

# **A CONTRACT WITH GOD**

## **Deuteronomy**

Thoughts come from a wide variety of sources. Some from messages I have heard from individuals, some from assembly Bible studies, some from home life and some from books I have read. The Holy Spirit is the Teacher who makes them real to me.

- "Believer's Bible Commentary: Old Testament." by William MacDonald. Thomas Nelson Pub.
- "The Life Application Bible." Tyndale House and Zondervan

### **Deuteronomy 1**

#### **A TIME TO REVIEW**

Nearly forty years had passed and Israel was again near the border of the promised land. A new generation had arisen. New adult faces, and a new generation of children looked across at the land God had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. God had told Moses the time had come for Israel to possess the land forty years before, and in fear they stopped short of acting in faith and obedience. An eleven days' journey had turned into forty years of wandering as an unbelieving generation of people died and were buried in wilderness graves. A younger generation had come to years and were being taught to obey God. Rebellion and self-will are on-going problems among God's people. We do well to review our past history and teach our children and grandchildren the things we have learned by our mistakes. Hopefully they won't do all the same things we did, although doubtless they will make mistakes of their own because they have the same tendencies we have.

In this journey of life on which we are traveling; even our service for God, difficulties, discouragement and pain are a part of the training process God puts us through. The reason behind much of this is so we will not make our choices based on the same premises as those who do not know the Lord. Our understanding of our God does not happen right away nor does it happen all at once. I expect it will never be complete even though it will go on forever. An Infinite God who is Eternal and Almighty has allowed us to call Him "Our Father."

There are certain necessities we have to face in life that cannot be learned except under the pressure of potential failure. We don't know what to avoid if we don't know the danger to our spiritual life it possesses. That is why God allows things to cross our paths that He knows, and we know, are not good for us. It is for the learning process, not to tempt us. The reality of who we are is made evident under tension. By these lessons God prepares us for the service He wants us to perform, and often our most sincere devotion and worship comes after the victory over temptation and potential defeat.

Moses did not review their life in Egypt, nor how they came to Egypt in the first place. The children of Israel went to Egypt as a family. They left Egypt as a disorganized band of freed slaves. Moses begins his review of the past forty years with the Israelites being formed into an orderly nation under an organized leadership that could administer justice and make impartial decisions based on the perfect standard of God's laws. We are not free-lancing who are at liberty to do whatever our evil hearts might desire. For God's people today there are the "commandments of the Lord" that empower us under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to do God's will. When we do them with grace and by faith, there is a holy order that works in the way God intends. Not every person does the same thing, but when each fulfills what God has gifted them to do, the body of believers, functions properly.

As we learn God's mind and will, and a covenant that has been formed by His with us begins to function, there comes to us an awareness of our responsibility to Him and the knowledge as to how we can fulfill that responsibility. We have to learn how to do His will. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine..." We are not given a road map of the events of our life ahead, and we do not know the nature of the events, good or bad, that we will face. But in the same way a new generation of Israelites had to learn who God is and what He wanted from them, so we learn from day to day as we follow Him by faith.

Those who led God's people then, were able to make righteous judgments because they were respectful men who had wisdom as to what was right, and the understanding as to how to do what was right. Those characteristics still hold true for those who lead God's people today. Some of the qualities may be inherent in one's personality, but most are learned by being willing to obey God and act on divine guidance. The character of a leader is not formed by their ability to accumulate wealth or by family pedigree. Being popular

is not a qualification for good leadership. The qualities of character that are needed to lead are formed by being careful as to what we allow into our minds through our senses, and then using what we have been given in the respectful fear of the Lord.

In the beginning of the review Moses gave to the nation, was included the failure to possess the land because of fear and self-will. They had not learned to trust God and take the risk of obeying even though they didn't really know the process, and how God would fulfill His promises. When we let the pressures of difficulties control our movements, we will do nothing. Some people are afraid of making a mistake and consequently have nothing to show for their life. Faith in God enables us to take risks without fear and demonstrates to others the fact that we truly believe God. The failure of the spies was probably retold often as they watched Caleb and Joshua growing older, and yet moving in their strength among them while the other children of Israel continued to bury their dead.

Two men of faith and courage remained as a positive witness to God's faithfulness to those who trust Him. The things that seem like giants to us are no problem to God. But rather than smooth the way before us, God directs us through the difficulties by going before us. He gives us promises as to the future and gives us victories that are far more significant, than the failures we make by doing things our way. We need to remember as we review the past and God's dealing with us, that "without faith it is impossible to please [God]." Our young people, and any others who are wondering about the value of the Christian life, need to hear of God's ways with us. Our history is of greater value than we might think. Don't spend too much time reviewing the failures, although we must be honest about them. Give a clear review of the victories God has given us, and focus attention on Him. "If God be for us, who can be against us."

**Deuteronomy 1:9.** *"Behold, I have set the land before you; go in and possess the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to give unto them and to their seed after them."*

#### **POSSESS THE LAND.**

It is good to go back, and follow the track -  
The way the Lord has led us until now.  
When we start to review, God is able to show  
The reason things happened and how.  
At the time there was fear, and the load hard to bear -  
But looking back we can see there's a plan.  
It was no accident - God Himself arranged it -  
He does things impossible to man.

Moses is speaking - telling how they went seeking  
To get into the promised land.  
They had to remember, that ten of their number  
Doubted God's will and the strength of His hand.  
So all the spies but two died, and their fear multiplied -  
Their fear condemned a whole generation.  
The land lay before them, but only their children  
Would enter and possess their possessions.

It was a good land the Lord gave; it was theirs to have -  
All they had to do was walk on it by foot.  
How sad to know millions missed claiming the blessings -  
Losing that for which forty years they sought.  
It is possible that I, if I don't fully rely  
On the promises contained in God's Word -  
Will miss or not take, what has been provided by grace,  
If I don't walk in the steps of the Lord.

I can't condemn them, who lived way back then -  
When I God's Word and will disobey.  
There are consequences now, if I am not willing to bow  
And respond to what God has to say.  
When I know there's a need, and I am willing to heed  
Divine guidance coming to me from Him -  
Then I will surely be safe, and be in the right place -  
Where I can be preserved from sin.

**"O Father, I have experienced grace from Thee through these many years - not just the saving grace Thou gave me when I was saved. There was grace when as a young believer I failed in thinking ahead far enough and weighing up consequences. There**

**was grace when I was able to participate with others in reaching out with the Gospel to places I had never been. There was grace given to us in our marriage and family life. That same grace continues to us even this very day, where far away from home, I am still able to speak to people about the Lord and present them with the saving grace of God - where I began. Thank You for grace abounding, In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **Deuteronomy 2**

### **RIGHTS OF OTHERS**

The reason for thirty-eight years spent in the wilderness was the fault of the Israelites themselves, not the opposition of those who lived in the areas around. They were not to pick a fight with their ancient relatives, the children of Esau or the children of Lot. In fact, they were to pay for everything they used as they passed through the territory of Edom, Moab and Ammon. Common sense tells us that when we pass from one country to another or need to cross another person's property, we are obligated to get permission from them and submit to their laws and rights. Even though they may do things differently, or have expectations of us that seem extreme, it is our responsibility to adapt to their wishes. We do have choices. We can go back; we can go another way; or we can accept their demands. Their rights are in place and it is our place to accept those restrictions.

In times past, people have created a problem over a matter such as which side of a fence the boards should be nailed, or how close to the edge of the property line should a driveway go. For the sake of personal contentment and Christian testimony, we must respect the rights of those who live around us. There will be times when their expectations are unreasonable. Then it is up to us to decide if a project is important enough in the long view of things, to pursue it any farther.

Broken relationships can sometimes be mended when a respectful attitude toward the rights of others is shown even though it may seem unreasonable and silly to us. Often there are extenuating circumstances in another person's life that we know nothing about. Because of those, their reaction towards what seems a simple and uncomplicated matter to us, is a big matter to them. By acting justly, relationships can be maintained, or mended if necessary, in a reasonable way, even though a closeness may never come as a result.

There will be valleys to cross in our lives that cause us to pause and look for another way. In the case of Israel's journey, the Lord directed them to cross the valley. They were assured before they started down into the valley, that they would cross and come up on the other side. Some of the valley experiences of the people of God are very hard to bear. There may be significant losses to us in the darkness of a valley crossing. Pain, sorrow and tears are often experienced at such times in our lives. Others too will have similar times, and we may wonder if we should go to them at such times or just pray and leave them to God. As a general rule, the valley experiences of others, calls for our actual presence. Maybe not our words so much, but our compassion is needed. People have a right to expect that of us.

It is possible for the people of God to look on others as enemies just because they are not like us. The descendants of Esau were to be let alone by the descendants of Jacob and fully compensated for any benefits they received from the Edomites. They were to avoid the descendants of Moab and be cautious as they went by the area where the Ammonites lived, both of whom were descendants of Lot, Abraham's nephew. We know full well that all who call themselves "Christians" are not true believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. But to unnecessarily provoke them is not right for us. In the preaching of the Gospel, many who take the place of being Christians will oppose a clear presentation of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. Such provocation should come from their response to the truth of God being presented to them, not from our attitude toward them. A plain message of the warnings and consequences of sin, and salvation by grace alone through faith in Christ, may stir a resentful conviction. That is the work of the Holy Spirit, not a reaction produced by men. A faithful message delivered in the power of the Spirit by a gracious person, with kindness and earnestness, cannot be justly condemned. The rights of the listener are not trampled on, but at the same time, the listeners are called upon to act on the rights of God "in whom they live and move, and have their being." God can save those who seem very unlikely to be saved according to our thinking.

The Israelites had to spend thirty-eight years wandering because of their own disobedience, so they had no right to act independently when it came to other people and their God-given rights. Our lives as believers will be what they should be when we submit to the will of God as each situation in life arises. We rebelled against God's authority. We resisted His commands. We willfully went our own ways. We made our own

lives complicated. So, we don't have the right to condemn others for what they do, because we did the same things. But we do have the responsibility to show them what God says in His Word.

When we act consciously aware of the will of God, our lives will be less complicated and we will know when to draw near to others and when to avoid unnecessary contact. We will know what to defend and what to claim for ourselves. We will know what to give and what to take. The Israelites under Moses' leadership avoided some intertribal obstacles because God explained their rights and the reasons for them. In the case of Sihon, king of Hesbon, the retribution for his opposition came from God. God directed the children of Israel as to what to do. It was God who gave the victory through His people. He prepared them before they crossed into the promised land, for what He would expect from them in days and years to come, and He showed them what He was going to do through them.

We do not have the power in ourselves to defeat the enemies that surround us who are unseen and unknown. Our discernment is lacking when it comes to the hidden agendas of those who want nothing to do with God and His Gospel. Some who are opposed may be those who are looking for peace and don't know where to find it. Others may seem favorable but are subtle and want to undermine and defeat the work of God. All we need to do is fulfill what we know is God's will, and are told to do by divine authority. We can leave the outcome of such things to God. He knows the end from the beginning. It is up to us to follow Him with our whole heart and mind, and be conscious of the fact that He is going ahead of us. It may be that circumstances will alter our plans. Sometimes wise advice given by those who are closer to a situation or place will be God's means of guiding our actions. In our contract with God in which we have died to ourselves and live unto Him, it is important that we understand who leads and who follows. His plans are the ones we act on. It is His divine purposes that we are going to be fulfilled. He is allowing us to share in His work now, and He will allow us to share in His glory later.

**Deuteronomy 2:2-3.** *“And the Lord spake unto me, saying, ‘Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward.’”*

**YE HAVE COMPASSED THIS MOUNTAIN LONG ENOUGH.**

It was the right place - for awhile  
God chose that stopping place - for awhile  
There was a time of great learning - for awhile  
Service for God there was good - for awhile

Long years were spent in Seir - waiting  
Moses spoke of those years in few words - waiting  
The fortieth year has come; still - waiting  
Miriam, then Aaron; funerals by the thousands - waiting

Now the word from the Lord - long enough  
The old generation is gone, you are here - long enough  
There is nothing for you here now - long enough  
It is time for you to move north, you've been here - long enough

It is possible to be content and want no changes - satisfied  
Your family has lived here, you are used to it - satisfied  
There are burial places here of the old generation - satisfied  
You are so used to second or third rate you are - satisfied

Rise up and move on - put this in the past  
The people who murmured - put this in the past  
The forty years of waiting - put this in the past  
All the failures of obeying God - put this in the past

Pack your things and prepare - move on  
Don't hesitate to obey God this time - move on  
Follow the leading of the cloud and pillar - move on  
Don't look back to where you have been - move on

We are still here waiting, Lord - look up  
There seems to be so much wrong, Lord - look up  
Even the governments and money fail, Lord - look up  
I am starting to get tired and slow, Lord - look up

**“Father, there have been times when I have moved too hastily, I know. Other times I have dragged my heels not wanting to make a move for fear of making a mistake. Now that I am more mature, I think I am getting a better sense of when to move and when to stay, but I still need guidance and assurance of each step I take. O leave me not to make my way through the days, years and events Thou hast planned for me. Sometimes I think I have compassed this mountain long enough. Other times I think I have been in Oregon and the Northwest long enough. I am ready Father, for whatever is Thy will. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

### **Deuteronomy 3**

#### **PRESS AHEAD**

After forty years of learning who they were and their limitations, and learning who God is and His infinite power and authority, the children of Israel now began to move toward their goal with events happening to them in rapid succession. Now as they pressed ahead, they saw the power of God at work in them and through them. In God's own way, He empowered the Israelites to do what naturally they could not do. Sihon, king of the Amorites was miraculously defeated and all that he and his people had was now theirs. The giant, Og, king of Bashan and his forces came against them and God gave to His people the power to utterly destroy them. What had belonged to those of Bashan now belonged to them. When God's people are in fellowship with Him, things we think are impossible to accomplish are able to be done. Obstacles we thought were so great are overcome. Barriers we thought were insurmountable are crossed when the sovereign God works on our behalf.

