

God's Will for the ministry of his Word Deuteronomy 11:1-7, 16-21

¹ Love the LORD your God and always carry out his requirements, his statutes, his ordinances, and his commandments. ² Know this today! I am not addressing your children, who have not known and seen all these things: the discipline of the LORD your God; his greatness, his strong hand, and his outstretched arm; ³ his signs and his deeds that he performed in Egypt against Pharaoh king of Egypt and against all his land; ⁴ what he did to the army of Egypt and its horses and chariots; how he caused the water of the Red Sea to flow over their heads when they pursued you; how the LORD has destroyed them to this day; ⁵ what he did for you in the wilderness until you came to this place; ⁶ what he did to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab son of Reuben; how the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them with their households, their tents, and every living thing that was at their feet, in the middle of all Israel. ⁷ Know today it is your own eyes that have seen every deed that the LORD your God performed. ¹⁶ Be careful, or your heart will be deceived and you will turn away and serve other gods and bow down to them. ¹⁷ Then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and he will close up the heavens. There will be no rain, the ground will not produce crops, and you will perish quickly from the good land that the LORD is giving you. ¹⁸ Put these words of mine in your hearts and in your soul, and tie them on your wrists as signs and as symbols on your forehead. ¹⁹ Teach them to your children by talking about them when you sit in your house and when you travel on the road, when you lie down and when you get up. ²⁰ Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, ²¹ so that your days and the days of your children may be many on the land that the LORD promised to your fathers with an oath, as many as the days that the heavens remain over the earth.

Deuteronomy 11 shows the Lord providing his gracious counsel. He's speaking to his children through his servant Moses. The Lord expresses his will concerning the ministry of his word. The Lord commands his people lovingly motivating them to do what is right. He recounts his own mighty and loving work on their behalf. He promises them a future of rich blessings that he himself provides. May we who are celebrating Christian Education today take these words to heart. May we follow God's will as we minister with his word.

Moses begins with the first table of the Law. *Love the LORD your God and always carry out his requirements, his statutes, his ordinances, and his commandments.* This verse communicates the most primary will of the Lord. All other details of his direction follow. Jesus taught, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength. This is the first and greatest commandment" (Matthew 22:37). If any activity is going to be God-pleasing and productive for people, it must flow from love for God. Keeping all motivating focus on who the Lord is and what in Christ he has done will be essential to achieve healthy spiritual results.

Moses continues: *Know this today! I am not addressing your children, who have not known and seen all these things: the discipline of the LORD your God; his greatness, his strong hand, and his outstretched arm.* Moses was preparing family leaders to place God's Word on their own hearts. Then they could teach their children. And they were to keep speaking about it. There's a good reason for them to be teachers. They are witnesses. They are qualified and responsible to testify to what God has done for them. As they testify they bring honor to the Lord. They also provide nourishing, spiritual guidance to their children. These leaders had

witnessed the drowning of Pharaoh and his warriors in the very sea through which they passed on dry ground. They saw fellow Israelites and all their families swallowed up by the earth.

This Bible history lesson is a tribute to the mercy and faithfulness of their Savior. The Lord saw the misery of Israel in slavery. In mercy he delivered them in a most dramatic way. He protected them. In so doing he protected the Messianic promise that he was fulfilling through them. The danger to Israel's salvation posed by Pharaoh is not much different from the danger posed by Dathan and Abiram. These men who were full of themselves. They defied the will of the Lord. If they were not stopped, their defiance would have spread as spiritual poison, eroding away trust in the love of God. How awesome these deeds of deliverance! The Spirit fills us with awe as well to love the Lord. We praise him as we teach the next generations.

