

Grandparents, it's your day today. Apparently September 9th is national grandparent's day. Now I don't know the traditional gift for grandparent's day. I don't know if you're supposed to get chocolate, flowers, or money. I don't know if it's a day for you to spend with the grandchildren alone, or if your day should have no grandchildren at all. No matter what, consider it your day.

For grandchildren, days spent with grandma and grandpa are easy. Grandchildren can get away with just about anything. Grandparents usually aren't as strict as mom and dad. Ice cream before bed, sure. Staying up late, no problem. You're at the grandparents' house. You get to do things you never would with your parents. Now grandparents still want the kids to listen. There are rules, but they're different. So different sometimes that when the kids get back with the parents all their rules are forgotten.

In some ways that's with God too. We either treat God like the grandparent that lets us get away with anything. Or we treat him like the parent while we're away at grandma and grandpa's house getting away with anything. In either case we lose our obedience to God and his Word. In the first lesson we hear that's not where God wants us at all. Instead God wants us to know...

Obedience to the Word begins in the heart
Guarding it faithfully
Observing it carefully

"Now when you get to Grandma's house you be good." Those sound like famous last words of a parent about to drop the grandchild off with the grandparents fully aware that rules are almost non-existent. Truth is the same rules the child has at home should apply no matter where they are. Consistency makes for much easier parenting and grandparenting. God operates the same way. Through his appointed spokesperson Moses, God gave his chosen people commands and laws. Those wouldn't change wherever they went or what they did. They were to guard what they heard faithfully.

For the Israelites it was to be a way of life. **"Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land that the Lord is giving you."** It was important for the Israelites to listen up, to hear everything God was sharing with them. Nothing would change from what they heard, not even if circumstances changed. Them going into the Promised Land, a land the Lord had promised to lead them into, was a big change. But the laws and commands weren't going to be left behind like a child going to grandma's house might be tempted to leave the rules of home behind. Nothing would change. They were required to obey the Word of God and guard it faithfully.

As we guard God's Word, his laws and commands, the temptation is to put some modifications in. I mean, since God isn't around to really enforce these laws and commands, what's the big deal if we make them a bit easier to keep. Like the places where the Bible commands us not to get drunk on too much alcohol. Lighten that up, there has to be some room for a good time. Like the places where the Bible tells us only married people should sleep together. Come on, everyone is doing that. That's old fashioned thinking and besides it's no one's business. Or we compare our behavior with the world's and think we're doing what's right, they're wrong. God is going to save us, not them because we're doing what's right. But our behavior doesn't qualify us. Truth is you and I sin because in guarding God's Word we instead sinfully added to it or subtracted from it.

God didn't want the Israelites changing his laws and commands just because their situation was changing. He doesn't want you changing his laws and commands either. **"Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you."** This is the Savior God talking about his laws and commands. That's important. It's not simply "do this" and "don't do this" or else eternal death. The message from God doesn't stop there. All God has given is good. His laws and commands are good. But especially so is the gospel he gives. There's a message focused on Christ Jesus that's good. Obedience to God's law earns us nothing. But Jesus' perfect obedience to the very same law earns us everything. It's Christ Jesus who through his guarding of God's Word faithfully forgives our sinfulness of adding and subtracting. It's Christ Jesus alone who guarantees that the laws and commands of God aren't held against us. We can guard them faithfully in our hearts because Christ kept them perfectly for us.

The grandchildren might say to grandma and grandpa, "I love you with all my heart." The grandparents' hearts melt. Love like that, in the heart, can't be easily taken away. It's in the heart protected and kept safe. Grandparents and grandchildren want to guard that kind of love. But what if right after they say how much they love you they disobey you and laugh in your face. Love guarded in the heart but not shown must be questioned as to whether it's real. It's the same with God's Word. We say we guard it in our hearts faithfully. But we also want to observe it carefully because true obedience comes from the heart.

A little boy or girl who obeys the rules will generally have a happier life. Things will go that much better when they're listening and doing what they're told. Observing the law brings blessings. God blessed the people of Israel when they obeyed his laws and commands. He protected them as a nation and brought them to the Promised Land. **"Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, 'Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.'"** Obedience gave the Israelites the opportunity to demonstrate for others the blessings of God's Word in law and gospel. The happy life of the Israelites would make other nations think God's laws were pretty smart. But it also gave God the opportunity to teach that blessings didn't come from careful observation but from his grace.

Remember life when you didn't listen to your parents or grandparents? It got pretty tough when you stepped outside obeying their rules. Getting grounded or given extra chores, having curfew shortened, or taking away toys all happen because we stop obeying carefully the rules of our parents. We complain about how chaotic life is. We complain that life is hard, but then we go and make it that much harder by breaking God's laws.

Millions have made their lives tougher by worshiping their money. They give themselves ulcers trying to make more of it or worrying that they don't have enough. Stress increases when their money is threatened or is taken away. Are you stressed because maybe you give your money too much credit for the life you have? God tried to avoid that for you with laws and commands that keep us from worshiping our money or our things. Consider also how tough life gets when you hate someone else, when you're looking for revenge, or when you're gossiping about someone else. Isn't that kind of life more challenging? You spend your days planning and plotting. You think constantly about what the other person did to you. God was trying to avoid you falling into those sinful traps when he set up his laws and commands. "Don't do it," God said. "Disobedience and sin only drain your life, they don't make it better." God's laws are good but our sin makes us think they're bad.

The only thing that overcomes your disobedience is Christ's obedience. The only thing that takes the chaos out of life is Christ. Christ Jesus obeyed and observed every law and command of God carefully. He did this for you and for me. He did this because we fail in our attempts to do the same. He did it perfectly because he alone could. His observation of the law shows that it's good. It also shows that the gospel is good too. That message is that our sins are fully forgiven in Christ.

The obedience of Christ leads us to want to be obedient. We want to observe God's Word carefully in our hearts because our hearts have been purified by Christ. So we learn and listen to God's laws and we recognize them as good. We learn to trust in God and know that he's got our best interests at the center of his heart. Even when God seems to be taking away something fun or something we really want to do, he's doing it because he loves us. When we do observe his laws, and we do, he pours out blessings on us beyond what we could imagine.

Grandparents and grandchildren interacting are an important dynamic. There's a lot of opportunity for the younger generation to learn from the older. That's what God wanted. **"Watch yourselves closely so that you do not forget the things your eyes have seen or let them slip from your heart as long as you live. Teach them to your children and to their children after them."** God knows just how easy it is for us once we feel like we're out of sight to fall into sin and break the law. God knows and that's why he offers this encouragement, that's why he gave his Son Jesus. It's all too important for one generation to teach the next, not just the rules for life, not just how to obey, but more. It's important that one generation tell the next about Jesus so that obedience to God's Word can truly begin in the heart.