

Deuteronomy (Part 4) (1994)

How Love Grows

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This sermon is going to continue in the book of Deuteronomy, and I am not exactly sure if we are going to finish today. But if we do not, we are getting very close!

I want to begin once again by getting us up to speed by briefly recalling the major points of the previous sermons. We began by showing that God, as mentioned in Deuteronomy 31, said that Deuteronomy is to be reviewed every seven years. We then proceeded to show you the unique position it was in, being placed beside the ark. It is a summary of the wilderness experiences and a modification of some of the laws, and it is to be used to prepare the people to live in the land.

Deuteronomy consists of dominant themes that are really more clearly expressed in greater detail in the New Testament. The first of these is, as I expounded, that it gives vision for why we do what we do; that is, it prepares us for living in our inheritance.

Consequently, God has broken our enslavement to sin, and He has set alternatives before us, thus forcing us to choose. He tells us that His way is not difficult, but we find that making the right choices is difficult because of the sin that dwells in us. And it is still in us, striving to maintain its grip through self-centeredness and vanity.

Sin has so estranged us from God that we have to be alert, or it will guide us right back into what we came out of. And we have to have factors working on our behalf, or (almost without realizing it) we are going to slide back into slavery to sin once again.

This leads to the next theme of how our freedom is maintained. First in this area is the *fear of God*. This is not something we have by nature; it is an acquired characteristic. But it is exceedingly important because this quality

undergirds more important qualities such as faith, hope, and love. The Bible describes the fear of God as being the beginning of wisdom.

This led to the question of how one ever gets into position to have God as a part of one's life, and to prepare for living in the inheritance. Deuteronomy gives us two basic reasons. One is the grace of God, and the other is God's faithfulness.

We can read in the Bible that God is faithful. But that is not good enough for God's purpose. He shows us through Deuteronomy that each of us must learn through the day-to-day trials of life that He is indeed faithful. It must be through practical experience, and it must be personally ingrained into our minds until it is a part of our personality, that God does not fail.

"Faithful" describes something or someone that can be leaned upon. You can build upon that. It is solid. It is trustworthy. It means, in practical fact, that God will take care of what, and whom He has made. He will finish what He starts. The whole Bible largely consists of showing God carrying out His obligations so that we will understand that He keeps His word. His obligations are to His Word. Whatever He says, He does. Whatever He says, He feels it is His duty to do. And He will do it. Much of our preparation for living in our inheritance consists of learning to trust the Word of God.

The next theme grows out of trusting Him, and that is *holiness*. Holiness, like righteousness, is two things at the same time. It is a state or condition into which one is placed by God; it is something that the New Testament calls, "imputed." Righteousness is imputed to us. Holiness is also imputed. We are put into that category by God. Secondly, it is a quality that is achieved.

I thought it especially interesting to see the context in which holiness is introduced in the book of Deuteronomy. In chapter 7, it is shown immediately following His statement of policy that the Israelites were to utterly destroy the people of the land, their altars, their pillars, and their images; that they were not to be tolerant of these people's beliefs. That is designed to show us the clear division that God wants us to see between Him

and this world. And that we are not to be tolerant of the remnants of this world that are in us, because He is in us, and He does not want to be associated with our sins. So, we are commanded to come out of them.

The demands of holiness are extremely high because God Himself is the standard. How can those standards ever be met? The answer is that only within a relationship of love where two have given themselves exclusively to each other. I showed how God illustrates this by showing that He has right of ownership of us; that is, He says we are His inheritance. But on the other hand, He is also our inheritance. It means that I am of God, or that God is mine! Two sides of one coin. I possess Him, while on the other hand, I am possessed by Him.

God gave His Son for us. The Son, then, gave Himself for us. And now, all that remains to be seen is whether we will give ourselves to Them in love. That is what we are committing ourselves to when we get baptized.

Let us begin this sermon by turning to Luke 14.

Luke 14:25-26 Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple."

"Hate" here is not an absolute term, but a relative term. It means to love less by comparison. And so, "If anyone comes to me, and does not *love less by comparison* his father, mother, sister, brother. . ."

Luke 14:27 "And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."

Luke 14:33 "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple."

