

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

DEUTERONOMY 4:1-40

Last week we saw that the children of Israel are about to go into the Promised Land. We saw that this is the **second generation**...they are the children of the folks Moses led out of Egypt. And we saw last week that these folks either weren't born or at least were small children when God gave Moses the Law at Mt. Sinai.

We saw last week that now they are about to go in and take the land that their fathers should have taken 38 years before...and finally, we saw that Moses undertakes to teach them what is expected of them when they get into the land.

In fact, **for one solid month**, Moses addresses these people. He instructs them and exhorts them to follow all God's Law...all of its precepts and all of its ordinances. And that's going to be our study for the next three months.

I believe it's a good thing to know that God didn't just have Moses give these folks the Law and simply say, "*Now then, go forth and obey it!*" No, God inspired Moses to explain the different aspects of the Law. God demanded obedience from these folks, but He didn't demand blind obedience. God wanted His people to understand why certain things were expected of them.

We did this with our children, didn't we? We told them to do or not to do something but we didn't just stop there... we patiently explained to them why a certain thing was to be done or not to be done. And that's exactly what Moses is doing in the *Book of Deuteronomy*.

Verses 1-2...

They were to **do** the Word of God...not only **hear** it, but **do** it. They were not to add to the Law, nor were they to take away from the Law. They were simply to obey it as God gave it.

We know from Scripture that they didn't obey the Law. In fact, they ignored it. **They ignored it to such an extent that they lost it.** Remember when good King Josiah was going to have the temple repaired and when they went into the temple, do you remember what they found? They found the book of the Law. The book of the Law had been lost and it had been lost in the house of the Lord.

We know that thousands of years later, the Law had evolved into a long, long list of "do's" and "don't's." The Pharisees had gotten hold of the Law and had added to it. I guess they had never read ***Deuteronomy 4:2***.

So, I believe the question before us today is this...do we ignore the commandments of God? Or do we add to the commandments of God? Both are wrong, aren't they?

Wouldn't it have been wonderful if Israel had kept the Law? But they didn't! Was it because the Law was not good? Oh, the Law was good. In fact, Paul calls the Law **holy and righteous and good**.

So, if the Law was a good thing...what was the problem? The problem wasn't the Law...the problem was the people. The Bible tells us that no flesh will be justified by the Law...because the flesh is wrong. The flesh represents our fallen nature.

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

But, God gave the Law so the people would know what God expected. God gave the Law so we would know how holy and righteous God is and how far short we fall from that holiness and righteousness. Without the Law, we would never know how bad we really are, would we? Paul said it this way, **“I would never have come to know sin except through the Law.”**

So, the Law was very important. And may I say to you that our civil laws are primarily based upon the Law that God gave Moses some 6,000 years ago.

Let's consider some reasons why obedience of the Law was so important to these people.

1) God expected their obedience so that He could preserve and prosper them.

Look back at **verse 1**: “...that you may live and go in and possess the land.”

God longs to bless His people and He blesses obedience, not disobedience. He had prepared the Promised Land for them...He had led them out of bondage in order to bring them to the Promised Land and the desire of God's heart was for them to go in and live and prosper there.

And you know, when you think about it, it seems they did everything in their power to keep from going into the Land of Promise, didn't they?

To see the other side of this...we must look at

Verses 3-4...

Remember Balaam? Remember how when the children of Israel were about to cross through the land of Moab and the king of Moab, whose name was Balak, sent for Balaam and offered him big money if he would curse the Israelites? Remember how God wouldn't allow that to happen, and how four times Balak blessed Israel instead of cursing Israel?

And if that's all we knew about Balaam, we would say,
“Well, what a great prophet he was...”

But, Balaam was **not** a great prophet. In fact, Balaam was **a prophet for hire and a false prophet** at that. Since God had not allowed Balaam to curse Israel, Balaam had devised a plan to hurt the Israelites anyway. He told the Moabites they needed to invite the Israelites to their worship service. The Moabites were heathens and they sacrificed to a pagan god named Baal-peor. The Moabites invited the Israelites to their sacrifices and do you remember what happened?

God's people bowed down to the god of Moab, and they committed immorality with the Moabite women in that worship service. And God commanded that all the leaders of the Jewish people who took part in this be executed in broad daylight and on that day 24,000 men died.

