Dt. 6:20-25; Gen. 18:16-19 “The Law of the Covenant” I. The Context of the Law II. The Blessing of the Law III. The Proof of the Law

Congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, how many of you are teachers? Well, a few of you may be teachers in the school setting- others teach at church in Sunday School and Catechism classes. But as we will see this morning, many members of our congregation are called to be teachers! The teaching that is to take place is not found in the context of the formal classroom setting alone, but rather this teaching takes place around the dining room table. When I was thinking about a passage to preach on this morning, I was speak to both baptism and Mother’s Day- and we find a focus on parents, children and the covenant in our text. Here in Dt. 6 we find not only a summary of the 10 Commandments- as v. 5 says- Love the Lord your God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself. We also find a call to teach running through this passage- parents teach your children v. 7 continues. Talk about God’s way when you sit and when you stand, when you go out and when you enter in. So Dt. 6 not only summarizes God’s Law, it also reveals the way in which this Law is to be passed down to the next generation! Although we may tend to think that the 10 Commandments are normally read at church, today we find that God’s Law is to have a principal place in the home as well. So this morning we consider this theme: Jesus Christ commands parents to teach His Law to their children. No good parent withholds food from their children- so would we withhold spiritual food from our little ones?

**I. The Context of the Law**

In our first point we consider the context in which the Law of God is given as well as the context in which the Law of God is to be taught today. V. 20 starts with a son asking his parents an important question. What is the meaning of these statutes and testimonies? What is the purpose of the Law and why has God given it to us? The answer comes as we consider the context in which the Law was first received. In other words, in order for us to understand the meaning of the Law we have to consider the context in which the Law was given. To say this another way, no one can rightly and fully understand and obey the 10 Commandments if they do no understand the reason why these commandments were given. So I could ask our children here, what was happening to the Israelites when they were given the Law at Mt. Sinai? What was going on in Redemptive History? The context of the Law is that of grace! As v. 21 continues, the Israelites were brought up out of bondage. We were slaves in Egypt and the Lord brought us out with a mighty hand and outstretch arm. The Law of God is given in the context of the rescue that God has performed. The recipients of the Law are the ones whom God has saved from slavery! To repeat the point- those who receive the Law must first understand their identity! Who are you sets the context in which you can understand what you are called to do! So the Law is given to those whom God has set free. Obedience to the Law does not make us God’s people- rather the Law is what marks us and sets us apart as God’s people. As we will see in our third point- obedience to the Law is a sign of our freedom from slavery. Now this is not a new point- the LORD had made it clear already in the introduction to the 10 Commandments in Dt. 5:6- I brought you out of the land of Egypt- I brought you out of the house of slavery. To be clear, God’s people are first rescued by God before the Law is given to them. They pass under the blood of the Passover Lamb- they are first baptized into Moses- and then they are instructed how they are to live as God’s people. Loving God and loving your neighbor is not something you can do by yourself. First you are a child of God- first you are washed. The Law then becomes your birthright- a gift given to one who has been set free. We need to remember this- our obedience to the Law does not make us children of God. The same fact applies in our home- how our children act does not make then our children. Their actions do not change their identity. Rather the Law is given to those who have already been set free! The Law is given in the context of grace! In fact, the Law is a sign of God’s love! He rescued us and has given us His word! It is a sign of His faithfulness- He keeps His promise as v. 23 says. The Law comes in the context of the covenant! He saves His people just as He said He would- giving them the promised land as He swore to our fathers. So the general context of the Law is that of grace. Those who receive the Law are first of all those who are set apart by God! So the Law is for the people of God! This is the context in which the Law was received. But there is another context to consider- the context in which the law is to be taught today. What is the specific context in which we would expect the Laws of God to be heard today? I imagine that most of us are used to hearing the 10 Commandments read at church on a regular basis. But Dt. 6 points to another place where the Law should be heard. That place is the home! The teachers of that Law are believing parents. So the specific context in which we find the Law found today is that of Christian parents who teach their children. The question raised by children in v. 20 is this- what is the meaning of the Law? So we could imagine a child asking their parents- why do we have to read the Bible after meals and before bed? Why do we have to go to church twice every Sunday? Why do we have to memorize our catechism and go to Sunday school? Well- parents- how do you answer these questions? When you children ask you- why do we have the Law? Why do we read the Bible? Why do we go to church? What do you say? And how about this? Why just happened with little Rhea? What did we see? What does baptism mean? These are the questions that children ask their parents. So, do you have an answer? Well, the way in which you answer is by telling your children about the God of the covenant and His works! You tell them- you remind them about who they are as God’s children. You recite the things that God has done in redemptive history and what God has done in your story. Parents respond to the questions of their children by teaching them- instructing them in the way that they should go. As Eph. 6:4 puts it, bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. It a calling that God gives to parents- to instruct, train and discipline their children. Reminding them of their identity- that they belong to the LORD their God who has rescued them from slavery to sin, death and hell. The context in which the Word of God is applied to their little hearts is around the dinner table- when they leave for school and come home from their sports events. In your coming and going- reminding them of their identity and their calling. You have been chosen and set apart by God- called to live for Him! This verse assumes that you have a good relationship with your child- that your home is a loving and wise place of instruction. The fact is, parents are called to teach their children right from wrong. Children, morality is not learned from your friends or social media- but from Godly parents who are teaching you God’s Word! And parents- this teaching is a constant and consistent thing. You have to spend time with your kids in order to instruct them. One sad consequence of living in a busy world is that parents don’t have time to spend with their children- so little to no teaching takes place! Society and the schooling system are no substitute for parental instruction! So it is that parents have to root obedience in identity. Little one, you are a child of God! You belong to Him! Jesus claims you as His own and He bought you with His blood. You are to obey God because of what He has done for you! Obedience flows from thanksgiving. That is the context of the Law.