One of the best ways God teaches us is to place things in front of us that are beyond our ability to deal with by ourselves. It is in those times we earnestly seek the Lord and beseech Him with true faith, to do what we know we cannot do. If we do not "trust Him and be not afraid," we will find ourselves in a state of worry and discouragement that we are not able to overcome. Our doubts and fears claim our mind and our time because we are focusing on ourselves and our weakness, instead of on God and His strength. When we are in a state of despair, we need to consider the promises of God and trust Him who is faithful to fulfill them. The problems we face in life are often allowed by our Gracious Father to keep us looking beyond our failed attempts at solving a problem, to His grace that does "exceedingly abundantly, above all that we ask or think."

By divine power, Israel won a victory over Og, the king of Bashan, and all his forces. Now the land on the east side of the Jordan River belonged to the Israelites. The tribes of Reuben and Gad, and half of Manasseh found that the high land there was a good place for their cattle and herds, and were granted that land. The victories over those who came against them before they got to the promised land would encourage all of the nation by assuring them of the presence and power of God with them. They could press forward with confidence in God and have nothing to fear. "If God be for us, who can be against us." There is often a problem that arises among God's people after some significant victory is won. We start to think we did it. We won the victory. It is imperative for us, when a soul is saved through the efforts we have put forth, to reach that person, to give God all the glory. When a miraculous recovery from illness takes place, we must give God all the glory, and thank those doctors and nurses who God used. If a wandering son or daughter returns in humility to the family, we must not claim the magnetism of our home life to be the reason - we must give God all the glory for answering our prayers.

It is very encouraging to us when the persistent pressures of evil against us are defeated by divine intervention. Such times help us to press ahead in faith to the next objective in our Christian life. Victories are not reasons for us to slow down or stop venturing forward with the divine commission. The attractions of the world will always be with us and against us in this life. The deceitfulness of our flesh will not abandon ongoing attempts to bring us down into failure. The god of this world, the devil, will not stop his attempts to discredit the child of God and get that believer to surrender to his enticements. Enemies will be against the people of God until our Lord Jesus Christ reigns. But we need to press ahead, resisting the temptations and fears that beset us; trusting in our faithful God to do for us what we cannot do. Hope and trust placed in our unfailing God who has promised to "never leave [us] nor forsake [us]," is confidence placed in the right Person. "Vain is man who trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm."

Not all the things we hope for will happen to us or for us in this life. Our expectations are usually based on our limited vision of what we or others have experienced, rather than on what the Lord's intention is for us. Much of what we had hoped to accomplish we will not see done. We have only a finite view of things and are in danger of taking credit for victories ourselves. In the work of God among an assembly of believers, there is a variety of gifts being used by God to benefit the whole body. Some things God uses in certain people will never be known by anyone else except that faithful servant and his Master. Other more public uses of gifts may be a very small part of a whole united effort when we are doing a work for God. Each one

has a particular segment of work that should be used heartily to press ahead the work at hand. Whatever is my responsibility in any activity or service for God, I should continually press ahead in having confidence in God. By faith I do what is set before me and trust the outcome will be a victory of some kind that will glorify Him.

The Lord God made clear to Moses the fact that Joshua was to be the new leader He had chosen. Moses' responsibility before he died was to make that known publicly to the nation of Israel. In that way there would be no leadership vacuum when God took Moses. The on-going leadership of God's people should be done by men who have been prepared in advance to function in roles suited to them until they become proficient in that work. When a leader passes away or steps down for some reason from the work he has been doing, the training he had received over the previous years should enable those raised up by the Holy Spirit to press ahead in confidence. They should by now have learned to trust in God and act in faith as they guide the Lord's people forward in the work of testimony for the Lord.

Preparation to do a work takes longer than the time it takes to deal with a situation that arises. Much of the training process is general in that principles need to be taught that will be acted upon appropriately, even though a matter arises that has not been encountered before. Moses had known Joshua for a long time and had him share in the work in many ways before Joshua was called upon by God to lead the nation. To be able to function in a leadership role takes time and is not accomplished without making mistakes. Paul wrote Timothy about this and said, "The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also."

As Moses reviewed the contract God had made with the people of Israel, both the failures and victories were rehearsed. His leadership, and now the transfer of leadership to Joshua was addressed. Moses wasn't allowed to lead them into the promised land but was allowed to see it from a mountain and envision the day when the people dwelt in peace where God intended them to be. We may never see the results of our labor in the service of God because of our own failures in the work or for some other reason. But by God's grace, we can see by faith the result of labor done for God. Because of that assurance and hope, we must press ahead with what we are called to do, and do it "with our might as unto the Lord, and not unto men."

**Deuteronomy 3:28.** *"But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see."*

### **TRANSFER OF LEADERSHIP #2.**

"O God, Thou art great and mighty in every word and way -  
All authority and power on earth belongeth unto Thee.  
Grant to Thy servant Moses, right words - just what to say -  
So that those who follow behind me will all be able to see  
Thou art in control of the course of all these events,  
And Joshua, my servant, is the one Thou hast chosen to lead.

Thy mighty arm has been seen delivering us all this way -  
We have experienced many times the grace Thou dost freely give.  
Many times, we've failed Thee, not heeding what You say -  
But all Thy people Israel, know it is in Thee that we live.  
I will encourage this younger man to lead carefully every day,  
Assuring him Thou wilt add Thy strength to the strength that now is his."

In times past when it was necessary that leadership changes came -  
It was important that God's people knew God's work was in good hands.  
It is no different here today - when someone speaks a name -  
It is easy to tell from others if they think he is a trustworthy man.  
True leaders will not lead for money or from people want their acclaim -  
They will be more concerned to do for God the very best they can.

Joshua was a proven man in his battles for the Lord -  
For years he served his mentor; had really proved himself.  
It needs to be the same today when leading people forward -  
It takes a man of character; one who understands God's truth -  
He is not afraid to press ahead in spite of pressures from the world -  
He follows the example of older ones who already proved their worth.

It is easy for me to challenge a man who the Lord Himself anointed -  
He will take the challenge do what's needed and rise to the occasion.  
When trials come, I can encourage him so he will not be disappointed -

Assuring him we all make mistakes and to seek God's help in every decision.  
It is possible to strengthen him, telling him God is the One who promoted  
You as His servant, giving you vigor, vitality, and vision.

**“O God, my heavenly Father: there are these men who seem to think they are well qualified to lead and yet they have never led anything or anyone. Is there something I should do to show them the reason why their leadership is premature? If there is, please make it unmistakable clear to me. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

#### **Deuteronomy 4**

##### **KEEP AND DO**

The heart of the covenant God made with the nation of Israel is the law He gave. He set the unmistakable standard. Moses went over the terms of the contract carefully with this next generation of Israelites so all the people of Israel would know what would happen if they failed to keep the commands of the Lord, and also the blessings they would have if they kept and did what the law said. It is possible for us to know what is right and be able to define, and pass on, truth, and not do it. To go through religious forms that seem fairly close to what God intends, is not what it means to do them. Even if we are able to exactly duplicate what God intends from us, but to do it in resentment or carelessly, is not what doing the will of God from the heart is like. There are times when the feeble saint is restricted by age, infirmity or some imposed limitation. But when they draw near to the Lord and seek to keep His commandments and do them to the best of their ability, they are accepted because of the perfect acceptance of their Lord.

To take away from God's Word or add to it, is a presumptuous act on the part of one who is usurping authority over the revealed will of God. Anything taken away and considered unimportant, would make God's Word incomplete. Any additions we might make to God's commands and His Word, would impose a human element that could change with each individual's opinion. It would make it a burden to some and would undermine the divine authority of the scripture. Traditions of one culture or another have been added by religious groups and confusion has been the result. How often we hear the comment, "Which one is right?" When human laws are added to the Word of God, challenge to God's sovereign authority is made.

The Lord Jesus Christ condemned the Pharisees and other groups when He was here for doing that very thing. His clarification of the meaning of the law were not additions but were to aid people in understanding what the true meaning of the law was and what was the purpose of the law. The written law revealed what sin is. The lifestyle of humanity is guided by laws to avoid confusion and conflict. To obey those given by God guides us by pointing out our sin and the way sin has to be dealt with. The standard of righteousness the law defines, clearly points out what is wrong and what is right in the life of a conscientious person.

God's law first of all reveals to us what God is like morally. Then it exposes us for what we are and the kind of lifestyle God expects from us. Who God is, who we are, what God intends from us and how He expects us to live are all seen in the moral and ceremonial aspects of the law. It is true that our relationship with God does not depend on us keeping the whole law perfectly. The righteous standard of the law is beyond our human ability to keep and do perfectly for a lifetime without one failure. But the principle of the law, and the truth of the law is applicable to humanity world-wide. There are rules to live by and God wrote them on the heart and conscience of every person. Every culture has some standard of conduct to prevent anarchy and terror. When those laws are broken, wars break out, moral standards are forsaken and people live in fear.

When there is respect and obedience to laws, there is appreciation for God. Thanksgiving for forgiveness, worship for God, gladness in fellowship with others is appreciated because of the accepted sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ on our behalf. This results in reverence for God, respect for God and others, and joy that accompanies righteousness in life. We are made aware of our sin by the law; of the holiness of God by the law; of the fact we are condemned by the law - but we are moved to accept God's forgiveness and love because Christ fulfilled the law.

The following generations of God's people need to be taught the Word of God early in life in order to learn how to escape the condemnation of the broken law. Passing on truth from one generation to another is the responsibility of parents and grandparents. When parents deviate from the path they were taught from the Bible, and go a different way than their parents, the grandparents will then have very little to say that is accepted by the younger generations. About all that we have to give by way of instruction that will be at least in a little measure accepted, is our lifestyle that is different but consistent. We are able to express our convictions and the scriptures by which we live. Sometimes the stories of life and what we have learned by experience are politely listened to. They at least give information even if the truths they contain are ignored as ancient and irrelevant. Over a lifetime we have proved the faithfulness of God to us as we have sought to

serve Him according to the teachings of the scripture. Beyond that point we have to leave the results to God and trust Him to do what we cannot do.

For those who know what is right scripturally, and choose not to do that, there is greater condemnation than for those whose idols seem real to them. The idols (the things that we think about most) people make have no value and are wrong, no matter who the person is who submits to idol worship. They are condemned because of not obeying the law written on the tables of their heart, but their condemnation is not as great as those who know who God is and what he has done for them, and deliberately turned away from Him. Ignorance is not an excuse because "God is not far from everyone of us, for in Him we live and move, and have our being." God has very plainly revealed Himself to us in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. There is only one true God and there is no acceptable reason for a person to not come to Him. Creation, conscience, His goodness to us, the lives of Christians, pain and suffering, dreams - all these and more give silent testimony to Him and His being. The history of Israel prophetically unfolding, the Bible, the verbal teachings of believers in Christ and the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ leave every person without an excuse for not believing in Him.

The moral perfections of God keep people separated from Him without a sinless substitute to come between and provide reconciliation. In the Old Testament sinless animals provide temporary atonement. Now through our Lord Jesus Christ, the Perfect Man, and sinless Substitute for us has been provided. Moses' anger and self-will kept him from going into the promised land. Any form of idolatry we might have is reason for the "consuming fire" of God's holiness to bring judgment of one kind or another. His jealousy for righteousness is right and appropriate. God's word and God's honor, He will defend because these reflect His character as He reveals Himself to us. The law of God states the terms of our acceptance, and for that demand, He is jealous. That is not able to be nor ever will be, compromised. He is the Lord God Almighty, and His glory will never be given to another.

We can know God when with our heart and soul we seek for Him. When we find Him through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, we are accepted. That is not because we may have tried to keep the law, or for any false notion we might have that He will compromise His character and overlook our sin, but because we have claimed for ourselves the provision of the acceptable Substitute. With gratitude and devotion, we come to Him, and "believe that He is, and is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him." When that personal relationship with God has been established, we find He is there to guide us, meet our need, give us understanding that we do not have naturally, and He loves us unconditionally. It is His divine right to have authority over us, and He does this with benevolent mercy. It is of "His mercies we are not consumed."

