

Bible Study – Deuteronomy Chapter 11 – Obedience & Disobedience

In the last study, we saw how God would use the Israelites as his instruments of judgement against the Canaanites. However, Moses reminds them that even though they are carrying out this judgement, it is not because of their righteousness and points out their shortfalls. He also reminds them of God's grace and love in their lives. Today, we conclude the second sermon from Moses with a reminder of how he started this; to love and obey God because of His love for them.

Read Deuteronomy 11:1 – 17

Moses concludes this section with how he started it: by exhorting Israel to covenant loyalty. He then talks about the discipline of the Lord your God, on both the Egyptians (Exodus 14) and certain Israelites, specifically Dathan and Abiram (Numbers 16:12-15, 20-33), reminding Israel of God's protection and justice on his chosen people. As Moses repeats his exhortation to obey God's commands for their own good, he begins to compare the land they left to the land they are about to possess, illustrating the difference of what they were leaving behind to what they were going to. As added incentive to love the Lord God and to obey His commands, they would enjoy abundant crops in their new land.

Q. In verses 2-7, Moses goes into detail regarding God's punishment on the Egyptians and on Dathan and Abiram. What do you think is Moses' purpose in giving these details? Does it give you comfort or encouragement or does it give you worry or uneasiness about how God has dealt with these incidents?

- **Objective – To show that God is just and disciplines the ones he loves**
- There are several reasons why Moses could be including all these details regarding the punishment and discipline of the Egyptians and Israelites:
 - To the Egyptians, to show that no matter how great the forces Israel was going against, the Lord God that they served was even greater
 - The Egyptians, with their great armies, were no match for God and with great power, vanquished their once great army
 - To the two Israelites who participated in Korah's rebellion, it was to show that their acts of rebellion would be dealt with harshly and swiftly
 - It was to be shown as a 'disciplining' lesson, meaning that it was meant to demonstrate what would happen if the Israelites went against the word of God
- This also could have been used as motivation to obey the word of God, after seeing his powerful and supernatural acts (e.g. dividing the sea, opening up the earth) as part of his judgement and discipline on those who disobeyed him
- When there are threats to God's holiness, such as the different events in the wilderness (as they traveled to the Promised Land), God will act to maintain the integrity of his holiness
- This was also to remind them to fear and obey God because of His great power
- Depending on where a person is in their life, it can be either a comfort or a discomfort
- For those who are worried about punishment or discipline in their lives, it may be because they are living a consistent disobedient life and are afraid of when the judgement will come
- It can be a comfort for others, knowing that God will judge those who disobey

Q. In verses 8-15, Moses implores the Israelites to obey the commandments that he is giving them, with promises of blessings in the land that they are going to possess. Moses also goes into detail, comparing the lands of Egypt and Canaan. What do you think Moses is trying to show to Israel in his comparison? Do you think this was sufficient incentive for the Israelites to obey God's commands?

- **Objective – God prepares the best for those who love him and keep his commands**
- Moses is trying to show that the land of Egypt, as good as they had known it, was nothing compared to the land that the Lord God was bringing them to
- In Egypt, especially in the land of Goshen (where the Israelites were situated – Genesis 47:27), the ground was fertile and ripe for the growth of their crops and for their people
- However, the Israelites needed to irrigate (e.g. water) their crops in order for it to grow and be ripe for harvest
- In Canaan, by contrast, there would be no need for irrigation as the land would have sufficient water from the rains that God provided
- Moses also compares the lands of Egypt in a disdainful way, showing that it was just a garden of vegetables, trying to show how small and limited it was compared to what they would have in Canaan, a large field of crops
 - This was to show inferiority of the Egypt land compared to Canaan
 - The Israelites saw Egypt as their land of 'milk and honey', but in Moses' comparison, Egypt is nothing like what they will experience in Canaan
- No, it was not a sufficient incentive as we will see later in Israel's history, that they would still fall into sin and disobey the word of God
- The only reward that would provide enough incentive for them is God himself

Q. In verse 16-17, Moses warns about turning away from the Lord God and worshipping another. Why do you think Moses inserts this warning here? What could cause the Israelites to worship another? Does the same reason for Israel also apply to us regarding the worship of another? How can we keep guard on preventing this from happening in our lives?

