**Obedience Commanded**

I recently saw a billboard promoting virtual banking, that is having a meeting with a banker on line to conduct many transactions that you would normally do in person. I can see some benefit to this and we have considered implementing this service at my bank. Our board chairman years ago mandated casual attire at work because he thought bankers in suits are intimidating to blue collar workers who felt like they had to dress up to meet with a banker. Now you can meet with your banker in your pajamas. It seems that the virtual world is expanding to virtually everything. We have virtual meetings, shopping, social clubs and yes, even virtual church. While there are some advantages, my fear is that our virtual life becomes dehumanizing. People will sling the most vile insults imaginable in a chat room, things they would never say in person. Perhaps the most ghastly virtual act is a drone strike directed by a virtual pilot who is thousands of miles from a combat zone. When we view life in the abstract, we can lose sight of the tangible. In our study of Deuteronomy chapters 5 & 6, we see that God ties a tangible benefit to following His laws and decrees.

In chapter 5, Moses reminded the people of the covenant that God made with them at Mt. Sinai when He proclaimed the Ten Commandments. The covenant was originally made with Abraham when God told him his descendants would receive the inheritance of Canaan (see Gen. 15:16), thus tying the covenant to future generations. While many of the Israelites to whom Moses spoke were not alive when God spoke from Mt. Sinai, they were still subject to the covenant. Moses then repeated the Ten Commandments as given by God in Exodus chapter 15 with the exception of the 4th. Instead of saying that the Sabbath was to be kept holy because God rested on the 7th day when he created the world, Moses said that they were to remember that they had been slaves in Egypt and that God had brought them out of bondage and they were to obey Him. Moses then recounted how the elders had told him they feared hearing God speak and asked him to communicate with Him on their behalf (see Ex. 20:19). God had told Moses that He wished they would always fear Him so that it would go well with them and their children. The chapter ends with Moses telling the people to walk in the ways God commanded so they would live and prosper in the land they would possess.

Chapter 6 continues the theme of directing the people to obey God’s commands so that they would live long lives and multiply. Moses told them to love God with all their hearts, soul and strength, a directive often repeated in the Bible (see 10:12, 13:3, Mark 12:30, Matt. 22:37, Luke 10:27). Moses told them to talk about the commandments with their children constantly. Moses then gave them a warning not to forget God when they inhabited Canaan. They would enjoy cities they did not build, wells they did not dig and fruit from vineyards and olive trees they did not plant. They would benefit from the things that God provided for them but Moses feared they would become complacent and forget that it was Jehovah Jireh who was responsible for their bountiful lives.

Moses told the people to fear god, another often repeated line, particularly in Psalms and Proverbs. He warned them not to follow other gods or test God as they had done in the desert. The chapter ends with Moses giving the people a lengthy admonition to tell their children about how God had brought them out of Egypt and gave them the land in which they lived. In the last verse Moses told them to tell their children that obeying God’s laws would be their righteousness.

We previously discussed how God warned against worshipping false gods and making idols to resemble things they could see such as animals in place of God whom they could not see. He constantly reminded them of how he had provided for their freedom, safety and sustenance which no false god could do. I read that 81% of US adults profess a belief in God which on the surface is encouraging. I wonder though, how many believe in some sort of abstract god rather than a personal savior, much like the Greeks of 2000 years ago whom Paul debated (see Acts. chapter 17). God has given us a tangible benefit, our very salvation which is a priceless gift on a very personal level rather than an abstract idea. Unlike the Israelites, our righteousness does not come from obeying God’s laws, rather it is imputed to us from Jesus. The old covenant was viewed as obey and be saved. The new covenant is be saved and obey.