

Puritan Christian School Students- June 2001
Deuteronomy 4:1-40

“REMEMBER”

Proposition: You may forget everything I say to you today- - but remember this one thing:

“OBEDIENCE TO GOD’S COMMANDMENTS IS THE ONLY TRUE WAY TO FIND REAL PURPOSE, TRUE FULFILLMENT, AND LASTING HAPPINESS!”

Introduction

In our Scripture from Deuteronomy chapter four, the Israelites are poised on the edge of the Jordan River, on the Plains of Moab, patiently waiting to cross over into the Promised Land of Canaan. They were about to cross over into the Promised Land to begin a new life of obedience to God. This was the beginning of a new era of their lives. The past was behind them, ahead was their hopeful future!

You too have a very hopeful future waiting to unfold before you! You too are about to *cross over* - -not the Jordan, not into the Promised Land- - but into a “land” just as hostile and threatening as the one Israel was about to enter. You see, although God had promised the land to Israel, there were those who lived in the land that denied God’s existence, opposed God, and would do the same to them!

Israel was about to go into a land of many idols and “so-called gods”. “Gods” that the True God hated. They were going into a land where they would experience hatred from those who opposed God and turn their invisible vindictiveness, visibly toward God’s people. This was a culture that prided itself on plurality and relativism. In this land, they would experience persecution for believing in only *one way to God, only one truth about God* (that he

had revealed in his Scripture), *and only one life provided by God*. This was a culture that did not believe in any objective truth other than “there is no objective truth”!

You are about to enter a land, a world like this if you will! So how do you survive? How do you stand firm under persecution? How are you to maintain the truth of Scripture? How are you to live your life for the sole purpose of glorifying God and enjoying him forever, in a culture that scoffs at such things as this? How are you to keep yourself set-apart (holy) from this world, while maintaining your faith and making a difference for your Lord in this world? In your vocation, your life, in your education, your goal will be to live for God’s glory *in the world*, but not *of it*. How are you to keep yourself from becoming “like” the world? These were Israel’s challenges poised on the edge of the Promised Land; they are your challenges on your day of graduation, poised on the eve of entering into the real world! How? [*Pause*] **Remember!**

Illustration: Sherman, Jason, and Kevin you have made history this week. What will you remember about this week five years from now? Ten years from now? Twenty, or even thirty years from now? (BTW, that will be the year 2031). Many future leaders like you who are graduating this week will remember such things as the following. During the time you graduated these things had recently happened during the week of June 8, 2001:

- The movies *Pearl Harbor* and *Shrek* are the blockbusters making millions of dollars at the box office.
- On the *New York Times Books, Bestseller List*, P. D. James, Amy Tan, James Ellroy, James Patterson and Stephen King are being voraciously read at home and the beach!
- And popular artists like U2, Weezer, Eva Cassidy, Enya, Tool, Radiohead, Lucinda Williams, Mary Chapin Carpenter, and even older artists as diverse as R.E.M. and Paul McCartney and Wings, and the Beatles (although they broke up as a group over 30 years ago) are still climbing the *Billboard* charts, being listened to in headsets, car CD players, and boom boxes all over America!

- In other news, Anthony Quinn died this week (Zorba the Great or the Great Zampano); the Oklahoma City Bomber will die by execution; Bush, “George W.” that is, is President of the U.S. and congress has just had a \$1.34 trillion tax cut approved by congress!

However, I want you to remember three important truths that will give you real *purpose*, true *fulfillment* and lasting *happiness* throughout your lives:

Sherman, Jason, and Kevin: REMEMBER! (1) Remember: To Keep God’s Commandments; (2) Remember: To Keep idols from your hearts; and (3) Remember: To Keep the LORD your God first in your Lives!

I. Remember: To Keep God’s Commandments:

Deuteronomy 4:2: 2 "You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that *you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you...*"

(a) Why? Because they are God’s commands! God is our Creator and therefore His commands are to be kept because HE IS GOD!

- There are two main so-called virtues of our modern world: *Tolerance* and *Pluralism*.
 1. *Tolerance* is accepting all the beliefs of people as equal, or *their choice*. As the people of God, our wisdom and understanding will be evident in our *intolerance*. Intolerance of other’s beliefs is not to be rude or hostile to those who differ with you, but to realize that there is only one God who has revealed himself and his will. In a *tolerant* modern world, no one will mind if you have your own beliefs, *they have theirs as well*. The wisdom and understanding will come when you say that the truth you believe from Scripture is the *Only* truth. That leads us to what is the other virtue: Pluralism.
 2. *Pluralism* is believing that all truths or assertions of fact are equally true. As the people of God, we are not

pluralistic, but we believe that all truth is absolute and revealed by God in his Word!

