

Obedience from Grace – Deuteronomy 4:1-14

Introduction – The first sermon of Moses in this book reaches its climax in this chapter. Ending his “field trip” of the mighty works of God, Moses turns to the obvious application for Israel. God can take care of the giants; the charge is simply to Israel’s faith and faithfulness.

Therefore...Listen and Obey (vv1-4) – The very first word is important, “Now” (NKJV). The construction is the same as Psalm 2:10, “Now, therefore,” where the command is connected to the previous truths. This is the nature of God’s covenant; God saves and then we obey. It is enough that we should obey God because He is God, but we are constantly exhorted to obey because He has been so gracious to us. We are not called on to “obey and therefore,” but rather, “therefore, obey.” This watershed difference defines the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus does not command us to “go and disciple the nations,” but rather to “therefore go disciple the nations” (Matt 28:19).

Listen and Live (vv1-2) – The unconverted see the law as something to do to get to God; the converted see the law as the way to live in the grace of God. To the regenerate, all the Word is grace and gospel; and to the unregenerate, all the Word is law and condemnation. Therefore, living in the gospel means living according to every command. We do not get to pick and choose (James 2:10). In that grace, with the expectation of blessing, we are to be doers and not only hearers (James 1:22-25).

Remember the Consequences of Disobedience (vv3-4) – To do any less than full obedience is to adulterate the commands of God, illustrated by Israel’s adulteration at Baal Peor (Num 25, Psalm 106:28-31). Judgment follows idolatrous worship and God’s people are warned by remembering these events. We learn by remembering the chastisements God has brought upon others and ourselves.

Obedience to the Word as Evangelism to the World (vv5-8) – The significance of remembering the Baal Peor event was to see that the only way to be successful in the new land was by being faithful to God. The only way to grow in wisdom and discernment is to obey what you have been given (Heb 5:12-14). A corollary is added: when nations see that God’s people have received His special law from Him and are walking in covenant love with Him, they are amazed at the fruit of such a union. Sometimes the neighbors see your fruit. Unbelievers may see right worship and know that God is in our midst (1 Cor 14:25). Even nations will know, when God’s people living in a right relationship before Him as a nation, that they have something very, very special.

What Nation? – Some would say that this only applies to Israel as a nation, but that misses the mark of the New Covenant and the age of the Gospel. Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords now, and nations are to bow the knee now before Him – as nations. Conversely, individuals, churches, or nations who honor God with their lips (“I prayed a prayer,” “We followed the liturgy,” “We put ‘In God We Trust’ on our coins”) but their hearts are far from Him, are an abomination in His sight (Mark 7:6-7, Isaiah 1:12, Psalm 51:16-17).

Take Heed to the Word (vv9-14) – But taking heed does not begin at the national level. “Take heed to yourself, and diligently keep yourself...” (v9). Revival begins with your heart, and then with your family, remembering God’s promises and mercy to a thousand generations. Even grandparents are to have this mindset toward their grandchildren. This is not patriarchalism, but faithful covenant keeping. Our sin is to retire and “spend our children’s inheritance,” rather than see our covenantal obligations and opportunities before God. The stories of God’s covenant renewals, and especially the Words given at Horeb, are to be remembered, recalled, and taught to our children – for this will be the basis having a godly civilization or not. The same principle has not changed in the New Covenant where fathers are told to bring their children up in the training and admonition of the Lord (Eph 6:4). We are to first “fear” and then “teach” (v 10).

WORDS – It was in the midst of a mountain burning with fire, with darkness, cloud, and thick darkness (for we are not to see God, for He is invisible) that He gave His Words. The contrast was not visible vs. invisible, but visible vs. audible (v12). Creation is Word-centered (Gen 1:3), redemption is Word-centered (Heb 1:1-2), our Redeemer is Word (John 1:1), and so our religion is Word-centered (Rom 10:14-15). Therefore, while the miraculous workings of God testify to the authority of those bringing His Word to us, it is His Word, the Gospel, which convicts and transforms. And it is the preaching of His Word which will establish and lead His people as to how they should live.

Take Heed and Obey – All of God’s Word is Gospel and life to those who hear with faith; all of God’s Word is condemning law to those who hear with ears of flesh. We are not to hear and obey in order to be saved. Rather, therefore (having been delivered, redeemed, born again, having been saved) we are to hear and obey. Godly obedience flows from grace to grace.