

## Lesson 25: Deuteronomy 4-11 Listen and love

### Introduction

Jesus began his earthly ministry by going into the wilderness to fast. The serpent confronted Jesus there, twisting the truth of God to corrupt Jesus' ministry before it began. The serpent used the same strategy successfully to tempt Adam and Eve, twisting the words of God, calling the Lord's character into question. Jesus did what Adam and Eve should have done. He rebuked Satan with the true words of God applied according to their true meaning. Three times Jesus quoted the Bible:

1. "It is written, 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.' "
2. "On the other hand, it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.' "
3. "Go, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.' "

(Matthew 4:4, 7, 10)

Two points I have to make. First, we rebuke falsehood by correctly applying the Word of truth. Jesus is not just pulling out three nice random quotes that fit the context. Jesus is reaching back into Torah and faithfully handling the Word, according to the meaning in the original context. Jesus knows these verses. He knows the context. Which leads to the second point, Jesus knows Deuteronomy; not just the quotable points in the text, the whole text, the meaning and heart of the text.

The three references he quotes against Satan are Deuteronomy 8:3, 6:18 and 6:16. All three quotes come from the theological exhortation in Deuteronomy chapters 4-11. The section we are going to address in this lesson. It is a wonderful section of Scripture to read over and over, to consider and digest. Jesus also quotes from this section when asked, "What is the greatest commandment?" He responds with Deuteronomy 6:5, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might."

The section does present some difficulty. It is chiasmic with several overlapping themes. Concepts keep repeating, but the organizing principle is not easily apparent. In this it is similar to the style of Jesus final words to his disciples recorded in John 13-17. That section is also chiasmic with overlapping themes, beautiful and quotable, but with a flow that is somewhat difficult to grasp.

The overlapping themes in Deuteronomy 4-11 remind me of how waves overlap in a rocky cove. Standing on the rocks of the cove, you can distinguish the waves coming in, rhythmically repeating. But the harmony of those waves is broken by reverberating ripples that bounce back each time a new wave hits the rocks of the cove. Two or three different patterns ripple from the rocks back out against the waves that are rolling in. The water movement seems confused until you begin to identify the overlapping patterns. And as you read Deuteronomy 4-11 several times, certain themes clearly stand out. You see them. But the pattern is difficult to discern. I will help you begin to consider how the pattern of this text works.

If all that sounds complicated, it is a bit complicated. One of the wonderful aspects of this repetitive style is that you can pick up major themes the very first time you read through the text. Still, as you come back again and again, applying your attention to deeper study, there is more to notice, more connections to make, and a pattern begins to emerge.

I'll start with an overview of the structure. Then we will consider the major theme of covenant obedience and several sub-themes Moses uses to develop our understanding of covenant obedience.

### The ten-part chiasmic structure of Deuteronomy 4-11

The voice of Deuteronomy is the voice of Moses exhorting the people of Israel. The form of Deuteronomy is a suzerain-vassal covenant. The overall structure of Deuteronomy is chiasmic. The outer frames are narrative. Chapters 1-3 look back to how this generation came to be camped on the plains of Moab by the Jordan river. The parallel section at the end of the book, chapters 31-34,

describe the renewal of covenant with this second generation out of Egypt and the historic transition from Moses to Joshua. There are two inner frames containing theological narrative, first in chapters 4-11, then in 27-30. The center of the chiasm in 12-26 contains the specific laws of covenant.

Deuteronomy: Kingdom Renewal				
Key Passage: 6:4-5				
A	B	X	B'	A'
1-3 Historical prologue	4-11 Theological exhortation	12-26 Covenant stipulations	27-30 Theological exhortation	31-34 Historic transition

In this lesson we are considering the first half of the inner frame, chapters 4-11. This is not legal code, and it is not historic narrative. This is a call to consider truths about covenant with Yahweh.

Duane Christensen recommends in the Word Biblical Commentary viewing the structure of these chapters as a ten-part chiasm. That suggestion helped me resolve some of the challenges I had seen in the text but did not know what to do with. And I like very much the idea that this section which highlights the ten commandments also has a ten-part structure. The structure fits the content. In the end, you may not buy into the idea that Moses intended for us to see this in such a developed chiasm. I think there is something to it. It will help us to recognize some of the repetition in the text.