This is fundamental to a good relationship with God. It is fundamental to becoming holy in the sense of something that is achieved.

Turn to John 21 where this is stated in a very personal way to Peter:

John 21:15 So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?"

"These" what? There can only be two answers to that question. Jesus could have gestured toward the other disciples who were there. Or He could have gestured to the fishing equipment, because that is what they were doing. In either case, He was referring to Peter's friendships with these other men, or Peter's attachment to the job, which represented his way of making a living, and therefore the support of a family, and those ties.

John 21:15 "Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" He said to Him, "Yes, Lord; You know that I love You." He said to him, "Feed My lambs."

And you know that He repeated that two more times! He wanted to really drill that into Peter's head—"You have got to love Me more than anything!"

If we can just get the picture here and understand that in principle it applies to us as well. We will find out why in a moment.

Matthew 22:36-40 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?" Jesus said to him, 'You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets."

Everything hangs on this principle of love! If we are going to have success in this way, it is going to be because we truly do love God. In case you did not know it, or maybe it slipped your mind, verse 37 is quoted from Deuteronomy 6:5. If we really love God, we will meet the demands of this way of life. There is now doubt about it. We will do it.

Now, how can we get it? How can we get this love if it is that important?

Well, in one sense, brethren, the answer to this is so simple. We are going to begin the explanation in Romans 5. It is not a principle that requires a great deal of explanation. I know that you know this. I know that you understand it.

Romans 5:1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

That word “peace,” does not necessarily mean an unending tranquility, but rather it means that there is no longer wrath that is flowing back and forth between God and us. The carnal mind is enmity against God—that is a wrath and anger toward Him. But “having been justified” by God “by faith,” that anger, that wrath, that hostility has been removed, and God is no longer angry at us, and by a miraculous cleansing by His Spirit of our conscience, our hostility toward God is removed as well.

Romans 5:2 through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Romans 5:5 Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts.

Do you understand that? We already have that love! It has been given to us! But (and it is a big “but”), it has to be *used*. It is been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

The principle that I am talking about is not difficult to understand at all. In fact, as I mentioned, it is so simple it may come as somewhat a letdown. I will give you the answer: The principle by which the love of God that is already in us by His Spirit is triggered and caused to grow, is the same way we humanly come to know someone better and grow to love them.

How does that happen? Well, there was a time when you did not know your mate. How did your relationship grow to where you married? Did it grow because you ran away from each other? Or did it grow because you came toward each other, and spent time together with each other. It is that same principle. You spent time together, and then you began to share the experiences of life together, did you not?

Turn to Deuteronomy 4. We will start here and string a few scriptures together that are relevant to this principle. We will just pick up a verse, here. We are not going to spend a lot of time. I am going to be stringing several scriptures together, and I want to have you get the principle that is involved.

Deuteronomy 4:29 “But from there [a position of captivity] you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find Him if you seek Him with all your heart and with all your soul.”

Notice that He even delineates how He wants it to be done—with all your heart, and with all your soul, you seek after Him.

II Chronicles 15:1-2 Now the Spirit of God came upon Azariah the son of Oded. And he went out to meet Asa, and said to him: "Hear me, Asa, and all Judah and Benjamin. The LORD is with you while you are with Him. [There is a reciprocity at work here.] If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you.”

Remember that man that always used to say, “If you begin to feel as though you were far from God, guess who moved?”

Isaiah 55:6 Seek the LORD while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near.

Turn to Amos for the last in this string.

Amos 5:4 For thus says the LORD to the house of Israel: " Seek Me and live.”

Amos 5:6 “Seek the LORD and live, lest He break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour it, with no one to quench it in Bethel.”

Amos 5:14 Seek good and not evil, that you may live; so the LORD God of hosts will be with you, as you have spoken.

In our culture, two people go on dates with each other and they experience a wide variety of lawful situations and circumstances as they possibly can. Why? They do it because they like to spend time together, and because they want to get to know each other as well as they possibly can, so as to understand whether they should continue the relationship, and possibly spend a lifetime together.