And Moses brings this back to their remembrance so they will know God means business. Moses says God punished the guilty, but He didn't punish the innocent.

See, God is a God of wrath, but He is also a God of love. In fact, the two great themes contained in the **Book of Deuteronomy** are love and obedience.

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

Someone asked me the other day how sin affects God. I told him sin grieves and offends the heart of God. I believe you and I can know just a little of how God feels. And I don't believe we can ever know how much, but we can liken it in a small way to how we feel when our children disobey us. We are motivated by love, aren't we? We love them so much and we want what's best for them so much and it grieves us when they go against our knowledge of what's best for them.

And it's the same with the Lord. He loves us. He knows what's best for us. He has given us a way to walk that will be **for our good and His glory** and it offends and grieves His heart when we disobey Him. I believe God would much rather be pleased with our obedience and preserve us and prosper us than to have to discipline us.

And I believe God disciplines His children today. Now, we may not see 24,000 people die at once... But I also believe that the Promised Land is a picture of the victorious Christian life and some Christians never have victory because they have allowed disobedience to become such a part of their lives.

Well, God expected obedience in order to preserve and prosper His children, and

2) God expected their obedience so they would be an example to the other nations.

Verses 5-8...

God had called these folks to be a light to the pagan nations around them. God had called them to be a peculiar people...and to draw the godless folks around them to long to be like this great and wise and understanding nation.

See, God wanted the Jews to point the Gentiles to Him. But as a nation they failed to do this...but One from the nation would accomplish this...

And doesn't He expect the same from us? He has called us to be salt and light to the world around us and when the world sees Christians acting like the world, what does the world say? I'll tell you what they say...They say, "You know I don't need that! I don't need the Lord to help me act like that!"

3) God expected their obedience so they would be an example to their descendants.

Verse 9...

God gave to the nation Israel the great burden of a teaching ministry. They were to obey God, and they were to teach these things to their children and their grandchildren.

The greatest undertaking of any nation is the education of the young. God tells these folks, "I want you to teach your children and your grandchildren." We so often want to blame the schools, and I'm sure that some schools are to blame, but the real failure to teach is the failure of mothers and daddys in the home.

I believe God is going to hold a lot of folks accountable for the failure to teach godly principles to their children. Bill and I pray daily that God will allow us and enable us and empower us to have a godly influence on our children and grandchild.

4) God expected their obedience because they belonged to Him.

Verse 20...

They were God's children. He **called** them and He **chose** them to be His own possession. He **redeemed** them out of Egypt. And He had **cared** for them and **carried** them as a father would carry his child.

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

You know, somehow it doesn't mean nearly as much to us when someone else's child misbehaves, does it? I mean, we sympathize with their parents and all, but it just doesn't get under our skin like when **our** children or grandchildren misbehave, does it?

And I believe that's the way God feels. He **loves** us. He has **called** us. He has **redeemed** us. **And He longs for us to walk in a manner worthy of our calling.** When I think of the times that I have brought Him shame and sorrow and yet, He's never disowned me, it makes me so ashamed.

5) God expected their obedience so they could stay in the land.

Verses 23-26...

Remember we said last week that the Abrahamic Covenant was unconditional. And within that covenant was the promise that this land they were about to enter would always belong to them. But, the Mosaic Covenant was conditional. God gave the land to them for an eternal possession, but they could only enjoy living in that land when they were obedient.

As we said a few minutes ago, Canaan, or the Promised Land, is not a picture or type of heaven. Songs are written telling us this, but that's not what Scripture teaches. Think about it. The Promised Land had enemies to conquer...there'll be no enemies in heaven. There was sin in the Promised Land...there'll be no sin in heaven. No, the Promised Land is a type of the victorious Christian life. When we're saved we belong to Jesus...**permanently!**

Our salvation doesn't depend on **us**. It depends on **Him!** He has given us the Christian life to live...but when we disobey Him and live a life apart from His will, we're not going to continue living with His blessing showered upon us.

And I also believe a Christian can become such a disgrace to God that He will take him home early rather than allow him to continue to bring shame to the cause of Christ. This is the "sin unto death" that John talks about in the book of **1 John**. He'll take us home or He will allow us to live a life of defeat, but we won't enjoy the victorious Christian life He wants us to enjoy. **We will not occupy the Promised Land if we live in disobedience.**

Well, Moses goes on to tell these folks what will happen if they don't obey...

