

Living Undistracted in a Distracted World

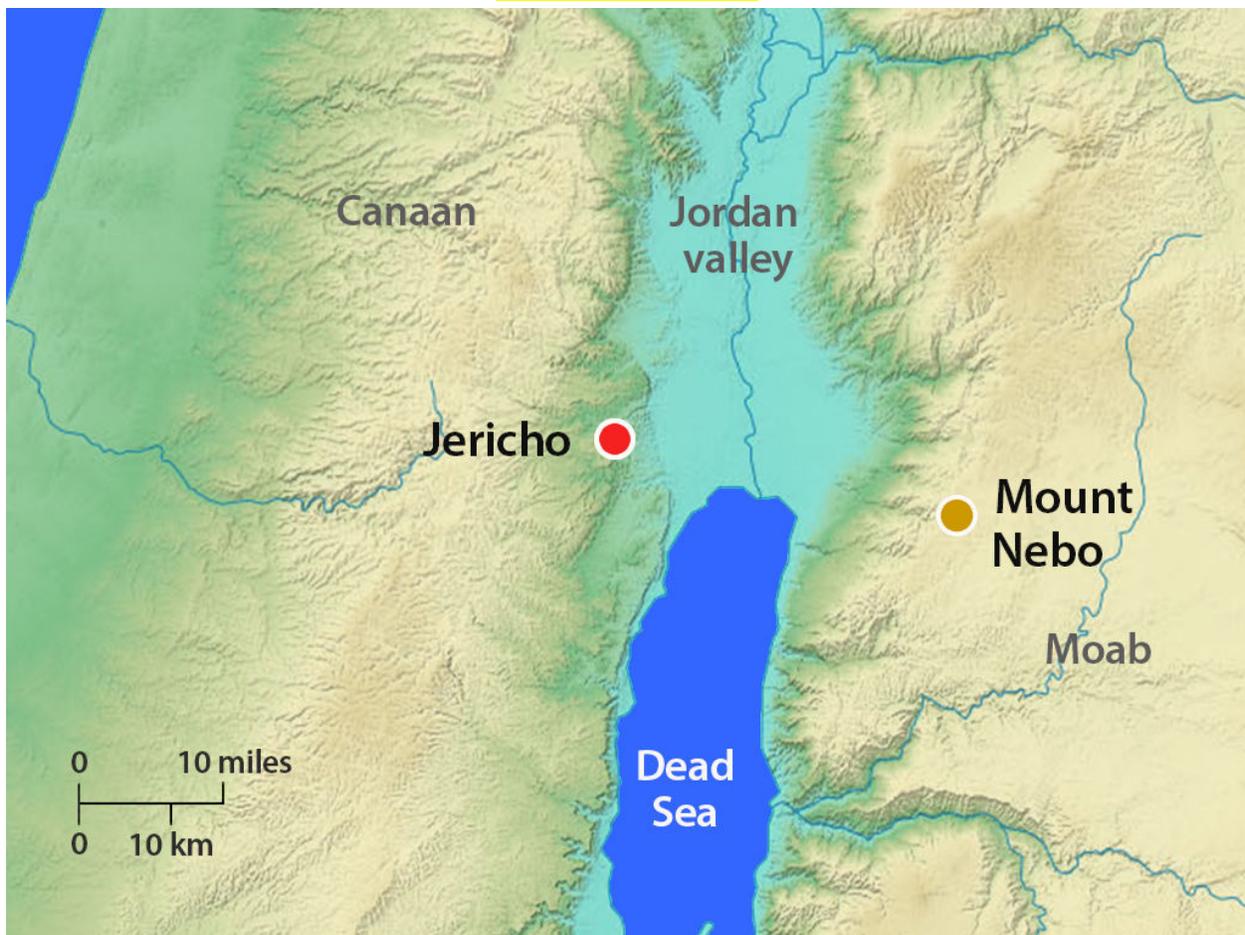
“Cherishing God’s Word”

Introduction: Review—as we turn to the second message in this series

Setting

- Most significant event preceding this book is the Exodus 40 years prior.
- Their unbelief cost them 40 years in the wilderness.
- Now ready to enter Canaan
- Moses last will and testament (plains of Moab)

