

"Walk With God to Enjoy Life"

Deuteronomy 5

One of the big dilemmas many of us have faced, when we heard and understood the gospel before we got saved or you were a teenager or off to college/university and were questioning your faith, is if I give my life to Christ do I have to give up enjoyment? Am I saying goodbye to all those fun activities that my unsaved friends are doing? Which, as we've gotten older we've realized weren't as fun as we thought, and some of them were dangerous and eventually led people down paths of self-destruction.

But it is a legitimate question: if we give our lives for Jesus, if we seek to walk with God faithfully, will we enjoy life? And the answer of course is yes. And we see that answer all over the Bible, but it may surprise you that one of the passages we see that clearly is in the Ten Commandments. That's where we're going this morning, to Deuteronomy 5, the second time the Ten Commandments were given. In Deuteronomy, Moses is speaking to grandparents who have been around for almost 40 years, the adults who were just kids when they came out of Egypt and the children born during the wilderness wanderings. God wants Moses to remind the nation that His laws are still as fresh and relevant more so now than they were when they were first given 39 years or so before.

But aren't the commandments all the 'don't-do-this and don't-do-that', those fun-sucking rules God gives so His people can look grim and glum? No, not at all. Like all of Deuteronomy 5 where we see towards the end the reason God gave Israel all His laws. We're going to work backwards this morning starting with why God gave all His laws and Commandments for His people so that we can better understand God's purposes and God Himself.

As Moses wraps up God's laws, he explains to God's people how following these laws will allow them to enjoy life.

*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!** ³⁰ "Go, tell them to return to their tents. ³¹ But you stay here with me so that I may give you all the commands, decrees and laws you are to teach them to follow in the land I am giving them to possess." ³² So be careful to do what the Lord your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left. ³³ Walk in all the way that the Lord your God has commanded you, **so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.***

When God gave His laws to Israel, which included the 10 commandments, which still apply to God's people today, He shows us that ...

God's Design for Us is to Enjoy Life (5:28-33)

We saw in the garden of Eden right from the start with Adam and Eve, that God enjoyed His relationship with them. He walked in the Garden with them until they sinned and they hid from God. Who still came looking for them yet didn't condemn them but He also didn't let them off. There are

consequences when we disobey God. We lose out on enjoying life when we break God's rules. So then we see here that we will enjoy life as God intends for us to enjoy

By taking His Word to heart (vv.28-29)

When Moses shared these laws on Mt. Sinai, the people all said, *"We will listen and obey"* (v.27). God knew their hearts, and He knows our hearts. We say we want to walk with God and obey His Word but He knows us too well.

²⁹ Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always.

Sounds like God prays for us. Jesus is always interceding for us according to Heb. 7:25. And they are praying that we would have obedient hearts which lives out God's Words and doesn't just pay lip service. Jesus Himself would say to the self-proclaimed gatekeepers of the Law of God,

Matt. 15:7 You hypocrites, rightly- did Isaiah prophesy about you, by saying: ⁸ 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. ⁹ And in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.'"

When David confessed his sin with Bathsheba in Ps. 51 he stated,

¹⁶ You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. ¹⁷ The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise.

God called David a man after His own heart. Why? Because he never sinned? Hardly. But when he did sin and was confronted with it, his heart broke over what he had done and he sought God's heart in forgiveness.

God desired for Israel to have obedient hearts which would result in their enjoying the land He would give them. Later in Deut. 28-29 God will lay out His blessings and curses. He will list all the ways He would bless them in the land by providing for their needs so that, their work would not be as burdensome since the land was getting the rain and sunshine it needed. But if they disobeyed Him, then he would make working the land much less enjoyable and it would produce less meaning less things to enjoy in life, and their families would suffer and everyone would be hurting because their needs weren't being met by God. So they need to take His word to heart, believing it in order to obey God.

