

oundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."...
ousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife. 24 And a servant of the Lord must not quarrel but be gentle to all, able to teach, patient, 25 in humility correcting those who are in opposition, if God perhaps will grant them repentance, so that they may know the truth, 26 and that they may come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will."

3:1 "But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: 2 For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, 3 unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, 4 traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, 5 having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! ...

10 But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, 11 persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra--what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. 12 Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution. 13 But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived. 14 But you must continue in the things which you have learned and been assured of, knowing from whom you have learned them, 15 and that from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. 16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.

"Instruction in Righteousness"

After starting the New Year focused on Psalm 51, I took upon myself the task of giving you a review of the Book of Deuteronomy in just three short weeks!

- We are making such good progress, that I may throw in a Prophet next week ☺

Last week, I made the case that taking an areal view of Deuteronomy we can see how God gives His vision for His people, His instructions for His people and sober warnings for His people. We saw this vision in chapters one thru eleven, along with the responsibility we have to instill this vision in the covenant children God has blessed us with. A vision that is summarized by the author of Hebrews when he declares in chapter 8 verse 10:

- "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; & I will be their God, & they shall be My People."
- This week we want to focus on how we are to give these same covenant children, and all of us, the instruction in righteousness that we need to properly live as God's people.

For this we look to the extensive explanation of God's Law given in chapters twelve through twenty-seven. To give us the proper context, let me go back to where we ended last week: The Words of Jesus from the early part of the Sermon on the Mount right after He tells us to be salt & light:

Matthew 5: 16 Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. 17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle

fulfilled. 19 Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps all these commandments and does not break one of them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. 20 For I say to you, that unless you turn and become like children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

- So Jesus says that He came not to destroy the Law but to fulfill the Law and that our righteousness has to exceed that of the Pharisees!

This might seem strange to many Christians today whose view of God's Law has been informed ONLY by John's statement in the first chapter of his Gospel "For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" and the statements by the Apostle Paul in both Romans and Galatians that no one is justified by the Law!

As we pointed out last week, both John and Paul are pointing to the sinful use of God's Law by the Pharisees which they and Jesus condemned! These religious leaders tried to proudly earn their salvation by the keeping of the Law.

Those who have neglected God's Law using these verses as their proof texts, as well as the Pharisees of our day who use the Law in a legalistic way, have given God's Law a bad name: Something the Bible itself certainly does NOT do: The central example would be Psalm 119, the longest Psalm or chapter in the Scriptures!

- 176 verses of praise & adoration of God's laws, statutes, commandments judgments, testimonies & precepts.

The Law of God is still essential for giving our children or new converts the instruction in righteousness that they need and the history given here in Deuteronomy is a powerful example of how we are to teach them!

- This is why the Apostle Paul said these things are written for our benefit and that ALL Scripture is profitable for giving the instruction in righteousness!

Moses gives a few hundred thousand of God's people the instruction in righteousness they will need as they prepare to enter the Promised Land. When God gives them the summary of the Law in the Ten Commandments He begins by saying "I am Jehovah your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage."

- It is God who has delivered them and not they themselves!

In the early chapters of Deuteronomy God explains to them that He is going to go before them and destroy all their enemies in this Promised Land...

- They will be destroyed in His strength, not their strength.

And finally, in several places that we considered last week God reminded them of all the great blessings they will have – Wells, vineyards, orchards, fields and great cities -- ALL blessings to be given to them freely by God and not earned by them.

- So in the midst of all this grace, God calls on them to remember Him and to be obedient to His Laws!

See if this does not sound a lot like the precious promises that we often read from Ephesians chapter two:

"4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, [like their bondage in Egypt] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. [God is our deliverer!]

faith, & that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of
promised Land]
Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared

that He had not come to abolish the Law but to establish the Law.

- This is why we are to properly love God's Law!

The Pharisees had gotten it all wrong and took the very milk that God had provided to nourish His people and boiled them in it by demanding that people earn their salvation. Just listen to how Jesus rebukes them near the end of Matthew's Gospel:

Matthew 23: ðWoe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith.

[notice that even here Jesus defends the principles of the Law...]

“These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone. 24 Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! 25 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. 26 Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also. 27 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. 28 Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.”

