

Walk Through The Bible

*The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul;
The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple;
8The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart;
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;
9The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever;
The judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.
10More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold;
Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
11Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward.
(Psalm 19:7-11. NKJV)*

*25But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.
(James 1:25. NKJV)*

For Our Good Always

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Deuteronomy 6

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Introduction:

Open your Bibles this morning to Deuteronomy 6. I know I had mentioned that we would do four weeks in the Book of Revelation and this should be week 3 but I wanted to hit on a passage from your readings that would be of particular benefit to fathers today and so we will re-enter Revelation next week and I think you will see that we will do that quite seamlessly. Let me read to you from God's Word:

¹“Now this *is* the commandment, *and these are* the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe *them* in the land which you are crossing over to possess, ²that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. ³Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe *it*, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you—‘a land flowing with milk and honey.’⁴

⁴“Hear, O Israel: ⁵The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

⁶“And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. ⁷You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. ⁸You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. ⁹You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

¹⁰“So it shall be, when the LORD your God brings you into the land of which He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give you large and beautiful cities which you did not build, ¹¹houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, hewn-out wells which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees which you did not

plant—when you have eaten and are full—¹²*then* beware, lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage. ¹³You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name. ¹⁴You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who *are* all around you ¹⁵(for the LORD your God *is* a jealous God among you), lest the anger of the LORD your God be aroused against you and destroy you from the face of the earth. ¹⁶“You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted *Him* in Massah. ¹⁷You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. ¹⁸And you shall do *what is* right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you, and that you may go in and possess the good land of which the LORD swore to your fathers, ¹⁹to cast out all your enemies from before you, as the LORD has spoken.

²⁰“When your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What *is the meaning of* the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD our God has commanded you?’ ²¹then you shall say to your son: ‘We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; ²²and the LORD showed signs and wonders before our eyes, great and severe, against Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his household. ²³Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers. ²⁴And the LORD commanded us to observe all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that He might preserve us alive, as *it is* this day. ²⁵Then it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to observe all these commandments before the LORD our God, as He has commanded us.’ (Deuteronomy 6:1-25. NKJV)

This is the Word of the Lord, thanks be to God.

Most Evangelicals experience a sort of mental and theological paralysis when they read passages like this. On the one hand we’ve been told time and time again that it is not by works of the law but by faith that we are saved and that is certainly true. On the other hand we’ve also been told that in some way, through Christ, we are the Israel of God and that we have been grafted in to the people of promise and that all of the promises of God are yes and amen in Christ. And yet we have been warned many times about the dangers of over-realized eschatology as though we can expect to claim in this life all of the blessings that are promised to those who keep the law. So with all of that teaching floating around in our brains we can become utterly paralyzed by a text like; we don’t know what to do with it. We know that we cannot discard it entirely and yet we suspect that we cannot take it too literally lest we be dragged down into legalism and Pharisaism. Have I captured the paralysis somewhat accurately? So what do we do with a text like this? Let me suggest that there are at least four questions we have to wrestle with in this text as Christians living on the other side of the cross of Jesus Christ if we are to believe in the central premise of this chapter which is that the law of God is for our good always. So let’s begin to wrestle through those questions together.

Q1: What is the relationship between law, life, salvation and blessing?

Because we don’t have a ton of time this morning I’ll just tell you the answer and walk you through the process that gets us there. The answer to that question is that the law is our

righteousness before God, BUT it is not our keeping of the law that saves us but Christ's. Let me say that another way; we are saved by works – but we are not saved by our works we are saved by HIS works. To really understand what happened on the cross you have to go back to the garden of Eden. In the garden of Eden God laid down the rules of life and death:

¹⁵Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. ¹⁶And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." (Genesis 2:15. NKJV)

The original covenant that God made with humanity was pretty simple: You can live with me forever – remember that one of the trees they were allowed to eat from was the tree of eternal life – you can live with me forever if you obey my commandments, but if you disobey then you will die. That was the original covenant. Obey and live, disobey and die. That is what theologians refer to as the covenant of works and it has never been abolished. The problem is that after Adam, no one born to Adam was capable of fulfilling it.

