

Introduction

Today we're in Deuteronomy chapters 28 & 30 as we take another step in our Remember and Renew series. You'll notice right away that Moses is again reminding the Israelites that if they walk in obedience to the covenant they've made with God, a long, abundant life in the land awaits them.

It's important for us to remember, as we jump in, that the people to whom Moses is speaking have spent either all or most of their lives in the desert. They have lived in tents and eaten manna for forty years. All the adults who came out of Egypt, except Caleb, Joshua and Moses, were dead. This is a new generation. The temptation to be wooed by the abundance awaiting them in the Promised Land would be great. There would be a constant pull and pressure to believe that the false gods in the culture around them were the source of all that abundance. 'We've been living in tents for 40 years, eating bread from heaven and an occasional quail, while these people have grapes that grow so big that it takes two men to carry one cluster.'¹ That's what the spies discovered when they peeked into the Promised Land forty years earlier. It's a land flowing with milk and honey. When you're a poor kid who suddenly gets exposed to prosperity, it's tempting to want to become like the people with all the wealth so you can have what they have. But the abundance in the land wasn't from the pagan gods of the region—it was from Yahweh.

So God wanted Moses to emphasize, once again, if the Israelites were going to live long lives in the abundant land He was giving them, that they'd need to live in alignment with the covenant they had made with God. Failure to do so would lead them far *from* God, the land *and* His blessings.

¹ Numbers 13:23-24

If you'll lovingly obey (v 1-2)

Look at the first two verses of chapter 28 with me. I'm reading from the ESV. [READ]

"And if you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, the LORD your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. ² And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of the LORD your God."

Last week Brian reminded us that listening to God must not be an occasional activity, but the pattern of our lives. To do that we must learn to tune out other voices, noises, so we can more clearly discern His. But listening to God isn't just about hearing what He says, it includes acting in obedience to what He's said. And that can be the challenge—not only for the Israelites but for us.

Faithfully obeying the voice of the Lord our God means that we do what He says. And obedience is rooted in trust. But we don't trust people we don't know. The Israelites in the desert had spent 40 years completely dependent upon God's provision for everything: food, water, safety...But they still wrestled with trusting Him because, as they faced challenges or looked around at other people who had more than them, they doubted His goodness. They doubted His plan. They doubted His love for them. Despite all God had done to call them His own, deliver them from bondage, protect and provide for them, the Israelites (as a people) didn't trust Him. They didn't seek to really know Him—the just wanted what He had to offer.

We're no different. Despite God's goodness and kindness, His provision and protection in our lives, we often struggle, even refuse, to trust Him because He didn't give us what we want. But, because of the life and ministry of Jesus, through the Bible, and through the presence of the

Holy Spirit in our lives, you and I have the opportunity to get to know God intimately. But here's the problem: we often trust Jesus to save us from the penalty and power of sin—to save us from Hell, but that's where our trust ends. We'll trust Him to rescue us for eternity, but we don't trust Him with our daily lives. The only way we will trust Him to lead us moment by moment is if we genuinely know His heart. Once we begin to grasp how wide, high and deep His love is for us, once we start to understand, in our deepest heart, just how perfect His will is and His earnest desire to care for us in ways we never considered, *then* our hearts can grow and we'll actually begin to love Him, too. And from there we'll begin to trust and obey as an overflow of our love for the One who loves us best and most. *You've got to know Him, not just know about Him* if you're going to lovingly trust Him.

So here's the obvious question: Do you truly trust Him? Do you love Him? If you don't, you'll never obey Him with your whole heart, and you'll miss out on the life He wants for you. Trying to obey out of obligation is a burden. Obeying out of love is a joy! Love makes the difference in obedience.

That brings me back to the urgent necessity of spending time with God. Spend time alone with Him. Spend time in the Word reading and listening. Spend time in prayer. Spend time in worship. Time nurtures relationships. Just like with your friends, or when you're dating or in your marriage: time together deepens the relationship. It solidifies the love and trust. If you're going to trust God, you're going to need to spend time with Him. There are no substitutes or shortcuts for that.

