

“The Blessings of Obedience”
Deuteronomy 4
(Preached at Trinity, July 14, 2024)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citation will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Deuteronomy contains three sermons preached by Moses at the end of his life just prior to Israel entering the Promised Land under the command of Joshua.
Israel is being called to remember where they stood 40 years before when they were about to enter into Canaan. But they did not enter. Instead, because of their sin they were left to wander forty years in the wilderness. We need to remember that no one standing before Moses at this time was older than 20 when their fathers failed to follow God.
 - A. Moses is calling upon this new generation to remember the sins of their fathers. He was also calling them to reflect on the riches of God's blessings upon Israel, blessings that they failed to appreciate and blessings they had forgotten.
 - B. Entering the land is the fulfillment of God's Covenant promises, but if they fell into idolatry they would be exiled from the land. It's a motivational sermon calling them to Covenant faithfulness to the laws given on Mount Sinai forty years before.
2. Moses is calling upon them to remember. God's grace in the past serves as the context and motivation for Israel's keeping the law in the present.
Keeping the law in the book of Deuteronomy is a response to God's grace and not a means to earn God's favor.
3. In **Chapter 4** Moses brings his first sermon to a close. It is a call to obedience.
Deuteronomy 4:1 NAU - "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you."
Deuteronomy 4:5 NAU - "See, I have taught you statutes and judgments just as the LORD my God commanded me, that you should do thus in the land where you are entering to possess it."
Deuteronomy 4:9 NAU - "Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons."
4. God gave His Law by way of Covenant and commanded obedience.
Deuteronomy 4:13-14 NAU - "He declared to you His covenant which He commanded you to perform, *that is*, the Ten Commandments; and He wrote them on two tablets of stone. ¹⁴ "The LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that you might perform them in the land where you are going over to possess it."
Deuteronomy 4:23-24 NAU - "So watch yourselves, that you do not forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything *against* which the LORD your God has commanded you. ²⁴ "For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God."

5. Although God's Covenant promise is unconditional and unchanging, Israel's continuance in the Land of Promise was conditioned upon their covenant faithfulness. We know Israel always struggled with idolatry. They would continually be entangled with the pagans of the land. Their kings would lead them into ever increasing sin. God gave them a stern warning.
Deuteronomy 4:25-27 NAU - "When you become the father of children and children's children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD your God so as to provoke Him to anger, ²⁶ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed. ²⁷ "The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD drives you."
6. Israel was unfaithful, but God's promises will never fail.
Deuteronomy 4:31 NAU - "For the LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them."
7. Although obedience is never meritorious, there are blessings that accompany obedience. This remains true even in the New Covenant. We must handle this carefully. Moses is encouraging Israel before they crossed the Jordan into Canaan. The phrase "that it may go well with you" appears eight times in the Book of Deuteronomy.
Deuteronomy 4:39-40 NAU - "Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the LORD, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other. ⁴⁰ "So you shall keep His statutes and His commandments which I am giving you today, that it may go well with you and with your children after you, and that you may live long on the land which the LORD your God is giving you for all time."
- I. The Law carries with it consequences for obedience and disobedience.
Deuteronomy 5:8-10 NAU - "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. ⁹ 'You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, and on the third and the fourth *generations* of those who hate Me, ¹⁰ but showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments."
A. On one hand all of our righteousness is in Christ.
 1. We are not saved by our righteousness but by His.
1 Corinthians 1:30-31 NAU - "But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption, ³¹ that, just as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast in the Lord."
 2. No amount of obedience to the Law can save us
Romans 3:20 NAU - "because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin."
Titus 3:5-6 NAU - "He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,"

- B. On the other hand, there is an expectation of obedience.
1. The Bible equates salvation with faithful continuance in following Christ
Matthew 10:22 NAU - "And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved."
1 Corinthians 9:27 NAU - "I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified."
Matthew Henry – “A preacher of salvation may yet miss it. He may show others the way to heaven, and never get thither himself. To prevent this, Paul took so much pains in subduing and keeping under bodily inclinations, lest by any means he himself, who had preached to others, should yet miss the crown, be disapproved and rejected by his sovereign Judge. A holy fear of himself was necessary to preserve the fidelity of an apostle; and how much more necessary is it to our preservation? Note, Holy fear of ourselves, and not presumptuous confidence, is the best security against apostasy from God, and final rejection by him.”¹
 2. Jesus equated obedience as characteristic of our redemption.
Matthew 7:21-23 NAU - "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. ²² "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' ²³ "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness."
- II. One of the great blessings of obedience is the blessing of God’s Presence.
- A. Israel was blessed with the presence of God because of their obedience.
 1. Remember, after they had sinned they lost the presence of God.
Exodus. 33:3 NAU - "I will not go up in your midst, because you are an obstinate people, lest I destroy you on the way."
 2. As they obeyed God they would enjoy His rich presence.
Deuteronomy 4:29 NAU - "you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find *Him* if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul."
 - B. Sin will affect our fellowship with God.
 1. There is a difference between *union* and *communion*
 - a. Our union with God is sovereign and unalterable.
 - b. Our communion with God is alterable – it can be affected by our actions.
 2. Sin can cause the Holy Spirit to remove His gracious influences
Isaiah 59:2 NAU - "But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, And your sins have hidden *His* face from you so that He does not hear."

¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry’s Commentary on the Whole Bible: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 2261.

3. Sin is poison to our relationship with Christ. It hinders our prayer life. It crushes our confidence. It acts like water on the fires of our fervency. It separates us from fellowship with God.
LBC 17:3 – *Of the Perseverance of the Saints*
“we can fall into grievous sins, and for a time continue therein, whereby they incur God’s displeasure and grieve His Holy Spirit, come to have their graces and comforts impaired, have their hearts hardened, and their consciences wounded, hurt and scandalize others, and bring temporal judgments upon themselves . . .”
4. Our greatest desire is the presence of God in our lives and is the motivation for all our works.
Samuel Bolton in *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*
“In servile obedience the man does things in a legal spirit, either hoping to get rewards by it, or fearing punishments if he omits the duty. The godly man, on the other hand, goes about duty for the sake of obtaining communion with God, and knows it to be his reward and happiness to have that communion, while the lack of it is the greatest punishment he can endure.”
“The one kind of man looks for his satisfaction in the duty by the performance of the duty, the other looks for satisfaction in the duty as he finds Christ thereby.”²
“The believer does not perform duty that it may go well with him here; nor does he perform duty that he may gain glory hereafter. He regards communion and nearness to God as happiness enough. He esteems it a piece of his heaven, to have communion with God.”³

III. Obedience brings us peace

- A. In the New Covenant through the Gospel of Christ we have been brought to peace with God.
 1. This is a permanent peace made possible through the work of Christ on the cross. Jesus has atoned for our sins.
Romans 5:1 NAU - "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,"
 2. We cannot lose this peace.
- B. We can lose peace of conscience, however.
 1. As Christians our consciences have been awakened to sin. The sanctified conscience is tender. Sin offends our consciences.
 2. When we sin the Holy Spirit convicts our conscience. It is a hounding sorrow and grief of heart. It is a terrible burning fire in our bosom.

² Bolton, Samuel, *The True Bounds of Christian Freedom*, Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2001 – page 57.

³ *Ibid.*, Page 140.

3. Our offended conscience crushes our confidence before God and hinders our assurance.
LBC Chapter 18:4 – “True believers may have the assurance of their salvation divers ways shaken, diminished, and intermitted; as by negligence in preserving of it, by falling into some special sin which woundeth the conscience and grieveth the Spirit.”
 4. It is at this level that God’s chastening often comes.
 - a. Sometimes we flee from the warnings of our conscience. We kick against the pricks.
 - b. God intervenes to turn us.
His chastening is not punitive but disciplinary – it is an act of love to return us to holiness and restore our peace of conscience.
- C. It is this conviction that keeps us from sin.
1. Obedience keeps our conscience at peace.
Hebrews refers to it as the peaceful fruit of righteousness.
Hebrews 12:11 NAU - "All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness."
 2. Gospel obedience isn’t motivated by a fear of condemnation. Rather it is a grief of heart over offending God.
- IV. One of the greatest benefits of obedience is the joy of pleasing God.
- A. Jesus, our high example, lived in total obedience to the Father.
Philippians 2:8 NAU - "Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."
1. Obedience was His high desire – it ruled His holy life
John 4:34 NAU - "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work."
 2. Even as He considered the torment of the cross, He was directed totally by a desire to do the Father’s will
Luke 22:42 NAU - "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."
 3. What motivated His great desire to do His Father’s will? It was pure love.
John 14:31 NAU - "but so that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me."
- B. For the Christian our obedience should be motivated by the pure joy of pleasing God.
1. We obey and serve God because we love Him
1 John 5:3 NAU - "For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome."
 2. Nothing should bring us greater pleasure than obeying Him. We have no other motive. We expect nothing in return. Obedience is simply the desire of our heart and it brings us great joy.

Conclusion:

1. Does this describe you? Only a heart for Christ will lead us to consistently obey Him.
2. Your heart will determine your behavior
Matthew 6:21 NAU - "for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."