

Let God Bless His People

‡ Remember God's Word with your family. (vv.18-21)

‡ Recognize God's blessing and His curse. (vv.26-28)

In the name of Jesus, God's Word – crucified, risen and ruling – dearly redeemed family of God:

It's a story I need to tell delicately about the time I was glad cows don't usually bite. I was eating my Cheerios one Sunday morning when my brother hurried in. "Mark, that cow is almost dead. Her calf died last night. We have to pull it to save her." Neither of us had experience or a calf-pulling apparatus. So we sat on the ground and took hold of whatever we could. Then we pulled for all we were worth. Saved the cow, and I went back to finish my Cheerios so we could get to church on time.

Was that cruel or do we sometimes need to hurt in order to heal? We become so used to sanitized grocery stores and pain-free surgery that our soul gets anesthetized to the life and death battle around and in us. We need a heavy dose of reality to **Let God Bless His People** today. Make it your life to...

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Moses was worried. In this collection of last sermons called Deuteronomy, the LORD's prophet is trying to impress God's people with God's desire to bless, and how they need to get out of His way. We need a muzzle to help us stop talking and the Holy Spirit's hearing aid to get down deep inside.

"Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads." This is one of four verses in Moses' law about phylacteries which are still worn by Jews today. According to www.JewishEncyclopedia.com, "There are more laws...about the institution of tefillin than about any other institution of Judaism." Only a few sentences, and you see how these laws hide Moses' message. *"These words of mine"* are really God's Word to Moses, not meant for tiny little black boxes, but clearly written on our hearts. The Jewish Rabbi from Nazareth who fulfilled all the Messianic prophecies condemned the Pharisees and teachers of the law: *"Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long."* (Matthew 23:5 NIV) Directly to them, Jesus said: *"Do not think I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses, on whom your hopes are set. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?"* (John 5:45-47)

It's not surprising that Jews steeped in tradition would miss the point. Truly disappointing is how Christians fail to listen to Christ and neglect fine traditions like Christian education. Listen to the LORD's prophet: *"Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the Lord swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth."*

According to another Jewish prophet named Jeremiah (31:31-34), by disobeying the LORD God the Jews lost the Old Covenant which was connected to the Promised Land. But God is still reaching out to His chosen people through the Old Testament Scriptures and through Christians all over the world. What's at stake now is the Promised Land of heaven, that Paradise of God where He wants us to live forever with Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We need to **Remember God's Word to [our] family** in order to **Let God Bless His People**. And some Christian traditions can be helpful, not required, but helpful.

One of these became clear to me when Hmong people started joining our fellowship. Their WELS-Hmong pastors explained how Hmong culture requires "god money" to be put up on their walls at home to pay the expenses of dead relatives in the afterlife. When they became Christians, they realized this is not good according to the Bible. So they developed a liturgical rite for going to the home of a new

Among Christian, removing the slips of paper from the walls and putting up crosses and pictures of Jesus. This tradition reminds us how Christ won eternal life for us by dying and rising again.

Do you find yourself complaining about lost traditions in raunchy entertainment? Or do you use movies and media even as bad examples to teach God's truth to your children and grandchildren, nephews and nieces? God's wisdom gives practical applications. For example one mother told her teenage boys they had to watch TV one night. "But, Mom, you're supposed to tell us to watch less TV, and then we argue how we want more." "You need to watch this show," she replied. "What's it called?" "*Life, Health and the American Woman.*" "Why do you want us to watch that?" "Because if God gives you a wife someday, I want you to be an understanding husband." Doesn't God's Word say, "***Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her***" (Ephesians 5:25)? And isn't family psychologist Gary Smalley right when he says, "Love seeks knowledge"? Dear family of God, you can think of a million other examples to make long car rides and family vacations meaningful ways to **Let God Bless His People**. You just need to **Remember God's Word to your family** and in that way to...

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Long before Face Book, God had some lessons for His family literally, "to your face." And one of them was introduced here like two sides to the same coin, or two messages from two mountains. The verse after our text says, "***When the LORD your God has brought you into the land you are entering to possess, you are to proclaim on Mount Gerizim the blessings, and on Mount Ebal the curses.***" (Deuteronomy 11:29 NIV) That would be like riding along in the car and having the children take turns. One points out a blessing of God's creation and the other an example of God's curse because of sin.

Right "to your face" are constant reminders to help us **Recognize God's blessing and His curse**. But let's be honest. We Americans want to be positive except about other people's evil. We tend to ignore God's **curse** on sin, but take credit for our prosperity or health or family or whatever. **Blessings** even in church can be a problem. God has blessed our congregation with new life in Christ. But do you catch yourself giving people the credit – "The pastor..." this, or, "The congregation..." that – rather than glorifying God? Or maybe you pride yourself in being "realistic" and "practical," without realizing how your critical attitude discourages your fellow Christians. Don't we all need to heed Paul's warning to the Corinthians? "***So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!***" (1 Corinthians 10:12) Focus on Christ who bore God's **curse** on the cross and enjoy His **blessing** of sin-forgiving grace.

Let God Bless His People by paying careful attention to His warning through Moses: "***See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse – the blessing if you obey the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you today; the curse if you disobey the commands of the LORD your God and turn from the way that I command you today by following other gods, which you have not known.***" By translating "***obey,***" the NIV hides the real call to *close and careful listening*. If we don't hear what God says, we water down the Law and miss the fact that it curses and condemns us all. But keep listening carefully because in the Gospel God forgives us all, all our sins, for all time. This Good News gives us power to live God's way and enjoy His **blessing** on our lives and complete relief from the **curse** of sin.

One little boy growing up on God's goodness was overheard saying he would go over a friend's and "be naughty." He needed to **Recognize God's blessing and His curse**. When his father asked, "Did you say you were going over to your friend's to be naughty?" the little boy could only squirm, "Yes." Instead of scolding him, the father said sadly, "You go right ahead...and then you can go to hell." "But, Dad!" the boy cried. "Son, your mother and I are teaching you what God's Word says, but we can't watch you all the time. If you choose to follow the devil instead, you will go to hell. You don't want that, do you?" "No," the little guy said sheepishly. "Neither do I and neither does Jesus. That's why He died for you. Now thank God for His forgiveness and live like you mean it."

Dear family of God, there's a time to pull the dead calf even if it hurts the cow. Always listen attentively. Our loving God cuts in order to heal. He kills to make alive in Christ forevermore. Amen.