

## “Training to Walk in His Ways” (Deuteronomy 8:1-6)

We have been in the series of “The Tree of Life” studying the Pentateuch. Last two times, we looked at Leviticus and Numbers. In Leviticus, we learned about “The New Stage of relationship.” How unholy people can approach the Holy God and have an intimate relationship. Numbers shows us “Wandering in the Wilderness.” The Israelites rebelled against God, but God had mercy and grace on them. So, today, we will look at Deuteronomy, of course. And, the title of today’s message is “Training to Walk in His Ways”.

Deuteronomy is the message Moses preached in the last one month of the forty-year journey in the wilderness. It was just before the Israelites entered the Promised Land, Canaan. Moses was talking to the new generation who were born and raised after they had left Egypt to prepare them for the life in Canaan.

So, Moses starts to talk from the beginning of the journey. God spoke to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai, “Turn and take your journey. Go in and possess the land. (1:7-8)” But they were unwilling to go up and rebelled against the commandment of the Lord (1:26). They complained, “The Lord hates us; so he brought us out of Egypt to deliver us into the hands of the Amorites to destroy us. (1:27)” Wherever they went, they complained and rebelled against the Lord. The Lord said, “They cannot enter the Promised Land” (see Num 14:21-23). As he said, all of them had died in the wilderness (Num 26:64-65).

So now Moses says to the new generation, “You shouldn’t be like them.” “I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded me. Follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it. (4:5 NIV)” “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. (6:5)”

## Training to Walk in His Ways

### Deuteronomy 8:1-6 NRSV

This entire commandment that I command you today you must diligently observe, so that you may live and increase, and go in and occupy the land that the LORD promised on oath to your ancestors. <sup>2</sup> Remember the long way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, in order to humble you, **testing you to know what was in your heart**, whether or not you would keep his commandments. <sup>3</sup> He humbled you by letting you hunger, then by feeding you with manna, with which neither you nor your ancestors were acquainted, in order to **make you understand that one does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.** <sup>4</sup> The clothes on your back did not wear out and your feet did not swell these forty years. <sup>5</sup> Know then in your

heart that as a parent disciplines a child so the LORD your God **disciplines** you.  
<sup>6</sup> Therefore keep the commandments of the LORD your God, by walking in his ways and by fearing him.

The forty years in the wilderness was to test and discipline the Lord's people.

- 1) Test: to know what was in their heart
- 2) Discipline: so that they live by the Word of God

- 1) Test: to know what was in their heart

If their heart will become proud, they will not follow the Word of the Lord. They will just do what they want to do. When they enter the Promised Land, and have plenty and are satisfied, their heart may become proud and will forget the Lord (8:12-14).

They may say to themselves, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me. (8:17)" And they may think, "The Lord has brought us here to take possession of this land because of our righteousness. (9:4)" That is a big mistake.

Moses talks to the new generation that, in fact, you have nothing to be proud of, there is nothing more remarkable about you than other nations. "In fact, you are a stiff-necked people. Remember this and never forget how you provoke the Lord to anger in the desert. (9:6-7)" But it was only because of the Lord's mercy, that you were forgiven. Only because of God's unfailing love and grace, you would be brought into this land (7:7-8).

- 2) Discipline : so that they live by the Word of God

#### Deut 8:5-6

Know then in your heart that as a parent disciplines a child so the LORD your God disciplines you. <sup>6</sup> Therefore keep the commandments of the LORD your God, by walking in his ways and by fearing him.

#### Deut 10:12-13

So now, O Israel, what does the LORD your God require of you? Only to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, <sup>13</sup> and to keep the commandments of the LORD your God and his decrees that I am commanding you today, for your own well-being.

Here, Moses explained the meaning of living by the Word of God. That is to love the Lord, listen to his Word, and serve Him. That is a life as the holy people

of the Lord. And that way of living will be manifested in the righteous actions of love toward others.

God had been training them every day through the forty-year journey in the wilderness. When they crossed the Jordan River and entered Canaan, their journey did not end. They started to practice all the training they had received so far. Through this practice, God trained and prepared them further, and made them grow continually. God continues to train them so that they will live by the Word of God, not just by bread alone. This way of life will not end, but will continue.