(b)V.6: ‘Wisdom and Understanding will be evident in your life!’

- Because you do not fall into the tolerance and pluralism of the modern world, your lives will display God’s order and purpose. You may undergo persecution for standing firm, but others will see the *truth found in your lives*.

(c) Why? Because the Lord has redeemed you ‘in Christ’ (as the Israelites were redeemed out of Egyptian bondage).

- Remember *love* is the foundation and the motivation for your obedience to God’s commandments. You obey them out of gratitude for your lives as creatures of God and for his redemption in Christ!

Our Lord Jesus taught that the summary of all of God’s commandments was to love the LORD your God with all of your heart, soul, mind, and strength, and your neighbor as yourself!

Elsewhere, I Lord taught that *if you love him* - - show it! He says in John 15: *If you love me*, keep my commandments!

II. Remember: To Keep Idols from your Hearts:

Deuteronomy 4:15: " Take careful heed to yourselves, for you saw no form when the LORD spoke to you at Horeb out of the midst of the fire, 16 "lest you act corruptly and make for yourselves a carved image in the form of any figure: the likeness of male or female, 17 "the likeness of any animal that *is* on the earth or the likeness of any winged bird that flies in the air, 18 "the likeness of anything that creeps on the ground or the likeness of any fish that *is* in the water beneath the earth. 19 "And *take heed*, lest you lift your eyes to heaven, and *when* you see the sun, the moon, and the stars, all the host of heaven, you feel driven to worship them and serve them, which the LORD your God has given to all the peoples under the whole heaven as a heritage."

(a) What idols? I have seen no “high places” or “altars to Baal” in our modern world!

- (Remember that idols are *outwardly manifested realities based on an inward disposition of the heart*). Jesus said in Matthew 15:

"...those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. "For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. "These are *the things* which defile a man..."

In other words, *idols* are anything that take position in your hearts before the love for God and your obedience to him.

(b) Because it is *from the heart* that these *idols* proceed, beware *idols of the heart*! Such as?

1. Self-sufficiency:

I can do it all myself, I need no help at all. I have graduated from a Christian School, now I can break from the shackles of my faith. I will live my life "my way"- - as Frank Sinatra.

2. Self-love; self-seeking:

I am more important than anyone else. To serve my neighbor as myself would only get in the way of my progress! Life is short, I must live it to my own glory and good!

3. Peer pressure: "to be liked" or "to conform" to other's expectations (One of the greatest dangers to the Christian):

I want to be liked no matter what! I will do whatever friends, family, employers, or professors ask me to do. I need and long for acceptance by others! Please like me!!

4. Correct equation for avoiding idols:

"Seek the LORD + Deny Self = Find true life!"

Mt. 6:33: "But **seek** first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

Mt. 16:24-26: Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him **deny** himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

(c) Live a life of continual repentance from the idols that populate your heart-

Deut 4:28 "And there you will serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. 29 "But from there 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. 30 "When you are in distress, and

all these things come upon you in the latter days, when you turn to the LORD your God and obey His voice 31 '(for the LORD your God *is* a merciful God), He will not forsake you nor destroy you, nor forget the covenant of your fathers which He swore to them."

- Seek the LORD always in your life because he is truly merciful to you when you sin just as he told the Israelites. When you sin and fall short of his glory, the obedience you owe to him, repent and continue to seek the LORD! Live a repentant, obedient, grateful existence!

III. **Remember: To Keep the Lord your God First in your Lives:**

Deuteronomy 4:24: For the LORD thy God *is* a consuming fire, *even* a jealous God.

Deuteronomy 4:35-40: "To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD Himself *is* God; *there is none other besides Him.* 36 "Out of heaven He let you hear His voice, that He might instruct you; on earth He showed you His great fire, and you heard His words out of the midst of the fire. 37 "And because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them; and He brought you out of Egypt with His Presence, with His mighty power, 38 "driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in, to give you their land *as* an inheritance, as *it is* this day. 39 "Therefore know this day, and consider *it in your heart*, that the LORD Himself *is* God in heaven above and on the earth beneath; *there is no other.*"

(a) **V. 24: The LORD is a Jealous God:**

- Jealousy seems to be a rather strange attribute for a Holy and Perfect God, but it is not. It is a perfect jealousy, a jealousy of love for his people. God knows that his commandments are right and just and when disobeyed will lead to the people's disaster! God is zealous for his Truth, he is jealous when his creatures do not lovingly commit themselves to him as they should!
- In other words, there is no *tolerance* to God's commands, God's truth and other so-called truths that are competing for acceptance! This is a biblical and good way of *intolerance*. God does not tolerate his truth to be challenged!