- **Objective – Not to forget that it is God who blesses and gives growth. It is not by our own strength.**
- This warning is connected to the description of the land and the blessings that come from it
- This was a warning not to think it was they alone that produced all their bountiful crops, but to remember to thank God and to attribute the blessing to them
- Elements of pride could creep in when they saw the bountiful harvest that was provided by the Lord God
- As well, it was a warning to also not to attribute it to another. Remember – Israel was going into a land that had many false gods, ones that were attributed to the protection of the land and livestock of the Canaanite people
- This can also apply to Christians – Pride can affect Christians too and so it is a relevant warning to all of us, to make sure that we don't think it is by our own efforts, but through God and his blessings that has given us these things
- A way to keep guard is to make sure we have the right theology and to have the right mind set
 - The right theology means a proper understanding of who God is and his character
 - The right mind set means applying that proper understanding in how we live out our lives
- Another way is to remember to attribute all our blessings to God as He is the one who gives us good things in our lives

Read Deuteronomy 11:18-32

Moses commands the Israelites to keep the word of God close to them, specifically in their heart and soul, and on their bodies. He also reminds them to teach these words to their children as it would bring blessing to them in the land they are to possess (cf. Deut. 6:3, 6-9). If the Israelites are to follow the commands of the Lord God, they would be blessed in the land they are to possess. If they disobey, however, they will be cursed in their new land.

Q. Moses uses the word “Today” frequently in the chapters we have studied thus far. In this chapter, what do you think “Today” means and its significance? What response do you think Moses was trying to get out of Israel (Joshua 24:15)? What needed to be the motivation behind their response (Joshua 24:16-25)?

- **Objective – To show the immediacy and urgency to decide whether to follow God or not**
- Today means as it states, the here and now
- The significance is that it is asking for an immediate decision to be made on this day, whether or not the Israelites would follow the Lord God and his commands
- Joshua 24:15 – Joshua boldly stood up to state that he and his family would follow God
- This was the response that Moses wanted the people of Israel to state: That they too would also state their allegiance in following God and his commands
- Joshua 24:16 – 25 – Though not explicitly said, but the motivation had to be done out of love for the Lord God
- It could not be empty words or to be forced into the allegiance, rather it had to be done out of their own free will
- God has shown his love for his chosen people, from the moment he decides to call them out of Egypt to the moment they are standing on the Plains of Moab
- The natural response to these acts of love would be to obey the commands that were given to them for their righteous living before God

Q. Moses summarizes what Israel needs to do in v.22: 1) Loving the Lord your God, 2) Walking in all his ways, and 3) Holding fast to him. By doing this, God would remove the nations in the land and give it over to Israel as He promised Abraham. Knowing that God also requires this from Christians, which of the three commands above do you find most difficult to follow and why? Do you think you miss out on God’s promises and blessings by not following one (or all) of the commands above? What can you do to follow in the ways of God (2 Peter 1:3-10)?

- **Objective – To have the people in your group talk about their struggle of living out the Christian life**
- Whatever one they choose, have them open up and have them explain the difficulties they are experiencing
- To get people started, it may be good to share your own experiences in your daily walk
- The second part of the question is a rhetorical question as the bible does state if we walk in his ways, that we would be blessed
- If we don’t follow what God has commanded us to do, we not only miss out on the blessings that God has promised us, but may face judgement or curse
- 2 Peter 1:3-10 – If we find ourselves struggling, it may be that we need to bolster or strengthen our faith
 - Characteristics such as virtue, knowledge, self-control, steadfastness, godliness, brotherly affection and love can help to strengthen one’s faith
 - V. 8 – Also talks about preventing from being ineffective or unfruitful

Moses concludes his second sermon with an emphasis on the obedience to the commands of the Lord God. If Israel obeyed, they would receive blessings. If they disobeyed, they would be cursed. On the plains of Moab, Israel had a decision to make as to whether they were going to follow the Lord God or not. God demonstrated His love for the Israelites, by choosing them amongst more powerful and perhaps more deserving nations, to be the object of His affection. He also disciplined them, out of love, so that they would be the righteous and royal priesthood he wanted them to be. With this demonstration, it should have been an easy choice for Israel.

Those who call themselves Christians also see the same love that God showed to the Israelites; having been chosen and redeemed for his purposes and being disciplined so they would be more like Christ. The choice to follow His commands must still be made each day. Those choices will result in either blessings or curses in the Christian's life.