When God says to, “Seek Me,” I want you to understand that it is always said to those to whom He has already revealed Himself. It is never once—not even one time in the entire Bible—said to the world. It is always said to those with whom He has already made the covenant. And the reason is that nobody could ever find God unless He revealed Himself to them first, because people do not know what to look for. When God does this, He is seeking a relationship. And so, He breaks the ice. He calls. He introduces Himself. He makes the “first date.” He says, “Come on! I want you and Me to have a relationship.”

But then, some of the responsibility for continuing the relationship begins to fall on us. Will we choose to do it, or not? But it is *essential* that we choose to do it, because this is how the love of God is activated. It flows first from Him, and then goes back to Him, before it can truly go out to somebody in the world. He makes this clear in I John, where He says, “You say you love your brother, but you do not love God? Impossible!” (I am paraphrasing what John says.) The love first has to be flowing back and forth between you and the One supplying the love, before it can go out to our brother in the world.

What we have to do, then, is begin to include God in our lives. And so, when He says, “Seek Me,” He is saying, “Seek My way of life.” That is why I read that last verse—seek good and not evil. That is the same as saying, “Seek God and live!” Seek good and not evil, that you may live. He puts just a little twist upon it so that we will understand what he means, by having a relationship with Him.

What is it that separates us from Him? It is sin. You see? If we seek good, we are going to be drawn toward Him. If we do not seek good, we are going to sin, and the barrier between us is going to get higher and wider. So, He is actually saying when He says, “Seek Me,” seek My way of life.

What He wants us to do is to experience it, find out that it is good, so that our desire is to continue with it.

Is this not the same principle that is at work humanly? If we make no effort to pursue after God, the relationship cools, we drift apart, and there is no relationship before long. It has to be pursued.

If we do pursue Him, what is it that begins to occur to us? Wonderful things that have to do with spiritual life. He begins to share with us His vision.

Is that not what two people do? What are your hopes and dreams for the future? You have to know those things before you marry so that you understand if you really are on the same path.

So, God begins to share His vision with us of the future. He begins to share with us His hopes and dreams of sharing life with us for all eternity. You see, the key to this is whether we will allow Him into our life, and whether we will give Him the time and attention that He deserves in order for Him to clearly and fully make His case.

It is right here that we have to take a jog because there is a subject that is important to the book of Deuteronomy. This subject of coming close to Him—pursuing Him, seeking Him—is also related to the subject of *idolatry*.

There is, by my own estimation, no sin in the book of Deuteronomy that is spoken of more frequently than idolatry. That is interesting because idolatry is shown to be a deviation from the love of two who have supposedly given themselves exclusively to each other in a relationship shown as either being in the courting stages, or of marriage. It is also interesting that the word “idol,” or “idolatry” almost never appears in the book of Deuteronomy. I believe that the word idol only appears one time. And I believe that the word idolatry only appears one time as well.

There is a reason for that. Both of those words—idol and idolatry—are really rather impersonal and distant. Instead, in the book of Deuteronomy, He shows the idolatry with a much more personal term—“other gods.” It is used the same sense as if you would say “the other woman” or “the other man”—the one that is stealing your mate’s heart away. In other words, a triangle begins to develop. That is the way that God looks at idolatry in the book of Deuteronomy—the other woman.

In Deuteronomy 5, right in the midst of the commandments, He says in verse 6,

Deuteronomy 5:6-9 'I am the LORD your God who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image—any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them. For I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God.'

What is He jealous of? He is jealous of this other god who is stealing us away from Him. Why?

In human life, sometimes murders occur because of the other person who is breaking up a marriage, a relationship. At the very least, somebody is hurt very badly emotionally when another person is breaking up a relationship. And that is exactly the way that God feels. That is why there is more heat, more passion expended by Him on idolatry than any other sin—somebody is breaking up a relationship that He had established with this person. And He is jealous about it.

Deuteronomy 4:23-26 “Take heed to yourselves, lest you forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of anything which the LORD your God has forbidden you. For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. When you beget children and grandchildren and have grown old in the land, and act corruptly and make a carved image in the form of anything, and do evil in the

sight of the LORD your God to provoke Him to anger, I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that you will soon utterly perish from the land which you cross over the Jordan to possess; you will not prolong your days in it, but will be utterly destroyed.”

I read that to you so you get a sense of the feeling that He has against somebody who is breaking up a beautiful relationship.

Deuteronomy 6:12 “then beware, lest you forget the LORD who brought you out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.”