The purpose of the laws and regulations God had when He gave these to the nation of Israel, was for their good. If they would keep and do what He said, they would prosper. If they did not, there would be consequences because of their lack of faith in Him alone. When a nation acknowledges God as their Lord, there are great blessings. His laws were designed for their health, so certain things could be eaten and other things forbidden. Just laws for the behavior of the citizens were given so there would be contentment and fairness. When mercy was shown, there was prosperity. Covetousness brought loss. Righteous laws make for righteous living by righteous people when they are obeyed. God's laws are always righteous.

In our day, laws that we once lived by, have been changed so the people only prosper financially and to an extent, socially. They are becoming more depraved morally and spiritually. Good laws that are followed exalt a nation. When sin is allowed and justified as being acceptable "by the majority opinion," it is a shame to all the people. Spiritual prosperity that is experienced is known by the comfort and consciousness of the presence of God. There will always be difficulties, trials and temptations of living in this world where God is not honored. Believers will be going contrary to the ways of the world. But we are to "set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth." In this way what we know is from God and is the will of God, we will keep and do.

**Deuteronomy 4:2.** *"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the Lord your God which I command you."*

#### **INSTRUCTIONS.**

God is not confused about what He wants to do  
His plans were made before "the beginning."  
He has made very clear all we are supposed to know  
In His Word to give us understanding.  
It would be the same as rejecting His name  
If I would ever try to add to His Word,

Or to take some away, or diminish what it says  
Would be a severe insult unto the Lord.

I am to "keep" His Word and make it known  
And then to "do" what I have learned.  
His Word will give wisdom when I use it aright  
Far be it for me ever to spurn  
The truths it contains for they are placed there by God.  
He has every right to expect me to obey  
When I surrendered to Him - acknowledged Him as Lord  
I was committed to following "The Way."

Understanding of events and choices to be made  
Comes to me when to His Word I give heed.  
When there are alternatives there, for understanding I plead  
God is faithful to give light when I read.  
I must never forget I'm under His command  
It's not enough to know - it is wrong for me to forget  
Because I have heard His voice, sensed His guiding hand  
And by His truth overcome the sins that beset.

**"O God of all wisdom and understanding, I pray today that I will take heed to Thy Word and never forget it. I pray that I will always seek Thee and turn to Thee when decisions are to be made. I want to be obedient to Thy voice and committed to Thee and Thy truth and always seek Thee with all my heart and soul, by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

**Deuteronomy 4:9.** *"Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons."*

#### **DILIGENCE: faithful application to one's work.**

The keeping of my soul takes diligence, of that there is no doubt. The keeping of my soul is by the effective response to my conscience. That will in turn lead me, and keep me in the path of GOD'S WILL. [De.4:9]

I am told to "diligently keep the commandments of the Lord." It should go without saying, that His commandments are not suggestions. My convictions that the commandments of the Lord are GOD'S WORD will keep me from a casual attitude toward the scriptures of truth. [De.6:17]

I have been challenged to "keep thy precepts diligently." Far be it from me to shrug any of these holy practices to one side. My conduct bears a clear testimony as to what I think of GOD'S WAYS. I must walk in such a way as to be able to be identified as one of His own. [Ps.119:4]

The inner man is known as "the heart." "Keep thy heart with all diligence" implies that I have a serious responsibility here. This action will reflect the depth of my commitment. My commitment, in turn, will put on display my attitude towards GOD'S WORK. [Pro.4:23]

In taking heed to myself, I am not content to go on day after day with no thought to each issue of life or responsibility that I am given. I will earnestly look at each activity my heart and soul considers; then in carefulness I will act. God's ways are the plans that He makes known to those who are near to Him. The acts are a general response to God's will that are more superficial. I must keep all that my eyes have seen in the inner recesses of my heart. In that way I have them close at hand when the opportunity arises to speak to my family and grandchildren about those things that are in my soul. I am to be a diligent teacher to those who are closest to me; speaking of the things I have experienced of God, whenever the time is ripe [De.6:7]. I must be diligent in inquiry before making choices. Choices that I make, may affect others and it is my official duty to have considered everything carefully before passing a judgment [De.19:18]. In the busy affairs of temporal life, I am to be diligent; not slothful, but fervent. In this area of my life I also am reminded that I am God's servant. All of my life is not my own. I am His [Rom.12:11]. As a worker in His vineyard, it is incumbent on me to be consistent and to be continually involved in those things that are eternal. I have been called to further His work. God forbid that I would ever "take it easy" when the time is so short [1Cor.7:29-31]. The task of preaching the Word, is not one to be taken lightly. Nor should it be relegated to words spoken behind a desk to people who are a captive audience. It is my responsibility to use every means at my disposal to bring light and life to men and women around me [2Tim.4:1-5].

The special objects of my diligence are: the soul, the commands of the Lord, the heart, the graces that Peter tells me to add one upon the other; and the calling I have been given.

**“O gracious God who has called me with a holy calling. I am called upon today to give “all diligence” to those graces I am to add to. It occurs to me that each one is an evidence of Christ-likeness. The great blessing that follows certainly makes it worth the effort to be diligent in this regard. To be fruitful and reproducing in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ is the highest ambition I could have. I am aware of my lack of ability but diligence is within my grasp. I am not being intentionally blind because I do want the rewards of diligence - that Thou will be glorified. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **Deuteronomy 5**

### **THE TEN COMMANDMENTS**

In reviewing God's contract with Israel. Moses went back to the ten commandments and explained to the next generation and their children what these were and what they meant. This is a practice that is well to be followed - repeating the fundamental principles of life and faith. There are a lot of explanations and excuses people make when there is some obligation, they have with which they do not want to comply. When we have opportunities to talk with neighbors and family members, we do well to remind them in some way of what is important in long run. Busy lives lived under the pressure to produce something can make people forget their moral obligations to God, to themselves and to others.

God intended Moses to review the Ten Commandments to the Israelites in a way that they would hear with understanding, grasp the meaning, keep the truth in them and act on what the law said. It is possible to have information about God and truth without knowing what it really means. Many such conversations along that line have comments such as, "I think...", "I don't believe that way...", "I am not comfortable with that." When we pass on the truth of God to others, we need to make sure they understand the authority with which we speak is not from our own ideas. Otherwise the result is an argument that no one wins. One person's word against another is only that, and nothing is accomplished by an argument, nor are differences of opinion usually changed. In fact, often positions taken are polarized.

When one's ear is opened to actually listen to what is said from the Word of God, then there is hope that one might give heed to what is said. To hear with understanding means that information given is really understood and is being absorbed. That is why the public proclamation of the Gospel is needed. Private conversations are basically to the unbelievers, an exchange of information by equals with each having equal rights as the which one's opinion is most valid. When there is the heralding forth of the truth of God by a chosen servant, that person has the attention of people long enough to define the problem that separates people from God. Then they can give the solution to the problem from as many angles as possible. In a public message a speaker can then focus the hearer's attention on the issue to the exclusion of other opinions, and urge those who hear to act upon what has been said. Those who hear are able to absorb what has been spoken because they "have heard with the hearing of the ear."

The process of learning isn't an instant thing and may take a lengthy period of time depending on the convictions a person has and whether they are willing to be taught. After hearing a message from God, learning has the implication that acting on that message will be considered. The meaning of the message is understood. The implications that will affect one's life if the message is acted upon, will take some time to be decided on depending on that person's frame of reference, background and willingness to effect change.

Keeping and doing involved claiming for one's self the truth, and putting the truth into action in a person's life. Following what has been taught, learned and received with understanding is the way a relationship with God is formed and maintained. It is God's intention that His people not only are willing to have such a connection formed by reconciliation to Him, but that we live in that fellowship continually. In that way a person's life is able to be effective not only for themselves, but for those who come after us. We pass on what we know and have personally experienced.

Not everyone who has a god before the one true God, has an idol formed out of gold, silver, wood or stone as some religions do. Their idols are unseen but often are more powerful. Power, money, materialism, influence and popularity are some of the idols that are driving forces in their lives. Anything that claims the central focus of my life is the "god" in my life. The Lord God is to have the first place in my life and deserves my devotion, my attention and my allegiance. I am to be loyal to Him no matter what the consequences are. Each day I need to make sure His interests are the priority in all my activities. Love for Him is the motivating force of my life and when I fail Him, I need to confess my sin and forsake it. Thankfully He has promised to forgive me.

God is not at all interested in me having His photograph and hanging it on a wall along with other ancient people or even family members who have lived and died. To put a likeness of Him that someone has made or even one that I might think is like Him into a frame would be demeaning to Him. It would be like I am relegating Him to mere human perspective. To try to encapsulate an infinite Person who "inhabits eternity" and to whom "earth is His footstool" is really an insult to Him. Those people who refuse to be photographed or have pictures painted of them are to a certain extent exalting themselves rather than recognizing themselves for who they really are. Our God is the Living God who lives His life in us and through us. He is the vital part of all we are and do. He is not allowing us to give Him a humiliating place alongside of the other mementos of life that we collect.

Our speech is to always "be with grace, seasoned with salt." What is called "salty language" by men is not to come from the lips of the people of God. That kind of speech has no redeeming features at all. It is contrary to what God intends our voices and words to be used for. To praise God in words and songs glorifies Him. Worship uses words to communicate the thoughts of our heart in ways that honors God. There are a number of ways we can honor Him. God formed a covenant with the people of Israel in which the last day of the week became the Sabbath. That day was set apart for rest and fellowship with God. That day signified the end of creation in the beginning and then the end of the agreement God made with the nation of Israel. To those of us who live in the days of the New Covenant (Testament), the first day of the week is called the Lord's (lordly) Day. The important points of the first day of the week begin with the resurrection of Christ; the event that changed everything from being historical, to presently active in our lives. "Because He lives, we live also." The first day of the week is not only the day of resurrection but also of remembrance in which we remember Christ and make a public proclamation of His death. It is a day of responsibility when we give our financial offerings to God. The first day of the week is a day of review when the word of God is ministered to God's people, and it is a day of revelation as when John gave prophetic insights into the future.

When a person is young, we are told, "children obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." Parental authority is the same world-wide because the survival of children depends on the various provisions made for them by fathers and mothers. As years pass by adult children are called upon to "honor thy father and thy mother." The influence of parents, the values of parents, the morals and spiritual influence of parents are all part of what makes their grown children who they are. There may come differences of opinion and the children may choose a different path in life then that of their parents, but the parents still deserve the respect of their children and grandchildren.

The carrying out of just judgment by a nation or government, and deliberate murder by an individual are two different things. The right to give or take life is not in our hands. Anger and hatred in the heart of a person against another is considered the same as murder in the heart. The keys of life and death are held in the hands of the Lord. Lustful desires for another person are considered by God the same as committing adultery. Deliberate lying and misrepresenting the truth by false statements, taking what is not ours to have, wanting what belongs to another with a view of claiming it, are not only forbidden by the law, but the result of it does not bring joy and satisfaction to those who ignore and break those laws. It actually will promote an inward sense of guilt and discontentment because that is the purpose of the law. We will never be satisfied by claiming for ourselves what belong to others or even by an attempt to rob another person of their character.

All of the commandments of God make us conscious of our failures and shortcomings. We are motivated by the awakening of our conscience to the fact that we "have sinned and come short of the glory of God." One who loves the Lord wants to respect Him. It is their desire to know God and obey Him. When our lives are dedicated to the Lord, it is because our hearts are drawn by love to Him. When we love someone, we desire to please that person both in the human, natural sphere of our lives and in the spiritual.

The outcome of living for God is fellowship with God and His people. Our own lives are enhanced by yielding to divine authority and even the length of life is affected by the degree to which we keep God's commands. The principles stated in the law are right and good in that they reveal our sin and lead us to accept not only God's verdict because of sin, but His solution by providing salvation by grace through faith. The people who live and walk by the judgments and commands of God, will be able to withstand the pressures to compromise. God is honored when we obey what He has said, and apply ourselves to those things that please Him.

**Deuteronomy 5:29.** *"O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear Me, and keep all My commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!"*

**KEEP ALL MY COMMANDMENTS.**

No other gods - not self or pleasure, fame or money  
Can claim first place in my life.  
The Eternal God - He is the One and Only -  
He is Love and Life and Light.

Images made by man are imaginary -  
The Living God should never thus be portrayed.  
An attempt by men to make God ordinary -  
Is to be rejected - God is greatly to be praised.

The name of the Lord is as a great high tower -  
Where the righteous can run to and be safe.  
Take that name in vain, and to your own great sorrow -  
You are held guilty for spurning His grace.

The last day of the week was established by God  
As a covenant between Israel and Him.  
They were to remember their deliverance by power and blood,  
A reminder of God's mighty hand and arm.

Parents have a role no other people can fill -  
They are to train and guide their child.  
To dishonor and ignore them, not submitting your will -  
Will shorten your life because you do not yield.

To murder a person is to take a life God gave -  
You do not have the right to do this.  
Besides, he has a soul that may never be saved -  
And you will never from this be guiltless.