I have noticed in other chiastic texts in the Bible that the author sometimes introduces a parallel frame that stands out as a little odd or out of place to alert the reader to keep looking that this might be a chiastic structure. I think that is happening here in two short passages, one close to the beginning of our section and one close to the end. In 4:41-43, the flow of the text is broken with the report that Moses set apart three cities of refuge. This idea about cities of refuge does not connect with what comes before in chapter 4 nor what comes after in chapter 4. It stands out as odd. Something similar happens in 10:8-11 where we are told that the Lord set aside the Levites as special to him. That passage fits better with the context but is still an aside, not necessary to the flow of the passage. The law requiring cities of refuge and laws regarding the role of the Levites will be covered later in Deuteronomy right in the center of the legal code in chapters 17-20. It does not need to be addressed here. So, what is the point of these passages? Why break the flow of thought? I think Moses uses these passages to complete his ten-part chiasm and to alert the reader to parallelism in the text. Both passages are just a few verses, both are a little out of place, and both use the phrase "set apart;" set apart the cities and set apart the Levites. It calls to consider, "Is something parallel happening here?" It does not prove that we have chiasm, but it makes you look a little closer.

And looking closer, we see another set of markers standing out in the text. First, the phrase "Now O Israel," or just "Now Israel," occurs only twice in the text. And where it occurs is really interesting. The phrase occurs at the beginning of the two passages on either side of the "set apart" passages. The first is in 4:1,

And now O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, in order that you may live...

That starts the very first passage of our larger section which ends with the cities of refuge reference. Then, after our setting apart the Levites passage, our final passage of the whole section starts with,

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways and love him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul... (10:12).

So, that's interesting. We now have an A and a B followed by a B' and an A'; "And now O Israel," "set apart," "set apart," "And now, Israel." So, if chapter 4 is chiastically paralleled with chapters 10-11, then maybe the center of the section 5-9 completes the chiasm.

Another phrase leads us to consider more parallelism. "Hear O Israel" shows up three times in 5:1, 6:4 and 9:1. That is not enough to prove a full ten-part chiasm. But it is enough to encourage us to spend time reading through the text and looking for potential parallels. I realize this is getting a little too complicated for an audio lesson. We really need visuals to help us out. And since we do not have a visual of the structure, I am going to stop with the analysis of the chiasm and just quickly go through it. What I have said so far is just how you start to notice the parallelisms through phrases or through words that are set off certain sections.

But I'll just give if to you now, that way, if you want to come back and write it out yourself, you can do that later. I'll also have it printed in the transcript at [observetheword.com](http://observetheword.com). You do not need to get this all in your mind for the rest of the lesson. You just need the idea. It is a ten-part structure, so we have five points at the front. A, B, C, D and E, followed by five points at the back in reverse order E', D', C', B' and A'. And there is no middle point x in this particular chiasm.

A is 4:1-40, beginning with "And now, O Israel," and a call to obey Yahweh's commandments.

B is 4:41-43, the setting apart of three cities.

C is 4:44-6:3, beginning and ending with the phrase "This is the Law" and giving us representative of the whole law the ten commandments.

D is 6:4-7:11, which begins "Hear O Israel" and develops the call to obedience as righteousness.

At the center of the chiasm are E and E'.

E is 7:12-26 and communicates the idea when you obey, you will be blessed.

E' is 8:1-20 and communicates the corresponding idea when you disobey, you will perish.

D' is 9:1-29, which, like D begins "Hear O Israel" and also like D speaks about righteousness, though much more pessimistically.

C' is 10:1-7, returning to the receiving of the ten commandments as communicated in C, though this time it is the second receiving of the ten commandments after the sin of the golden calf.

B' is 10:8-11, the setting apart of the Levites.

A' is 10:12-11:25, beginning with "And now O Israel," and a call to obey Yahweh in the heart relationship with him.