He is referring to the fact that He owns us. We are His inheritance.

Deuteronomy 6:13-16 “You shall fear the LORD your God and serve Him, and shall take oaths in His name. You shall not go after other gods, the gods of the peoples who are all around you (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. You shall not tempt the LORD your God as you tempted Him in Massah.”

—tempt Him to strike out in anger, in the heat of His feelings about us.

Do not forget the context of these things. We have given ourselves to each other in a contract to which we have obligated ourselves. And God looks upon that as a marriage covenant. We belong to Him.

I will give you another example in Deuteronomy 13:

Deuteronomy 13:1-3 "If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods'—which you have not known—and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams, for the LORD your God is testing you to know whether you love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.”

Idolatry permits Him to test whether we really do love Him.

Deuteronomy 13:4-5 “You shall walk after the LORD your God and fear Him, and keep His commandments and obey His voice; you shall serve Him and hold fast to Him. But that prophet or that dreamer of dreams shall be put to death, because he has spoken in order to turn you away from the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt and redeemed you from the house of bondage, to entice you from the way in which the LORD your God commanded you to walk. So you shall put away the evil from your midst.”

Just as an aside—I hope, brethren, that you are checking up on me as to whether I am false or not! I mean that! You know, Herbert W. Armstrong used to say occasionally, “Don’t believe me, but believe your Bible!” I hope that you are also checking on others as well, because I know that you are getting material from them, too. I understand, and I want you to understand, that even if one makes a prophecy that comes true, that is not the test that God is giving to us here. The proof of a minister of God is whether he is working to build, to strengthen, and to solidify the people’s relationship with God. And this test of a prophet overrides all other tests.

I just happened to think, while I was preparing my introduction this morning, of a Latin phrase, *Sine qua non*, which means, “The absolutely indispensable or essential test.” And for all of us, it is the *sine qua non* of life—whether we totally love God. And with that goes total commitment and total allegiance to God. And if a prophet is deviating from pointing people toward that relationship, and loving God, then he was not of God regardless of what he said that came to pass.

Look at verse 2 again:

Deuteronomy 13:2 . . . 'Let us go after other gods—which you have not known.

Deuteronomy 13:6 . . . 'Let us go and serve other gods,' which you have not known, neither you nor your fathers.

Deuteronomy 13:13 . . . "Let us go and serve other gods"—which you have not known.

Do not be misled by that. That phrase, “which you have not known,” does not mean that they never heard of the god, but it simply means that they had never acknowledged it as being their god.

The Israelites knew God from their day to day experiences with them in the wilderness. And that is how we come to know God—that once He reveals Himself, He wants us to seek Him—to build the relationship—by turning to His way of life to seek good and not evil.

As we do these things, we will begin to become closer to Him, and come to know Him. If we study His Word, which is really a description of Him—a revelation of what He is like—and then meditate through on them, and talk with Him in prayer, it is very likely that God is going to “grow on us.” You know what I mean. And we will conform to His will. Do you know why? Because we see how good He is! How good His way is! And, especially, we do not want to disappoint One whom we are growing to love so deeply!

When you were courting and going toward marriage, you were on your best behavior, were you not? We did not want the other to see any dark side—our idiosyncrasies; bad habits. We were always on our best behavior.

Just think that through in relationship to God. He is always with us. And if we really love Him, we are going to be on our best behavior all the time. That is what He wants! Do you know why? Because it makes us like He is! That is exactly what He wants! We are going to look to Him to see what He expects of us, and because we know He is with us all the time, and we love to please Him, we will do everything we can to please Him. And if we do that, we will become holy as He is holy.

The process is so simple to understand. The relationship, brethren, is everything.

All the ticky-tacky details of the law of God that the people who go through the Bible to try and find out what they do not have to do, is dumb. If we

really love Him, He will show us what is expected. And we will love His law just as David said. We will look for ways to please Him, not for ways to get out of pleasing Him. That puts the right spin on the relationship. That is how the process is developed.

I said earlier in this series that our vision of eternal life is vague at best, and very difficult to be used as a motivator, because we really cannot relate to it. Paul said that we look through a glass darkly. We see only an image there. What we see is exciting, and that much is good. But God is hoping to attract our enthusiastic participation through a relationship in a way of life so good we do not want to let it go. That we can relate to. *That* will motivate us.

