

Words of Life

(January 10, 2007)

You shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, His testimonies, and His statutes which He has commanded you. And you shall do what is right and good in the sight of the LORD, that it may be well with you, and that you may go in and possess the good land of which the LORD swore to your fathers,

Deuteronomy 6:17,18

I used to go to a prayer meeting in which one of the brothers would frequently pray "Lord, there is much land to be possessed, help us go in and possess the land!" It was a wonderful prayer and I have prayed it often. I believe there is "much land to be possessed" in our Christian lives....probably much more than we could ever envision. Sometimes we can suffer from so much spiritual farsightedness we fail to see the land before us. We see heaven in our future and all our hope is there, but we miss the land that God desires us to possess today.

In these verses Moses is giving final instructions to the people prior to their entering the promised land. The passage contains a command followed by two promises. The command was to diligently obey God's commandments. The resultant promises were for protection and possession of the land. In a few chapters God even tells them that their occupation will take place quickly if they only obey (Deut 9:3).

It seems like an easy plan, right? But it really wasn't that easy, because there was going to be a lot of competition for their obedience just as there is a lot of competition for our obedience today. This competition can come in the form of temptations that war against the soul; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes or the pride of life. It can come from discouragement, or tiredness. Sometimes it can come through disillusionment because things didn't work out the way we thought or wanted them to. I believe in the case of the Israelites, they also would have lacked confidence as they looked back at their track record of inconsistency. They would have wondered whether they would really be able to maintain a life of consistent obedience given their inability of the past to do so.

The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.

John 6:63

So the question is “How do we consistently obey in the face of so many opposing forces?” While I believe there are many answers to the question, there is one way the Lord has been teaching me over the past few weeks. It has to do with the “attitude” of our obedience. Psalm 100:2 says that we are to “serve the Lord with gladness.” One of the keys to our ability to consistently obey has to do with our heart of service. When we obey God it should be enthusiastically and wholeheartedly. We should be excited about obeying and obey with the expectation that as we do, God will enable us to possess the land set before us regardless of what the obstacles are. I believe much of our inability to possess the land tied to our lack of enthusiasm.

Here are some suggestions that may help, if you find yourself in a place of being somewhat downcast in your obedience to God.

When you rise in the morning read Lamentations 3:22,23 and believe it! Give all your burdens to the Lord and ask Him to fill you with His joy for one day. Not for every day, but just for that day. Then do it again the next day. Start living for the Lord day by day.

When you begin your day of work, errands, school or whatever your day consists of, aggressively look for ways to express kindness and joy toward others. Go out of your way a little bit to find ways to express love for the people of this world. Make eye contact with others and smile and say “hello”. Hold the door open for others entering the grocery store. Pause a second longer at the stop sign and let the other guy go first. Pick up the McDonalds bag someone threw on the ground in the parking lot and throw it away. Push the target cart back to the collection point instead of leaving it in the planter box.

The list is endless of great ways to serve others. As we do, an amazing thing happens. We begin to be transformed and our heart of service toward God changes. We begin to serve out of love instead of from duty. When that happens, we will have unlocked one of the keys of consistency in our lives because service now becomes a joy, not a responsibility.

Yes, there is much land to be possessed and we will occupy it by enthusiastically keeping His commands. Heaven is in our future, but there is a promised land before us that is the stepping stone to heaven. Let’s occupy the land this side of glory and experience the fullness of God’s blessing now. God bless you in your service to our Great God! Pastor Ted.