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“Holy Motivations for Loving God in Every Way”

Deuteronomy 11

Series: *Loving God in Every Way*

Introduction: Take your Bibles and join me in Deuteronomy 11. When I was in college our soccer team traveled one weekend to the Atlanta area for a couple of matches. A group of my friends decided to stay at one of our friend’s houses who happened to be from that area and after church on Sunday morning we decided to head to downtown Atlanta and go to a Falcons vs. Vikings game. As spontaneous college students we of course did not have tickets so we were planning to buy some off the street. As we stopped to buy tickets one of my friends left his truck running as all three of them got out to talk to the ticket scalper. Within seconds, some dude was in that truck and was halfway down the street before we knew what was happening. Of all the surprising things that happen when your friend’s truck is stolen, the one that surprised me the most was how slow the Atlanta PD was to respond. To some kid from Podunk Ville MN, this was a big deal. But to them, this was old hat.

So, I can understand why a Baltimore mother called the cops in 2016 and told them that someone stole her car and that her little boy was still in the car. The police responded with a 2 hour search using all means necessary, including a helicopter to try to find the missing boy and the stolen car. But after 2 hours of searching they learned that the boy was actually safe and sound at his day care. The mother had fabricated that part of the story because she wanted to motivate the Baltimore PD to vigorously search for her stolen car. Now she had a stolen car and a criminal charge of making a false statement to police!

Surely you know the need to find something to motivate someone else to act. And sometimes this desire is pushed forward by an especially critical moment. That is where Moses finds himself in chapter 11. He has been rehearsing the core truth that there is no other God but their God. And he has been telling the children of Israel that their main responsibility is to love this unique and only God by serving and obeying Him in every way with everything they are and have. And he has been warning them that they will be prone to get into the Promised Land and forget all that God is and all that God has done. And so, in chapter 11, Moses lays before them 4 truths which should motivate them to this loving obedience of the Lord their God. Moses doesn’t sink to using underhanded methods to motivate their response, but rather, he points their attention to the character and actions of God to show them why they should love and obey God. Rather than read the whole chapter at once, I want to take one section at a time. Let’s start reading in verse 1 and we will read down through verse 7.

The text starts with a summary call to loving the Lord your God. This is a conclusion from the last chapter where they were called to love God comprehensively and submissively and exclusively. But verse 1 is also the introduction to chapter 12. This command to love God is kept by obedience to God, and that is what Moses is calling them to in the rest of the chapter – to loving obedience. This loving obedience will be moved along in the whole chapter by that key

verb – “keep.” So, in verse 1 they are to love God and keep his charge, his statutes, his rules, and his commandments always. In verse 8 they are to keep the whole commandment. In verse 16 they are to keep their hearts, or to watch carefully over their hearts, so that they are not deceived to worship other gods. In verse 22 the word is repeated twice in the Hebrew to make sure they get the message. They are to surely keep the commandment of the Lord. And then in verse 32 the word appears again when he closes this part of his sermon by saying – you shall be careful to do all the statutes and the rules that I am setting before you today. In other words, their obedience to the Lord is to be an expression of their love for the Lord, and this is going to look like a careful keeping of God’s Word. Like rebar in concrete, these commands to keep are the supports upon which the rest of the truths will rest. So, if Moses were building a house this idea of loving God in every way is the footer for the foundation, and the foundation is this idea of keeping the commands of God, and now he is going to build the four walls of holy motivation for this loving obedience.

I. **God Powerfully Disciplines the Rebellious – vs. 1-7**

- a. The first motivation is found in the truth that God powerfully disciplines the rebellious. That is what Moses rehearses for them in verses 2-6. He tells them that they have themselves personally seen the powerful discipline of the Lord. And he tells them in verse 2 to consider this discipline – to think about it and know it. Don’t just know the facts, but know what the significance of this discipline is for you. Study it and think about what truth it shows which should compel your own obedience.
- b. He gives them 2 specific situations where God’s powerful discipline was shown – where they themselves saw it with their own eyes. The discipline of Pharaoh and the discipline of Dathan and Abiram. These are the only two instances in the Scriptures where we are told that the earth swallowed alive groups of people out of judgment upon them. In both of these situations the issue was the clear word of the Lord which was being rebelliously ignored. This brought swift and mighty discipline from the Lord.
- c. In Pharaoh’s case the Lord had performed signs and deeds through the miraculous 10 plagues, and yet Pharaoh still thought he could overthrow the word of the Lord. He chased the people into the wilderness and even followed them into the parted Red Sea. At the command of the Lord, you remember how it went, the waters came back into their place and all of Pharaoh’s army was lost. Moses says that this is true to this day – some 40 years after that event. Indeed, a whole generation of soldiers and horses could not have been easily replaced and the army of Egypt was still in shambles. Notice also how verses 3 and 4 make it clear that this was happening in all of the land of Egypt, with the plagues, and then he goes on to list that the army was lost – the horses and their chariots – the whole thing. It was a total destruction under the mighty hand of the Lord. It was complete destruction that has lasted to this day.
- d. Then in verse 5 Moses transitions to something closer to home – the discipline the Lord has brought to them while they have wandered in the wilderness. There are many examples Moses could give, but he chooses the situation with Dathan