This in turn leads very naturally to the next major theme—and that is obedience!

It almost goes without saying that obedience would be a major theme in Deuteronomy, but what is interesting is that the words obey, observe, and keep, are almost invariably followed by the words or phrase, “That you may live,” or “That it may be well with you.”

Deuteronomy 4:1 "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers is giving you."

Deuteronomy 6:3 “Therefore 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.”

Deuteronomy 6:17-18 “You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. And 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.”

There are a few other expressions which follow a command to obey, but the sense behind them all is that one should keep God's commands to ensure their own well-being. This fact is made very clear in Deuteronomy.

I have to confess that one of the areas that warned me that there was something wrong was in the leadership's thinking in the Worldwide Church of God back in the late 1980s, when I began to hear teaching that we should not look at keeping God's laws with the hope of gain.

What they were beginning to teach took a while to penetrate my thick skull, because at first it sounded good. After all, we are supposed to be humble, and all that goes with that concept. Many people in the Worldwide Church of God were not living the good life. Life was very difficult for them, and many were discouraged.

This was just the opposite of Herbert Armstrong's teaching. I mean, he was always expounding the abundant life; the good life; the best way to live; and he urged people to obey God because it was going to be well with them. The conflict between the two concepts bothered me. But then, I began to realize that what was subtly being done was that the whole purpose of God's program was being undermined.

Do not people make changes because they think it is going to be better for them? Do people change because they say, "I am going this way now because I want to make it worse for myself"? That is absolutely stupid!

God urges us to change to His way because it is going to be better for us. He constantly urges us and reminds us often all along the way to continue in this way because it is better.

The problem behind their teaching was that it was short-sighted. Frequently when people repent and go God's way, it might get worse for a while. And sometimes there are some bumps along the road; sometimes there are lengthy detours along the way, in which things do not go well for people, and they may lose a great deal of their fortune because of obedience. They may go along very smoothly for a while, and then lose their job because of the Sabbath. Or family difficulties arise. And one in the family begins to backslide, and the other in the family begins to spurt to greater growth. And

the one leaves the other in the dust. But do you know what happens in the family? They realize they are not together anymore, and friction begins to arise.

Jesus said in that first series of verses we read today, Luke 14:25-27, “He who does not bear his cross, and come after Me, is not worthy of Me.” The cross represents two things: On the one hand, it represents the instrument of death on which Jesus was impaled because of mankind’s sin. And so back behind this metaphor is that sin is always going to be with us. We have to bear under it. On the other hand, it also represents any trial that may come upon us as a result of this way of life.

So there are times in Christian’s lives that sometimes it is at the very beginning, but other times it may come along a little bit later, but there are times when it does not seem all that good to follow God's way of life. And if we begin to lose our vision, then we begin to wane in our obedience and then sin comes into the picture.

God, again, shows in His Word that if people patiently endure over the long haul, their lives both here and now are going to be better; and in the future, eternal life is going to be added, or God is not God.

"Keep My commandments that you may live." It is a two-edged sword. "Live" in the sense of more abundantly now; "live" in the sense of eternal life in the future—either one of them. And so, He says, “Obey Me that it may be well with you,” is not only an incentive to repent, it also happens to be true. It is always better to do things the lawful way, whether in terms of relationships or in terms regarding the physical laws of this universe.

Over the years, I have observed people’s lives become more difficult either because they are undergoing a trial or they are being cursed. They might be under a trial that has nothing to do with them directly or their righteousness, but that other people’s sins become a trial for them; or they are burdened with a difficulty because they did not handle some circumstance wisely, though they were not sinning.

But the other side of that coin is that some people’s lives do become bitter because they are under a curse of a sin that *is* theirs. In that case, it is not

God's way that is to blame for their discouragement; it is their sin. Far too often, people were hiding a sin from others that they could not escape the curse, nor the discouragement, but they blamed God or the church.

Now, this is the thought underlying Deuteronomy 28. Either this chapter is true, or God is not God.

Deuteronomy 28:1-2 "Now it shall come to pass, if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the LORD your God will set you high above all nations of the earth. And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, because you obey the voice of the LORD your God."