Consider our responsibility to train our youth. We can't come up with an excuse like: I wasn't around to witness first-hand God's majestic power in delivering his people? You too from infancy have known the Holy Scriptures. They have made you wise for salvation which is by faith in Jesus Christ. You know the story. God created a perfect world. But Adam and Eve sinned and ruined it. Still God came through with the promise of a Savior from sin. But then the whole world became corrupt. God had to destroy our world and its inhabitants with a flood. Yet God still kept his promise alive on a floating ark built by Noah and his family. You know how God chose descendants of Abraham to bring a Savior to us. But then God's people proved faithless forcing God to use a foreign power to carry them away. God still kept a remnant alive to return to the Promised Land and fulfill God's saving promise.

When the time was right, God sent his own Son to be that Savior. Born into this world by a virgin, he took our place in life. While all we could do is sin, he never did once. He remained the obedient child of God his whole life. And that obedience also led him to a cross. Unjustly nailed there, God punished him for the sin of us all. He died and was buried. But he was never abandoned to the grave. He rose victorious from the grave because he had defeated death. He defeated death for himself and for us. Our graves won't hold us forever either. When he does return in glory, he will raise us too. And body and soul we'll live in glory forever. You know the story. Make sure the people in your life know it too, especially the children.

We want to share God's truth with everyone so no one falls victim to what God warns against. *Be careful, or your heart will be deceived and you will turn away and serve other gods and bow down to them. Then the anger of the LORD will burn against you, and he will close up the heavens. There will be no rain, the ground will not produce crops, and you will perish quickly from the good land that the LORD is giving you.* We take to heart God's threat to cause his face to burn against sinners. We confess with the Psalmist, *"Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge"* (51:4). The Spirit teaches us to say with Paul, *"What a wretched man I am! Who can save me from this body of death"* (Romans 7:24, 25). What a gift to know that God has saved us through our Lord Jesus Christ! Though we deserve to *"fall into the hands of the living God"* (Hebrews 10:31), Jesus saves us and protects us with his own hand. He assures us, *"I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. My sheep...shall never perish; no one will snatch them out of my hand"* (John 10).

The following verses form the basis for Christian education: *Put these words of mine in your hearts and in your soul, and tie them on your wrists as signs and as symbols on your forehead. Teach them to your children by talking about them when you sit in your house and when you travel on the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.* The 3rd Commandment requires all people to love God and gladly hear his Word. So we put our love for God's Word into practice within the family setting. How gracious the Lord is to provide his saving truth. The thing that *"no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived—these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit"* (1 Corinthians 2:9-10). How deeply Christ desires for us to hear and believe his Word.

Even though God does not gift all people equally with abilities to either understand or to teach, he still commands parents to carry out this responsibility for the children he has given them. Knowing that parents would need help explaining the why of God's history, God has established forms of ministry to help. God gave some to be prophets. He established the Levitical priesthood. These Old Testament public ministers had their own responsibilities to teach so the families of Israel would know, remember, believe, and be saved. Your public ministers are commanded to faithfully provide you the same assistance. So pastors and teachers will assist parents in sharing God's saving truths.

The Lord writes his saving truth on our hearts. He commands us to pass along his Word from parent to child or person to person. This communication from the believer is not optional. Scripture says to all believers, *"Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come. The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us"* (2 Corinthians 5:17-20).

And our Lord ends his command with a promise. *"So that your days and the days of your children may be many on the land that the LORD promised to your fathers with an oath, as many as the days that the heavens remain over the earth."* The promise here is nearly identical to the 4th Commandment. The promise demonstrates the pure desire of the Lord for the blessings of his Word to be shared from parent to child. As the family is bonded and blessed by God's grace, so communities and nations formed by those families may also know and receive blessing from the Lord.

Holy Scripture provides an unlimited supply of lessons for our own spiritual growth. When can we ever learn enough of our God's goodness and love. God's Spirit reveals his goodness to us. God's Spirit deepens our insight and appreciation for it. With this truth in mind, St. Peter wrote, *"So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things."* (2 Peter 1:12-15). God has preserved his truth for us. May we pass it on to others and always see the great need for Christian Education. That is truly God's will for the ministry of his Word.