and Abiram from Numbers 16. You will remember that they were cohorts with Korah and his rebellion against the leadership of Moses and Aaron. Korah was a priest of the family of Levi, and therefore he was related to Aaron and Moses, but Dathan and Abiram were sons of Reuben. And the whole of the rebellion was spurred along by these men's unwillingness to submit to Moses and Aaron any longer. It was a coup de tat and they wanted to be in charge. Moses called them to appear before him so that the Lord could settle this matter between them, but they wouldn't come to the tent of meeting. So, God told Moses to go there and to tell all the people around them to get away from them because God was about to judge them. And then the earth opened up and swallowed them, and as verse 6 says – their households, their tents, and every living thing that followed them. Again, this mighty discipline of the Lord is full throttle – nothing was left out and nothing was missed.

- e. So, even if you are the king of the mightiest nation on the planet, you will not escape the mighty discipline of the Lord, if he so chooses to bring it upon you. If you are from a family of great servants of the Lord, you will not escape the mighty discipline of the Lord. If you are influential in the community and can convince others that you are a much better leader than the one's who are currently leading, you will not escape the mighty discipline of the Lord. Nothing will protect you. If you be so bold as to utterly rebel against the clear Word of the Lord, then you must know that you are putting yourself in the seat of the scorner who welcomes this Almighty God to deal swiftly and utterly with you.
- f. Will that look like the Earth opening up and swallowing you and all that you own whole? Probably not! In fact, that has only happened twice. And that happened at this critical moment in the history of God's people where he was working this mighty work of taking them from Egypt and making them his own people in their own land. This unique period called for unique intervention when sin was so obviously a threat to God's people and God's plan. Do you remember what happened in Acts 5 as the Church is just getting started? Ananias and Sapphira are judged suddenly and swiftly by the Lord because they lied about how much money they sold their property for. This lying to God at this critical juncture of the beginnings of the church brought from God His swift judgment. But honestly, this is not his normal way. And that is not some secret you aren't supposed to know. If you read your Bible you'll come to that truth. Just think about the Israelites after they got in the Promised Land. Their track record was not one of stellar faithfulness. They had seasons of that, but mostly, they were disobedient and rebellious. And yet, God did not take them fully into exile until some 700 years later. That's a lot of patient mercy from the Lord. And just think of how this happened in the Early Church as well. Sure, there were other moments of God's swift discipline, but after Ananias and Sapphira, what we read mostly is of God's patient mercy as He slowly disciplines His people. Truly He is slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.
- g. So, why does Moses call the people to consider these extreme examples of God's mighty discipline when in reality this is probably not how God is going to act

towards them? Well, in part, it must be to remind them that God's patient mercy is not because he is okay with rebellion. He may not send lightning from Heaven to destroy after every sin, but that doesn't mean he doesn't care. As he has clearly shown with Pharaoh and with Dathan and Abiram, He will punish sin with His Almighty judgment. Therefore, why would you put this God to the test? Why would you presume that He doesn't care about your rebellion? Why would you for a moment presume upon His great lovingkindness? Rather, out of loving fear of this merciful God, you should obey His every word!

