

September 7, 2003
AM Service
Patchogue Church of the Nazarene

“Be Holy and Be Happy”
Deut 5:1-29

The word “Deuteronomy” comes from a phrase in Deut. 17:18, which in Hebrew means “copy of this law.” Deuteronomy, it is believed, is written by Moses and in it Moses repeats the law and re-records the incidents leading up to and following the giving of the law. (Recently in the news a judge in Alabama was forced to remove a monument of the Ten Commandments from his courthouse. Many drove from miles around to protest the removal of the monument. I wondered how many fighting for the monument to stay could recite the Ten Commandments. Could we? More important than knowing them, of course, is keeping them, but we have to know them to keep them.) I thought it would be good to read or review the law known as the Ten Commandments.

5:1 Moses summoned all Israel and said:

Hear, O Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them. 2 The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. 3 It was not with our fathers that the LORD made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today. 4 The LORD spoke to you face to face out of the fire on the mountain. 5 (At that time I stood between the LORD and you to declare to you the word of the LORD, because you were afraid of the fire and did not go up the mountain.) And he said:

6 "I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery.

7 "You shall have no other gods before me.

8 "You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. 9 You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, 10 but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments.

11 "You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

12 "Observe the Sabbath day by keeping it holy, as the LORD your God has commanded you. 13 Six days you shall labor and do all your work, 14 but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your ox, your donkey or any of your animals, nor the alien within your gates, so that your manservant and maidservant may rest, as you do. 15 Remember that you were slaves in Egypt and that the LORD your God brought you out of there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore the LORD your God has commanded you to observe the Sabbath day.

16 "Honor your father and your mother, as the LORD your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well with you in the land the LORD your God is giving you.

17 "You shall not murder.

18 "You shall not commit adultery.

19 "You shall not steal.

20 "You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

21 "You shall not covet your neighbor's wife. You shall not set your desire on your neighbor's house or land, his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor."

22 These are the commandments the LORD proclaimed in a loud voice to your whole assembly there on the mountain from out of the fire, the cloud and the deep darkness; and he added nothing more. Then he wrote them on two stone tablets and gave them to me.

23 When you heard the voice out of the darkness, while the mountain was ablaze with fire, all the leading men of your tribes and your elders came to me. 24 And you said, "The LORD our God has shown us his glory and his majesty, and we have heard his voice from the fire. Today we have seen that a man can live even if God speaks with him. 25 But now, why should we die? This great fire will consume us, and we will die if we hear the voice of the LORD our God any longer. 26 For what mortal man has ever heard the voice of the living God speaking out of fire, as we have, and survived? 27 Go near and listen to all that the LORD our God says. Then tell us whatever the LORD our God tells you. We will listen and obey."

28 The LORD heard you when you spoke to me and the LORD said to me, "I have heard what this people said to you. Everything they said was good. **29 Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!**

The people of Israel heard the voice of God speaking from out of the darkness, while the mountain was ablaze with fire, out of the fire, cloud and deep darkness they heard God speak. (Talk about "shock and awe!") It was so powerful, awesome, so shocking that they wondered how they were able to survive it (they knew it was only because of the goodness of God that He would let them hear His voice and let them bear it). But they were afraid that if they heard it again they would certainly not survive, instead it would be fatal. So they asked Moses to act like Jesus, to be a mediator between God and man. Yet, only Jesus would make it possible for us to come boldly before God's throne of Grace. So, they said to Moses, "from now on you (v27) Go near and listen to all that the LORD our God says. Then tell us whatever the LORD our God tells you. We will listen and obey." God revealed Himself in such a powerful way that they turned their hearts toward Him.

When the Lord heard that and knew that it was said with sincere hearts - for God knows our heart – The Lord God was very pleased. Then the Lord says (v29) ***"Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!"***

Listen to the depth of God's desire that our hearts would be inclined toward Him always - at all times for our good because He loves us and wants to be gracious to us. Why does something dramatic have to happen for us to turn to God? A phrase often used in the OT, "Fear of God" is equivalent to the phrase, "true religion" – it means that one's devotion is

real. “Fear” in this sense means a reverent trust in God that includes commitment to His revealed will (word). So the Lord is saying, “Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to a reverent trust in Me that they would be committed to My will and commands to obey them always.” A reverent trust in God that includes commitment to His revealed will (word, commands). This is a deep desire of God for us – for our attitude toward Him to be that we would have such a reverent trust and confidence in Him that we would be committed to whatever He wills. We have had moments when we were under conviction, we were broken, humbled and our hearts were turned toward God (e.g. as a result of 9/11 – 2nd anniversary coming up this Thursday). Why do we need shock and awe to turn to God? Oh, that our hearts would always be inclined toward God, committed to His will. But in a world of pain and uncertainty it is not always easy to develop that confidence in God. We make two mistakes in trying to find God. We either don’t realistically face our problems reducing our pursuit of God to a set of organized activities or, our second mistake; we face them too much, we are too absorbed in our problems.

We will only find God by developing a confidence in His character that will not demand proof of His goodness. Instead will choose to believe God is good no matter what happens to us. God waits to be gracious to us. His mercy, grace and love invites us to repentance. Repentance is always the way back to God.

And why does God desire for us to trust Him and His goodness, to give reverence to Him and be committed to obey Him no matter what? So that it might go well with us (end of v29) ***“so that it might go well with them and their children forever!”*** By “go well” is meant that they would have happiness, joy contentment, find favor from God and be glad.

In America we are free to pursue happiness. It is one of our rights. But do we know what will bring us happiness? It seems to me the things people pursue in their ultimate pursuit of happiness at best only make them happy for a relatively short period of time. God says here that holiness brings happiness. A reverent trust in God that includes commitment to His revealed will (word) brings happiness.

But just knowing what God wants – knowing the law doesn’t help us keep it (necessarily). We may want to but our own will power will last just so long then one day temptation comes along and we fail. The law lets us know we failed by letting us know what things are against God’s will but knowing doesn’t empower us.

So if knowing the laws is not the answer to be holy so that our hearts are incline toward God continually...what is?

Rom 8:3-17

3 For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, 4 in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit.

5 Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. 6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; 7 the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. 8 Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

9 You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. 10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. 11 And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.

12 Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation-but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, 14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children.

We must turn to Jesus and yield our self and our will to Him.
Through Jesus the desire of the Father is realized:

“Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!”