#### **A Ten-Part Chiastic Structure of Deuteronomy 4-11**

A 4:1-40 And now, O Israel, obey YHWH's commandments

B 4:41-43 Then Moses set apart three cities

C 4:44-6:3 This is the Torah—the Ten Words

D 6:4-7:11 Hear, O Israel, YHWH is our God, YHWH alone

E 7:12-26 When you obey, you will be blessed

E' 8:1-20 When you disobey, you will perish

D' 9:1-29 Hear, O Israel, you are about to cross the Jordan

C' 10:1-7 At that time, YHWH spoke the Ten Words

B' 10:8-11 At that time, YHWH set apart the tribe of Levi

A' 10:12-11:25 And now, O Israel, what does YHWH ask of you?

Alright, with that overview of the structure let's consider some of the themes that ripple through these sections.

## Themes of covenant obedience

An overarching theme reoccurs again and again. “And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and judgments which I am teaching you to perform.... (4:1).” Moses is calling the people of Israel to covenant obedience with Yahweh. And two key words keep getting repeated all over our section. The word *shema*, translated variously as hear, listen, and obey, occurs 33 times in this section of Deuteronomy. The most famous occurrence is the first word of “The Shema,” the Jewish statement of faith in 6:4-5,

Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.

The word literally means to hear and in this context contains the assumption that the one who hears, receives what is heard and acts upon what he hears. Another word, *shamar*, occurs 36 times in this section, being translated as keep, guard or observe, and is in the second verse of the section, 4:2,

You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.

When this word applies to the commandments like here that you may “keep the commandments,” it means to observe or do. To “keep” is to observe. When the word is applied to a person it means to guard or watch over, such as in 4:9,

Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life; but make them known to your sons and your grandsons.

God wants people to be in relationship with him. It is not about religion. It is about relationship. That is true. And relationship with God does not exist without obedience. That part of the message is not always clear in modern Christian communication. We know Jesus wants relationship. We know passages like Jesus told the woman caught in adultery that he does not condemn her. But sometimes we forget to add what he says next, which is “Go and sin no more.” Right relationship with God is a relationship of covenant obedience.

Moses teaching in the section of Deuteronomy develops a number of sub-themes to go along with the overarching theme of covenant obedience. Let’s consider three sub-themes. Covenant obedience requires (1) exclusive faithfulness, (2) self-awareness, and (3) right motives.

### *Exclusive faithfulness*

Let’s start with exclusive faithfulness.

1. God calls people into an exclusive relationship with himself. This is a serious commitment. God really does abhor evil. And he abhors the evil of a human heart that would try to play him or manipulate him or use him. There is a tension in the commandments of God caused by the fallenness of human beings. The tension is not in God himself. He is harmonious all in himself. The tension is created by our brokenness. God hates sin. And God loves people. God is just. And God is compassionate.

Christians fall into a kind of idolatry when they emphasize only one side of the character of God to avoid the tension. I imagine that every nation with a variety of Christian churches and movements includes those who lean towards communication of God’s wrath against sin and also those who lean towards God as compassionate and merciful without referring to sin. This is not an Old Testament, New Testament distinction. Hell is not developed as a theological concept in the Old Testament. No one develops the idea of hell more than Jesus in the gospels. The tension is in the character of God as it relates to us in our fallenness. You know, the tension is that Jesus is both judge and savior. The whole point of the cross is not that Jesus came to save without judging, but that Jesus has already judged. We already stand condemned by Jesus, and therefore, he came to save. That is the full context of John 3:16-18. The cross is the satisfaction of the wrath of God on behalf of all who would

believe. Those who refuse to believe will have to pay the penalty of wrath themselves. And that wrath comes from the holy anger of God.

We might not like the extreme compassion of God. We might not like the consuming anger of God. But the true character of God includes both. In Deuteronomy 4, Moses calls Israel to covenant faithfulness to God whose character includes 4:24, “For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God” and also 4:31,

For the Lord your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.

Our covenant obedience begins with pursuing the true character of God with seriousness according to the manner in which he has revealed himself. The passage above says that God is a jealous God. Because of who God is in his character, He expects our covenant relationship to be exclusive. It is not just faithfulness, he requires, but exclusive faithfulness. Other gods, idols, objects of worship, claims to authoritative truth are all excluded from faithful relationship with God, if he is indeed the one true God. Consider three more passages from chapter 4.