Moses is telling the Israelites that if they will listen to and lovingly obey the Lord, that God will bless them in every way. And then he gives them an overview of what that looks like. Take a look at verses 3-6 with me. [READ] He says, if you'll faithfully obey the voice of the Lord, "Blessed shall you be in the city, and blessed shall you be in the field. ⁴ Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground and the fruit

of your cattle, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock.
⁵ Blessed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. ⁶ Blessed shall you be when you come in, and blessed shall you be when you go out.”

Blessed in every way (v 3-6)

This whole list is describing fruitfulness—abundance. If Israel will faithfully obey the Lord, their blessings will overflow. He will back up the blessing truck and abundance will overtake them. This list is God’s direct challenge to the fertility gods that the people of Canaan worshipped. Having large families, herds and crops were the main concerns for those involved in fertility religions (like worshipping Ashera or Dagon or Baal). Yahweh wanted everyone—both Israelite and Canaanite—to know that *He* was responsible for the abundance in the land, not the idols and false gods of the region. Yahweh was going to bless those who lovingly obeyed Him with more than they could imagine. Moses is reminding them that loving obedience to the Lord leads to blessings.

In verses 7-14, Moses describes what God will do in even greater detail. Check it out.

Blessings described. (v 7-14) [READ]

“*The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you. They shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways.* ⁸ *The LORD will command the blessing on you in your barns and in all that you undertake. And he will bless you in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.* ⁹ *The LORD will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in his ways.* ¹⁰ *And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of the LORD, and they shall be afraid of you.* ¹¹ *And the LORD will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your livestock and in the fruit of your ground, within the land that the LORD swore to your fathers to give you.* ¹² *The LORD will open to you his good treasury, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands.*”

And you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. ¹³ And *the LORD will* make you the head and not the tail, and you shall only go up and not down, if you obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you today, being careful to do them, ¹⁴ and if you do not turn aside from any of the words that I command you today, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.”

Question #2: Who will make all this happen? The LORD will! Over and over, Moses is saying, ‘Yahweh will...Yahweh will...Yahweh will.’ All these blessings are anchored in Yahweh! Not in the fertility gods of the region. The rain won’t come from Baal. Yahweh will bring the rain! Blessing, abundance, and complete provision are yours when you lovingly obey Him. Six times in this section we read, “...the LORD will...” Yahweh is the Source and Provider of the fruitfulness and blessing in the land—not the Canaanite, little ‘g’ gods.

Moses even went so far as to say (v 10) that all the people would see that the Israelites were “called by the name of the LORD...” In other words, every nation would see that the Israelites had been branded, marked or tagged by Yahweh; ‘These are MY people and I’m the one who takes care of them.’ When the godless cultures see that Yahweh has completely surrounded Israel, providing for and protecting them in every way, they will shudder in fear. Clearly, Yahweh is greater than any god they’ve ever known. Exactly!

What this looks like for us

You and I don’t usually think of large families, herds and crops as indicators of God’s blessings in our lives. We might think more along the lines of a healthy family, solid marriage, good job, a safe, comfortable place to live and reliable transportation as blessings. That’s true: those are tremendous blessings.

But our culture worships money, power, position, status and sex. Everyone wants more. And, as expected, people in our society will

sacrifice anything in worship of those little 'g' gods: they'll sacrifice their family, marriage, integrity, relationships, even their health, just to get more. Their motto is, "I deserve more. I deserve better." It's an entitlement mindset. Marriages crumble. Families shatter. Society collapses; all because we've mistaken our blessings for rights and forgotten that the Source of those blessings is Jesus—is God—not the idols and false gods revered in our culture.

