

February 16, 2020

PROCLAMATION

DEUTERONOMY 6:1-13

THE PROMISE (DEUT. 6:1-3)

In the context of multiple nations with their own ethics the people of God needed to remain distinct and reflect their devotion to the Lord. This distinction would come by following His statutes and ordinances in the land they were about to enter and possess (Deuteronomy 6:1) so that, as a result, they “*may prosper and multiply greatly*” (Deuteronomy 6:2). This prosperity is described in four ways. *First*, their fear of the Lord would increase as they obeyed Him (Deuteronomy 6:2). They would grow in their reverence and honor of the Lord, keeping His glory and fame at the forefront of all they do. *Second*, they would experience a long (full) life (Deuteronomy 6:2). Obedience would not simply bring about a greater length of days but life that is full of meaning; a life of fulfilling the purposes of the Lord and walking in His joy. *Third*, obedience would bring success. This is what is meant by the phrase “*a land flowing with milk and honey*” (Deuteronomy 6:3). All would go well for them because, in their obedience, God would protect and provide for them at every turn. All that they would ever need God, Himself, would provide. Finally, they would experience phenomenal growth as a people through child birth. This is more than a promise of having children. It is a promise that their seed would also be blessed because of their parents’ obedience. Today, these same blessings are reiterated throughout the New Testament, the only difference is that the blessings are, primarily, spiritual (Ephesians 1:3). As we walk in obedience to the Lord in a land full of many gods, our Lord promises His abiding presence (Matthew 28:20) but also a full life here on earth (Ephesians 6:3).

THE PASSION (DEUT. 6:4-5)

This portion of Deuteronomy is known as the *shema*. The shema represents the core statement of the faith of Israel that was to be repeated, often, as a reminder of their loyalty to the Lord. It begins with the call to *listen* (Deuteronomy 6:4). To listen was to give intense and undistracted consideration to what was about to be said. It was no passive listening being called for, but a listening with a passion to submit and obey. At the heart of the *shema* is this: “*The Lord our God, the Lord is one*” (Deuteronomy 6:4). This monotheistic statement was the essence of Israel’s worship. Unlike the rampant polytheism of the day, Israel was known distinctly as a people who worship one God. This also pointed to the uniqueness and supremacy of the Lord over all other so-called gods. Israel is to worship the one, true and living God and Him alone! Such worship was to be more than ritualistic or a simple formality. Worship was to involve the whole of the passions and desires of Israel – “*with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength*” (Deuteronomy 6:5). In essence they were to worship with their heart (the fullness of their minds), soul (their volition and will) and strength (the intensity and fervor expressed in their actions). Worship is passion. It is whole life passion. The Lord calls for and claims the whole of all who love Him and without such totality our worship fails to exhibit devotion and fidelity. This includes the church today. Jesus quoted this verse in reference to the question of what is the greatest commandment (See Mark 12:28-30). The mark of a true saint is a passion to worship Him truly and completely. While sin limits this possibility, our faith in Christ makes growth in worship possible. As we grow in love and obedience to Christ we will find our affections, mind and lives yielded more and more to the worship of the Lord.

THE PROCLAMATION (DEUT. 6:6-9)

Passion for the Lord curbs the mere formality of worship. The diverse ways in which the people of God can show forth their singular devotion and love to the Lord are enumerated in these verses. First, the laws *“are to be in your heart”* which is a call to memorize the them (Deuteronomy 6:6). Second, *“Repeat them to your children”* (Deuteronomy 6:7). As one sharpens a knife, believers should spiritually sharpen their children by ensuring their knowledge of the Lord and His laws. Third, everyday aspects of life whether it be *“in your house”* or *“along the road”* (Deuteronomy 6:7) – such as when shopping or driving to dance class – the law of the Lord should be central to our conversation. Fourth, the laws should be on their *hand* and their *forehead* (Deuteronomy 6:8) symbolizing that no activity is to be done contrary to the law of God and that they should occupy every aspect of our thinking. Finally, the laws should be written on their *“doorposts”* and on the *“city gates”* (Deuteronomy 6:9). In essence, every aspect of the lives of God’s people, then and now, should be marked by the Word of God.

THE POSSESSION (DEUT. 6:10-13)

The long-awaited promise given to Abraham (Gen. 15:18-21), Isaac (Gen. 26:2-5) and Jacob (Gen. 28:10-17) is now become a reality. All that they have is given to them by the Lord alone and not due to any action on their own. They have been given a land already furnished with everything they need: *large and beautiful cities that you did not build, houses full of every good thing that you did not fill them with, cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive groves that you did not plant”* (Deuteronomy 6:10-11). God gave them the land and every possible means to enjoy the land. Just like salvation! God gives us what we do not deserve and then provides us with every grace to enjoy it (2 Peter 1:3). This prosperity, however, can be difficult, leaving us easily to not be mindful of the One who provided it for us. Moses, therefore, calls the people to *“be careful not to forget the Lord”* who took you from slavery (Deuteronomy 6:12). The antidote to forgetting the Lord is fearing Him and worshipping Him (Deuteronomy 6:13); living in reverence to Him at all times and in allegiance to Him with the totality of our affections. Today, Christians must fight to remember the Lord’s mercies with the many distractions to our affections. Yet, living in a constant gaze of His majesty and glory as well as never forsaking our assembling together with the saints (Hebrews 10:23-25) are disciplines that fight against the sloth, indifference and being unthankful for His gracious ways towards us.