

The Law of God

Deuteronomy 4:1-9

INTRODUCTION

- A. A man lived in another country whose laws were such that one could not walk on the sidewalks after 6:00 PM.
1. Eventually this man moved to the United States.
 - a. After arriving here he decided to see the sights & went for a long walk.
 - b. Suddenly he realized it was getting close to 6:00 PM and he was far from where he was staying.
 - c. In desperation, he stopped a stranger who was getting into an automobile & in halting English said, "Please, sir, help me! It is almost six and I am too far from my hotel to walk back before I will be arrested. Can you give me a ride?"
 2. The stranger at first was confused but then realized that the man was new to the United States & so said to him, "Sir, let me assure you that in the United States we do not arrest people for being out after six."
 3. This man failed to understand that because he was in a new country he was under new laws.
- B. In this morning's text, the Israelites are preparing to enter a new country.
1. They had lived in Egyptian bondage for over 400 years & had spent 40 years wandering in the wilderness.
 2. Now, they are preparing to enter Canaan & God, through Moses, is giving them the new law for their new country.
 - a. Of course, God had given the Law before at Sinai.
 - b. But, in Deuteronomy, God repeats the Law & reiterates how important that Law really is. In fact, the word "Deuteronomy" literally means "Second Law" & the idea is that this Book is the second giving of the Law of God to his people.
 - c. Notice what Moses says about the Law: READ TEXT.
- C. Obviously, the very idea of "law" is quite unpopular in our modern society.
1. How many people actually do the speed limit? How many people cheat on their income taxes? How many people go to prison for crimes they thought would never be discovered?
 2. In the church, how popular is law?
 - a. How many people have we known to go into error because they felt that God's will was just too restrictive?
 - b. How many once-solid congregations have slid into apostasy because they failed to heed the law of God?
- D. Since "law" is so unpopular, we even discuss the rules of God this morning?
1. For one thing, it's biblical.
 - a. Even the New Testament speaks of "law": "Whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it. For he who said, 'Do not commit adultery,' also said, 'Do not murder.' If you do not commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty" (Js 2:10-12).
 - b. While the Law of Moses has been removed, God still has a law he expects people to follow.
 2. For another thing, it is by obedience to that law that we receive eternal life.
 - a. "The world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever" (1 Jn 2:17).
 - b. Because obedience to the law imparts eternal life, it's imperative that we think seriously about the law of God.
- E. This morning, we want to think seriously about the law of God, using the words of Moses. We see that God's law is A SUCCESSFUL LAW, A SUPREME LAW, A SAPIENT LAW, A SUITABLE LAW, & A SPANNING LAW.

GOD'S LAW IS A SUCCESSFUL LAW, v 1

- A. "And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the rules that I am teaching you, and do them, that you may live, and go in and take possession of the land that the LORD, the God of your fathers, is giving you."
- B. If the Israelites kept the Law, they would be successful—God would give them the land that he had promised to give their forefathers.
1. The land promise to Israel was tied up in the people's obedience to the Law.
 - a. Deut 30:15-18.

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- b. The people of Israel learned that lesson the hard way.
 - 1) When they went up against Ai, they had to retreat in defeat because Achan had taken some of the spoil from Jericho.
 - 2) When the Northern Kingdom persisted in sin, God sent them into Assyrian Captivity, never to return.
 - 3) When the Southern Kingdom persisted in sin, God sent them into Babylonian Captivity for 70 years.
- c. God never promised the Israelites that they would have Canaan forever with no strings attached. It was only through their obedience to the law that God would continue to bless them.
- 2. For us, the law of God is A SUCCESSFUL LAW.
 - a. God blesses his people for obedience to his law.
 - 1) “The one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing” (Jas 1:25).
 - 2) “Whatever we ask we receive from him, because we keep his commandments and do what pleases him” (1 Jn 3:22).
 - 3) “Being made perfect, [Jesus] became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him” (Heb 5:9)-If we obey the words of Jesus, we receive the blessing of eternal salvation.
 - b. A little boy in Scotland was wearing a top-coat for the very first time.
 - 1) He & his father were out walking one cold day, and the way was quite slippery.
 - 2) The little fellow’s hands were deep down in his pockets.
 - 3) His father said to him: “My son, you had better let me take your hand,” but he could never persuade the boy to take his hands out of his pockets.
 - a) They reached a slipper place & the boy had a hard fall. Then his pride began to abate & he said, “I will take your hand,” and he reached up and clasped his father’s hand the best he could.
 - b) When they came to a second slipper place, the clasp was broken & the fall was harder than the first. All the boy’s pride was gone, and he said, “You may take it now,” & the father clasped his son’s hand as tightly as he could.
 - c) When they came to other slipper places, the boy’s feet would begin to give way, but his father held him & kept him from falling.
 - c. That little boy learned that he was blessed in obeying his father—obedience kept him from falling & getting hurt.
 - d. Likewise, for us, there are blessings in our obedience to God. Are you obeying God? Are you receiving his blessings?

GOD’S LAW IS A SUPREME LAW, v 2

- A. “You shall not add to the word that I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you.”
- B. God’s law is A SUPREME LAW in that man cannot improve upon it.
 - 1. Moses tells the Israelites that they are neither to add to nor subtract from God’s commandments.
 - 2. Throughout Scripture, we find that God is concerned that man obey his will as he has given it.
 - a. “Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar” (Prov 30:6).
 - b. “I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book” (Rev 22:18-19).
 - 3. God has given his commandments; God’s Word says what it says, and there is no changing it.
 - a. So many try to change it.
 - 1) “I really don’t think that God cares that much whom someone loves. Let’s legalize homosexual marriage.”
 - 2) “I really don’t think God cares that much how I worship; let’s get a piano.”
 - b. Try changing the laws of man!
 - 1) You fill out your income tax forms, but you fail to report all your income & you include your dog as a dependent.
 - a) You have done precisely what so many in religion want to do—you added to the law by claiming your dog & you’ve subtracted from the law by not reporting all your income.
 - b) But, when they audit you, what do you really believe is going to happen?
 - 2) In the same vein, I cannot change the law of God, a far more important law than the laws of man.