Verses 27-28...

God kept His promise, didn't He?

Israel disobeyed God. They chose disobedience instead of obedience. And where are they today? They're scattered all over the world! They're in so many, many countries, but they're in the minority in those countries.

Oh, some have come back to Israel...and I'm so glad God has seen fit to allow Israel to be a nation again. But, they aren't obedient to God there. Most theologians believe they are there to stay this time. And I hope that's true. **But, you know, God has removed them before and He could do it again!**

They have no idea that they are still there only by the grace of God. They think they're there because of their military might. They have no idea that Christians around this world are praying for the peace of Jerusalem because we've been commanded in God's Word to do so.

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

One day they'll live in Israel in peace. They're certainly not at peace right now, are they? One day they'll live in Israel in belief...they're not believing now, are they?

One day, they will seek the Lord their God with all their hearts and you know what? He will let them find Him!

Verses 29-31...

Think about it! No other race of people has been as persecuted as the Jewish people! No other group of people has been the target of such hatred and holocaust. By all rights, they should no longer exist. But, God said He would not fail them or destroy them, nor forget His covenant...and He won't fail them because of His mercy!

Satan is working overtime...day in and day out...to destroy Israel. He always has and he will not stop until he's thrown into the lake of fire. Look at what's going on over there today...

EXAMPLE: Fox News Network...Palestinian suicide bombers

And may I say this...this is the very same reason you and I have not been consumed or destroyed. Because of His grace and mercy! Not because we deserve His watchcare over us, but because of His grace and mercy!

Remember grace is God's giving us what we do not deserve. And mercy is God's withholding from us what we do deserve.

We deserve a life without the presence of God, but because of His amazing grace and tender mercies that are new every morning, we will go to heaven and we will enjoy the presence of God forever and ever!

Moses goes on to remind them what an especially blessed people they are...

Verses 32-40...

Moses is saying,

"God chose **you** for His own purpose. He could have chosen **anybody**! Yet He allowed **you** to be His chosen people.

He chose you and allowed you to hear His voice.

He showed you signs and wonders and war and with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm and by great terrors He delivered you.

He has disciplined you.

He drove out greater and mightier nations before you and He gave you the land so you would keep His statutes and His commandments...

And so that it will go well with you and with your children and that you may live long on this land that God is giving you for all time."

And let me show you the reason He did all this.

Verse 37...

Did you know this is the first time in Scripture that God tells anybody He loves them? Now, God has certainly proven His love over and over and over before now...from **Genesis** on, but up until **Deuteronomy 4:37**, Scripture just doesn't record that He said it.

The Christian Arsenal

www.christianarsenal.com

God did all these things for them because He loved them. There was no good in them, but there was good in God.

The bottom line of all this is that God expected great things from His children. He chose them and called them for a purpose. Many of them failed...and we're tempted to look at them as a whole and say, **"they all failed."**

But they didn't! They gave us the Scripture. The Bible you hold in your laps was written overwhelmingly by Jewish men. Only two books were written by a Gentile. They not only gave us the Scripture...they gave us the Savior. God used the seed of Abraham to bring forth His precious Son.

God loves **us** today. But He doesn't save us by love; He saves us by grace. He couldn't just open the back door of heaven and slip us in. He couldn't be righteous and do that. A sacrifice for our sins had to be made. His love sent Christ to die for us, and Christ loved us enough to die so that you and I might have a pardon. The Bible doesn't say, **"God so loved the world that He saved the world."** It says, **"God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son..."**

He did this that "whosoever" – it makes no difference who it is... "believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

God loves me! God saved me! What an incredible thought! And because He does, I should seek with all my heart to obey Him and to fulfill the purpose He has for my life!

Is it an amazing thing to you that He chose you? It surely is to me!

John 15:16... Jesus said, "You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you..."

And so often we stop right there and we get into a great theological debate over being chosen, but that verse goes on to say...

"...I have chosen you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit."

Just as surely as God called the Jewish people to a task, He has called you and me to one as well. First, we must be certain that we know His dear Son as our Savior.

And then we must do all we can to bring others into the family of God. He has chosen and appointed us to go and bear fruit...

May we be about the business of doing just that!