The Normal Way – Deuteronomy 6:1-9 March 15, 2009

As you all know we begin our services each week with the Ten Commandments – The First Sunday of the Month we do the whole Ten Commandments. Other Sundays we do just that in capital letters – and to let you know, God did not speak in upper and lower case letters, it is just one of our customs that we have, and then sometimes we just do the summary of the Law.

There is specific purpose in doing the 10 commandments or the Summary of the Law each week because it lets us know that we need a Savior, because none of us can keep the law. Again, it reminds us week after week of why we need Christ, because he kept the whole law for us, as the Scriptures teach.

Some of the complaints for those who don't like liturgies is that it is repetition, but if we look through the scriptures we find that there is much repetition in the form of a teaching method and that is exactly what we see in our Old Testament Lesson from Deuteronomy 6, so please turn with me there.

The people of Israel were about to enter the promised land. Moses, who would not go in with them, is giving them some final instructions about what they were to do and not to do as they entered into the promised land.

Remember, that after the Exodus from Egypt, because of their unbelief, the adult generation that was part of the Exodus would not be able to enter the promised land – in fact they would wander in the wilderness until that generation died off – a period of 40 years.

That is what has happened and now Moses is preparing the next generation to enter into the promised land. The book of Deuteronomy is Moses final instructions to the generation that will enter into the promised land. The name actually means "Second Law" – and what we see is Moses summarizing and expanding what God has already revealed. For example, in Deuteronomy 5 he has restated the 10 commandments, and here in chapter 6 he tells them what they are to do with the commandments of the Lord.

And so I would like to read these words again — Deuteronomy 6:1-9 (READ). What we see here is what we should do, how we are to live our lives and also the way that parents are to instruct their covenant children in the ways of the Lord.

The first thing that I would like to point out is that the teaching that goes on is to be a regular part of life. In other words, it is not just something that we put on for a couple of hours on Sunday.

As we look at our passage we see that Moses summarizes what he has already given to the people and what they are to do with them. He then also attaches a promise to them.

Again, note clearly what he says in verses 6:1-3: "*Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you; 'a land flowing with milk and honey.*"

Notice clearly that the people were to observe the commandments ... that they were to fear the Lord, meaning to worship and honor Him and that they were to keep His statues and commandments.

And the purpose of this is so that their days may be prolonged, that it would be well with them and that they would greatly multiply in the land that God had promised to give them so many years before. In other words, as they obeyed God, they could expect His blessing.

Then in verses 6:4-5, Moses again reminds the people of who God is: "*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.*"

We see two things here. First, in verse 4, we see what is known as the Shema, which is the Hebrew word for "hear" – the first word in this phrase. This phrase, to this day, is a very important confession to those of the Jewish faith because it expresses their monotheistic faith. Remember, that all of the other nations had multiple gods, only the Jews believed in one God. Faithful Jews begin each day by saying the Shema.

The second thing that we see here is the great commandment, something that we are very familiar with. And it is based on the fact that they worship the one true God, and so therefor they are to love Him with all their heart, soul and strength.

Then we see the instructions that Moses gives the people as to what they are to do with all the commandments that God has given them – 6:6-9: "*And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*"

Notice a number of things here. First, they (and us, I might add) need to keep these words in our hearts. We need to remember them. We need to be continually reminded of them. And then note the repetition that is involved – *You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up.* As we do this, then we will keep these words in our hearts.

In other words, God's Law and God's Word is to be a normal part of their lives. As people go about their daily lives they are to live according to God's Word. Again, in other words, it is not just something that we put on for a few hours on Sunday morning. Our actions and our reactions should be controlled by God's Word.

The rest of the words here emphasize the importance of God's Word, and in fact, Jews since the time of Christ had taken these words very literally: *You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*" They have little boxes with the Shema and the Great Commandment that they tie to their arms and foreheads, and the doorposts of their house.

The purpose of this is seen the concluding words of Deuteronomy 6:20-25 (READ). Again, this is brief history of what happened to the Jewish people and the reason that they were to observe and obey the commandments of God. God had done much for them and He did not want them to forget what He had done. So again, the repetition.

Biblical history tells us that the Jews after Joshua did not do this. We know that after the death of Joshua, who was the successor to Moses, the people, as we read often in the book of Judges "*did evil in the sight of the Lord*." They worshiped other gods, they intermarried with pagans and did not obey the commandments of the Lord.

God sent Judges like Gideon, Deborah and Samson. And then later on in Jewish history we know that after Solomon, the kings and the people did evil in the eyes of the Lord. And he again, God judged them as He promised He would. The Temple was destroyed, the nation divided, the people carried into captivity – all part of God's judgment for their unfaithfulness. With the final judgment being the complete destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD for rejecting their Messiah.

What can we learn from all this? First, living according to God's Word and Commandments should be a normal part of our lives. If God says something is wrong, then it is wrong. If God says that we should be doing something, then we should be doing it.

We know that we cannot keep God's Word perfectly – that is why we need Jesus, and that is why we are reminded of this every week. But we should be making every effort to follow God's Word. Now, I am not talking about a list of does and don'ts – but rather a response to what God has done for us. He has saved us through the blood of Jesus Christ. He has forgiven our sins. We have the privilege of worship, of prayer and fellowship with Him.

So, in response, we should strive to do that which is pleasing to Him.

The second thing in all of this is that there is benefit and blessing in following the commandments of God. As we strive to please God in our lives, we can expect His blessing. Again, we won't follow God perfectly, but we see the commandment before us – "*to Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength.*"