Mount Nebo



- Their future goal entering the promised land
- When they came out of Egypt they were a people without a land or a constitution (law)
- In the wilderness they received constitution (law) but still no land
- As they stand here with Moses before them, a reminder of the covenant is occurring

At Issue: Distractions

1. A far more complex life (manna, water, no enemies).
2. Idols and varying religious philosophies.
3. Temptation toward greed and earthly possessions.
4. Leadership that had less charisma might make novelty interesting or tempting.
5. Boredom with the routine of settled life.
6. A covetous longing for the things others have. (ILL) Keeping up with the Jones—(ILL) Wanted a king
7. Fear of the unknown.

In this text Moses will underscore one of the great safeguards against these distractions—

The Word—Cherish the Word

"Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I teach you to observe, that you may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord God of your fathers is giving you. 2 You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. Deuteronomy 4:1-2 NKJV

4:1 a

- “Now, O Israel, listen...”
- Hear, O Isarel
- Shema, Yishrael
- Shema—“hear, perceive, diligently obey”

New Testament Parallel—don’t be hearers only—be doers

NOTE: Objective of Moses—that they “do” law, to observe

4:1b—Statutes (hoq)—law scribed by a superior with a sharp object on some material clay or stone.

NOTE: Laws and statutes together were shorthand for entire revelation at Horeb and along the way to Kadesh Barnea.

4:1c

“So that you may live and possess the land.”

But I must die in this land, I must not cross over the Jordan; but you shall cross over and possess that good land. Deuteronomy 4:22 NKJV

- Moses knew he would die without seeing Canaan.
- Obedience to the law was the only way they would see it. His pastoral role is intense.

New Testament truth

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." John 14:21 NKJV

Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. John 14:23 NKJV

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. John 10:10 NKJV

4.2

You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. Deuteronomy 4:2 NKJV

- Word is normative
- Should not be changed
- Common—Ancient Near East—don't tinker with document
- Could be cursed

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; 19 and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book.

Revelation 22:18-19 NKJV

Focus: Moses pastorally concerned that Israel might become distracted in Canaan and miss out on God's blessing. In 4:1-4—cherishing the Word is one of the great keys!

Application: So much we can become distracted by and potentially miss out on God's blessing.

Why is obedience to the Word so crucial?

Scripture Comes in Handy

Michelle attempts to teach her children the "please and thank you" of polite society. She also helps them memorize Scripture. One day, her 4-year-old son, John, was tussling and wrestling with his mom in a good-natured contest. Losing the battle, he wanted to be released. "What's the magic word?" encouraged Michelle, ready to comply with his wish. "Let my people go ... (Exodus 8:1)" came the reply.

I. Obedience to the Word is the key to spiritual life and the possessing of God's promises.

You shall not add to the word which I command you, nor take from it, that you may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you. 3 Your eyes have seen what the Lord did at Baal Peor; for the Lord your God has destroyed from among you all the men who followed Baal of Peor. 4 But you who held fast to the Lord your God are alive today, every one of you. Deuteronomy 4:2-4 NKJV

A. He will re-iterate this at the end of his discourse

"See, I have set before you today life and good, death and evil, 16 in that I command you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments, His statutes, and His judgments, that you may live and multiply; and the Lord your God will bless you in the land which you go to possess. 17 But if your heart turns away so that you do not bear, and are drawn away, and worship other gods and serve them, 18 I announce to you today that you shall surely perish; you shall not prolong your days in the land which you cross over the Jordan to go in and possess. 19 I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live; 20 that you may love the Lord your God, that you may obey His voice, and that you may cling to Him, for He is your life and the length of your days; and that you may dwell in the land which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give them." Deuteronomy 30:15-20 NKJV