To look upon another lower than their face -  
Can lead to sin that controls your mind.  
When temptation arises, flee that place -  
You will surely a place of refuge find.

Taking from another is not just sin against them,  
But is also against a command of God.  
Your rights stop at home, it is serious when -  
You reach out with the dirty hand of greed.

Telling a lie to some people seems very trivial -  
But it's not trivial to our God who hears.  
Every word, even exaggerations made so casual -  
Will come back some day far exceeding all your fears.

To want what belongs to another is different than stealing -  
Covetousness eats deep in the soul.  
It may never be known except by God what you are feeling -  
But once it starts you will never be whole.

These commands of the Lord are to awaken our hearts  
To the fact that there is a standard to meet.  
God has made plain that once sin gets its start -  
We are no longer from its consequence freed.

Our Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled completely the law -  
Substituting Himself on the cross for me.  
Now it has been made evident once through His Word I saw -  
By God's grace alone, I am made free.

**"O Righteous God, I give thanks and praise to Thee today for such a deliverance from the demands of the law. I failed in all points and yet the blessed Savior never once failed. I do believe He died in my place. I do believe Thou art able to look on Him and pardon me. I do believe that I am now "accepted in the Beloved." I am very, very grateful and thank Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

**Deuteronomy 6**

**THE KEY TO DAILY LIVING**

Most of what our children will learn from us is taught in the routine events of daily living. What my attitude is like at the beginning of a day is one of the major impressions they will get as to how to approach each day. Some people will excuse bad behavior by saying, "I am not a morning person." We are what we choose to be and what we allow ourselves to be. To begin each day with a conversation with the Lord our God, enables us to face the unknown events before us with faith in Him and grace toward others. Our children and grandchildren will look on silently and hopefully will learn that it is possible for us to "bring every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ," and if we do, we are off to a satisfactory start of a day. God's laws are given so we won't "crash and burn" because we are out-of-control people. The careful conduct of life under divine direction enables us to live long and well. The teaching process goes on constantly, and my love for the Lord and my response to His will is learned best by my example more than my words.

The promise of a fruitful land lay before the Israelites as they waited for the sign from God to enter. They were probably thinking about farms and homes that were waiting for them that could have been theirs forty years earlier. Moses taught them again how to avoid the same mistakes their fathers had made. He described the land to them and what was their responsibility to claim and maintain. God had promised them this land and they were to keep it in the way He intended. There are obligations and conditions we must meet in order to live our lives as God intends. We are not independent people without responsibilities towards God and other people.

Our appreciation and love for God should show when we live from day to day before our loved ones and our neighbors. The Word of God sets the pattern for daily living for God's people. There is a theme to life's story that works well and that is the kind of life God wants for us. We are to whole-heartedly, emotionally and intellectually love God with all our body, soul and spirit. When we love Him in this way, it gives the proper expression to our love for our families and those around us. If our faith in God is properly intact, that gives the insight for daily living as God intended. The lives of many people are so diverse and disconnected that they have a problem knowing what is really important. People can get almost as upset over losing a ballgame as they can over the loss of a human life. Some have given personhood to animals and plants to the extent they mourn over the death of things of creation more than over the need of the death of Christ as the Savior for their sins.

In family life it is up to parents to make their love for God evident to their children. Children need to be taught what God's commands are and why we follow the scriptures as our pattern for life. Bible teaching should not be left up to Sunday School teachers only. The guidelines taught in God's Word are there for parents to teach so the home environment will make them effective. Effective teaching will use object lessons from daily living. There will be situations that arise that will provide "teaching moments." There needs to be given opportunities for practical applications of the things that have been learned. Some things are taught in public meetings, but they are learned when people apply these things personally.

When there is genuine love for God, we will be able to see other people through God's eyes. The need of our children to know God, will affect our conversations. Opportunities come to make a spiritual point when we are consciously ready and wanting for God to use us. Opening up a conversation at a mealtime or on a walk is not too difficult if we are aware of the needs of those we are with. It is incumbent on us to take advantage of each opportunity to guide our children into the truth of God. Wherever we look and whatever we do, there are illustrations and examples of God's power and presence. Use those everyday experiences that we see and do, to teach spiritual things that are unseen. "The things that are seen are temporal (temporary), but the things that are not seen are eternal."

True religious education is an on-going process that can best be furthered by combining instruction and practical application. The children of Israel had evidence of God's presence in the cloud and fire all through the wilderness journey. Parents and children would go out six days a week into the pre-dawn darkness to gather manna for their daily provision. The tabernacle in the center of the camp, and the smoke of the continual offering rising into the air to God, could be seen by those who looked in that direction. We don't have those visible Jewish symbols, but we have the Bible containing the scriptures that we should read with our children. In our prayers to God we should name our children before Him so they know they are known to God and should conduct themselves with the assurance, "Thou God seest me." When we gather as an assembly to the Lord's Supper, the fellowship and all of the activities when we are together with other believers, can be "teaching moments" if they are explained. Let us make God and our faith in Him, real to our children in every possible way.

The Israelites were preparing to enter the land God had promised them, and the life they had known in Egypt and the wilderness for forty years was about to change completely. In a very brief time, they were going to have houses to live in and fields of their own to till. Instead of being a nation of slaves, they were

about to become prosperous landowners. The tendency to settle down and forget that God brought them there, would be real and had to be warned against. The need for God to provide manna, water and all the things that preserved life would soon be gone, and they would think they no longer needed Him. In their thinking they would be able to do what was needed for living by themselves. Far too often people forget that "in Him we live and move and have our being." The ground under our feet is filled with the "fullness of God." The seeds we plant have their life source in God alone. There is never a moment of life, a bite of food, a breath we draw when we are out of God's domain. The gods of men of whatever kind they are, do not provide "life and breath and all things."

Every aspect of our life is intended by God to be good and right. His standards of righteousness and justice are given to us to follow, and when we fail, His plan of redemption and reconciliation is made plain to us. Our dependence on Christ as our Mediator is on-going and is taught when we pray and read the scriptures with our families. There will be times when our children will ask us why we do what we do, and we owe them a clear explanation. A child will learn from wise parents the value of daily tasks that we must be responsible for in order to live a normal life. The value and reason for work is taught by example in normal home life. The spiritual part of life is taught when we apply truths the Bible contains, and the practices of our church life, to our daily life and routine.

To review the past is a way to teach how to live in the present and prepare for the future. Each generation of family members has lived a very different kind of life. To tell our children and grandchildren the life story of a family is a good way to prepare them for adding their experiences to the mosaic of a family history. It is very important to teach them how a right relationship with God establishes the foundation of each generation and each person. Obeying God is what makes life to be what it should be. We may have difficulties of poverty, suffering and uncertainty, but in those times our relationship with God sustains us. We know the will of the Lord is being done. Perhaps there will be some benefit in the future we would miss if we didn't have those times.

Prosperity is not always measured by being "rich and increased with goods, and have need of nothing." True prosperity is not what we have but who we are. One saintly man said to another, "Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth." The prosperity of the soul has to do with our contentment and enjoyment of life and God. It also includes our interaction with other people and the things that are important in the context of realistic living. When we love God and obey Him, there is a rest to our souls. "Godliness with contentment is great gain." "Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content." A right relationship with God enables us to live a contented life in spite of the circumstances in which we are found. Daily living a life of faith is the best part of our heritage that we can pass on to our children. A life of quiet contentment, and meaningful labor, linked with praise and worship of God, is an inheritance that has great value. Living daily in righteousness, dignity, respect, honor and integrity will please God, others and ourselves.

**Deuteronomy 6:4.** *"Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: and thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."*

**FEAR THE LORD.**

ABOVE ALL ELSE – THE LORD OUR GOD

*God is One Lord*  
Alone in His Glory  
Majestic in His Holiness  
Perfect in His righteousness  
Supreme in His Being  
Eternal in His Existence  
Matchless in His Character  
Authoritative in His Judgments  
Absolute in His Power  
Changeless in His Word  
Gracious in His Dealings  
Limitless in His Fullness  
Compassionate in His Kindness  
Measureless in His Love  
Faithful in His Truth

THE LORD YOUR GOD COMMANDED TO TEACH YOU

*The commandments, statutes and judgments*  
Do them with zeal  
Fear them with reverence  
Keep them with consistency

Hear them with attentiveness  
Do them with alacrity  
Increase with gratitude  
Enjoy milk and honey with thankfulness  
Prolonged days with dignity  
Teach them with authority

TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY TO THY CHILDREN

*Take time to teach the children*

Keep at teaching them

Talk to them about God's things naturally

Talk of them when sitting down at leisure

Talk of them when walking and busy

Talk of them at night before bedtime

Talk of them in the morning before school

Bind the things of God on your hand at work

Put them before your eyes when making decisions

Write them down to be seen inside your home

Write them where they can be a testimony outside your home

**"O Lord God, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth. I am fearful lest I seem to be less than reverent when I address Thee. Yet I am comfortable, and I trust not out of order, when I call Thee, "Father." I have been impressed these last few days, Father, with the emphasis Moses placed on Thy Word during his final address to the nation of Israel. I am getting older too, Father, and I want to be wise whenever I speak to Thy people. May I always be available to Thee to speak what Thy mind and will is - not any of my pet subjects that have no real value. I pray for humility and wisdom, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **Deuteronomy 7**

### **REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE**

In this culture of tolerance and complacency when anything and everything goes, most people are offended by true justice taking its course for the benefit of the whole society. Many people want personal independence without accountability to anyone else. Consequently, a lot of people rail against God or even refuse to believe God exists because He doesn't fit their description of a god to which they want to submit. The existential movement has lifted mankind's opinion of itself to a place where many people believe in a god of their own imagination. Moses made it clear to the Israelites that beside being a merciful and loving God, He was just and righteous. In His infinite wisdom He knows that evil allowed to go unchecked will go on forever and get increasingly worse. There are social and political groups in the Middle East today that are determined to destroy all who do not agree with their dogma. God's command to destroy the idolatrous society of the promised land was both His judgment on the evil that was practiced there, and a safety measure for the people of God who were going to move into the land. Idolatry and immorality will eventually destroy a nation. We are in danger of that happening in our nation.

Some people think of God only as a loving, grandfather type of person who overlooks what is righteous and just in order to have a kindly fuzzy-feeling relationship with sinful people. Their opinion is that God is too nice to punish sin by separating unrepentant sinners from Him forever. To relegate the Righteous, Holy God to a soft-touch, characterless person is to underestimate Him. "He is of holier eyes that to look upon sin." His sovereign choice is directed to those who appreciate His grace and goodness, and are willing to come in repentance for their sinfulness to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation. He intends those who accept His offer of salvation by grace through faith, into His family as adopted sons and daughters by virtue of the fact that we have been bought with the price of the precious blood of Christ.

By the Spirit of God, we have been set aside to be a holy people who are godly in life and are separated from the sinful ways of those who love their sin. God calls them a "special" people because they have been made the focus of divine attention. Every person has been loved by God who "so loved the world." But only those who willingly respond to His love and accept His mercy that will save them from hell, are brought into His family. When His love is directed upon them and they are warmed by the sweet influences of His grace, then a response from a redeemed soul is, "We love Him because He first loved us." God's people are a redeemed people. The Israelites were redeemed by the blood of the Passover lamb. We have been redeemed, "not of corruptible things such as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from you fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

The changes that happen to a child of God often come one lesson at a time as we begin to learn what it means to be a Christian and how to act in ways becoming to a child in God's family. The process of maturing is real and continues through life. We may not recognize a whole lot of changes in one's life at first, but usually there is first a change of attitude toward God and then toward "the brethren." When the past life is compared with this present life, the change in a believer becomes obvious. The child of God needs to know the best way to avoid sin and its consequences is to stay as far away as possible from anything that would defile us.

Moses assured the people of Israel that God wanted to bless them, and would bless them when they kept the terms of the covenant and obeyed the Lord their God. When we begin to realize how much God has blessed us and in how many ways, we begin to wake up to what it means to be a child of God. We are not in a position to bargain with God because there is no reason to. Our inheritance which we enjoy now and will forever, is far more than we can put into words, or measure in material ways. We have all things that pertain to life and godliness now. In the future we will understand far more of what all that consists of. God knows what we need and makes it available to us. Those who do not know the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior have never experienced the blessings associated with the forgiveness of sins, peace with God, a spiritual family, the comfort and power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. As long as Israel followed the Lord, they were abundantly supplied and could experience what they never had as a people for hundreds of years.

Israel was to "dwell alone" among all the nations as an identifiable people who were blessed because "their God was the Lord." God preserved them as He does us today when we "come out from among them and be ye separate saith the Lord. And I will be a Father to you and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty." God preserves His people even though we are small and despised among the millions of people in Christendom.

From time to time we need to review and reaffirm our commitment to our Lord. To be yielded to Him without reservation and in full commitment to Him is to be expected of those who know and why we are still in the world. We are in the world but not of the world. This is not where our values and commitments lie. A committed people know, and welcome, the call and commission of God to serve Him and love Him. "We are not our own." We are His people.