**II. The Blessing of the Law**

As we continue on, the Law is also a gift of God and a blessing. When people think about laws, they do not usually think about blessings. As we come to our second point, we will find that Law is meant for our good- to be a blessing to us! But most people think about laws as something that is restrictive- as if the law stops me from doing what I want to do! I want to drive fast, but the law stops me. It restricts me- it hinders my happiness! However, when we look at the context of the law and the purpose of God’s Law, we find that it is really designed to be a blessing for us! To do us good! As we find in v. 24- the Lord commanded us in these statutes, to fear the Lord our God for our good always. Since the Law reflect God’s character and will, the goodness of God must be reflected in His law. God’s Law, as a lamp to our feet and guide to our path, sets the straight way before us. As we walk in His paths, we can rest assured that this way will be lined with blessings and peace. The Law is given for our protection- that we might live a well ordered and God honoring life. It is also for the protection of others- to defend the rights of others and uphold justice in the land. Not only does God’s law do us good in that it keeps us out of trouble, it also keeps us from falling into eternal destruction. Stated in the negative, those who know and obey God and His word are kept from eternal death. Stated positively, those who know God and obey His Word are assured that their path will lead to live even life forevermore. One of the best aspects of the Word of God is that it reveals the way in which we can be saved. One of the best aspects of the Law is that it reveals the way in which we can live a life that is pleasing to God. For the Israelites in Dt. 6, the Law was given for their good that they might be preserved in the land. Kept alive in the promised land. The Law was for the Israelites a beneficial code by which the gracious King of Israel made His rule known and seen. Things would go well for the Israelites in the promised land as they obeyed this Word and submitted to this Law. If they did not, there would be severe consequences. If they rebelled against God, they would be cast out of the promised land. So, it stand today, those who submit to God’s Law find that His way is best! For our good- not only today- but always! The Law is not a burden but a blessing! Even as the 5th commandment reads in Dt. 5:7- honor your father and mother so that your days may be long and that it may go well with you in the land you are entering. Obeying God’s commands is living as God created us to live. Obedience is in line with being made in God’s image. We are never more human than when we love God and love His people! So honoring your parents specifically- and obeying all of God’s commandments generally- leads to well ordered and God pleasing life. How many people in prison never learned to submit to their parents! How many people in hell never learned to submit to the Law of the Lord? So learning, submitting and obeying God’s commands will be for your good in this life and in the next.

**III. The Proof of the Law**

So the Law is to be taught to our children as God has commanded us. One of the reasons that parents teach our children the Law is because we believe that this Law is for our children’s good. We trust God when He says that this Law is for their good always. As we come to our final point we find that this Law is also given to us as a sign. Specifically, our obedience to the Law is a sign to the world. As we become law filled followers of Christ, our submitting to His Word becomes a proof of our identity. As we read in v. 25, and it will be righteousness for us, if we are careful to do all this commandment. If we carefully obey His commandments, our actions are said to be righteousness for us. Now to be clear, the way this word “righteousness” is used needs to be fleshed out. This book of Moses is not saying that our works are what make us righteous. Dt. 6 is not teaching a justification by our works in that our actions change our status. No, we go back to our first point where we find the gracious work of God is saving us has already been established. But this verse uses the term righteousness similar to way it is used in James 2. We are justified by our works and not by faith alone. I will show you my faith by my works. A person’s faith is completed by his works. To put this another way, our obedience to the Law proves who we are. Our righteous acts verify our identity. Our works of the law prove that the Spirit has been working our hearts. In this way, our righteous deeds which is living according to His commandments proves to the watching world that we belong to the LORD our God. We are to live as we are- children of God! What we do verifies our identity. One clear application of this point is seen in how we treat our children- and how our children act. We speak to our children as they are- children of God. We tell then that they have received a wonderful blessing and a gift- that they belong to Jesus and they know His word. This inheritance comes with a responsibility as well. They are to live like children of light! Our little ones are not children of the world- they are children of God! As such, they are to live a certain way!

To conclude, the calling of believing parents to train their children is nothing new. Already in Gen. 18 Abraham was chosen so that he may command his children and his household to keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice. So we find today, Jesus Christ commands parents to teach His Law to their children. Our passage is reminding parents of their responsibility- teach God’s Word to your children! This is for their good! So train a child in the way that they should go- so that when they are old they will not depart from it.