B. Failure illustrated powerfully when Israel sinned with Moabite women

Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. 2 They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. 3 So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel. 4 Then the Lord said to Moses, "Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the Lord, out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel." 5 So Moses said to the judges of Israel, "Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor." 6 And indeed, one of the children of Israel came and presented to his brethren a Midianite woman in the sight of Moses and in the sight of all the congregation of the children of Israel, who were weeping at the door of the tabernacle of meeting. 7 Now when Phinehas the son of Eleazar, the son of Aaron the priest, saw it, he rose from among the congregation and took a javelin in his hand; 8 and he went after the man of Israel into the tent and thrust both of them through, the man of Israel, and the woman through her body. So the plague was stopped among the children of Israel. 9 And those who died in the plague were twenty-four thousand. Numbers 25:1-9 NKJV

C. Moses is making the point that Israel's faithfulness will be tested every day in Canaan.

D. Only those who obeyed lived.

IMPORTANT: God's Word is both beautiful and given to us to obey, to abide in.

The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul; The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple; 8 The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes; 9 The fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever; The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, Yea, than much fine gold; Sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb. 11 Moreover by them Your servant is warned, And in keeping them there is great reward. Psalms 19:7-11 NKJV

Your testimonies are wonderful; Therefore my soul keeps them. 130 The entrance of Your words gives light; It gives understanding to the simple. Psalms 119:129-130 NKJV

Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path. Psalms 119:105 NKJV

- Scriptures are not given to us to display in beautifully decorated family Bibles on a coffee table.
- Not to be subject of arguments, debates, creeds, or confessions
- They are given to us to conform us to His will!

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. Romans 12:2 NKJV

- Moses in his farewell address—Hear oh Israel!
- Jesus in His

"If you love Me, keep My commandments. John 14:15 NKJV

If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. John 15:10 NKJV

(ILL) Disciples are hearing the same Word that speaks at Mt. Horeb. Delighting to do His will is the call of the believer!

This world has many distractions

As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, 7 rooted and built up in Him and established in the faith, as you have been taught, abounding in it with thanksgiving. Colossians 2:6-7 NKJV

II. Obedience to the Word is an amazing and grand privilege.

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"Surely I have taught you statutes and judgments, just as the Lord my God commanded me, that you should act according to them in the land which you go to possess. 6 Therefore be careful to observe them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes, and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.' 7 "For what great nation is there that has God so near to it, as the Lord our God is to us, for whatever reason we may call upon Him? 8 And what great nation is there that has such statutes and righteous judgments as are in all this law which I set before you this day? Deuteronomy 4:5-8 NKJV

A. Complying with or obeying the Word is not a burden imposed on us, it is a special privilege that will make us the envy of others.

NOTE: Pictures other nations saying, "Wow! This nation will be great—wise and understanding people!"

B. Context of this text

NOTE: We have taken law and seen it as a noose around one's neck.

NOTE: According to Moses, how nations see Israel.

1. God could have delivered Israel from Egypt and then left them to figure out how to act in gracious response.
2. Without insight into the heart and mind of God, would not have known.
3. Knew His heart and mind gave them the Torah.
4. Other nations could only guess.
 - a. What would please their god.
 - b. What would win their god's good will.
 - c. What would offend their god.
 - d. Whether their assessment is right.

(ILL) *Prayer to Any God*

Their plight is illustrated by an ancient Sumerian prayer preserved in the library of Ashurbanipal (seventh century BC).

May (my) lord's angry heart be reconciled, May the god I do not know be reconciled, May the goddess I do not know be reconciled, May the god, whoever he is be reconciled, May the goddess, whoever she is, be reconciled, May my

(personal) god's heart be reconciled, May my (personal) goddess's heart be reconciled, May (my) god and (my) goddess be reconciled (with me)!

May the god who has turned away from me in anger be reconciled, I do not know what wrong I have done, I do not know what wrong I have done.

I could not eat for myself the bread I found, I could not drink for myself the water I found. I have perpetrated [unwittingly] an abomination to my god, I have unwittingly violated a taboo of my goddess. O (my) lord, many are my wrongs, great my sins, O my god, many are my wrongs, great my sins, O my goddess, many are my wrongs, great my sins, O god, whoever you are, many are my wrongs, great my sins, O goddess, whoever you are, many are my wrongs, great my sins! I do not know what wrong I have done, I do not know what sin I have committed, I do not know what abomination I have perpetrated, I do not know what taboo I have violated! A lord has glowered at me in the anger of his heart, A god has made me face the fury of his heart, A goddess has become enraged at me and turned me into a sick man, A god whoever he is, has excoriated me, A goddess, whoever she is, has laid misery upon me!