First, Deuteronomy 4:2,

You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you.

God’s word has exclusive authority over you and should not be added to or taken from by anyone other than God. Here is a longer one, Deuteronomy 4:15–19,

<sup>15</sup> “So watch yourselves carefully, since you did not see any form on the day the Lord spoke to you at Horeb from the midst of the fire, <sup>16</sup> so that you do not act corruptly and make a graven image for yourselves in the form of any figure, the likeness of male or female, <sup>17</sup> the likeness of any animal that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the sky, <sup>18</sup> the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the water below the earth. <sup>19</sup> “And *beware* not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.

God alone is to receive your worship. All idols, all other gods, are excluded. Third, Deuteronomy 4:39,

Know therefore today, and take it to your heart, that the Lord, He is God in heaven above and on the earth below; there is no other.

The call to faithful obedience is a call to obey God on his terms. He has the authority. He is the source of truth. There are no other gods. Our society is not our god. Politics, science, and culture do not define for us who God is or what God expects from us. It works the other way around. We enter into the marketplace of ideas, into politics, science, the arts with a worldview defined by our exclusive commitment to God.

Our relationship with God is meant to be intensely personal, but not solely private. Exclusive does not mean private. It does not mean that we do not have other significant relationships. It means we have no other God or source of final authority. We do have other relationships, and we do bring God with us into our other relationships. And that starts in the home. Parents are supposed to influence their children towards right belief and right relationship with God. That is part of our covenant obedience to God. Moses introduces this idea here in 4:9

Only give heed to yourself and keep your soul diligently, so that you do not forget the things which your eyes have seen and they do not depart from your heart all the days of your life...

And not only are you to keep your own soul. Moses goes on, “...but make them known to your sons and your grandsons.” This is an example of a theme being raised briefly early on in our section and then being further developed later. So, it is raised briefly here in chapter 4, but is developed as a

major theme of chapter 6. And I am not going to look at all of chapter 6 right now. I imagine it is familiar to you, 6:6-7 says,

These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up.

Our exclusive commitment to God compels us to shepherd the hearts and minds of our children towards their own exclusive commitment to God.

Along with exclusive faithfulness, covenant obedience involves ongoing and increasing self-awareness. This is our second sub-theme, self-awareness.

*Self-awareness*

I hesitated to use the term self-awareness because it might make you think more of pop-psychology or maybe even new age thinking. I mean to use the term in line with Paul's teaching in Romans 12:3. Paul tells the Romans not to think more highly of themselves than they ought to. Instead they are to consider themselves soberly, not too high, not too low, but accurately. They are to be self-aware.

Moses makes a series of exhortations at the center of our larger section that communicate this requirement of self-awareness. Ongoing covenant obedience requires right thinking about ourselves in relationship to God and his commands.

The love and favor of God can lead people into a wrong evaluation of their own situation. I have heard Europe referred to by a European thinker as a cut flower that blossomed out of a Judeo-Christian worldview but has been cut from those roots, such that Europeans believe that the beauty and success of their society is a result of their own ingenuity and thinking without any significant dependence on God or the Bible. I believe the same applies widely in the United States of America with the belief that Western values have evolved past the biblical worldview. Our success is our own as a result of our work ethic and independent spirit and goodness, and intelligence.

Moses warns the Israelites against this exact kind of thinking. He cautions them to remember where they have come from and when they have success to remember how they got to that success.

In part D of our passage, in 7:7-8, Moses reminds the Israelites,

The Lord did not set His love on you nor choose you because you were more in number than any of the peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples, but because the Lord loved you and kept the oath which He swore to your forefathers, the Lord brought you out by a mighty hand and redeemed you from the house of slavery, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

Because he loved you. Not because you were so great and numerous. In the parallel D', in 9:4, Moses adds this,

Do not say in your heart when the Lord your God has driven them out before you, 'Because of my righteousness the Lord has brought me in to possess this land,' but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the Lord is dispossessing them before you.