(b) **Verses 35, 39: The LORD is God, besides him there is no other!**

In other words, there is no *pluralism*, only God and His Truth exist! No matter what anyone else tells you, God has revealed himself to us and has revealed his will to us for us to obey! There are not many *truths*, but only God's truth!

(c) Verses 39, 40: Long and prosperous life lived in obedience to your Creator's commands!

These are the benefits of an obedient life to God! Also, in Ecclesiastes, the book about the "real world" it sums up all of life:

12:1 Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth, Before the difficult days come, And the years draw near when you say, "I have no pleasure in them" ...13 Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. 14 For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.

Conclusion

Remember Again: "OBEDIENCE TO GOD'S COMMANDMENTS IS THE ONLY TRUE WAY TO FIND REAL PURPOSE, TRUE FULFILLMENT, AND LASTING HAPPINESS!"

- But keeping God's commandments, keeping the idols from our hearts, and keeping the LORD God first is impossible for sinners. It is impossible for us who have sinned and who fall short of God's glory! In fact, the Apostle Paul describes our condition after the fall of Adam into sin, in Romans 3:10-20:

10 As it is written: "There is none righteous, no, not one;
 11 There is none who understands; There is none who seeks after God.
 12 They have all turned aside; They have together become unprofitable; There is none who does good, no, not one."
 13 "Their throat *is* an open tomb; With their tongues they have practiced deceit";
 "The poison of asps *is* under their lips";
 14 "Whose mouth *is* full of cursing and bitterness."
 15 "Their feet *are* swift to shed blood;
 16 Destruction and misery *are* in their ways;
 17 And the way of peace they have not known."
 18 "There is no fear of God before their eyes."

19 Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

20 Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

- Pretty grim reality, huh?! Thus the reason, I suppose, that the “real world” that you are about to enter is such a challenging place to try to exist...but there is great hope! After the Apostle Paul sums up fallen man’s great problem of keeping God’s commandments, killing the idols that all have in the heart, and keeping God first, he gives us wonderful news. Notice in Romans 3:21-26:

21 But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets,

22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference;

23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus,

25 whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed,

26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

- No, God does not just overlook our sins, the times we break his commandments, the idols we have in our hearts, the other things we put first in our lives etc. He does not overlook these realities because he is just and these things must be punished with a holy justice! This is where our hope in Christ is found! A righteousness that we do not have- - an *alien righteousness*- - if you will, is ours by faith in Jesus Christ. He propitiated God’s wrath by taking our punishment upon him on the cross. In doing this he expiated (or took away) our sins and the guilt for our sins. Christ glorifies God in a way we could never do as fallen sinners. In verse 26, we see that Christ glorified God in his righteousness. God was just (toward punishing sin in the body of Jesus), but the Justifier of those who believe in Jesus Christ alone for righteousness! This is what Paul meant earlier in Romans 1: “The Just, or the Justified man shall live by faith!”

SHERMAN, JASON, AND KEVIN:

THE TRUTH IS THAT YOU ARE INDEED “CROSSING OVER” INTO A *BRAVE NEW WORLD*. A WORLD THAT IS SO PREOCCUPIED WITH ENTERTAINMENT AND SEEKING PLEASURE, IT HAS NOT LOOKED UP LONG ENOUGH TO NOTICE THINGS HAVE CHANGED. THERE IS NO ABSOLUTE TRUTH; TRUTH

IS RELATIVE. THE ONLY ABSOLUTE IS THAT THERE IS NO ABSOLUTES. THE ONLY VIRTUE, THE ONLY THING THAT IS NOT TOLERATED IN A TOLERANT SOCIETY IS INTOLERANCE.

NEVERTHELESS, GOD IS SOVEREIGN OVER HISTORY. THEREFORE: GO TODAY IN THE POWER OF THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF CHRIST! CROSS OVER INTO THE REAL WORLD, INTO A WORLD THAT BECAUSE OF GOD'S BLESSINGS AND YOUR OBEDIENCE WILL BRING YOU A LIFETIME OF PURPOSE, FULFILLMENT, AND HAPPINESS! REMEMBER, OR BETTER: "DON'T FORGET" THE WORDS OF THE LORD YOUR GOD TODAY!

MAY THE LORD OUR GOD BLESS ALL OF YOUR ENDEAVORS! MAY THE LORD BLESS YOU BY DIRECTING YOUR PATH ACCORDING TO HIS WORD.

MEMORIZE THE WISDOM OF PROVERBS 3:3-6:

LET LOVE AND FAITHFULNESS NEVER LEAVE YOU...