God commands nations to war today. He does not.



*Slingers, common in battle. From Assyrian panel depicting siege of Lachish (British Museum. [www.ancientreplicas.com](http://www.ancientreplicas.com))*

### Why Holy War?

The Bible gives three reasons for Israel’s call to eliminate the people of Canaan. First, the Canaanites practiced persistent, unrepentant violence, bloodshed, sexual perversion, child sacrifice, and rebellion (Gen. 15:16; Deut. 9:4-5). The destruction of the people of Canaan was a just judgment against them for their wickedness by God. Second, God had promised the land of Canaan to His people because He was setting up a nation to be His own. Third, the Canaanites were a bad influence on others, and leaving Canaanites in the land would corrupt Israel. (Exod. 34:12-13) Wherever Israel failed to remove the Canaanites, Israel itself fell into idolatry.

### Near Eastern Hyperbole: Does “All” Always Mean “All”?

We must be careful. The Bible clearly uses hyperbole when it speaks of the destruction of cities and people groups, and “all” is a common Near Eastern hyperbole. The destruction was piece by piece, and sometimes the Canaanites were driven out (not killed), giving them time to repent. (Exod. 23:27-30; Deut. 7:22) “Every man, woman, and child” was a Near Eastern metaphor that may not have been intended literally. Such Near Eastern hyperbole explains why, in the Scriptures, people groups are “destroyed,” only to reappear later. For example, God says He will destroy Israel, then, in the very next verse, discusses Israel after their destruction! (Deut. 4:26-27) Joshua 11:22 says all the Anakim were killed, but then in 14:12 and 15:13-19 they are back. The Amalekites were completely destroyed in 1 Sam. 15, but then reappear in 1 Sam. 27:8, where they are utterly destroyed again. They appear again in 1 Sam. 30, and are still around 250 years later. (1 Chron. 4:43) Furthermore, the biblical term “destroy” (Heb. = *harem*) can mean “devoted to God,” and not necessarily “destroyed.” Don’t downplay what the Bible says about holy war, but don’t misunderstand hyperbole, either.

### Dealing with Evil Cultures

God commanded Israel to destroy a few people groups completely—those that were so thoroughly corrupt that the world could no longer tolerate them (Deut. 7:1-4). Sin can be embedded in a culture so deeply that the culture is irredeemable. And in a world where children were obliged to avenge their

parents, killing everyone may literally have been intended. Remember that war is not clean. A modern example: President Obama ordered multiple drone strikes in the Middle East as part of America's wars there, knowing some drone strikes would kill women and children. Typically, God commands Israel to offer terms of peace (Deut. 20:10-12), and God gives people the opportunity to repent. (Deut. 2:26; Jonah 3:3-10) For example, Rahab lived in the Canaanite city of Jericho, but she repented and was saved ... eventually to become an ancestor of Jesus Himself! (Matt. 1:5)

### Does God Condone Ethnic Cleansing?

No. The Canaanites weren't destroyed because of their ethnicity. In fact, ethnically, the Canaanites were indistinguishable from the Israelites. Rather, the Canaanites were destroyed because of their sin, the hardness of their hearts, and the pure evil of their idolatry. All of humanity is equipped by God with the ability to know right from wrong, so Canaan was without excuse. (Rom. 1:19ff) God commands Israel to love and treat fairly the foreigner and immigrant (Lev. 19:34; 22:22; Deut. 10:18-19) and to help its enemies. (Exod. 23:4-5) God's plan was always to bless the nations, calling non-Israelites to repent and come to Him. (Gen. 12:3; Zech. 9:10; Psa. 87:4; Isa. 2:2-4) The Philistines will eventually be offered salvation, as will also the Jebusites. (Zech. 9:6-7). Eventually the Babylonians, Cushites, and Lebanese will be offered salvation. (Psa. 87:4) God will establish a highway to save the Assyrians. (Isa. 19:23-25) Jesus ministers to the Canaanite woman of Tyre and Sidon (Matt. 15:22), and by the power of the Gospel, all nations will be blessed. Today, we take the Gospel to all nations. (Matt. 28:19-20)

### Embrace the Justice of God

All humans have rebelled against God. The question could well be "Why doesn't God destroy us all?" God is a just God—depicted in Scripture as a warrior, who even punishes Israel for its sins. (Exod. 15:3; Deut. 8:19ff.; Rev. 19:11ff) To leave sin and crime unpunished would violate God's justice. Do you want



18<sup>th</sup> century BC 16" bronze dagger found in Israel (dmy)

a judge who refuses to sentence criminals? In a world often deprived of true justice, the justice of God is good news. Furthermore, God's justice explains the cross, in which He took upon Himself the penalty for our sin, satisfying His justice but also demonstrating His love. The reason God has not punished the world up to this point is that, in His mercy, He is giving us all time to repent. (2 Pet. 3:9)

### Our Spiritual War

Jesus teaches us that we are not of this world, so though we are still at war, we don't fight as the world does. (John 18:36) We turn the other cheek. (Matt. 5:39) We love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. (Matt. 5:44) We conquer the nations with the Gospel, not the sword. (Matt. 28:19-20) Our warfare is spiritual, not physical. (Ephesians 6:10-17) We remember that our enemies are not those who oppose us, but evil spirits who have enslaved our opponents. It is our privilege to set our opponents free from the true enemy—Satan—using the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

*"My last resistance to the idea of God's wrath was a casualty of the war in the former Yugoslavia, the region from which I come. According to some estimates, 200,000 people were killed and over 3,000,000 were displaced. My villages and cities were destroyed, my people shelled day in and day out, some of them brutalized beyond imagination, and I could not imagine God not being angry .... Though I used to complain about the indecency of the idea of God's wrath, I came to think that I would have to rebel against a God who wasn't wrathful at the sight of the world's evil. God isn't wrathful in spite of being love. God is wrathful because God is love." (Miroslav Volf, Free of Charge)*