

The Reasons for Obedience *Deuteronomy 5:1-6*

Introduction

If obedience does not save us, why should we obey?

Read Deuteronomy 5:1-6

Background

Deuteronomy 5 marks the beginning of a section that extends to the end of Deuteronomy 11. These chapters that we will study over the next few months are essentially sermons by Moses that consider “the general principles whereby the nation is to be governed, with particular attention given to the developing of the first commandment” of the 10 commandments, which we will begin looking at next week. In this morning’s sermon, we are revisiting some of the verses from last week in order to have a proper vision of why God was summoning His people to obedience.

There are essentially five reasons given in verses 1-6 for obedience....

Exposition

- I. We should obey because of God’s **lordship** (Vss. 1-2)

According to OT scholar, Jack Lundbom, in the ancient near eastern culture, “the lawgiver was the king, as the preamble of the Code of Hammurabi makes clear. In Israel, however, the lawgiver is Yahweh,” the LORD himself.” As we will see later in this message, Moses’ role is not a lawgiver, but as mediator. Moses’ responsibility was to give what he received from the LORD. Thus, the giving of the law from God reveals that He alone is Lord over His people and that His people are to be supremely loyal to Him alone.

On the importance of “hearing the LORD”

John 5:24-25 (“hearing for eternal life”) - The Lordship of Jesus

The aim of God’s law is liberty; true liberty that “preserves the benefits of their liberty” by directing the people away from beliefs and behaviors that lead to the slavery of sin.

- II. We should obey because of God’s **covenant** (Vs. 2)

The Hebrew idiom, literally “cut a covenant,” is apparently derived from a ceremony in which parties to a covenant would cut up an animal to signify their acceptance of a like fate in case they should violate the agreement.¹

The new covenant in Jesus Christ

¹ Jeffrey H. Tigay, *Deuteronomy*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1996), 61.

As we will consider in the next two verses, the particular covenant in view in these verses was made with the nation of Israel. Thus, we might wonder how does this passage have significance for those of us who are gentiles by birth. We covered this about a year ago as we studied that book of Galatians, but to recap briefly, those who trust in Christ are included in the people of God, even Gentiles. This is clear in Galatians and Ephesians, and especially in the language of Romans 9-11, where Paul tells us that Gentiles have been grafted into the tree of the people of God while unbelieving Jews have been cut off for a season until the fulness of the Gentiles come in. Then, the ingathering of the Gentiles to the Messiah will provoke Jews (according to the flesh) to jealousy and they will turn to the Lord in faith and repentance, being grafted back into the people of God.

III. We should obey because of God's nearness (Vss. 3-4)

Admittedly, some readers may be confused by the language of verse 3, which states, "It was not with our ancestors that the LORD made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today." At first glance, it would appear that this verse is saying that the LORD did not make a covenant with the wilderness generation at Mt. Sinai (Mt. Horeb). However, it is best to understand this verse as being an example of "Hebrew relative negation," which means something like, "not only did God make a covenant with the previous generation, but also with us" (See Hosea 6:6 as another example of "relative negation"). The point of such language is to reinforce the intimacy and nearness of God with the current generation of Israelites. The reality of God's actions in the past must not be relegated to the past. They have a present implication.

"Corporate personality" - "The covenant was not made with individuals, but with the nation of Israel."

The language regarding the LORD's "face-to-face" speech is intended to convey the idea that God "spoke to the people in a way which no-one could deny" (Millar, 82).

When we read the Word of God, I believe that Christians can have tend to think in terms of God in the past without much consideration for God in the present. We tend to forget that the God of the book of Deuteronomy and the God of the book of Acts is still God today, and He is near to us. How often are you prone to fear because you believe that God is not near you or concerned with you? Christian, you are much a member of the people of God as the church in Jerusalem or the church in Ephesus. Christian, God is near to you. In fact, you are indwelt the Spirit of God Himself, if you are in Christ. The promises of the New Covenant in Christ are for you.

IV. We should obey because of God's provision (Vs. 5)

The use of Moses as a mediator of the LORD's word to the people of Israel did not make the LORD's speech to them any less direct. When Moses declared the LORD's word to the Israelites, it was as if the LORD himself was speaking face-to-face with the people out of the fire.

The mediatorial work of Christ – 1 Timothy 2:3-7 (“One mediator between God and Man, the man Christ Jesus.”)

V. We should obey because of God’s **salvation** (Vs. 6)

If we approach God’s law without an understanding of God’s salvation, we will misunderstand and misapply God’s law every time.

God highlights His redemption of the people before giving them the law. This is a reminder that grace comes first. Mercy is what makes us His children. But then, as children, we obey as children who honor their great Father who redeemed us from our slavery.

Conclusion

Those who are in relationship with God are also in obligation to God. As the redeemed of the LORD, we are not free to live however we want to live. We do not obey to belong to God. Instead, we obey because we belong to God.

We must be reminded that salvation is not “an unconditional ticket to freedom; it is a ‘a change of masters’.” (Lundbom, 276). As 1 Corinthians 3:32 tells us, “We are not our own. We have been bought with a price.” Romans 6:20-22 declares to us that “we have been freed from sin in order to be enslaved to God.” (See also, Ephesians 6:6; Colossians 3:24; 1 Peter 2:16)

To summarize, all the “reasons” that we have considered this morning ultimately boil down to one reason: **we obey because we belong to God**. He is our new master. Because of the redemption that we possess in Christ, we no longer serve the master of our sin, but the master of our savior.

Christian, are you going to keep living according to the course of this world? Are you going to make the decision this morning to hear and obey the God who saved you by His grace?

To choose to follow Christ is to choose to turn away from sin. There is no following Christ without turning away from sin. We cannot serve two masters. What will the decision be this morning? Will you hear and obey the LORD this morning?

Hebrews 12:18-29