So, in remembering where you have come from, know this, God did not choose you because of your numbers or because of your stellar morality. He chose you because he loves you. He chose you because he chose you. Moving further into the center of our section, Moses tells them in E, in 7:17-18, not to think too lowly of yourselves.

If you should say in your heart, 'These nations are greater than I; how can I dispossess them?' you shall not be afraid of them; you shall well remember what the Lord your God did to Pharaoh and to all Egypt:

But God knows the danger of success. If God says do not fear. And God gives instruction on how to enter the land and how to successfully live in the land, then his people, being people, will eventually take credit for that success, forgetting how fearful and unwise they were in the beginning. And this is in E', 8:11-14,

<sup>11</sup> Beware that you do not forget the Lord your God by not keeping His commandments and His ordinances and His statutes which I am commanding you today; <sup>12</sup> otherwise, when you have eaten and are satisfied, and have built good houses and lived *in them*, <sup>13</sup> and when your herds and your flocks multiply, and your silver and gold multiply, and all that you have multiplies, <sup>14</sup> then your heart will become proud and you will forget the Lord your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.

Does that story sound familiar? It is a story that has repeated over and over both on a societal level and on an individual level. On the social level as Christianity wins the hearts of a people, over time the faithful stop trusting God and begin to believe more and more in their own wisdom and judgment. They move from faithful dependence on God and begin to increasingly turn to the methods and strategies of the broader culture for success. For example, we could consider the effect of success on the early Christian church after it was promoted by the Roman Emperor Constantine from oppressed faith, to preferred religion. Or we could consider how some mega-churches move from a strategy of spiritual dependence to strategies that appear more in common with corporate America. This is the ongoing challenge of success. We become successful and then we begin to look at the strategies of our culture, and we forget how we got here.

This story is also repeated on an individual level. I am sure you have experienced something like this. When we are in need and afraid, we are much more likely to depend on God. When we work through our fears, becoming skilled and successful, we forget to go to God in prayer and are much more likely to take credit for the blessings we are receiving. So, before we judge the Israelites too harshly for what we know is coming, we should take the lesson to heart ourselves. Success is hard. Success is spiritual temptation.

There is one further interesting parallel, I'll note here. In D', in 9:4, we read that God did not choose the Israelites because they are righteous. In fact, most of D' is spent reminding Israelites of their past failures. This is where Moses brings up the golden calf and the failure to enter the promise land, and the grumbling rebellions. Moses is emphasizing the Israelites inability to be righteous.

In D, the parallel passage to D', Moses tells the Israelites in 6:25,

It will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the Lord our God, just as He commanded us.

Without considering all of the Torah we have studied so far, if we just read this one verse, we could definitely make the mistake of believing Moses is here teaching a works righteousness. Listen to it again, "It will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the Lord our God, just as He commanded us." How do you become righteous? By observing all that the Lord has commanded us. This is our righteousness.

But if we do not stop there in chapter 6, but keep studying through Deuteronomy, we come to D' in chapter 9 where Moses comes back to this question of righteous and raises grave questions about Israel's ability live for God. They are reminded of a variety of failures and told, "You were not chosen because of your righteousness."

In our own self-awareness and self-assessment as we consider ourselves soberly and rightly, we have to come back to the two questions of covenant and what we have been taught so far through the first four books of the Pentateuch. The first question of covenant asks, "What makes me acceptable or righteous to be in relationship with holy God?" And we have considered over and over monuments of grace that clearly establish how to answer this question. Remember, Genesis 15:6, "Abraham believed in the Lord and he reckoned it to him as righteousness." Paul develops that verse in Romans 4 after he has declared in Romans 3:20, "by the works of the Law no flesh will be [declared righteous in God's] sight." Righteousness does not come by obedience to the law when we are in this context of answering the first question of covenant. "What makes me acceptable or righteous enough to be in relationship with holy God?" Grace and grace alone received by faith.

So, what does Moses mean by saying, “It will be righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the Lord our God, just as He commanded us.” He cannot be overturning what he has already established. Moses is speaking in the context of covenant faithfulness. When we are already in covenant relationship with God by grace through faith, we are then asking the second question of covenant, “How then shall I live?” Or “How then shall we live?” Being declared righteous by grace, we can now wholeheartedly pursue righteousness in our thoughts, words, and actions. Obedience is our righteousness. But not as an answer to the first question of covenant. This is an answer to the second question of covenant.