If you are a Jesus follower, God promises to provide for all your needs because you belong to Christ.² You're God's kid. He doesn't promise overflowing riches or possessions—there's all kinds of false teaching about that! He promises to meet your needs. And, if you've walked with God for a while, you've experienced that. God may have even blessed you in ways you never saw coming—gave you more than you needed or ever dreamed of. But that wasn't out of obligation or because you somehow earned it. He just loves to give good gifts to His kids. He's the one who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment!³

As Jesus people, we need to remember that our blessings come from God. Not from money. Not from power, position, status or work ethic. If you forget that, you're at risk not only of missing out on the blessing, but of missing out on God! You'll miss out on the life He wants for you. And, just like the Israelites, you'll be the one who suffers. Forgetting the Giver to pursue the gifts will cost you greatly.

Tune your ears & Fix your eyes (28:14; 30:17-18)

Flip over to chapter 30:17-18 really quick... [READ]

"But if your heart turns away, and you will not hear, but are drawn away to worship other gods and serve them, ¹⁸I declare to you today, that you shall surely perish. You shall not live long in the land that you are going over the Jordan to enter and possess." That's an extension of verse 14 in chapter 28. All these blessings will be yours "if you do not turn aside from

² Philippians 4:19

³ 1 Timothy 6:17

any of the words that I command you today, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.”

Pay close attention...Brian said it so well last week: Listen to Him! Listening to God requires a kind of trust-filled obedience. “Listening to His voice is taking in the truth, trusting the truth and obeying that truth.” Don’t make the mistake of dismissing His voice. Don’t ignore the truth of His Word. Do what He’s called you to do.

To turn to the right or left means you’re looking to have your needs fulfilled elsewhere—and the only other places your gaze will take you is toward false gods who can never fulfill or provide or free or bless or give life. ‘Look where you want to go or you’ll go where you’re looking.’ Your focus determines your direction. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. There are so many bright, shiny distractions around us that will get us looking to the right or left instead of looking to the Lord; instead of tuning our ear to Him and focusing on Him. We’ve got to push out the noise around us. If we’re honest, we’re easily sidetracked (squirrel!), so staying focused is a skill that we need to cultivate. Again, that’s why time with Jesus is so important. We also have a very real enemy who hates God and who would love to distract us and discourage us and, if possible destroy us. We must not turn to the right or left and get sucked in by the culture and values around us. We must keep our eyes on Jesus, keep our ears tuned to Him, trusting His goodness, kindness and mercy. He is the one who is our Protector and our Provider. Everything else is just an imitation...a distraction. Failing to lovingly obey God will lead to destruction not abundance; to curses, not blessings.

You can do it! (30:11-14)

Now look at verses 11-14 in chapter 30 with me. [READ]

“For this commandment that I command you today is not too hard for you, neither is it far off. ¹² It is not in heaven, that you should say, ‘Who will ascend to heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?’

¹³ Neither is it beyond the sea, that you should say, ‘Who will go over the

sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' ¹⁴ But the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you *can* do it."

Moses is saying that, by His grace, God will do a work in you that enables you to keep the covenant you have made. This is tied to 30:6. I've got it on the screen for you. "And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will **love the Lord your God** with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live."
-Deuteronomy 30:6

This may sound familiar because it sounds a lot like the Shema from Deuteronomy 6. "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."⁴ Somehow, by God's amazing grace, He will enable those who have repented of their hard hearts and choose to genuinely trust God, to have their hearts changed. Now they'll be able to truly love Him and live in obedience to Him like never before. It's a work that God will do in His repentant, trusting people. This text doesn't tell us exactly how He will do that, but Moses says, "...the word is very near you. It is in your mouth and in your heart, so that you *can* do it." Faithfulness to the covenant and obedience are possible because God will enable and empower them to do it! But, just like Abraham, their faith, their trust, must be authentic and active; they must believe and act accordingly.⁵ God will do the work, but they've got to choose to cooperate with Him to do that work in them.