II. God Providentially Orchestrates Dependence – vs. 8-17

- a. Loving obedience should be motivated by the truth that God powerfully disciplines the rebellious. And then in verses 8-17 we learn that this loving obedience should also be motivated by the truth that God providentially orchestrates dependence. Let's read, starting in verse 8.
- b. If God's people disobey Him they will be weakened through His discipline. But if they obey, then they will be strengthened, and they will enter into the land of Promise. And what Moses does in these verses is remind them of how unique this land is. He tells them in verse 9 that it is specifically promised to their fathers and therefore to them. He tells them that it is a land of abundant provision at the end of verse 9. He tells them it is a land watered by God and not by man in verses 10-11. And he tells them that it is a land which God constantly has his eye on in verse 12. It is a land he uniquely cares about. And then in verses 13-17 he tells them that it is a land which is providentially designed to motivate their obedience. They couldn't irrigate this land if they wanted to. It was a land fully dependent upon God's good pleasure and providential working. And it was a good land which was always under God's watchful eye.
- c. That idea in verse 12 that God always has his eyes upon this land is in direct contrast to the gods worshiped by the nations they are going in to dispossess. The gods of the Canaanites took time off from the land. They were the gods of fertility and the rhythm in the land of rainy seasons and seasons of drought were perceived by their worshipers as being when the gods, like Baal, would descend into the netherworld. While they were away from their land the people were left in the hands of the gods of death and drought. But this is never true of God. He never leaves us nor forsakes us. He never is away on a trip or asleep or in the bathroom or just taking a 5 minute break. He is never not on His sovereign throne controlling and overseeing all things. And so, when they enter into this land where there is the rhythm of rain and drought, they must know that this is designed by God to orchestrate their dependent faith upon Him. If they will lovingly obey then he will continue to lovingly provide. But if they forget Him and they turn from Him, then their false worship will be fatal. The clouds above will become bronze and the ground beneath them will become iron, and they will perish from off the land.
- d. So, in light of this, the strong negative command in verse 16 is to take care, or to keep careful and close watch, over their heart so that they are not deceived. To be deceived here is literally to open up your heart and become open to other gods.

This open-mindedness to other gods as providentially in control of the circumstances of life leads us then to turn aside from what is true and ultimately to serve and worship other gods. This could happen to them in the times of prosperity in the land where they could be tempted by their comfort to be open-minded and less vigilant. They could be lured away by their prosperity to serve and worship other gods.

- e. But this could also happen to them in times of adversity and lack of provision. When they are waiting for the rains to come and their crops are entirely dependent upon that rain, rather than trusting the one true God, they might be tempted to look for another solution that is better in our control. Something like the worship of Baal where we can supposedly do some religious ritual and beckon the kind provision of this false god.
- f. And this is how it works so often for us as well. We don't live in a land like Israel, but we do live in a world in which the providential control of God orchestrates our lives in such a way that we are provoked to dependence. Either dependent faith upon Him, or some other crutch of dependence in some other god.
- g. Under the reign of Queen Mary I of England, also known as bloody Mary, many Protestants were put to death because they refused to declare allegiance to the Roman Catholic Church. Bernard Gilpin was one of those ornery Protestants who refused to deny the truths of the reformation simply to save his life. The bishop of London secured a royal warrant for his arrest, which meant his soon martyrdom. After he was apprehended they set out for London where he expected to be burned at the stake. But along the way he broke his leg, which unavoidably detained him for some time on the journey. Those who were supposed to deliver Gilpin to the authorities in London threw one of Gilpin's frequent sayings back in his face at this moment – "that nothing happens to us but what is intended for our good." And how exactly good a broken leg be good? When they asked him if he thought this broken leg counted as something intended for his good, he simply said that he had no doubt of it. And before he was able to travel again, he was proved right. Queen Mary died and he was set free.¹
- h. God so ordained Gilpin's circumstances as to provoke dependent trust upon Him alone. Gilpin had no other answers, no other way out, no other god to turn to. He was careful to guard his heart and he was not deceived by his circumstances to seek to manipulate them to suit his desires. Rather, he obeyed and he trusted. And in doing both he was blessed by his merciful Lord. That's what is happening in your life right now brother or sister. The God of Heaven has his eye on you and is uniquely orchestrating the rains and the droughts of your life to orchestrate loving trust and obedience from your heart. As he orchestrates your dependence, you must take care lest your heart be deceived and you turn aside and serve and worship other gods.

III. God Plainly Communicates Expectations – vs. 18-21

¹ Ron Prorise, *Preaching Illustrations from Church History*, pg. 97.