**Deuteronomy 7:6-8.** *"For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The Lord did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people: for ye were the fewest of all people: but because the Lord loved you:"*

### **HOLY PEOPLE... CHOSEN PEOPLE... SPECIAL PEOPLE.**

#### **IN GOD'S EYES**

It is not because we're great in the eyes of other men -

That the Lord separated us unto Him.

When God sets apart His own it is by grace alone -

To be like Him and gather to His name.

Holy people listen and are willing to obey -

They know a holy God has supreme authority.

When we are gathered out, we make a commitment every day -

To follow Him alone - not acting independently.

Chosen people have been identified by God for a special reason

To keep what He commanded close unto our heart.

We keep His judgments daily, not just for a special season -

And that includes them all, not some little private part.

To "keep" what God has said means I've made a deliberate choice -

To never let go of what God entrusted to me.

When I keep the terms of covenant, not loosely but up close -

My Lord has promised, "Lord thy God shall keep unto thee."

What makes these people special is they are in God's family -

They've been adopted to be God's daughters and His sons.

They are not a "super-race" but have been identified to be -

Special people doing what God has wanted done.

They are not free-lancing people but committed in what they do -

The efforts they put forth are to bring God all the glory.

Whether labor is done in private or out in public where all see -

Their motivation is for God to be honored solely.

Above all people around isn't a reason to be proud -

We are what we are, by sovereign grace alone.  
It is not right for us to be in fear of those who crowd around -  
God tells us not to be afraid when oppositions come.  
It is to be expected people will resent those who are forgiven -  
Who try to tell to others the truth of saving grace.  
The power of grace is seen when heavenly people are all living -  
The truth of God's salvation, and the just shall live by faith.

We don't deserve, in any way, the love God has loved us with -  
It is simple a fact that He has chosen to set His love on us.  
As a loved people, loved by God, we must always remember this -  
Love and light go together testifying to God's grace.  
To the eyes of those around us we are just a very simple people -  
They look down on our smallness as an evidence of failure.  
In the eyes of God, it's different, He looks at everyone as equal -  
To obedience and faith, He grants His divine favor.

**“Holy God, we are small indeed in the eyes of the world and sometimes in our own eyes. I never want to judge success or failure by smallness or greatness but by the fact that we are simply to obey Thee. Keep me from trying to measure our work or the work of others by human standards. I am satisfied to be where Thou would have me be. I am rejoicing and grateful that for Thy own reason I have been loved by God and I rest in this sense of acceptance in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **Deuteronomy 8**

### **LED BY THE LORD**

When we take time to review our lives up until this time, we will realize we have been blessed, and are daily receiving new blessings we often take for granted. When we read the Word of God in a devotional way, we begin to check ourselves out to see if we are true “practioners” of the truths we have learned. The Lord our God leads us day by day and step by step through the path of life He has designed for us. When He does this He gives grace for grace - grace given for grace needed. Besides that, we receive faith for faith - answers from His word when we move forward in His will. The process of living by the Word of God often follows a certain pattern. A need arises and we wonder how it is going to be met. To know our need stirs our faith in our Gracious Father and we turn to Him with full confidence. We remember how He has dealt with us in the past and why things unknown to us at the time, have turned out to be great blessings to us.

By God's grace, He has humbled us so that we realize what we thought we were able to do, we could not accomplish without Him. In humility and repentance because of our arrogant pride, we came to Him and He enabled us to do by His power what was needed. In hindsight we began then to understand our real need of God in the small things of life as well as what we considered to be big things. This turned out to be a testing time from our Lord to let us know our limitations and His all-sufficiency. By allowing us to go through difficulties beyond our control or capacity to deal with, He proves to us who we really are and we learn who God really is. It is in those times of need we find that it is God who meets that need.

When the children of Israel rose to dress each day, they could examine their shoes and clothes and find no sign of wear and tear in them in spite of the journey of the day before. They were probably quite amazed at first, but soon they began to take the provision of God for granted. Unfortunately, it is not uncommon for God's people to take for granted our acceptance with God through Christ, our fellowship with Him and His provision for our well-being in the small things of life. It is when we are consciously of God with us that our fellowship with Him lets both us and Him our hearts. When we learn God in the little things of life, He can trust us with the big things. When we are truly thankful for food, the appetite to eat it and the sense of smell to enjoy it, we are often moved to pray for those who have very little and, if possible, take steps to provide for their needs as well.

In grace God at times will lead us to the place in life where we learn the value of hunger. When it is hunger as the Lord Jesus experienced when He was tempted of the devil, we learn there is a satisfaction that goes way beyond being filled with food. Those who "hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled" with that holy provision. We have been "made the righteousness of God in Him." At those times when our spiritual senses are sharpened, we are made to realize what is really important in life. Then when God feeds us, we learn from Him. "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." The children of Israel were forty years being trained how to live in the land of promise. However, all those lost years weren't necessary if they had only been willing to follow the word of God and His leading when they first arrived at Kadesh-barnea.

We are called upon then, to observe what we know and practice it. Then to remember what God has taught us and learn life-lessons from those times of training. We are also called upon to consider why God has corrected us and what led up to that need of correction. It is not right that we should have to be corrected time after time for the same thing. Correction, chastening is inevitable, but its purpose is "to yield the peaceable fruits of righteousness." When we have been charged to obey God's word and carry out the precepts it teaches, we dare not ignore such a charge. The One who gives it is the Lord God who has "all power in heaven and on earth." How arrogant for a mere man to try to change the holy instructions given by God so they suit my preconceived ideas.

On the other hand, when we consider Him and seek to observe, remember and obey His divine directives, we find He moves in grace to us and blesses us with the spiritual blessings that bring us peace and contentment. The discontent of those who measure blessings by the tangible things of life, will never cease. There will always be more things available that the world offers than we can ever use. And yet a discontented person will seek them. How much better to be able to truly say, "Satisfied with Thee Lord Jesus, I am blessed."

In order to keep a balance, God wanted His people not just to remember what He had done for them for the forty years of wandering in the wilderness. There were more fundamental things He did not want them to forget. May we never forget who our Lord really is. He is Eternal in His being. He is Almighty in His power. He is Supreme in His authority. He is Limitless in His ability. He is Gracious in His dealings with us. He is Merciful in His forgiveness. He is Tender in His acts of compassion. His Love has no measure. There is no limit as to who our Lord is and what He is able to do. He is infinite in every attribute and yet has drawn near to us and is our Savior and Lord. He considers us friends. How far beyond our comprehension is His Love to us!

To begin to understand the multiplied blessings we have received from Him, we should not forget where we came from. The Israelites were to remember their bondage, their smallness and the way the Lord led them. We remember we were "not a people." We didn't count at all as far as deserving any attention from God. But now we are "the people of God." No longer are we strangers to His grace, but we are sons and daughters adopted into His family. Even more than a normal adoption, we have been given a new nature by means of the new birth. Both by adoption and by birth, we have been made children of the Living God. We have gone from having nothing, to having all things in Christ; from being enemies and aliens, to children and heirs; from having "no hope and without God in the world," to being placed in the blessed position of sonship.

Now what we have are all things to enjoy in Christ. When we find ourselves in happy fellowship with God, our lives are full of blessings and significant purposes. Accompanying those blessings are obligations that we have to God to live holy, righteous and godly lives because of our association with Him. As those who are a "special people" we owe the world around us our testimony to Him and of His grace. Those we live among need to know that the blessings we received are offered to them as well. Everything "we are, and have, and hope to be," we owe to our Lord. If we forget who He is and what He has done, and turn to the ways of the world around us to seek satisfaction for our fleshly nature, all we have and enjoy can be quickly lost, except for the new nature we have been given. That nature will be grieved and we will find no real joy. The reality of our spiritual joy and blessing will be lost if we turn to the religious world, the world of pleasure, the business world, or any other aspect of the world to try to find our satisfaction.

To truly obey God and keep His commands  
Means my heart is fully attracted to Him.  
It is not a burdensome thing to submit to His plans  
When I live in blessed freedom from sin.  
To know what God wants and to gladly submit;  
Is not always a natural thing to do.  
Obedience because of grace is the reason I commit  
Myself to let my appreciation for Him shine through.

My will is involved in obedience to God;  
I know He wants the very best for me.  
Even though I act in faith alone in His Word  
Each event by faith I can see;  
That my Lord knows best, He is infinite;  
Nothing to Him is unknown.  
Obedience to Him means walking by faith not sight;  
Trusting that what He chooses to me will be shown.

My mind by human nature is so very limited

That I couldn't really know what is right or wrong.  
Unless to principles of truth and grace I'm committed  
Then in my weakness His will is made strong;  
There is a foundation that is laid in my mind  
So, my spiritual intelligence will take control.  
Searching the scriptures of truth, I will find  
That learning from the Lord gives rest to my soul.

My strengths and talents are not very many.  
This body is getting slower and weak.  
Thankfully the Lord is gracious and willing to use any  
Physical abilities I have when fellowship with Him I seek.  
Fellowship in the Gospel, fellowship in any part of His work  
Is my delight in whatever way to participate.  
Financial or physical, may there be no way I shirk  
So that what I am and have to Him I can consecrate.

I look ahead to a day when accounts are made up  
And I stand in awe before the One I truly love.  
Before sitting at the marriage supper and with Him sup  
Will be displayed what for His glory I gave.  
May my purpose in life be consistent in faith  
As from day to day in obedience I serve.  
May my demeanor be a demonstration of God's grace  
May I never from the path of obedience swerve.

**Deuteronomy 8:2.** *"And thou shalt remember all the way the Lord thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep His commandments or no."*

#### **THE WAY THE LORD LED.**

Back at the beginning of my life and walk with God -  
I really wasn't aware of the importance of the things He said.  
Mainly a desire was placed within this heart of mine -  
Whatever my Lord wanted me to do, with me was just fine.

I remember the first doubt, it really humbled me -  
To think of my Lord and Christ, I would ashamed be.  
Joy returned again when I had confessed my sin -  
The lesson learned back there, has stayed with me since then.

Testing times came, but through them all - the Lord led -  
Learning how to act, or refuse what others said.  
God was proving me to let me know what's real -  
That reality is what's in my heart. And not just what I feel.

God has allowed me over the years to know a little hunger -  
Going without what I needed, a day or two or longer  
Helped me to consider what truly was in my heart -  
That I will still remember the Lord led me from the start.

Times have come when the Lord knew I really needed chastening -  
I'm a son and carelessness can't be allowed in the work I'm in.  
The Lord has led me all these years and I'm living in Beulah land -  
I'm more conscious now than ever He has led me by His hand.

**"O Gracious Father, how kind has been all Thy ways to me. How patient to wait for repentance when I have failed. How willing You were to receive my confession and restore me to Thyself when I sinned. How great has been Thy power when I was not able to fulfill the work to which Thou hast called me. How marvelous has been Thy provisions for me, my wife and family. I praise Thee here this morning for allowing me to be adopted into Thy family and making me a son. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

#### **Deuteronomy 9**

##### **STUBBORN AND REBELLIOUS PEOPLE**

There are times when we are more conscious of the sovereignty of God than at other times. We wonder at God's mercy and grace when people are so ungrateful, unrighteous and sinful. But when we stop to

consider ourselves, we are caused to ask, "What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him?" God's people are not immune to the ways and attractions of the world. For some reason there is a tendency to do some of the same things those "without God, without Christ and without hope" in the world do. It is never wise for us to look down on people and consider ourselves to be superior because we have been called by His grace and saved. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

Israel was soon to enter the land of Canaan that God promised Abraham 400 years before. God told the children of Israel He would drive out the wicked people who lived there before them when they came into the land. His people would be able to defeat the inhabitants of the land because God was with them, not because of their own power and strength. He had to clarify some things to them first. The victories were not going to be given them by God because they deserved to win, but because of the wickedness of the people that lived there. The Israelites were not very nice people. They took the blessings God gave them daily for granted. They weren't very thankful for what they had been given and complained because they didn't have more. They seemed to think they deserved more than they had and God was more or less obligated to give it to them. How often this same attitude is among us when we are daily loaded with benefits and have more than we need, and yet want more, and feel deprived if we don't get everything we covet.

The giant Anakites must have been really intimidating people because of their size and strength. Forty years before, the Israelites were so afraid of them they refused to trust God to enable them to win a victory over the giants. Those huge people seemed to be a major factor in them disobeying God and refusing to go in and possess their possessions. Now here was the next generation of God's people and the problem still remained. They were promised victory, not because they deserved it, but because those wicked people had to be annihilated.

"Without faith it is impossible to please Him [God]," is a major factor in our lives today. I have to ask myself from time to time, "Am I willing to take this action without being sure of the outcome?" Faith is not some obscure concept we are to assent to. It is the deciding factor in any service for God we might be called upon to do. To not go forward in faith when God wants us to, is a stubborn response and that response is sin. To rebel against God's revealed will is sin of the same kind. "For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry." We need to constantly be renewed in the spirit of our minds so that we do not sin against the Lord by either the sins of omission or commission.