- They could not keep God's Law perfectly and neither can we!
- They abused God's Law as some do today, but this does NOT mean God's Law has failed or is of no use.

So what is God's Law and how does it teach us to be the salt and light that Jesus calls us to be...

- Learning to walk in those good works that we were graciously created in Christ Jesus to walk in?
- The honest answer is that God's Law is very simple and at the same time very complex!

Most importantly, we must remember that we need to turn to ALL of God's Word for the proper understanding of how the Law is fulfilled in Christ. There are about 150 references to God's Law in the New Testament! Almost a third of them are found in the Book of Romans, so I would commend it to you for further study if you need more homework... Or come to Wednesday night Bible Study!

- So first, how is the Law simple?

In Matthew chapter 22 we find Jesus continuing His debates with the religious leaders of that day and at verse 35 He gives us His simple definition of The Law of God:

ðThen one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying, 36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" 37 Jesus said to him, "'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and great commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

The Ten Commandments given in Deuteronomy chapter five are a broader summary of the various Laws given in chapters twelve through twenty-seven so Jesus here gives us a summary of the summary!

- So what does it mean to love God and love your neighbor?
- This is what brings us to the complexity of the Law!

governed by the two tables of the Law with the first four and the last six teaching us how to love our neighbor.

With twenty-seven of Deuteronomy, as well as much more in the way what these commandments mean and how to keep them.

- So how do I go about covering all this in a single message?

I could just give you some suggested reading... [show the books]

I hauled all these in here to make an important point...

- This instruction is not something given in just a single lesson nor even one where we will ever reach a point of saying we have arrived!

This is why God told us that teaching them to our children would be a full time project:

- In our home, on the road, when we rise up and when we lie down. The Law of God impacts ALL areas of our lives.

This is also why we will continue to grow in our understanding of God's Law and its application for our entire lives, IF we are faithful disciples! ALWAYS remembering that our salvation does not depend on the keeping of God's Law and that all of the applications should lead us to the simple obedience of the two Great Commandments...

- To love God and to love our neighbor.

Toward this end we see in God's Law, as we do with all of the Scriptures that Timothy was admonished to follow, three great principles or categories:

- The Holiness of God
- The Sinfulness of Sin
- The Greatness of God's Salvation

When we remember the purpose of the Law and these principles, all of the many details that we find in the explanations of the Law begin to make much more sense! *[we must understand this to give a proper defense of the Law & the Bible!]*

-- Moses begins in chapter twelve with the importance of the right worship of God & the command to avoid all idolatry.

-- In chapter 13 he reminds the people that those idols can be false prophets who sound very convincing or even come from our own families or government: A warning that is very relevant for America today.

-- In chapter 14 we have some of those food laws that demonstrate God's holiness and the sinfulness of sin and how we are to be separated from sin.

- We are to remember how gracious our God has been to us with the giving of our tithes, years of releases and celebrations!

-- This continues in chapter 15 where the Sabbatical year reminds God's people of where their prosperity came from.

-- In chapter 16 we have the feasts which bring more celebration and a call to maintain justice

-- Chapter 17 is another reminder about right worship & maintaining justice: Any King must avoid the trappings of this world – the power of horses; the seduction of many wives; or temptation of money – and to maintain justice!

evites who served God calling on His people to avoid
ious reminder that a Prophet greater than Moses will come

Instructions about justice with the cities of refuge, property
rights and the witnesses needed for criminal cases.

- Chapter 20 has many rules for warfare, another important area of discussion needed in our nation today.
- Chapter 21 brings us to some of the more difficult situations dealing with unsolved murders, war captives, inheritances and incorrigible sons.
 - It also brings a reminder about the terrible curse of hanging on a tree, foretelling the way our Savior would have to suffer for the sins of His people.
- Chapters 22 thru 25 present a long list of miscellaneous Laws
- Chapter 26 returns to the importance of tithing so the people do not come to take the blessings of God for granted.
 - Finally, after the instructions have been given, chapter 27 begins a series of very practical reminders of the importance of these Laws.

Moses again commands them to keep these Laws after they pass over into the Promised Land, just as we should do those good works we were created in Christ Jesus to walk in.

- Moses instructed them to write them upon stones, just as God has promised to write them on our hearts.