GOD'S LAW IS A SAPIENT LAW, v 6

- A. "Keep them and do them, for that will be your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples, who, when they hear all these statutes, will say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'"
- B. God's law is A SAPIENT LAW in that it makes its followers sapient, i.e., wise.
 - 1. God's law provides man with true & lasting wisdom.
 - a. "The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge" (Prov 1:7).
 - b. "Your commandment makes me wiser than my enemies, for it is ever with me" (Ps 119:98).
 - 2. Moses says that other nations, when they hear these statutes, will recognize the will of God as sapient.
 - a. In verses 7 & 8, Moses says that the people will see the wisdom of the people in two ways:
 - 1) One, no other nation—save Israel—had a God who would come to their aid whenever they called for him.
 - a) Why would God come to the people's aid whenever they called for him?
 - b) Because they kept the Law: Deut 30:1-5.
 - i. Notice that this text speaks of the aid that God would give—he would bring his outcast children back into the land that he had promised to give them.
 - ii. But, that promise is conditional upon obedience to the Law; the people would need to obey the voice of God (v 2).
 - 2) Second, the people would notice that the statutes of God are righteous. The people would sit up & take notice of how right the Law of Moses was.
 - b. In today's world, people will continue to notice that God's law is A SAPIENT LAW.
 - 1) Paul says that the Word of God bring wisdom.
 - a) Paul says to Timothy, "From childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (2 Tm 3:15).
 - b) Granted, it may not be in this life that the world recognizes the wisdom God's Word imparts, but when they see the obedient entering the heavenly city, they will fully understand how wise we have been.
 - 2) Have you been made wise through your obedience to the Word of God?

GOD'S LAW IS A SUITABLE LAW, v 8

- A. "What great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I set before you today?"
- B. God's Law is A SUITABLE LAW in that it is a righteous—i.e., right—law.
 - 1. It is suitable. It is appropriate. It is right.
 - a. "The law of the LORD is perfect, reviving the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple; the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart" (Ps 19:7-8).
 - b. "Your righteousness is righteous forever, and your law is true" (Ps 119:142).
 - 2. The law of God today is also suitable.
 - a. That law contains no defect, no blemish. It is righteous.
 - 1) "The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good" (Rom 7:12).
 - 2) "We know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully" (1 Tm 1:8).
 - b. God's law is A SUITABLE LAW, for it comes from the mind of a perfect God.
 - 1) How could we expect God's law to be anything other than righteous when God is perfectly righteous?
 - 2) How could we expect the moral teaching of Scripture to be anything other than sheer perfection when God himself is the model of perfection?

GOD'S LAW IS A SPANNING LAW, v 9

- A. God's law is to span generations.
- B. "Only take care, and keep your soul diligently, lest you forget the things that your eyes have seen, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life. Make them known to your children and your children's children."
 - 1. It wasn't just the case that the Israelites needed to know themselves what God had said & what their eyes had seen, but they were to make God's law known to their children.
 - 2. God instructed the Israelites to teach their children his ways.
 - a. "These words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise" (Deut 6:6-7).

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- b. “Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it” (Prov 22:6).
- C. The law that God has given to us through his apostles is to be a spanning law.
 - 1. It is to span from this generation to the next: “Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord” (Eph 6:4).
 - 2. Through Rochester, New York runs the Genesee River, between steep & crooked banks.
 - a. On one occasion a gentleman, who lived in the city, had just arrived by train from a journey.
 - b. He was anxious to go home & meet his wife and children, and he was hurrying along the streets, with a bright vision of home in his mind, when he saw on the bank of the river a lot of excited men.
 - 1) “What is the matter?” he shouted.
 - 2) They replied, “A boy is in the water. He will drown! Will you save him?”
 - c. In a moment, throwing down his bag & pulling off his coat, he jumped into the stream, grasped the boy in his arms, struggled with him to the shore, and, as he wiped the water from the boy’s dripping face and brushed back his hair, he exclaimed: “It is my boy!”
 - d. That gentleman was able to save his own child from a certain death.
 - 1) When we take the time to teach the Word of God to our children, we are saving our own children from a certain hell.
 - 2) Are we taking the time to make sure that God’s law is a spanning law & that it spans from our generation to the next?

CONCLUSION

- A. The whole point of this passage is to impress upon the Israelites the need to obey the Law of God.
 - 1. If the people obey the Law, they will find success in what they do; the people are to obey the Law as God has given it; if the people do obey the Law, other nations will see them as wise; if the people obey the Law, they will do what’s right, for the Law is righteous; and if the people need to teach their children to obey the Law.
 - 2. Obedience to the commands of God is so very important: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven” (Mt 7:21).
- B. During the Second World War, a French gunner was directed by his commanding officer to train his gun on a little house in the distance in which he suspected the enemy might be hiding.
 - 1. The soldier obeyed & the little house was blown to bits.
 - 2. High pleased with the expert marksmanship, the commander turned to his gunner with a compliment, only to find him with tear-dimmed eyes.
 - a. Asked why he wept, the soldier said, “That was my home.”
 - b. “If you had told me,” said the officer, “I might have modified the order.”
 - c. The soldier swiftly replied, “A soldier’s first duty is to obey orders.”
 - 3. Our first duty is to obey God. Are you obeying God?