The list of unrighteous acts of the children of Israel had not escaped the eyes of God, and Moses recounted them to the children of Israel so they would not exalt themselves in pride. They had not arrived at a place where they deserved the promised land. God was going to use them by His power to drive out, and eliminate the people who lived there in great wickedness. The list of evils committed by those inhabitants of Canaan is not given here, but unspeakable evil was common practice, even in serving the gods they worshipped. There are times when the only way to eradicate evil and its on-going impact, is to totally annihilate those who practice it and pollute all other people who live nearby. The influence of immorality, unrighteousness and false gods has the power to claim the hearts and minds of people very quickly. Satan can even move those who lead our nation to pass laws that defy God's laws, and they threaten those who will not accept their decision, with reprisals.

The willful attitude of people who want their own way can be expected in little children, but in adults it is obnoxious behavior that can even cause wars. Stiff-necked people have taken a position that refuses to listen to any other opinion. Sometimes pride overcomes even common sense when people are stiff-necked, to the point they will not obey God. Cain was one such person. In essence he indicated, "If God won't take what I want to give Him, I won't give Him anything." Other apostates are named in scripture as those who knew what was right but deliberately turned away from it because they had their own personal opinion and agenda. To be stiff-necked is a deliberate rejection of divine authority.

The outcome of such an attitude is that those against whom you have set your will, are provoked, both by the attitude and the behavior that accompanies it. That is bad enough when people are provoked, but it becomes extremely serious and has great consequences when God is provoked to anger. There is a mindset that many have now, that we are supposed to be tolerant of anything and everything that people do. They "don't want to offend" those who are wayward, provoking, stiff-necked and unrighteous, for fear "They won't like us." Then the reasoning is, they won't listen to the Gospel and, "If they don't get saved, it will be our fault, because we weren't kind enough." The best kindness we can show people who love and live in sin, is to tell them what is right and how to avoid the consequences of sin. If we really love them as Christ loves them, we will not cover sin but show them how they can be forgiven of their sins.

Rebellion is in the heart of our children because it came to them by way of us. In any home there is a struggle for leadership between parents and a small headstrong infant who screeches and hollers non-stop in a way the parents cannot. Who is going to be in control here - the wise parents who have learned what is right and wrong, or the little pagan who knows only what he or she wants? This same rebellious way was in the nation of Israel when they chose to go their own way, and do their own thing in spite of what God said. They would not listen to Moses when he told them what God said. He recounted some of the times and ways they had turned a deaf ear to God's instruction, and how he interceded for them so they wouldn't all have died on the spot. It is within the capacity of the people of God today to deliberately turn a deaf ear toward teaching they don't want to hear because it would interfere with their own will and chosen lifestyle. To shut one's ears to the word of God and wise instruction given by trusted leaders, is really a wicked thing. How strange to think that I am right and those who do not agree with me are all wrong.

When we rely on our own opinions to direct our lives, we are stepping into an area in which we are in danger of going against God. Such an attitude and the action (or lack of action) that follows, means we will lose everything except for the grace of God. In times of decision and/or uncertainty, we must look for God's help and guidance, or the mistakes we make will have lasting consequences that we will forever regret. God used the nation of Israel to fulfill His purpose in spite of their unrighteous, rebellious and stiff-necked attitude. Their blessings did not come because they deserved them, but in spite of them. "It is of God's mercies we are not consumed."

The attitude of unbelief creates a whole host of problems and sins that have the power to bring us down in shame if they are not confessed and forsaken. To claim anything from God because we think we deserve it is foolish, arrogant and sinful. The lesson Moses was impressing upon the children of Israel as he reviewed their failures, was so they might approach the work before them in humility, faith and dependence on God. When we realize where our strength lies and submit ourselves as tools in the hands of the Master, then we can be used by God and the results can be blessings for us in spite of our failures and shortcomings. In such a time we can understand better the fact that "If God be for us who can be against us."

He still calls us His people. We are still His inheritance and there is no difficulty in tracing His gracious ways with us when we remember and review our past. When all is said and done, we will know that anything of value has been accomplished by God's power. He has reached out to us and done for us what we cannot do for ourselves. This holds true in personal life, family life, assembly life and national life. How dangerous it is for us to take credit for what God does in us and through us. How wise it is when there have been obvious times of blessing and success, to honestly GIVE GOD ALL THE GLORY.

**Deuteronomy 9:4.** *"Speak not thou in thy heart, after that the Lord thy God hast cast them out from before thee, saying, 'For my righteousness the Lord hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the Lord doth drive them out from before thee.'"*

**NOT FOR THY RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

We dare not claim rights over what God alone can give.

It is not within our power to determine that I live.

God Himself has the keys over life and over death -

He is the Source of life alone - He alone can give us breath.

We dare not claim we deserve to be given God's salvation.

If we had our just desserts we never would be forgiven.

God Himself let us hear His Word; by His Spirit we were awakened -

He showed us by His Holy Word, Christ all our sins had taken.

We dare not claim we have been saved by any works which we have done.

The only work acceptable to God was done by His own Son.

God Himself laid our iniquities on the Lord Jesus that He might bare

All the punishment they deserve, for His only Son He did not spare.

We dare not claim after receiving the Lord, that any work that we do now  
Has any merit or that by our efforts we have earned God's grace somehow.

God Himself has saved us, by the blood of Christ alone -

No "after-works" can add to grace or for any sin atone.

We dare not say we are deserving now of life's blessings we receive,

It is only by God's mercy that we live and move and breathe.

God Himself keeps us and preserves us to live from day to day -

Because we have an adversary who wants to us take out of the way.

We dare not say we deserve to be in heaven when we die.  
I am grateful for eternal life promised by God who cannot lie.  
God Himself assures us because of imputed righteousness -  
That we will be in His "promised land", in the company of the blessed.

**"O God my Father, reading the words in this chapter keeps my from thinking I deserve all the blessings and benefits Thou dost daily load us with. Yet greater than that is the privilege of being not just in a nation of the blessed, but in the family of the blessed. I praise Thee for this wonderful calling and I am humbled by Thy promises of all the wonders of the future. Until the Lord comes, help me to keep on calling sinners to repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **Deuteronomy 10**

### **GOD CHOSE YOU**

The news among the nations of the Middle East many years ago would probably have been focused to a great measure on a huge multitude of slaves who escaped Egypt and were wandering around in the wilderness. How they could survive in such a difficult area would have perplexed the people around who knew how tough wilderness living was for an individual, let alone millions of people. It seemed like they were going toward Canaan at first, but then they turned back the way they came. There was a strange phenomenon where ever they went. There was always a cloud over them in the daytime, and at night, shining across the area where they were camped, there was a pillar of fire. During those years they had turned into a well-organized tent city of millions of people, from a disorganized band of escaped slaves. Then they turned again toward Canaan, only this time they were farther east and had taken over all the land and high ground east of the Jordan River. Now they had stopped and seemed to be waiting for something. God's waiting times are always important to the big picture of things as He deals with His chosen people. The first day of the week, the Lord's Day, to many seems like a wasted waiting time. So instead of stopping and waiting to hear what God the Lord has to say, they use that special waiting time for their own pleasure. God knows we can easily get side-tracked from working His will in our lives, so has us to stop and listen again to His words and to worship Him.

The ark containing the tables of stone on which was written the ten commandments was always in the middle of the camp of Israel. When they entered the promised land, it was there. Right up to the time Solomon built the temple five hundred years later, the ark had a special place of focus for God's people in those ancient times. In a similar way our Lord Jesus Christ is in the middle of us today when we are gathered to His name. Our gathering center is not a building or a creed made by men, but an unseen Person who we know by faith and love supremely.

The Levites in the past were a separated tribe of Israel whose calling was to daily serve God on behalf of all His people. The Israelites had forfeited the privilege of being a kingdom of priests by their disobedience, so this tribe acted on behalf of God for the people, and on behalf of the people in their approach toward God. When there are those who are called by God to serve Him, the result is special care given to carry out the mandate He has given us to "go into all the world and make disciples." This work is on-going though we cannot see the full extent of it. No longer is it the role of those who serve God to deal with a small group of people, but to serve all humanity for God who has shown grace and mercy to all mankind.

God expects of His people today what He expected of them in the ancient past. We are to fear God with respect and reverence. He is the Almighty God who has chosen to draw near to us and to bless us. He has plainly told us, "Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you." For people chosen by Him to be His people, this is what we should want to do. When this is true of us, we will walk in His ways and follow where He leads us. One thing we know for sure: where He leads us, it is in our best interest to follow even if there are times when the road seems hard and rough. Faithfulness to Him and following Him will give our lives meaning, and there is a purpose in it that is known to Him. "What I do, thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter."

When we love the Lord with our heart and soul, our service for Him will be whole-hearted and genuine. To love Him is to trust Him. To love Him is to look at things as He sees them. To love Him gives the right perspective to everything else in our lives. Those who love Him want to do His will, and devoted service for Him is our desire. Whatever we can do for one we love, gives us delight. To satisfy one we love is very important to us. Any work we can do for one we love is an expression of our devotion in a way that can be seen, and that is enough for us. To obey God when we know what He wants from us gives real meaning to work that otherwise could be a drudgery. When we put our hand to accomplish some seemingly mundane

task, that work is changed into an act of worship because we are doing it as "unto the Lord, and not unto men."

The surgery of circumcision that set the nation of Israel apart from other nations, was not to be only an outward expression of acquiescence to the will of God, but was to be an inward sign of one who was committed to do the will of God from the heart. When there is genuine submission to the desires of the Lord for us, there is glad gratitude for the privilege of representing Him in this world. The cutting off of the flesh indicates we are going to "walk in the Spirit, and not fulfill the lusts of the flesh." When that happens, we are "led by the Spirit" to do our service for the Lord in glad obedience and love for Him. Christ-likeness is made evident when there is love for God and justice for men as we live in the place of our calling.

The "Lord your God is the God of gods, and the Lord of lords," and the descriptions of Him creates a spirit of reverence and godly fear in our souls. We know He delights in His people. Even though we fail Him often, and because He loves us, He chastens us. Still we are conscious that as His chosen people, we are the objects of His affection. He hasn't only given us His word to go by and teach us as He did when He gave the commandments to Israel, He has promised to be with us as the presence of the ark assured them. "I will never leave thee or forsaken thee" is a wonderful promise as we journey through a godless world.

Our allegiance to the Lord is not only in words, but should be easily demonstrated in our deeds before men. People around us who do not know the Lord, have much higher expectations of us then they do of themselves. When we claim to follow the word of God as "the man of our counsel and our guide," we have taken high ground. Even most professing Christians will claim to follow the scriptures but "we interpret them differently." When we read the scriptures and interpret them, we must remember they are not of "private" interpretation, but are to read and obeyed contextually right so the interpretation is right, and the application is appropriate. The Lord has chosen people to bear His name and honor Him scripturally and personally. He has also promised a future for His people who will love Him and enjoy Him forever. During this wilderness journey, we need to review the terms of our covenant with God often, so we do not act independently and go off the path of His revealed will.

**Deuteronomy 10:12.** *"And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul."*

### **REQUIREMENTS.**

FEAR – reverential respect

My Lord is the Lord of lords and the God of gods

He is great in all His attributes

Mighty in all His actions

Terrible in all His judgments

Never manipulated by persons or things

No respecter of persons

Never compromised or compromising

He is the Object of my praise

He is the God of my salvation

He is my Savior – I belong to Him

I fear Him with due reverential respect

WALK – progressive conduct

The ways of the Lord are before me as I journey

The righteousness of the Lord is imputed to me, so I must be righteous in actions

The holiness of the Lord demands holiness in every action of my life

The grace of the Lord demands gracious acts from me

The kindness of the Lord I must be kind to others

The obedience of the Lord requires me to obey Him

The pleasure of the Lord indicates God should find pleasure in me

The faithfulness of the Lord requires that His steward be found faithful

The availability of the Lord instructs me to be available to others

His walk on earth was in the light and showed the light of God

I walk in the light and have fellowship with Him

LOVE – inherent value or worth

The love of the Lord is inherent in Him for He is love

His love for the Father and the Father's love to Him should be in me

His love for sinners led Him to come, mine should make me go  
His love for children should show through me to children  
His love for the Word motivates me to love it too  
His love for His disciples is passed on to me for my brothers  
His love led Him to die and mine should make me die to self  
His love for us today intercedes for us and I should be an intercessor  
His love for the Church is without limit and mine for my wife should be the same  
His love was total and its impact and value is evident everywhere  
I love Him and that love should be evident and shown to others

SERVE – useful labor

The Lord came not to be served but to serve  
He served as the Representative of the Godhead in a body, so should I  
He served as He met the needs of others, so should I  
He served by identifying with the despised ones, so should I  
He served wholeheartedly, so should I  
He served without advertising it, so should I  
He served in the lowest of tasks, so should I  
He served by sacrificing Himself, so should I  
He served God and others with joy, so should I  
His service was there for all to see and yet He never asked for recognition  
I serve Him; may it always be from my heart with the right motives.