Let me unpack that just a little bit. Adam and Eve were created with the capacity to obey God or not. They had free will. Now before you closet Calvinists throw a rock at me you should know that all Reformed teachers believe that. They don't believe that you have free will but they all believe that Adam and Eve had it. Adam and Eve had free will. They could have obeyed God and lived with him in his beauty and splendour for eternity. They would have had children and those children would have had free will and those children could have lived with God forever. But Adam and Eve also had the freedom and the ability to sin. And they did. That changed everything. Sin introduced a defect and mutation into our mindset and nature and it has been passed on to all of Adam's posterity. Everyone born through the male line – happy father's day by the way – is now infected with original sin. The effect of original sin is that our moral compass is broken and spun and now what we call good is not good and what we think is right leads to our death. The Bible says that since Adam no one has been able to live perfectly before God. They are sinners from conception. They are sinners in the womb and as soon as they come out they sin. We sin because we are sinners. Our minds are dark and broken and warped because of sin.

Why then does God even bother to give the law? Why does he bother saying to a bunch of people who are incapable of keeping the law that they should live this way and that way?

Because whether we are able to has no bearing on whether we ought to. God hasn't changed, we have. The behaviour that OUGHT to happen in God's world is not connected to what we are now capable of, it is connected to WHO GOD IS, that has not changed. And that is the problem. We are still required to live according to God's holiness, but we are no longer able to do. That is why no one in the Old Testament is said to have been saved by obeying God perfectly. How are people saved in the Old Testament?

⁶And he believed in the LORD, and He accounted it to him for righteousness. (Genesis 15:6. NKJV)

Legal imputation. Abram BELIEVED – he had faith in what God promised and because he trusted in that a RIGHTEOUSNESS was deposited to his account that was not his own. This is how salvation worked in the Old Testament and this is how it works now. The Apostle Paul says in Romans 5:

¹⁸Therefore, as through one man's offense *judgment* came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act *the free gift came* to all men, resulting in justification of life. ¹⁹For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. (Romans 5:18-19. NKJV)

So we are saved by the keeping of the law, but not our keeping of the law, by CHRIST'S KEEPING OF THE LAW. This is what the cross is all about. On the cross Jesus absorbed the curse. Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree the Bible says. Jesus, the sinless Son of God hung on a cross to absorb the curse, to pay our sin debt. He is the punishment of our peace, Isaiah says. And because he lived a perfect life, not only not sinning but also keeping the law perfectly and doing every good thing, his righteousness can be given to others who trust in his name. Imputation means that by faith our sin debt can be hung on him and his righteousness can be hung on us such that for those who are in Christ their account before God now reads in the sin column: paid in full and in the reward column: heir to all the blessings. If you are in Christ then you are not under the curse. There is therefore NO CONDEMNATION for those who are in Christ. And if you are in Christ then you are joint heirs with Jesus and all the blessings spoken of in this chapter and throughout Deuteronomy are yours for all eternity. The law thus is for your good ALWAYS just as the Bible says.

The result of righteousness therefore is still life, blessing, perseverance and the everlasting experience of God's presence.

Q2: To what extent do we realize these benefits in our earthly lives?

There are some folks out there in Christendom who will take what we've just said, that Jesus Christ fulfilled the law and they will say that therefore we have access right now in the present tense to all the promises we just read about in Deuteronomy. We can claim right now perfect health, we can claim victory over all our enemies, we can claim longevity of life, we can claim financial windfall, we can claim success in every venture and we can command blessings of the Spirit just by praying in boldness and faith. Is that a legitimate conclusion for us to draw? D.A. Carson addresses this issue head on in his book "How Long O Lord." He says:

In this day when many in the Western world have been seduced by some form of the power, health and wealth gospel, it is important to stress the believer's location – between the fall and the new heaven and the new earth, enjoying the "down payment" of the Spirit but by no means free of death and decay. D.A. Carson, How Long O Lord (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2006), p.223.

It isn't so much "nothing now vs. everything later" or "everything now and everything later" as much as it is "first fruits now and fullness later". Let me put it this way, we WILL be entirely healed, renewed and restored in our bodies in the new heaven and the new earth in eternity, AND we have signs and first fruits of that in the present age through Jesus Christ. There is a reason that healings for example are called miracles in the Bible and not Thursday; BECAUSE THEY ARE NOT THE NORM, THEY ARE SIGNS, FIRST FRUITS and ENCOURAGEMENTS!!!! God gives them to us SOMETIMES to remind us of all the good that is ahead and to encourage us for the tough times we must yet endure but we are not to expect them always, neither are we to be discouraged if we do not get one when we ask. We mustn't obsess over the signs and first fruits. We need to be future focused and present prevailing!