Then they were to worship at an altar made of rocks untouched by human hands, offering ascension offerings and peace offerings, eating and rejoicing before the Lord, just as we do in worship each week.

- They were then instructed to divide the tribes between Mount Gerizim and Mount Ebal to declare the blessings and curses of the covenant which we will consider next week.

So as we study & ponder these instructions in righteousness we should remember:

- That the Law of God is both simple and very complex!
- It is the schoolmaster that brings us to Christ as our only way of salvation and then it teaches us what it means to love God and to love our neighbor!

And as I mentioned last week, we must remember and avoid those dangerous ditches on either side of this road of righteousness:

- The ditch of neglect on one side where we largely ignore the Law of God and thus struggle to rightly understand how to properly love God or to love our neighbor.

And the ditch of legalism on the other side where we demand that the law must be obeyed for one to be saved and thus take ourselves and our neighbors far from God to the very gates of death and hell.

- We see the proper balance of all this in the life and writings of the Apostle Paul!

First his testimony that we will soon study in the Book of Acts given by Paul to defend himself against those who said that he rejected the Law of Moses:

Acts 24: 12 And they neither found me in the temple disputing with anyone nor inciting the crowd, either in the synagogues or in the city. 13 Nor can they prove the things of which they now accuse me. 14 But this I confess to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets. 15 I have hope in God, which they themselves also accept, that there will be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust. 16 This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.”

ns where as I mentioned the Law is cited about fifty times by
one is saved by the Law and then in chapter thirteen explains
l: And as we reflect on these two passages we should
who wrote to young Timothy that ALL Scripture is
profitable for instruction in righteousness!

Romans 3:19 “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. 21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law & the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. 27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. 29 Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also, 30 since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. 31 Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.”

- Jesus said He had come to make full the Law and that is exactly what He accomplished in His life and ministry.

Now we are called to take this Good News to all the nations of the earth, Discipling them, baptizing them AND teaching them to observe all things that Jesus commanded! This is pictured in Romans 13:8

“Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. 9 For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” 10 Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. 11 And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed. 12 The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly, as in the day, not in revelry & drunkenness, not in lewdness and lust, not in strife and envy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts.”

- We have considered just some of the important lessons from the Old Testament book quoted more than any other in our Lord’s earthly ministry: Deuteronomy.

-- We must have the vision that God has for His people: Remembering He is our God and that we are His people.

-- We must faithfully study & understand the instructions in righteousness that are given and we must heed the warnings that God has for His people.

- In short we must love and be able to apply and defend God’s Law!

It must be God’s wisdom that informs all that we do, from teaching our little ones to share their toys all the way up to being a President who must manage very complex international relationships in our modern world.

Francis Schaeffer often used to help our children, and all of

from bondage in Egypt and gave them a land flowing with milk and honey, so our God has given us new life in Jesus.

- We have been given new life:
A life that Jesus wants us to live as an abundant life!

It is like a new home that is purchased by a family which the children do nothing to earn or even deserve it! They look outside and see a marvelous backyard with swing sets and trees and lots of space in which to play! The fence around that yard is the protection that God gives us in His Law: The rules for enjoying the backyard if you will...

- It protects the children from wild animals or freeways or cliffs or toxic chemicals or whatever dangers may lie outside that fence.

The parents tell the children to go forth and enjoy the bounty of this backyard but to always stay within the fence.

- The child who obeys does in fact enjoy all there is to enjoy in that special back yard!

The child who forgets his parents warning or rebels against the restriction of the fence, not only loses the enjoyment of the yard but will suffer the consequences of going outside their parents loving boundaries.

- It is in this context that we should seek to have God's instructions in righteousness and learn to love and obey His Laws!

For as many of us learned in our reading of Proverbs ten this week,
"He who keeps instruction is in the way of life, But he who refuses correction goes astray."

Communion Meditation: Proverbs 9:

"Wisdom has built her house,
She has hewn out her seven pillars;
She has slaughtered her meat,
She has mixed her wine,
She has also furnished her table.
She has sent out her maidens,
She cries out from the highest places of the city,

4 "Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!"

As for him who lacks understanding, she says to him,

5 "Come, eat of my bread And drink of the wine I have mixed. 6 Forsake foolishness and live, And go in the way of understanding. í

10 "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, & the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.

11 For by me your days will be multiplied, And years of life will be added to you.