What can we learn from here?

We were forgiven for our sins because of the cross of Jesus. We believed in Jesus and we were made children of God. But that is not the end of the story. From now on, we live as children of God. We learn how to live as a person who received the righteousness of God. We get training how to practice righteousness with love. We learn to live as the light of the world and grow in this new way of life. We learn this by training. We get better by making a lot of mistakes. We will continue to grow and become more like Christ. A Christian life is training to walk in His ways.

Our life on the earth should focus on growing into Christlikeness.<sup>1</sup> This is a lifelong process.

But, we face the challenge because this goes against our culture. We are living in the consumer culture. We are in the big waves of consumption, speed, and convenience. I've read somewhere, "Hurry up!" is the common message a child hears from their parent. How often do we think, "When can I get that?" "How can we speed this up?" "How long should I wait?"

Bill Hull says, "Impatience is the most accepted sin in Western culture."<sup>2</sup> We are hurried people.

According to Bill Hull, "The hurried and impatient life is based on pride and a fear of failure."<sup>3</sup> Pride demands success which must be recognized by others. Fear of failure is rooted in our artificial identities. And the unsatisfied soul leads us to a restless life.

We need to train ourselves to walk in His ways. Today, I will talk about three things for our training.

## **(1) To See Us the Righteous**

First, we train to see that in Christ we are given the righteousness of God.

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Andrews, ed., *The Kingdom Life: A Practical Theology of Discipleship and Spiritual Formation*, (Colorado Springs, CO: NavPress, 2010), 84, Kindle.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 104.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 105.

In the OT time and Jesus' time, people offered sacrifices according to the law every year. Why did they do that? Because they knew they sinned. Each time they offered the sacrifices, they remembered they were sinners. It never ends. (See Heb 10:1-4)

The law gives us a guilty feeling and the sense of an incomplete task. The law shows what is right to do. But we must understand that the law is not able to change us, it doesn't have the power to transform us. The law shows you are a sinner. That's all.

So, we are hopeless. But, there is good news. God did an amazing thing for us.

### 2 Corinthians 5:21

God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

At the cross of Jesus, a great exchange took place. Jesus is the true God (1 John 5:20). He has perfect holiness, righteousness and goodness. Of course, he never sins nor disobeys God the Father. He has perfect harmony and love relationship with the Father.

Jesus became the sacrifice for sinners, you and me. It happened on the cross. On the cross, he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? (Matt. 27:46)." Jesus was forsaken by God on our behalf. On the cross, Jesus received all God's wrath. The cost of our sin was paid fully. The demand of the law was satisfied perfectly.

How can it happen to us? Through faith in him, we receive the righteousness of God.

### Romans 3:22

This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference.

When God looks at a man who is in Christ Jesus, God sees the righteousness that Jesus had -- the absolute, perfect and complete righteousness of God Himself. Thereby man is acceptable in God's sight. God does not see him as a sinner but as a 100% righteous man who has fulfilled all of the holy law of God without falling short at any point.

We can stand before God because the price for sin has been fully paid by Jesus. We are seen as innocent and righteous before the throne of God. When God looks at us, God sees the righteousness of His own Son, Jesus Christ.

The cross of Jesus makes us a person who is at the right standing position before God. Our righteousness depends on his cross. We receive righteousness by faith.

## **(2) To Trust Who God Says I Am**

The second training is to Trust Who God Says I Am.

Talking about righteousness, what do you think about people who say, "I'm not like other men – robbers, evildoers, adulterers. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get. Thank you, God. I'm so righteous. (Luke 18:11-12)" "I read the Bible and pray every day. I attend Sunday service every week. I never missed communion. So, God will look at me as righteous." " I stopped watching Occult moves, and I am watching Christian programs. I stopped going to Karaoke, and I am listening to Christian music. So, God should look at me as righteous." What do you think about these people?

Some people think like this, "To believe Jesus is the starting point of the Christian life. After that, whether I achieve righteousness or not, it all depends on my hard work."

Let me share my experience. Once I start to rely on my Christian activities, to maintain my righteousness with God, before long, my quiet time will turn into legalism. When I miss my quiet time, I feel God is not happy with me. The Bible reading, prayer, meditation, serving, there is nothing wrong with them. What is the problem? The problem is my intention: What I set my intention for.