Thus as we keep the law and walk in the counsel of God in this life we will experience first fruits of all the blessings that lie ahead. We will generally live healthier lives than people running head long into hell. Ask Dr. Gary about all of the health risks associated with living the homosexual lifestyle. They are myriad and horrific. Ask him about the health risks simply from general promiscuity – you almost get the idea that marriage was invented not just for the raising of babies but for the promotion of health and happiness! There is a reason that every couple of months or so CNN or The Globe and Mail run a story saying: "Wonder of wonders! A new study has

revealed that non-smoking, non-drinking, married people with kids are the happiest, healthiest people on the planet!” This is hailed as a noteworthy piece of news by the pagans, but Christians receive it as par for the course. Of course God’s ways are for our good, of course they are the ways of life, HE IS THE AUTHOR OF LIFE and HE IS GOOD. We do have these first fruits as we walk in the Word of God but we do not have the fullness of them yet because we live in a world that is still generally under the curse and we are surrounded by people who still hate God. Remember that while Jesus was living the perfect life he was not exactly universally celebrated. In fact he was reviled and persecuted and eventually he was hung on a tree to die. As long as sin is in the world the life of God will be hated by most of the people who live in this world. There is also the fact that sin – even in the saved person has to be displaced little by little as God gives us grace and this takes time and while it is happening we can do ourselves great harm. We live as people being set free by degrees. God got the people out of Egypt in just a couple of weeks but it took 40 years to get the Egypt out of the people and so the fullness of blessing lies on the other side. As Jesus said:

¹¹“Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. ¹²Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, **for great is your reward in heaven**, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:11-12. NKJV)

Q3: What is our motivation for keeping the law?

At this point in the discussion a person might reasonably ask why then we bother with the law at all? If Christ has already secured our salvation by keeping the law and if we can’t add to that with our own law keeping what is the point? And if we cannot fully realize the blessings associated with the law in this life, again, why would we even bother to try and keep the law of God? Many people ask that and many more people do not ask that out loud but they give evidence of their answer in how they live. They live as though they cannot see any reason to bother with the law. They live in such a way as to indicate the law’s irrelevance to them. So why do we keep the law and why do we try so hard to teach it to our children? The answer to question 2 above is at least part of the answer to question 3 here. While we cannot realize fully in this life the blessings associated with the law we can realize the firstfruits and initial deposits of those blessings. This is still the best way to live even if it is not universally celebrated and even if it is resisted and reviled by the world. If you love your children at all you will tell them that. You will tell your kids that there are many other ways that seem right to a man but the end thereof for

all of them is death. Taste and see that the Lord is good and his mercies endureth forever. If you love your kids at all you will tell them that. But this passage gives us an even more primary motivation and we find that in verses 20-22, let me remind you of them:

²⁰“When your son asks you in time to come, saying, ‘What *is the meaning of* the testimonies, the statutes, and the judgments which the LORD our God has commanded you?’ ²¹then you shall say to your son: ‘We were slaves of Pharaoh in Egypt, and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand; ²²and the LORD showed signs and wonders before our eyes, great and severe, against Egypt, Pharaoh, and all his household. (Deuteronomy 6:20-22. NKJV)

Moses says to the people of Israel: “If you truly live this way and walk in the Word of the Lord your children will inevitably ask you what this is all about. Why do you live unlike everyone else dad? Why do you think and act so distinctly mother? And when they ask you that you tell them about Egypt. You tell them how God set us free. You tell them how he lifted us up out of bondage and slavery and how he brought us to a good land and made us his own people. You tell them that.” You see long before we keep the law because it is *good for us* we keep the law because *he died for us*. If the Exodus was to be a powerful motivation for keeping the law how much more should the cross motivate us? At the end of the day church, we keep the law of God not out of pragmatism, not because it works, we keep the law out of GRATITUDE. We keep the law out of thankfulness. The law is given to SAVED PEOPLE and grace is given to those saved people so that they can live in the very manner of God. It is a privilege to live this way. If you want to wallow with the pigs in the mud of depravity than you must never have seen God. He is good and he invites us as saved people into his goodness and he helps us by his grace. Praise his name! We keep the law out of gratitude and out of worship.