When I wept, they would not draw near. When I would make a complaint, not one would listen, I am miserable, blindfolded, I cannot see! Turn towards me, merciful god, as I implore you. I do homage to you, my goddess, as I keep groveling before you,

O god, whoever you are, [turn towards me, I implore you],

O goddess, [whoever you are, turn towards me, I implore you],

O lord, turn towards me, I implore you,

O goddess look upon me, I implore you],

O god [whoever you are, turn towards me, I implore you]!

O goddess, whoever you are turn towards me, I implore you!

How long, O god whosoever you are, until your angry heart is calmed?

How long O goddess, whosoever you are, until your estranged heart is reconciled?

Men are slow-witted and know nothing.

No matter how many names they go by, what do they know? They do not know at all if they are doing good or evil!

O my god, though my wrongs be seven times seven, absolve my wrongs, O my goddess, though my wrongs be seven times seven, absolve my wrongs. Absolve my wrongs, let me sound your praises! As if you were my real mother, let your heart be reconciled, As if you were my real mother, my real father.

C. Before this prayer

1. God's are angry
2. Sin has caused anger
3. Gods must be placated

(ILL) Shipmen/Jonah

- But which god?
- Which sin?
- How can I placate?

D. What a privilege we have the Word

1. We know Him
2. We know His will
3. We know Him to be reconciled

(ILL) Child who has no father—longs to have correction (Hebrews 12)

(ILL) People wandering aimlessly

That's why the Word is so powerful and true!

And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. 2 Peter 1:19 NKJV

III. Obedience to the Word is what mediates the Presence of God.

A. Look again at the end of Moses' speech

"For this commandment which I command you today is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off. 12 It is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' 13 Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, 'Who will go over the sea for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?' 14 But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may do it. Deuteronomy 30:11-14 NKJV

B. Paul will use that in Romans

For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, "The man who does those things shall live by them." 6 But the righteousness of faith speaks in this way, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down from above) 7 or, "'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). 8 But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." Romans 10:5-11 NKJV

C. Most beautiful

And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14 NKJV

D. Further disclosed

And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace. 17 For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. John 1:16-17 NKJV

IMPORTANT: Not contrast between law and grace

2 ways of mediating the grace of God's presence

— For Israel, Torah, the Law

Who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises. Romans 9:4 NKJV

— For us, Word became flesh—Immanuel, God with us

Conclusion: What a privilege! The Word.

- So easy to become distracted today.
- But we cherish His Word
- It gives us life
- It is a great privilege!
- It mediates His presence!

(ILL) John/Jesus/Mary/Elizabeth

Challenge:

- Daily read (even a little)
- Meditate on it

Blessed is the man Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor stands in the path of sinners, Nor sits in the seat of the scornful; 2 But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night. 3 He shall be like a tree Planted by the rivers of water, That brings forth its fruit in its season, Whose leaf also shall not wither; And whatever he does shall prosper. Psalms 1:1-3 NKJV

- Devotional
- Journal
- Bring it to church
- His Word is Magnified

I will worship toward Your holy temple, And praise Your name For Your lovingkindness and Your truth; For You have magnified Your word above all Your name. Psalms 138:2 NKJV

(ILL) Forgotten Data

Tragedy is often like a giant eraser, cleaning our mental tapes of preceding data. Luke tells of two followers walking hurriedly away from Jerusalem, hoping to hit Emmaus by nightfall. Their journey was fueled by the adrenaline that one possesses when life crumbles and survival is the order of the day. They are together, yet alone. We feel the poignancy of their comment when they meet the stranger and tell of their troubles.

"We had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel," they say. ... The stranger--the yet unrecognized Jesus--does not respond by peppering them with homey advice ("It's always darkest before the dawn."); nor does he indulge their self-pity ("Here, here, tell me all about it."). Instead he draws them back to what they know, the Scriptures, and teaches them again the things that drew them to follow him in the first place