That verse is not saying that people cannot be blessed apart from God. There are other portions of the Bible that show that people can receive a measure of blessing apart from God. Psalm 73 is very good in this regard. This upset Asaph, because the godly were in trouble, and the ungodly were prospering. But remember what I said: Over the long haul, if you patiently endure, God will bless and you will live—or God is not God.

Deuteronomy 28:15 "But it shall come to pass, if you do not obey the voice of the LORD your God, to observe carefully all His commandments and His statutes which I command you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you."

Now, if God is not a God who takes pleasure in righteousness, and responds with blessings that only He can give, then why obey Him? Who can trust a God who is capricious? It cannot be done!

In James 2, in getting back to the subject of obedience, it says:

James 2:14-18 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does

it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith, and I have works." Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

Obedience is the evidence over the long haul of our pilgrimage which shows God that we understand what He is doing, and that we believe in it, and that we trust His Word, and that we care both to see it brought to a successful conclusion in our lives, and that we glorify Him in our witness. Obedience is that we trust Him.

“Let me show you my faith by my works”—that is the evidence that we understand what He is doing. It is not going to save us; but the works of obedience are necessary so that God be reproduced in us! It shows God that we are living our lives coping with the present realities, but we are doing it with our ears, and eyes on the future, preparing for the time when the future becomes the present—the Kingdom of God.

Brethren, that is the only way to live. Obedience shows that we are acting out a living hope! The fear of God, faith, hope, and love all motivate obedience, and obedience in turn is the evidence of those others are working in a person's life. And when God observes the obedience, He blesses!

Did God bless Abraham? Isaac? Jacob? He gives those things as proofs. Were their lives difficult at times? Were there times when they did wrong things? Were there times when they wanted to give up? Were there times when God intervened? Sure!

Did God bless David? Absolutely! David went from the bottom, to the top, back to the bottom again; he wavered around; he was a man of like passions. Did God bless him? Did David give himself in obedience to God? Sure he did!

What about Jesus Christ? Brethren, the blessings to these men, and their wives, and others, are so great, that thousands of years later, they are still being reaped upon their descendants. Think about that. You and I have the

blessings of Abraham, thousands of years after he lived. That is how generous God is! You can read it in Genesis 26, “because that Abraham obeyed My voice.”

And because Christ did what He did, the promises are confirmed, and we can look forward to an inheritance in the Kingdom of God. Is Christ going to be blessed? It seems like He is going to have an endless stream of brothers and sisters!

So, God blessed them. Please understand, the same blessings can accrue to us because the same God who blessed them is involved in our lives. He does not change. He is no respecter of persons. Obedience is intended to show God that we understand what He is doing, and that in yielding our lives in obedience to Him, the promises will be fulfilled in our lives as well.

Turn to Deuteronomy 11. We will conclude with this scripture.

Deuteronomy 11:8 Therefore you shall keep every commandment which I command you today, that you may be strong, . . .

Notice: do you want to be strong, spiritually? Do you want to be strong and go into the land? He said to keep the commandments! And that will make you strong! Why? Because God will bless!

Deuteronomy 11:8-9 "Therefore you shall keep every commandment which I command you today, that you may be strong, and go in and possess the land which you cross over to possess, [What greater blessing could there be?] and that you may prolong your days in the land which the LORD swore to give your fathers, to them and their descendants, 'a land flowing with milk and honey.'

Understand: there is no other way of life that produces what God's way of life does. It does not give us eternal life, but I think all of us understand that if you want to do something right, you do it the lawful way, whether it is chemistry, biology, or carpentry in building a house; it does not matter. You obey the law.

God is most concerned that we obey the laws regarding relationships with Him and with others, and it will produce blessings just like it does in the physical realm.

So, do not let anybody ever kid you that you do not have to keep the commandments. That is looking at things in the wrong way. It is looking at things like, "Let's try to get out of what we can, so that our lives might be a disaster!" They do not say that, but if they tried to fly an airplane, not following the laws of aerodynamics, it would be a disaster. And the same principle holds true in life.

If you want life to be a success, if you want to prosper in life, you keep the laws of God regarding relationships, and you prosper.