We also keep the law to fulfil our vocation. We see that in verse 23:

²³Then He brought us out from there, that He might bring us in, to give us the land of which He swore to our fathers. (Deuteronomy 6:23. NKJV)

He didn't just save them from Egypt, he saved them TO something better. He put them in the centre of the world at that time as a testimony to the nations. He told them in the very giving of the law:

⁵Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth *is* Mine. ⁶And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ (Exodus 19:5-6. NKJV)

God saved the Israelites for a reason, for a specific vocation. They were to be a kingdom of priests – that is a bridge between God and man and they were to be a HOLY NATION – that is they were to show forth the character of God to mankind in a winsome and inviting way. This is no less true of us than it was of them, in the New Testament these words are applied to the church:

⁹But you *are* a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; ¹⁰who once *were* not a people but *are* now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. (1 Peter 2:9-10. NKJV)

The Apostle Paul says we are God’s ambassadors:

²⁰Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore *you* on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God. ²¹For He made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:20-21. NKJV)

Church understand this: when the law of God is neglected by Christians the cause of our evangelism suffers greatly.

We keep the law as saved people who cannot add to the salvation that is ours in Christ first of all because of gratitude, second of all because it is our vocation and is intimately tied up with the success of the Gospel mission and only lastly do we keep the law because it is ultimately still the best way to live. Teach this to your children.

Q4. What is the summary of the law?

At the heart of this chapter there is perhaps the most famous passage in all the Old Testament. It is quoted multiple times in the New Testament and it is affirmed by Jesus as being the summary of God’s revealed will:

⁴“Hear, O Israel: ⁵The LORD our God, the LORD *is* one! ⁵You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. (Deuteronomy 6:4. NKJV)

This is the first and greatest commandment according to Jesus Christ, the Word of God in the flesh. Some folks hear this and they say to themselves: “All I have to do to keep the law is to

love God!” and they give themselves permission to live however they like and they fool themselves into thinking that because they were fond for God and cherished some sentimental attachment to him in their hearts that they have fulfilled this commandment. Those are the sorts of people to whom Jesus said:

⁴⁶“But why do you call Me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and not do the things which I say? (Luke 6:44. NKJV)

These are the sorts of folks to whom Jesus will say on the last day:

‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’ (Matthew 7:23. NKJV)

Clearly that is not what this passage means. It means the opposite of that; it means that the way we show our love for God is by applying all of our hearts – in English culture we would say all of our wills or all of our minds – all of our soul – all of our substance and our being – and all of our strength – all of our power, energy and might – we apply all of that to knowing, keeping and preserving in our families the law of God. That is what it means and that is what it always means in the Bible. That is why Jesus said:

¹⁵“If you love me, you will keep [£] my commandments. (John 15:14. NRSV)

²¹He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.” (John 14:21. NKJV)

A saved person loves God by keeping his commandments. Obedience is the love language of the Almighty.

Conclusion:

Today is Father’s Day in my home as I’m sure it is in yours so I wonder if you would permit me a personal illustration. My wife is a stay at home mom, as most of you know. We have 5 kids ranging from 14 down to 7 months. Its a busy home and Shauna Lee has graciously given her full focus and full passion to the raising of our kids and the management of our house and I bless her for that. Today however, she will give me a gift for Father’s Day. Now as a stay at home mom she has no income. She has no way to buy me this gift unless I give her the money. She will give me a gift by means of my grace-gift to her. But it will still speak of her love and it will

still be very much appreciated by me. That is exactly how it works with God. We cannot give to God anything out of our own resources. We cannot speak to God in his love language unless he himself gives us of his grace. God gave us our righteousness through the life and death of Jesus Christ. He put within us his Holy Spirit which is enabling our transformation by one degree of glory to the next. He gives us other means of grace – things like church, things like prayer, things like worship so that we can grow in our obedience. He gives us the means by which we may love him. When we pray things like “hallowed be thy name” or “thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven” we are asking for God to make a deposit in our account so that we can give him the gift of our obedience. We’re saying: “God give to me the grace to live before you as I ought! Enable me to love you as you desire to be loved! Give me the help to be to you as I was created to be!” That is the gift he wants today and he will give to you what you need to give it to him. By the grace of God in Jesus Christ indeed you can and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. Fathers, teach this to your children and to your grandchildren; it is for our God and for our good always. Jody, will you come and lead us?