

How God Intends to Bless the World

Deuteronomy 4:1-14

Introduction

Read Deuteronomy 4:1-14

Exposition

God intends to bless the world through His people who are to be...

I. Directed by His Word (Vv. 1-4)

If you notice in verses 1-4, the people are expected “to hear, to listen, to obey” the Word of the Lord through Moses. As a people redeemed by the Lord, as a people set free from slavery in Egypt, as a people who had been chosen by God, the Israelites were to respond to God’s grace toward them with obedience. Obedience was a response to God’s grace as an expression of love. Obedience did not make them God’s people. Instead, obedience was the evidence that they were God’s people.

They were directed by His Word, which they were commanded to not “add to or subtract from.” For, “adding to” or “subtracting from” God’s Word was essentially an act of rebellion against God. Their hope was to be found in God’s Word. They were to be directed by it as they entered the land. To change God’s Word was abandon God’s instruction. Sadly, we see this among many professing Christians in our day. They find things in God’s Word that they do not like so they ignore it or functionally remove it, or they believe that there are things missing in God’s Word so that add to it with their traditions. But they fail to recognize that God’s Word is perfectly suited for their every need already. The tendency among many, maybe even some who are here today is to dilute the medicine of God’s Word because sometimes it has a bitter aftertaste due to our fallen tastebuds. The Word of God, which is intended to heal us, is sweet and nourishing for those who have redeemed tastebuds, but too often, we have spoiled our appetite with fake food-like substances that do not actually make us healthy. God’s people must be direct by His Word!

What happens if God’s people are not direct by His Word, though? We see the result in verses 3-4, where Moses recalls the people’s rebellion at Baal Peor. At Baal Peor, according to Numbers 25:1-9, Israelite men were led astray into sexual immorality and idolatry by Moabite women. Instead of staying true to God’s Word, they were influenced and directed by their surrounding culture, which led them to worship Baal instead of the one True God. What is particularly sad about this event is that it took place a short time after the defeat of Og and Sihon. In other words, the men of Israel were just coming off a victory over their enemies, then they turned away from God. Thus, God brought swift and terrible judgment upon all who had abandoned His Word.

Herein lies a valuable lesson for us this morning, when we are directed by God’s Word as God’s people, we can be sure that we are on the path of life. The Word of God leads to life, not death. As Romans 8:6-8 tells us, “The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. Those who are in the realm of the flesh cannot please God.”

If we would live in a manner that is pleasing to God as His children, then we must be directed by His Word, living according to the Spirit, not carried away by the desires of our flesh, like the Israelite men in Baal Peor.

Those that God uses to bless the world will be those who are directed by His Word!

II. Distinct from the World (Vv. 5-8)

As a result of being directed by God's Word, the people of God will live in a manner that is distinct from the world. This is exceedingly clear in verses 5-8. For, as the people of God observe the Word of God carefully, "this will show their wisdom and understanding to the nations." The apostle Paul prays similarly for the church in the world in Ephesians 3, when he tells the church that it is God's intention that through them "the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus."

You see, the people of God were not supposed to be like the nations. They were called to be different. They were called to live in a such a way that the nations would be provoked to ask, "What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the LORD our God is near us whenever we pray to him?" Yet, many in our day reject the idea that the people of God need to be distinct from the world. In fact, they believe that for the church to reach the world, then the church will have to become like the world. One of the most obvious examples of this related to the matter of sexuality and gender. We see Christians and churches on a regularly basis rejecting what God's word clearly teaches about His intention for sex in the context of a heterosexual, monogamous marriage for a lifetime, because the world find such a belief to be offensive. So, these professing Christians and their churches say, "Well, we must change what we believe. We must add to or subtract from God's word. Otherwise, people will be offended, and we will never reach people. We cannot teach what the Bible teaches about sexuality and gender. No one will ever listen to us if we do that. If we do not become like the world, the world will never listen to us."

Yet, what does God's Word actually teach? It teaches the exact opposite. The Word of God teaches the people of God that is not by becoming like the nations that we win the nations but by being the people that God intends for us to be, namely, a people who are faithful to His Word, despite what it costs us in this world! God's people are called to be different in the world! We are called to be directed by a different set of values because we belong to a different kingdom. Our citizenship is in heaven. We live according to the laws of a different land. We follow a different King. And we recognize that the only way that we will ever actually be a blessing to world is by revealing to the world the wisdom of God by preaching the gospel and following Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.

Will some people in the world reject us? Yes! Of course! The mind set on the flesh is hostile to God. But the hope of the world will not be found in a church or a people who look like the world, but rather, a people who are in the world but not of the world. A people directed by God's Word! Living in obedience to Christ!

III. Dedicated to His Work (Vv. 9-14)

This final point could go in several different directions, but for now, what I want us to see is how God expected one generation of believers to be dedicated to the work of passing on the news of His faithfulness so that a new generation of Israelites might “revere the Lord.” One generation came near the mountain where God delivered the Ten Commandments. They heard the sound. They saw the fire. Now, a new generation that did not hear the sound or see the fire on the mountain was in need of hearing the Words of the Lord to His people. Passing on God’s Word was the work to which the people of God were to be dedicated.

In general sense, this principle applies to our call to be making disciples as followers of Christ. In Matthew 28:18-20, we are commissioned with this specific work. In a more specific sense, though, I believe this passage has great significance for how we think about NextGen ministry here at Copperfield Church. As those who have seen and experienced God’s faithfulness over our years of following Jesus, we have an obligation to pass on what we have received. Older saints, you have an obligation to be investing in the next generation. Younger saints, you have an obligation to be invested in by the older generation while recognizing that you are also tasked with passing on what you receive to others.

The Next Generation at Copperfield Church won’t prosper and flourish as God’s intends without your investment in them. This means your time, your resources, your wisdom, your life.

Will we be dedicated to the work that He has called us to? The work to bless the world as the people of God?

Conclusion

God’s plan for blessing the world comes through a people who trust and obey His word, live distinctly holy lives in the world, and are completely dedicated to His work above all.

Are you participating in God’s plan to bless the world?

Are you a part of the people of God by faith in Christ?