And what will help them stay on track with God is

Through committed leaders who trust God (vv.30-31)

God told Moses

³⁰ "Go, tell them to return to their tents. ³¹ But you stay here with me so that I may give you all the commands, decrees and laws you are to teach them to follow in the land I am giving them to possess.

It was Moses' job to listen to God regularly so that he could faithfully teach these things to the people. Moses stayed faithful to God, Joshua stayed faithful to God, listening to God and sharing His truths with His people. But:

Judges 2:8 Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of a hundred and ten. ⁹ And they buried him in the land of his inheritance, at Timnath Heres in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash. ¹⁰ After that whole generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel. ¹¹ Then the Israelites did evil in the eyes of the Lord and served the Baals. ¹² They forsook the Lord, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of Egypt. They followed and worshiped various gods of the peoples around them. They provoked the Lord to anger ¹³ because they forsook him and served Baal and the Ashtoreths.

“Another generation grew up, who knew neither the Lord nor what he had done for Israel.” Why? Because the leaders dropped the baton. They grew careless. They just assumed everyone knew who they were and why there here and who God was. But they didn’t pass truths on. Leaders failed. Parents failed. And then the grandparents wondered why the world was so terrible now. They failed to teach God’s ways and God’s world-view from His Word.

We need to constantly read, listen and be taught the Word of God. Here, of course, but on your own as well. Listen to and read good and godly teachers (dead ones from the past and living ones today) who want to walk with God and want us to walk faithfully with God. Because, we still have a sin nature and we will always face temptations veering us away from the truth. Subtly usually.

³² So be careful to do what the Lord your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left.

³³ Walk in all the way that the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live and prosper and prolong your days in the land that you will possess.

We need to keep listening to and obeying God’s Word

Believing, when tempted that obedience is better (vv.32-33) ...

... than the sinful temptation is on the left side or on the right side of God’s laws. However, I can’t know what’s not according to God’s Word if I’m not clear on what God’s Word says. And when we do know what it says, we have to trust God by faith that obeying His Word is more enjoyable and more beneficial than the sin that so easily entangles us.

Why else should we obey God’s Word in order to enjoy life more?

God’s Word Reveals God’s Character **(5:22-27)**

When God spoke His commandments to the people at Mt. Sinai in a voice loud enough for all to hear Him, it was scary for the people. Which was unfortunate because that is not God’s intention. God revealed Himself to the people in a clear and powerful way so that

They would be awed by His glory and majesty (vv.22-24)

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. To- day we have seen that a man can live even if God speaks with him

God wants us to know Him, that He is everything to us and is completely for us.

Rom. 8:31 What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? ³² He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³³ Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. ³⁴ Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?....

³⁷ No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹ neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

What shall we say in response to this? What's the "this" he just told us? That God uses everything in the believer's life for the good of conforming us to Jesus. But we're not convinced of that sometimes. We know what it says but we're still afraid of God and cry 'Why are you doing this to me God when difficulties arise? We're not different than these Israelites who were awed by God's glory and majesty and marvelled that they were in God's presence and He didn't zap them, but then they wimped out and said in v.25

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."

"Yes, I know what the Word of God says, but ..." They were temporarily in awe of God and then they let fear take over. Like Peter who looked down at the raging waters as he was walking on the water. They just said, 'Isn't this cool, that we can be in God's presence and not die', and then turn around in unbelief and say to Moses, 'We're going to die! We want you to walk close with God for us. We're too afraid to live a life like.'

Fear God AND draw near to Him (vv.25-27)

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."

Did Israel listen and obey God? Not very well. They misinterpreted the knowledge of God's awe and glory as something to be afraid of instead of something to trust. Which is what Moses did back in Ex. 20:18,

¹⁸ When the people saw the thunder and lightning and heard the trumpet and saw the mountain in smoke, they trembled with fear. They stayed at a distance ¹⁹ and said to Moses, "Speak to us yourself and we will listen. But do not have God speak to us or we will die." ²⁰ Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning." ²¹ The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was.