KEEP – personally committed

The Lord's commandments and statutes are to be kept  
He is the Creator who has an order, I am to commit myself to orderliness  
He is the Sustainer of all things; I am to maintain what He gives me  
He is the Law-Giver, I must obey Him – and His laws  
He is the Owner of everything, I must labor for Him  
He is the Head of the Church, I must fulfill my calling  
He is the Giver of gifts; I must use them for His glory and for others  
He is the Truth, I must never compromise truth nor lie  
He is The Righteousness; I must keep that righteousness visible through me  
He has entrusted His truth to me for all to see and hear  
I must keep those commandments that others may know what sin is and how to be saved

**“O Lord God of my salvation, I honor Thee here today and worship at the reading of Thy name and the listing of some of Thy attributes. I am totally indebted to Thee for every benefit I have received and every evidence of Thy willingness to use this unfaithful servant. I am concerned that I fulfill the calling for which Thou hast called me. It is with a knowledge of my weakness that I appeal to Thee for strength to meet the requirements of faithful service. Lord, remember I am but dust but I do want to bring glory to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **Deuteronomy 11**

### **TEACH THE CHILDREN**

Our attitude toward God and His word silently tells our children what we think about God. Do I take His commands seriously? Do I truly love Him? Am I willing to obey Him no matter what it might cost me? Will I commit myself to follow Him no matter what other people do? Am I willing to do His will even if it is not popular and may cause me to lose friends and even family approval? Much of child-training is done by actions - what I do or not do. That does not mean that I should not tell them the reasons for my lifestyle and choices. The children of the Israelites had never known what Egypt was like. All they knew was wilderness living. Stories about the glories of Egypt might have been attractive to them when they heard about the pyramids, the great cities and the irrigated crops growing along the Nile River. The attractions of the world are all around us. Of that there is no doubt. But the slavery to the world, its ways and its costs, needs to be told to our children as a warning that just because something looks good, doesn't make it right.

The people of God need to tell those who are young, the things they must avoid. Tell them from your experiences of the difficulties that come because of disobedience and self-will. Warn them of what happens if they follow a road in life that does not please God. Let them know the "pleasures of sin" are only for a season, and then comes the serious consequences that sin brings. Teach them by the history of others who knew what was right but chose to do wrong. Don't let them think they can do what they want in spite of what

God says, and they will be able to escape the inevitable truth that when we sow we reap. We reap what we sow and we reap more than we sow.

Those who make a conscious decision to avoid what is bad, will come to appreciate what is good. This does not begin with our children. This begins with us who claim to be children of God by faith in Jesus Christ. We will always be tempted to accommodate to the world and its attractions. To be popular has a great appeal because our flesh thinks, "The closer I am to being like everyone else around me, the more my friends and neighbors will be open to listen when I tell them about the Savior." There is a fallacy in this type of thinking however. Those to whom we witness when we are trying to be like them will probably think, "Then why are you here with us doing what we do? You are no different than we are." God's word says plainly, "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing."

My teaching to those who are young will have a positive effect when I take heed to myself first and what I do. My ambition and self-satisfaction must not claim me at the expense of modeling my faith in God. The blessing of the Lord when I do what is right, may not make me materially rich, but will make me spiritually happy. The attitude I have toward God and the Word of God may not appeal to my children when they are young, but the "peaceable fruits of righteousness" will have a place to take root in their hearts. We may have to wait a long time to see the results of our teaching. The Israelites were told plainly of blessing if they did right and cursing if they did wrong. In fact, this was such an important principle, that God told them to carry out a ceremony with this in mind at mount Gerizim and mount Ebal. The children would not easily forget the sound of millions of voices speaking of the reasons for blessing from the one mountain, and the reason for cursing on the other.

Before I start teaching my children and other people the word of God, I need to check myself out and see if I am really doing what God intends. I need to make conscious decisions for my daily life based on the scriptures of truth in my heart and soul. If it has the right place there, the motivation behind what I do will be right. Then the actual activities with which I am involved, whether it be the work I do to provide for the needs of my family, or my work in the assembly of God's people I am a part of and my work for the Lord, It will be what it should be. Unfelt truth is usually easily detected by listeners and may be considered spurious because of my inconsistency. In the home life of God's people, there are opportunities to apply spiritual truth to the affairs associated with family living. Bible reading, audible prayers, reading good books out loud that have good lessons that are applicable to children, are ways we can pass on truth to those God have given us. Ways God has worked in the course of events in a day give us lessons to be taught.

When we start with ourselves and our relationship with God and His word, we have something of value to pass on to our children. Quite often the benefit of those times in the home life extend out to those we know in the public sphere of life. "Why do you do that?" "Why don't you do this?" are questions we are asked and our children will be asked them too. Our children deserve to have a ready answer that makes sense to their friends. We need to be able to give a good answer as to our faith and practice to those with whom we work. The consistent daily life of a believer may not produce faith in other people that we are aware of, but the seed of the word of God that is sown, will have the desired effect that God wants. He is the only One who can produce life. We are the ones to sow the seed.

Obedience and love for God may not be popular among those with whom we live and work, but it does have a good influence. When it is in us and a real part of our life and experience, we have a peace that cannot be found in any other way. Peace is what most people want in life. Adversity will not overcome us or take away our peace even though it may hurt us. Sin does not have dominion over us even though the pressures against us to conform to the world are great. Obedience and faith in us, affects other people as well. It indicates that all that is going on in our lives is not seen. The things that are important to us are the unseen things. Most people live for what they can grasp for themselves. We who know God, love Him, believe in Him and obey Him, have a higher kind of life that escapes those who have no covenant with God.

When a new covenant based on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross for our sins has been formed, the new birth by the Holy Spirit brings new life to us. That new life is made evident when a believer is made a new creation. In the terms of the new covenant, the choices we make have far reaching effects. They extend to our children and grandchildren. There is an effect on those with whom we work and do business. A reputation is made as we apply the principles of the written word to our life and conduct, as well as the decisions we make. The children of Israel were able to possess the land of promise because God was at work on their behalf by the terms of the old covenant. He works on our behalf by the terms of the new covenant made by the blood of Christ. In spite of the uncertain days in which we live, we can be at peace because "our times are in Thy hands," and God is able to "do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think." Let us teach our children so they too will be at peace.

**Deuteronomy 11:7.** *“But your eyes have seen all the great acts of the Lord which He did.”*

**YOUR EYES HAVE SEEN.**

It was a great act of God when He delivered Israel from bondage -  
It was a great act of God when they crossed the Red Sea.  
My eyes saw weekly, the saint's genuine homage -  
My eyes saw in my home genuine reality.

It was a great act of God when He provided water and food -  
It was a great act of God to defeat Israel's foes.  
My eyes have seen often, God's acts where I stood -  
My eyes look in a mirror and His mercy I know.

It was a great act of God when He wrote down His laws -  
It was a great act of God to spare Israel when they sinned.  
My eyes have seen in God's Word to the end from First Cause -  
My eyes have seen reality when faith and works blend.

It was a great act of God to judge those who transgressed -  
It was a great act of God to wait patiently forty years.  
My eyes have seen evidence of God's grace and people He blessed -  
My eyes have seen results of salvation beyond what appears.

It was a great act of God when Israel crossed Jordan -  
It was a great act of God to give them the promised land.  
My eyes have seen families changed when men are born again -  
My eyes have seen people go to heaven while I'm holding their hand.

I never want to lose the wonder of the great acts of God -  
I want ever to thank Him from my heart for His great acts for me.  
I see evidence of His greatness all around and in His Word -  
I have experienced His greatness, and will for eternity.

**“O God, I see evidence Thy working here today as I listen to the sounds and see the sights of Thy creation. Far greater Father, is the sound and sight of Thy people singing, Man of Sorrows, what a name, For the Son of God who came, Ruined sinners to reclaim, Hallelujah! What a Savior.”** May we see further the great acts of God in salvation of precious souls before these meetings are over. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”

**Deuteronomy 12**

**THE PLACE GOD CHOOSES**

To many people today there is no difference as to where they come to worship God collectively. Choices are made where they go to worship as to what is convenient to them geographically, what appeals to them and their friends, and where they feel comfortable. If people who go there are nice to them, and if they can find good social life, they will go there as the place of their choosing. Some religious gathering centers are higher on the public social scale than others. It makes it easier for people to interface with social and business contemporaries there, than if those who attend are from a lower or difference social strata. In the scriptures none of these things are considered when it comes to the place God would have us attend to worship and service. In the promised land, there was one place God intended His people to gather. All of their collective spiritual activities, as the people of God, were to take place where He chose to place His name. "Where two or three are gathered (having been gathered) together in My name, there am I in the midst of them."

When the Israelites took over the land of Canaan, there were idols, high places of worship, and large and small Baals erected. Baals were set up wherever there was evidence of things that created and sustained life. Streams of water and groves of trees had Baals set there as the people worshipped the creation and the creature, not the Creator. In those places a lot of immoral activity occurred under the guise of religion, and lust had its way with men and women from an early age. God had passed judgment on the evil that was rampant there long before the Israelites got there. The evils that were promoted did not only affect the adults but the young people as well. When the people of God claimed the land God had promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, He insisted that all idols, idol worshippers and anything that was a temptation to the Israelites to compromise their faith in Him, was to be ruthlessly removed. Worship is a sacred act and anything that pollutes or compromises worship must not be allowed, or if there already, must be removed. Our activities when God's people come together to worship, indicates the standing and state of our souls. If it has as an

objective to please the people, it is to be removed. The attitude of those who come together to worship God is affected by the surroundings. If the place we meet draws our attention rather than thoughts of God who is not seen in images, but only by faith, then we are in the wrong place. The place God chooses will focus all our attention on Him, His love, His grace, His mercy, and most of all, on His Son and all He has provided for us.

It is to the place God chooses we bring our offerings of worship, praise and thanksgiving. It is to that place we come together in fellowship with God's people and are blessed with spiritual blessings as the gifts that God has given are able to be used in appropriate ways. It is in the place God chooses that we come when guilt as to public worship is corrected. That is where the message of repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ is publicly proclaimed. The gifts we set aside to give to God and those who serve Him are given at that place. It isn't our right to pass on to anyone who asks for our donations on radio and television, that which belongs to God. Public vows are to be made at the place God chooses. Vows are taken lightly now by those who travel to distant places to make their "vows" before a select group of people. In that way their vows are often taken lightly. In the place where God chooses to place His name, vows are made in the sanctity of holiness in the view of God's people.

Times of greatest joy and fellowship are to be shared by God's people in the place where He has chosen to put His name. The children came there with their parents when Israel gathered together. There would be lasting friendships formed with those "of like precious faith." The attitude of parents toward God, and hopefully of the children, would be strengthened when the people of God gathered together at that place. The young would watch the older folks and be able to see the reality of their parent's faith as they witnessed the sacrifices and offerings made, and the worship of hearts as a result of the gratitude they had toward God. In that place the children can see what is meaningful to us in our lives. The teaching/learning process of a family is not only done at home, but also in the place God chooses.

Reasons for celebration used to be called "holy days." Our use of the word "holiday" comes from the times God's people gathered together each week, or in the case of Israel, they rested on the Sabbath. They also had special times during the year when "Sabbaths" of a unique kind were held and the children of Israel gathered together in fellowship to the place God chose. They would meet each other and share their lives for a few days as they would recount what God was doing for them and in them. These times of conference and convocation can be life-changing when we meet before God in the place of His choosing to be reminded of what is really important to Him. In that way we can keep a proper perspective on events happening in our lives and in the world around us. Purity of worship among God's people is to be safeguarded. This can be done when those of spiritual maturity can minister publicly or privately to others where we gather together.

The Lord's name is honored there in ways that does not happen where other names and persons vie for preeminence. Among God's people in the place of the name, the Lord Jesus Christ has the preeminence in all things beginning with the gathering center. We meet in His name. We pray in His name. We bless each other in His name. We worship in His name. Separation from religious practices that exalt men and women was necessary in the place God chose. Separation from evil of any kind was taught there and to be practiced everywhere. The teaching of right and wrong needs a uniformity that does not change with differing opinions, ideas that people have, or even cultures. God's word is unchangeable and infallible. When we follow what it teaches and really apply its precepts to our personal life, family life, assembly life and every other part of our life, we will not only be separated from evil, but separated to God. The place He chooses is so that He can meet with us in communion with Him and unity with others who follow God's word.

The instructions Moses gave to the new generation of Israelites included knowing who they were and belonged to, what they were to do and teach, where they were supposed to meet together, but also what they were not to do and deliberately avoid. Pagan worship, had sacrifices that people made from their own opinions or frame of reference. Some included human sacrifices of their own children, all of which was an abomination to God. Partaking of blood as a "life-source" was also part of pagan practice. To the people of God, blood was not to be eaten. Life is sacred to God and should be to us, and the "life of the flesh is in the blood." God is the One who chose the use of blood "to make atonement for the soul." That was not the prerogative of men. God is the giver of life, not the blood of beasts. The blood of the sacrifices sprinkled around the altar, the blood of sanctification of the priests and the blood on the mercy seat and in front of the ark on the Day of Atonement, was sacred to God. It was not to be eaten. Blood is a reminder that life is from God and He was willing to accept "the blood of Jesus Christ, His Son" to cleanse us from all sin. The sacrifice of Christ was made on our behalf. We do not gain acceptance with God by partaking of blood or even the fruit of the vine in the cup of blessing.