For example, just an example, you lived in a city where the air was super polluted. And, you smoked a lot. A doctor said if you didn't stop smoking ASAP, you would die because of lung problems. But, you didn't follow his word. The condition of your lung became worse and worse. And you were about to die. Suddenly, someone gave you his healthy strong perfect lung. Now you recovered fully and became healthy. Is that the end of your life story? No, no, no. It's the new beginning. The main point is how you would live with the healthy strong perfect lung.

"If you were to die tonight, would you go to heaven?" is not the right question. We should ask, "If you knew you were going to live forever, what kind of person would you like to become?" Because the point is how you would live the eternity.

Here, I want to introduce what I learned from the book, "The Kingdom Life." "Working on My Sin Issues" vs. "Trusting Who God Says I Am"<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 70.

The first one, I set my intention for “Working on My Sin Issues.” I focus on what I do. I deal with my sin. I’m trying not to be angry, lust-filled, or greedy. I’m trying to be more loving, patient, or joyful. For a while, I have a victorious life. But sooner or later, what’ll happen? I’ll find myself committing the same kind of sin again. I’ll try harder, but the result is the same. This approach gives you frustration and discouragement. When your intention is working on your sin issues, you remain in a life of guilt, failure, and hopelessness.

The second one, I set my intention for “Trusting Who God Says I Am.” I focus on what God says about who I am. “We intentionally trust Him for direction to mature into what is already true—that righteous identity, which is our new heart. This is the basis for our becoming like Christ.”<sup>5</sup> This is what Bill Thrall and Bruce McNicol say.

God says, in Christ I’ve given the righteousness of God. So I set my intention on what God says about me and live as who I am, the righteousness of God. I may make mistakes. But I’m still the righteousness of God. I’ll continue to live as the righteousness of God. I need to train myself to trust who God says I am. It doesn’t happen automatically although it’s true to myself.

What is the distinctive ability of humans, compared to other animals? You can make a list of answers. One of the significant human abilities is walking on two legs. I’m speaking in general. In general, humans can walk on two legs. We can not only walk but also run and jump. The world record for the 100-meter race is 9.58 seconds. The marathon world record is 2 hours 1 minute and 39 seconds. The high jump world record is 2.45 meters. And, the world record for the long jump is 8.95 meters. This is amazing!

Could they run so fast from the beginning? Could they jump so high and long from the beginning? The answer is obviously no. Do you know they were born as a baby? They couldn’t walk, they couldn’t even stand up. They had to learn how to stand up, how to walk, how to run, and how to run fast, and faster, and faster, and faster. Can you imagine how many times they fell down? And how many times they made mistakes? But they didn’t give up, because they knew they could stand up, they knew they could walk, they could run, they could jump. So they trained themselves for many many years.

Training is not limited to what they do in the field. They must be careful about what they eat and drink. For top arthritis, every single part of your daily activity is concerned. Because you are a runner whatever you are doing, wherever you are, not just when you are running. They know who they are: they are a runner. They live as a runner always.

Perhaps, they may feel pain sometimes. Maybe, they got injured. They should not ignore them, should not pretend as if they were okay. That’s very

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 70.

dangerous. They should take care of their body well. They should give themselves treatment, rest, healing, and keep on training themselves.

This is exactly the same for our Christian life. Our spiritual journey begins when we accept Jesus into our lives and it continues throughout our lives. We've become the righteousness of God (2 Cor 5:21). We set intention on who we are in Christ, the righteousness of God. We live who we are in Christ, righteous identity. It requires the direct work of the Holy Spirit and the human effort of rearranging our daily practices following Jesus who is righteousness.<sup>6</sup> It's a training process, requiring patience, accepting mistakes and unexpected things, and preparing for the future.<sup>7</sup>

For learning to walk in His ways, or you may call it spiritual disciplines, there are two very important keys. One is to integrate your spiritual life with your ordinary life. The other is to live in grace. And these two are closely connected to each other.

We must live as who we are in Christ always. When we separate our spiritual life from our ordinary life, we have a big problem. We may regularly practice Christian activities such as reading the Bible, prayer, having devotion time, attending church programs, and serving in the church.