God's awesomeness is for our good and joy. We need to run to Him and not be afraid of Him. C S Lewis grasped this so well when in the Chronicles of Narnia, the 4 Pevensie children heard for

the first time about Aslan the lion who is the true King of Narnia on his way back. Mr. Beaver, when asked if Aslan is safe, replies, "Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good."

God is for us. God wants us to know Him and know who He is and what he is capable of doing, so that we do fear Him and walk in obedience because He is working for our good. Now we can better understand why He gave the Commandments, which ...

God's Laws Promote Mutual Life Enjoyment **(5:1-21)**

When God saved the Israelites out of Egypt, He gave them rules to abide by which will promote an understanding of life and how best to enjoy it. He grounds this in the redemption event (the exodus)

⁶ *"I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. "You shall have no other gods before me.*

Israel left behind a land and a worldview that claimed there are many gods. Man looks around and up and down and when he sees things he cannot control (sun, water, wind) he surmises that there must be something out there that controls these things. And since we're made with a God-consciousness, man acknowledges that there is either a God who controls it all or numerous gods who control various things. The Egyptians formed a false theology based on many gods. They believed that if you wanted good crops you needed to worship the rain god at the right time, the sun god at the right time, and appease the wind god and the river gods and the locust gods so they didn't ruin your crops. God's plagues were judgments on the false gods of the Egyptians to prove there is only one God who oversees and rules everything. So then the first five commandments all have to do with not worshipping other gods who can't provide you with anything! So worship only and listen to the One True God and

You'll enjoy God by faith, believing He provides (vv.1-15)

God can make our life less enjoyable when we disobey Him. But we make our own lives less enjoyable through disobedience and misplaced trust when we lack faith in God. When we don't trust God we worry. We get anxious. We start thinking about solutions outside of faith in God. Doesn't mean we don't make practical decisions but it does mean don't depend on yourself. Because when we depend on ourselves we just committed idolatry by believing we can solve our own problems because we can control our life.

That goes for the Sabbath too. God said rest one day a week. We refuse rest because we think we don't have the time to rest so we have to work in order to provide for our needs. And when we don't rest we get irritable and work too much and spend less time with the family and God, and we don't enjoy life. Funny how we think working harder and longer will make life more enjoyable. Never does. It's almost like God knows something we don't!

And the last 5 commands all have to do with our enjoyment of life by not harming one another.

We'll enjoy community by doing mutual good for one another (vv.16-21)

Good parents watch over us and provide for us. We need to honour them by thanking them and doing the same for them when they can't look after themselves on their own. If I steal from you, you suffer loss and I break the Law. I will suffer the consequences of a guilty conscience and a

dishonest life. If we hurt each other desiring to destroy the person physically or verbally or socially online, we both suffer. We enjoy life less. But when we love, support, give to one another we both enjoy life more. When we do that to the unsaved they enjoy life more and that acts as a witness for us because we are showing them how God changes us and impacts the world for good. But when we covet and steal and speak falsely against each other, we all enjoy life less.

God wants His people to enjoy life by walking with Him in obedience to His Words. *‘Walk entirely in the way the Lord Your God has commanded you.’* How have you veered off God’s path? Is that benefitting you and those around you? Are you miserable, angry or sad because you speak more harmfully to and about others? Do people enjoy being around us because we are trying to do God’s good for them? God rescued us from ourselves by sending Jesus to die for our sins. By faith we now seek to allow Jesus to live through us by conforming more each day to the way he thinks and acts. God’s words can be challenging but they benefit everyone’s good when we obey them.

When we make wise decisions in obedience to God, it will improve our life. While there is no guarantee of how long we’ll live, obeying God’s rules will result in a physically and emotionally happier life, which results in a better quality of life. God is for us not against us. He gave us His Word so we could enjoy life in obedience with him and with each other.

³² *So be careful to do what the Lord your God has commanded you; do not turn aside to the right or to the left.*

³³ *Walk in all the way that the Lord your God has commanded you.*

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If you have any comments or suggestions about this message, please
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