So, honest self-awareness recognizes these two truths: First, I do not at all meet the holy perfect standard of God. I am accepted based on the grace of God. And second, God is at work in me so that I can actually do things that please him. As I obey, this is my righteousness. Not a righteousness that makes me stand before the court of God. It does not avail me before God. I cannot depend on my righteousness as my argument on the judgment day. But it is a righteousness that pleases God and brings about the blessings of God.

So far, we have considered two sub-themes to covenant obedience. We have considered the requirements of exclusive faithfulness and some issues that go along with that. And we have considered humble self-awareness and issues related to that. Covenant obedience also requires right motive.

#### *Right motive*

So, what is the right motive? I am tempted to just say love and be done with it. In the end love is going to be prime motive. “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.”

But that is not where we start. The theme of love will be developed as a major theme of Deuteronomy 4-11. But not really until chapter 6. It is not the starting point. We are going to build up to it. But before we get there, Moses mentions at least three other motives.

#### *Consequences as motive*

First, we get the motive of consequences, rewards and punishments. This is the motive introduced in the very first verse of the whole section in 4:1,

<sup>1</sup> Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you.

Along with positive consequences for obedience, there are negative consequences for disobedience. This is Deuteronomy 4:25–26,

<sup>25</sup> When you become the father of children and children’s children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the Lord your God so as to provoke Him to anger, <sup>26</sup> I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed.

I am going to wait to develop this idea of reward and punishment in future lessons. It is actually very easy to get the wrong idea about reward and punishment, primarily because we are all legalists at heart and that is how we filter these statements. So, we need to spend some time on that. Right now, it is enough to recognize that the consequences of covenant obedience are one of the valid motives for obeying.

#### *Witness as motive*

A second motive is witness. Moses says this in 4:6-8,

<sup>6</sup> So keep and do *them*, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ <sup>7</sup> For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is the

Lord our God whenever we call on Him? <sup>8</sup> Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?

God gave Israel identity and purpose in Exodus 19:6, “you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.” A kingdom of priests represents God before all peoples and mediates for all people, helping bring anyone who would come into relationship with God.” Moses teaches Deuteronomy 4:6-8 that the obedience of the Israelites plays a crucial role in their witness as priests. Obedience to God’s command makes a people wise and understanding. “What nations has laws like these?” One of the tragedies of our modern world is that refugees streaming into the West, into Europe or the United States or Canada, are not recognizing how much of the order and law and freedom and success of the West comes from a worldview originally grounded in the Bible. It is tragic that the witness has been lost.

As God’s people, we still have the ability to live out the righteousness of God in a way that witnesses to others in our communities. Jesus call for us to be salt and to be a light on a hill is the same idea Moses is communicating. Of course, covenant obedience does not guarantee that we will find favor with non-believers in our societies. Israel has plenty of people wanting to destroy them from day one up still to today for their commitment to the shema, “Hear, O Israel! The Lord is our God, the Lord is one!” No matter how well we live out the commands of God, the gospel will smell of life to some and death to others. Moses is focusing here on those who will see and be attracted. Just as with the Israelites then, so also with us today, if we walk with God in covenant obedience, there will be some who see the practical effects in our finances, in our parenting, in our marriages, in our business relationships, in our compassion, in our stand for justice, in our convictions. They will be drawn to God through us. That is one of the motives for covenant obedience.

And then of course, there is love.

#### *Love as motive*

Just as in the New Covenant, so also in the Old Covenant, the law was not intended for believers to be a legal code imposed by governing authorities or a ritual code imposed by priests. It was given, so that those who love God and worship him will have the means of expressing their love through obedience. Torah law did serve as a legal code for society for all Jews, whether they sought to follow Yahweh or not. At the same time, it provided a call for faithful individuals to enter into obedient relationship with their heavenly Father from the heart motive of love.

Jesus develops this connection between love and obedience, speaking to his disciples on the night of his arrest. John 14:21 records Jesus as saying,

He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him.