But, when you separate your spiritual life and ordinary life, you are only open to God regarding your spiritual life, but not open to Him concerning your ordinary life. Which means, you are working out your sin, character, behavior, habits, relationships as well as your broken-parts by yourself! You are so disappointed each time you see emotional issues such as anger, fear, worry, pride, people-pleasing, etc. still remaining in you.

You must remember you live in grace. Please don't misunderstand this. It doesn't mean your life is like, you are always asking forgiveness and God forgives you. Yes, it's true, but it's not only that.

Grace is "God acting in your life to accomplish what you can't accomplish on your own," as Dallas Willard says.<sup>8</sup>

You must recognize and admit that you cannot change yourself. Your spiritual disciplines cannot change you. But, God can change you!

Discipleship is what we respond to God in our obedience and submission to God as we trust Him. By practicing spiritual disciplines, we become open to God to change us, let him do whatever he will do in us. We stay in his presence and focus on him and tune into him so that God can minister to us. We can do it by the power of the Holy Spirit who lives in us. This is living in grace. It's training of trusting who God says I am.

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 108, 121.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 48.

### **(3) To Live as Righteous by Faith**

The third training is to live as the righteous by faith.

#### Galatians 3:11

Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous will live by faith."

God wants us to live with him. It's his desire to have an intimate relationship with us. But without righteousness, we can't do that, or he can't do that. That's why God paid the cost of our sin. He took the initiative for reconciliation. He took the action, not we, for our salvation. God the Father sent his only Son, Jesus as our Saviour who died on the cross for our sin. Jesus, God himself became human and came to us. He called us back to himself, invited us to his kingdom as his people.

Actually we had no way to come back to him. No way to be forgiven. So Jesus became our salvation because it's his desire to have an intimate relationship with us.

#### John 15:9 (NASB)

Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.

The Father loves Jesus with his perfect love. Jesus loves us in the same way the Father loves him. It's not about the future. It has started already and will never fade away.

And we are told, "Abide in My love." It's not to study about God's love intellectually. It's to stay in his love, to be in his love and receive his love, to keep the love relationship, and experience his love.

When does he love us? Does he say, "After you do this and that, I will love you."? Or, does he say, "If you become a person like this or that, I may love you."? No. He said, "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you." He loves us, you and me even while we were sinners, when we were weak and the enemies of God (Rom. 6:6-10). He always loves us.

The Triune God has perfect unity and love relationship. It is the sovereignty of God. The Church, all assembly of believers, is going to be welcomed into that perfect unity and love relationship for eternity as his bride.

God is love. He is perfect love. Only in the relationship with God, we can experience true love, pure love, experience to be loved unconditionally. As a response to his love, we love him. Then, we will learn to love.

Our life is training to walk in his ways. In human relationships, we experience not only love but also hurt, because all of us are perfectly imperfect. But we continue to have a relationship with others because we know we are loved by God. We know our love is growing. "The righteous will live by faith."

We have faith that God loves you and me perfectly. You and I have the right relationship with him because of Jesus. And, our life is training to walk in his ways, to have a right relationship with each other. We may not see it today, but we will work on it because we believe the power of the gospel. "The righteous will live by faith."

We came into his love by faith. We have a relationship with him by faith. We will live this new life by faith. In the relationship with him, our broken parts will be restored, our hurt will be healed, our immature emotion will become mature, and our small love will grow. The kingdom of God will be revealed through us, and among us. It's all the work of God. "The righteous will live by faith." Our life is training to walk in his ways.

### **For Self-reflection**

1. Share how the consumer culture (consumption, speed, and convenience) influences your life. How does consumer culture affect your Christian life?
2. Can you illustrate a life "Working on My Sin Issues" and a life "Trusting Who God Says I Am"?
  - Is your intention on "Working on My Sin Issues" or on "Trusting Who God Says I Am"?
3. Why is it important to integrate your spiritual life with your ordinary life?
  - What is a challenge for you to integrate your spiritual life with your ordinary life? How would you overcome it?
4. Do you have faith to come to God and remain in His love?
  - If you have faith, how are you practicing it?
  - If you are not sure, what is the problem? What would you do?