Gratefully, you and I know the rest of the story. The whole concept of God circumcising hearts is pointing to the new covenant. It's pointing Jesus, and what He accomplished on the cross and through His resurrection. We know from the New Testament that those who trust, place their faith, in

⁴ Deuteronomy 6:5

⁵ Genesis 15:6

Jesus have their hearts transformed, circumcised,⁶ removing the old loves, desires and sinfulness, to now love and walk in obedience with God. When we place our faith in Jesus, God transforms our hearts and *gives us* the Holy Spirit to take up residence within us and empower us to live in obedience to God. Do you see it? God makes it possible for us to live the life He wants for us—to experience *real life* and intimacy with Him—so we’re able to enjoy all that He has for us. We bring very little to the table, friends. God does all the work. The only effort, if you want to call it that, which we bring is a willingness to consistently say, “Yes!” to Him. By God’s grace and through His Spirit, you can love the Lord and really live!

That’s exactly what Moses is urging the Israelites to do out on the Plains of Moab: by God’s grace, love the LORD with all you are and live long in the land He is giving you.

Choose life! (v 15-20)

Let’s wrap it up with verses 15 and following. [READ]

“See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil. ¹⁶ If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I command you today, by loving the LORD your God, by walking in his ways, and by keeping his commandments and his statutes and his rules, then you shall live and multiply, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to take possession of it. [*Skip down to verse 19*]

¹⁹ I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore *choose life*, that you and your offspring may live, ²⁰ loving the LORD your God, obeying his voice and holding fast to him, *for he is your life and length of days*, that you may dwell in the land that the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.”

If the Israelites will lovingly obey the Lord, He will bless them with everything they need and more. Blessings will follow them everywhere

⁶ Check out Colossians 2:11 and Romans 2:25-29

they go. If they'll continue to listen to Him, and keep their eyes fixed on Him, remaining faithful to the covenant they've made with Him, they will enjoy the life He wants for them. But they must choose! Who will they serve? To whom will they listen? Where will they place their love and affection? Will they trust Him? The decision is theirs: life & good or death & evil.

Just like the Israelites, you and I must choose. Who will you serve? Who will you listen to? Where does your love and devotion rest? Do you trust Him? If you will love and obey Jesus, keep your eyes on Him, listen to His voice and follow His lead, you will enjoy the life He wants for you. The God who built the universe and who knit you together in your mother's womb, knows *exactly* what you need and how to best care for you. He wants to pull you close and give you peace that nothing and no one else can. He wants you to rest, even in the hurricanes of life, knowing that He's got you and will never let go. There is nothing and no one else in this world that can do this. Only God can. Everything else is counterfeit; a distraction.

Moses urges them to choose life! But their decision involved more than a simple affirmation; it involved a whole way of living based on that decision.⁷ It's not about simply saying, 'I want all that God has for me.' It's about saying, 'I want God and I'm going to live in step with Him for the rest of my life!' See the difference?

All of this abundance, blessing, long life, security, stability and peace are available to you because He is your life. Moses gives us the answer. Choose life: The best life, real life, the life God wants for you! Choose that. And if you will trust and follow Him wholeheartedly, you will enjoy all that He has for you.

⁷ Cragie, Peter C. *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: The Book of Deuteronomy* (Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1976), 366.

Wrap

The Israelites were standing on the edge of the Promised Land with a critical decision to make: did they want life and prosperity or death and destruction? Did they want God or not? Moses admonished them to choose life. But faithfully following the voice of the Lord would require more than a shrug and a nod. It would need to influence how they lived each day and their willingness to trust and obey God.

Every morning you wake up with a decision to make: do I want God and the life He wants for me? If so, by His grace, I'm going to trust Jesus and wholeheartedly follow His lead again today because real life is found only in Him.

Pray

Thanks for all that You have done that we may truly live.

Help us to take time to be with you, to tune-in to Your voice and turn down the noise around us.

Help us keep cultivate the skill of fixing our eyes on You and not getting sidetracked by distractions.

May our obedience come from hearts that fully trust and love you.

For those in the room who have not yet trusted You: may today be the day.

Remind us that You are with us and that as we trust You, You will take care of the rest.

Bless & Go

Need to talk? Pray? We're here.

Worship through giving: black boxes by doors on your way out.

See you next week. Goodbye for now.