It is possible to take this as manipulative. If you love me you will ... blank. You can imagine a man or woman using this conditionally, manipulatively. If you love me you will... You can fill it in. That is not what Jesus is communicating. He is not stating a conditional. He is stating an indicative, a fact. If you really do love God, if that is a true fact about you, then you will desire to keep his commandments. And you will keep them. And you will enter into relationship. And you will experience love from him. That is what love looks like towards your heavenly Father, towards your rightful King, towards your God. That is what love looks like in an authority relationship. To love in such a relationship is to obey. If you choose to reject the will of God and go and do as you please, then you show that you do not love your God. It is not a conditional. It is a fact. If you just don’t care about God’s will in your life, you refuse to accept his authority, you do not love him. Or, at the very least, you are not loving him in that moment.

We could not state this call to love more completely than Moses does in Deuteronomy 6:5, “You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.” This is not a concept new with the New Testament. This is the expectation delivered by Moses as he called this second generation to renewal of covenant with God. Covenant obedience is to come from inside

with all one's heart and all one's soul and all one's strength. We see here with certainty that acceptance into relationship with God must be based on grace for who can keep such a high calling of love? How do I love God with all that I am consistently? I don't. And I never will; not until I get to heaven. But having been accepted by grace, God frees his people to pursue love for him wholeheartedly without fear in failure.

### **The Exhortation to walk with God in Deuteronomy 10:12-22**

I am going to conclude by reading from the last part of our larger section in Deuteronomy. This is the beginning of A', Deuteronomy 10:12-22. We have said that the voice of Deuteronomy is Moses speaking first person to Israel. It is a plea to Israel. And parts of the book really read better out loud as sermons. It may be hard to follow all of this just from listening as I read. And that's okay. I'd love for you to go back later and read chapter 10 on your own. Now, I just want you to get a feel for it. And recognize that Jesus words in John 14 have a strong connection with the heart presented here in Deuteronomy. As you listen, see if you catch who is loving whom. Who does God love? And who are God's people to love? Here we go, this is Deuteronomy 10:12-22.

<sup>12</sup> Now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require from you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, <sup>13</sup> and to keep the Lord's commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good? <sup>14</sup> Behold, to the Lord your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it. <sup>15</sup> Yet on your fathers did the Lord set His affection to love them, and He chose their descendants after them, *even* you above all peoples, as *it is* this day. <sup>16</sup> So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer. <sup>17</sup> For the Lord your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe. <sup>18</sup> He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing. <sup>19</sup> So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. <sup>20</sup> You shall fear the Lord your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name. <sup>21</sup> He is your praise and He is your God, who has done these great and awesome things for you which your eyes have seen. <sup>22</sup> Your fathers went down to Egypt seventy persons *in all*, and now the Lord your God has made you as numerous as the stars of heaven.

Did you notice how Moses frames the call to love? Who does God love? Well, God loved their fathers. And God loves the aliens among them. So, who are the Israelites to love? They are to love God with everything they have. And they are to love the aliens among them. Sounds a lot like Jesus, doesn't it?

### **Reflection Questions**

1. Skim through chapters 4-11 paying attention to the ten part chiasm presented in this lesson. Read the "set apart" B and B' sections in 4:41-43 and 10:8-11. And take note of the beginning verses in each section. What stands out to you as you consider this structure?
2. Read through chapter 4. What stands out to you as interesting or strange or important?
3. Describe in your own words the connection between the call to covenant obedience through this section and the call to love in the Shema (Deuteronomy 6:4-5). Consider also John 14:15-24.
4. Do you think it is possible to love someone in an authority relationship without being committed to obey the one in authority? Why does love want to obey a father or a king or God?
5. Read the texts quoted in this lesson regarding self-awareness: 7:7-8, 7:17-18, 8:11-14 and 9:4. When have you seen this temptation in your own life? Think of a time when you knew you were weak or unskilled or lacking insight and trusted God and he brought you success. Think also of a time you trusted in your own abilities and still succeeded. How would you describe your inner state after each experience? How do you relate to the warning Moses is giving the Israelites?
6. Read 10:12-22. What stands out to you?