- a. The third truth about God which motivates our loving obedience is found in verses 18-21, and that is that God plainly communicates expectations. Let's read those verses.
- b. This is an almost verbatim repetition of what he told them back in chapter 6. They are to take this law from the Lord and they are to inundate their lives with this law and they are to teach this law to their children every opportunity they get so that neither they nor their children will forget God. They are to make this word from God public and not private. They are to have it ingrained upon their heart and soul in verse 18, but that is not enough. That ingrain and internalizing of the Word must come out of them. And it must dominate their every sphere of life as they seek to love the Lord their God with all their heart with all their soul and with all their might.
- c. If these expectations for how they are to live are internal and external and such a part of their life, then they must also pass them onto the next generation. They are to teach them diligently to their children. Notice that the parents are to teach the children God's expectations in verse 19, but Moses is commanding them about these expectations in verse 22. There is a difference of role here between the leader of the nation and the parents of the next generation. Teaching requires the skill of personally living out what is commanded and helping the next generation to do the same. The parents are so uniquely positioned for this role of teaching because their children live with them and see all of life happen right before their eyes. Therefore they can truly communicate their love for the Lord by talking of God's truth every chance they get. And if they do this, and their children love God in the same way and this passes on from generation to generation, then they will have multiplied days and will live long in the Promised Land. Notice that at the end of verse 21 this land is promised to Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob for as long as the heavens are above the earth. And that is not a current political statement about the current nation of Israel, though it could be. Rather, it is a statement about God's unending and irrevocable promise to His chosen people. There is yet a future for the nation of Israel in their own land, and we know from the New Testament that this will look like their Messiah ruling over them in their land for 1000 years.
- d. But the point of our text as a whole is to show them that God has given them clear expectations. He has delivered it once to them, and now through Moses He is giving it to them again. And they are to take these expectations for how they should live and they are to walk in all those ways. And this should motivate their loving obedience because they are not serving a God who changes the rules mid-game or who forgets his covenant promises mid-life. He has clearly communicated and this will not change for them. They can simply commit themselves to all that God has said and they can walk in loving obedience and they have the promise of God's blessing upon them in the land.
- e. And the same is true for us as New Testament believers. God has clearly communicated with us how He would have us to live as those redeemed by the blood of His Son. He has told us what it means to walk worthy of our calling in

the Lord Jesus Christ. He has made known to us the way we should go, and He has told us to commit ourselves to His Word and His Way. This is like the Romans 12:1-2 text of the Old Testament. Paul says there, “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. ² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”

- f. God has clearly communicated and we have this word with us and the promise of good if we will lovingly obey. This should compel us.

IV. God Profoundly Guarantees Success – vs. 22-32

- a. And that leads to the last truth found in the last 10 verses – that God profoundly guarantees success. Let’s read starting in verse 22.
- b. Take notice of the profound promise of God here. Though they are weaker and smaller than the nations who are already in the Promised Land, God guarantees their complete and total victory. He even gives them the geographic markers of the land they will possess if they simply take God at His Word and hold fast to him. Moses also tells them that there is a blessing and a curse being laid on them as they enter into the Land. It is a blessing and a curse being put on them on that day, and it is one they will rehearse again when they get into the land.
- c. This is a statement of transition here for Moses. In chapters 12-26 he is going to shift into walking through many of the specifics of the Law of God they are to keep. And then in chapter 27 he will state again that this law brings with it a blessing and a curse. One which they must rehearse when they get into the Land and one which is on them on that very day. And then in chapters 27-28 he will detail this blessing and this curse which stands over them as they enter the Promised Land. So, we will spend a lot more time talking about this when we get there, but for now, just notice the profound, complete, and utter success that is guaranteed by their gracious God if they will simply hear and heed His Word. If they will commit themselves to loving obedience, they will know the greatest of success in the Land. But if they refuse and rebel, if they forget and forsake, then they will know the severe discipline of the Lord.
- d. Friend, this promised blessing and cursing foreshadows Jesus Christ. God is serious about sin and serious about blessing those who have faith in Him. And this blessing is only possible because of the Jesus who gave himself as a sacrifice under the cursing of the Law we all deserve. The only path you have to eternal blessing rather than to eternal cursing is through Jesus Christ – his life, his death, his burial, and his resurrection. The only way you can be led from the wilderness of sinful rebellion into the Promised Land of blessing is if you are in Christ by grace through faith. And if you are in Christ, then you are indeed blessed with all spiritual blessing in heavenly places.
- e. And if this is true in you, then you should all the more be compelled to this loving obedience to your Heavenly Father. He who did not spare his own son, will he not with him also give us all good things? May we walk by faith in Him.

Conclusion: Will you today walk in God's truth no matter the cost. The reformer Martin Luther was pursued by an envoy sent by the Pope. They threatened him with what would follow if Martin persisted in his course. They warned Luther that in the end he would be deserted by all his supporters. "Where will you be then?" demanded the envoy. "Then as now," Luther responded, "in the hands of God."² Beloved, will you walk into this week with that kind of unremitting confidence in the Lord your God? Let's pray!

² Ajith Fernando, *Deuteronomy*; Preach the Word Commentary Series, pg. 361.