The symbolic meaning of the emblems God intends us to partake of at the Lord's Supper, is not to indicate a change is made in us or for us when we do so. It is a reminder of a work of God that has already been accomplished for us by God Himself, with which He is fully satisfied. We are reminded of the perfection of the sacrifice, the Lamb of God, when we partake of the bread which we bless. It continues to teach us of the value of "the corn of wheat which fell into the ground and died. And in dying it brought forth much fruit." The fact of a complete redemption price paid when we were "bought with a price," "the precious blood of Christ," is testified to in the cup of blessing. There is nothing added to the work of Christ in any way when we partake of those emblems. In the place God chooses to place His name today, we come to remember, to worship, to proclaim the Lord's death and to give Him our various spiritual sacrifices. That place is holy ground where we come as holy people, to give holy sacrifices to our Holy God.

**Deuteronomy 12:5.** *"But unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put His name there, even unto His habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:"*

#### **THE PLACE.**

They are coming - from Dan in the north to Beersheba in the south -  
From the desert and mountains in the east on the other side of Jordan -  
From the Great Sea to the west - they are coming as God said -  
Coming to "The Place" - the one the Lord God Himself chose.

God's name is there - God's habitation with His people is there -  
Plan on coming to meet Him there - leave what you are doing and come there -  
Bring your sons and daughters - maidservants and menservants too -  
"The Place" is where God expects you to come - where He wants to meet with you.

There are animals coming from the herds and flocks - beautiful animals - the very best  
There are bags full of grain - sheaves are being brought - tithes of all  
Not provisions to eat but to give to God - evidence of gratitude and thanksgiving  
They are bringing oil in the casks - the first of everything belongs to the Lord.

Why are they not coming? Where are they? What are they doing?  
Business comes first - personal matters interfere with offering to God.  
Pleasure demands its time on His Day and "The Place" is well down on the list.  
Priorities are made but they are not God's - "I don't need to come to go to heaven."

Seats are empty at the table - the supper is spread but they are not there.  
"The Place" doesn't mean much to them - if the place doesn't, does God?  
The food of fellowship is on the table - the privilege of offering is there -  
The quiet hymns of worship and praise go to God's ears - but voices are missing.

Words of thanksgiving - of remembrance - of appreciation - of spiritual joy -  
These are given from open and grateful hearts at "The Place" - when you are there  
But there is a sense of incompleteness when those who could be aren't there.  
Lord, speak to them and show them the value of "The Place."

**"O Lord, Thou art the Head of the Church and also the Gathering Center of the assembly in each locality. I thank Thee that the Holy Spirit has given me an appreciation for the place of His name. We have among us those, who for some reason haven't seen the value of the gathering together of the people of God. If there is some way I can assist them, to see what Thou dost expect, bring it clearly to my mind that I may act in a Christ-like way to help them. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

### **Deuteronomy 13**

#### **DEALING WITH EVIL**

Those who oppose God and His Word do not often show up as ungodly, sin-loving, God-hating people. More often they will appear as attractive, nice, intellectual, thoughtful people with a charismatic appeal to many who listen to them. They follow the pattern of Satan who may be seen as "an angel of light" rather than as a "roaring lion." The first is more dangerous than the second because they get closer and there is a certain appeal when preachers or prophets come with a new philosophical approach to life, God and the Bible. If a person claims to be a prophet, we need to examine his credentials and test his predictions by the word of God which we know to be true. Some "prophets" have set dates on the calendar for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ and have deceived thousands. They have calculated these dates by events that have happened or are happening. Some have made an obscure formula based on verses out of context in the scriptures and teach this as facts. Usually there is a book to buy or some other money-making scheme

behind them. Occasionally there are those who insist they gain nothing from these predictions but are just wanting people to get ready to meet God.

No reason people give for teaching these things that are outside the tried and proven truths of the Bible, should be paid attention to. Rather we should warn people against false teaching and false teachers who have some unknown agenda. Among the children of Israel, false prophets, whether they were strangers, family members of communities, were to be destroyed as the only way to stop the spread of dangerous doctrines of demons. To allow false doctrine to continue in an assembly, or among God's people today, will soon lead to divisions and then to the demise of a local testimony. There are certain things we have to look for in order to keep the influence of false teachers and their doctrine from spreading. Anyone who doesn't believe "that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh," that He is the Son of God from all eternity and for all eternity, and that He alone is the way of salvation, is teaching false doctrine. There are many other areas of teaching regarding salvation, church truth, the life of a believer, future events and eternal destinations that are being attacked by false teachers today.

When a stranger comes among us and wants to be a part of the local fellowship, we need to know who they are and why they have this interest in this assembly. If they are not a professing Christian, we can encourage them to attend our meetings and listen to the Gospel with a view of them coming to know the Lord Jesus Christ as their own Savior. If they profess to be saved soon after first hearing the Gospel, we need to wait long enough to see the genuine fruits of salvation and the reality of new life in them before baptizing them and ultimately accepting them into the fellowship of the saints. When one comes who is a professing believer, a letter of commendation from the place of fellowship they left is needed as a recommendation of their profession of faith, and the conduct of life up until this time. Some professing Christians come from other "churches" and they have a number of complaints about the people, the teaching they heard and the practices there. Do not be in a hurry to give a place to discontented people, especially if that has been a pattern, and they have been moving often from one place to another. That is often their pattern of life in general that they are bringing with them indicating they think they have always been right and everyone else is wrong. That attitude does not leave in a hurry and then only when there is evidence of genuine humility and an honest change in themselves.

If a family member becomes discontented and wants to change what has been tried and proven to be biblical, then we cannot treat them in a different way in the local assembly than we do other people. Warning signs are a discontentment with things that have been taught from the scriptures and practiced in the assembly for generations by godly people. When a person seeks to give a private interpretation of a passage of scripture, and wants everyone to accept that interpretation as a true fact, that person needs to be warned, and the teaching rejected even if it is from our own family member. Subtle whispers of discontent sometimes come to us from others and we find the source is our own flesh and blood. Love in the family unit does not take precedence over love for God.

Whole communities in the nation of Israel were to be destroyed if rebellion against God and His revealed will found root there. Some epidemics can only be stopped by extreme measures. A community of faithful Christians in one generation can be lost by the discontent and unbelief of the next generation. The desire of Islam is to eliminate not only communities of Christians and Jews, but whole nations. That is the only way they can control the whole population and bring it under the domination of the Muslim religion. Our laws do not allow such things to happen here, and as Christians, we are called upon to promote what is right by preaching and living the truth of God. Our mandate, and Christians today are to go and make disciples of all nations, and then mark them by baptism in a scriptural way. We are to teach them to do what God's Word says in their own lives, families and community life. The motivation of genuine Christian love is the great power at our disposal when used under the direction of the Holy Spirit of God.

When false teachers from away; from among our own families or in the community of which we are a part, begin promoting teaching from obscure sources, we need to address the problem quickly. Determine just what they are saying and why they are teaching these things. In order to make this determination, the points they are making need to be carefully defined from our perspective by the scriptures, lest we be found making a false accusation. Usually there will be found some ulterior motive such as a false religion and its doctrine they are seeking to promote. Some may be seeking a position as a leader and teacher, because they love to have the preeminence for egotistical reasons.

We need to be sure what they are saying is true, because right words can be used, but the meaning behind the use of the words may not be what is taught in the Bible. The words "born again" are often used in ways that are not used in the context of the scriptures. Many use the words, "personal relationship," in a way that is not consistent with becoming a child of God. Right words used in a wrong way leads people in a wrong

direction. All teaching needs to be tested by the statements of scripture, and in the context in which they are found in the word of God. "Try the spirits" indicates there is more behind the teaching than just the person wanting his voice to be heard. The powers of darkness will not hesitate to use the words of the Bible to promote false teaching so people will be lost to God.

It is necessary when unusual teaching is given, to test the rumors around the person and the new teaching he gives. Prove the reliability of the person and the message. If he is false, do not use innuendo and gossip to stop the problem but give proof of the falseness of the teaching and teacher. If charges are laid by others and it comes to your ears, check the facts, because it is possible for facts to be overlooked when news passes from one person to another. False accusations are not an honest way to deal with problems that arise among us. When a problem has been investigated, tested and proven, then do not hesitate to deal with the problem and the person or persons who caused it, no matter who that person may be.

There may be times when we have to rebuke a friend, discipline our own child and avoid a place where the truth of God is compromised. Those are hard things to do, but when we act with faith in God, and the authority of the scripture as our reason for the action, we must then leave the outcome with God, and trust Him to produce the desired result according to His sovereign will.

**Deuteronomy 13:12-14.** *"If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities, which the Lord thy God hath given thee to dwell there saying, 'Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known,' then shalt thou inquire, and make search, and ask diligently: and, behold, if it be the truth, and the thing certain, that such an abomination is among you:"*

#### **HEAR SAY.**

There are tests you can make when you hear a person say,  
"Such an one has gone away from the Lord."  
Ask are there others who can support such a claim -  
You don't want to act on just one person's word.

Inquire just yourself to find out if others know  
The information you received is really right.  
When such a thing has happened, others have heard it too -  
Such gossip needs to be confirmed by sight.

Take time to make a search, too much is at stake -  
A person's life can be ruined by a word.  
Check out all the sources, people can mistake  
Motives behind what seems to be a misdeed.

Do not treat lightly what may or may not be true -  
Inquire diligently before acting on a rumor.  
If another life is hindered, you will always rue -  
You were not diligent and checked for truth much sooner.

What can you do to know the truth of a matter?  
Is there a way to come to the right conclusion?  
Two or three witnesses are the way to determine whether  
A rumor is true or someone else is spreading poison.

If some gossip is not certain, stop the rumor if you can -  
Go to the person who told you at the first.  
You may not stop the gossip, but perhaps you can help the man -  
Who may be unaware or innocent of the words that hurt.

**"O God, who art the Listener to every conversation and the Judge of every matter: give me the sense to keep my mouth shut when I know uncertain rumors have the potential of breaking a person's spirit. I know some things need never be spoken of and others things have to be looked into. Please give to me and all who are involved in such matters, a spirit of Christ-likeness and carefulness "lest thou be tempted also." In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

#### **Deuteronomy 14**

#### **YOU BELONG TO GOD**

As I seek to learn lessons from God and His dealing with His treasured possession in the past, it brings to my remembrance that Christians today also stand out in the world as "a peculiar people, zealous of good

works." I have on several occasions seen those who are some of God's people, reacting to the death of a loved one in a way that is most unseemly for a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ. There no question that the loss of a loved one brings great grief to us because of the memories of a life shared, and the fact that that person is now gone from us. One we have shared life and love with has gone and a familiar face will be seen no more. Yet in spite of such a great loss, we must remind ourselves when these times come, there shall be a resurrection of the dead. Even though the loss may seem hopeless, when these times come, God is with us. He does not leave nor forsake us. His plans for living also include dying, and the day of our death. We cannot avoid the pain, tears and consequences of death. But we can learn from our blessed Lord Jesus Christ, the way to deal with the death of a loved one with dignity and respect. "Jesus wept" because He knew the feelings of loss others had. He knew He was going to raise Lazarus from the dead, but could empathize with Martha and Mary because Lazarus was a dear friend of His and a loved brother of theirs.

When one of our own by nature's ties passes away, we will have sorrow. But any physical abuse of our body to display sorrow, or even making cuttings or tattoos as evidence of our devotion and a memorial to the loved one, is inappropriate. Our bodies are the Lord's. We belong to Him. We do not have the right to abuse it. It is wrong to indulge in extreme displays of grief when we know the truth of the matter is our Lord holds the keys of life and death. What He allows is because He knows the future as well as the past. Those who belong to God are to "Pray today, and leave tomorrow, in our loving Savior's hands."

A child of God also needs to remember the fact that we belong to God - body, soul and spirit. Even what seems like a little matter such as what food we eat, has to be considered in the light of the Word of God. Some things are not to be eaten because of the conscience of another person who may be offended if I do. In this day of grace in which we live, we are at liberty to eat "what is set before you, asking no questions." Yet that may not be appropriate in some places because of the culture and conscience of those who live there. Prohibitions were given to the children of Israel in regards to what they ate that were both spiritual and sensible. Many creatures were not to be eaten for the taste and pleasure one received from it, because of the things on which those animals, birds and fish fed. Scavenger beasts, birds and fish were prohibited for both health reasons and the spiritual reason of separation from anything that is unclean. Animals that fed on rapidly growing plants such as grass, were considered clean because they both chewed the cud and had cloven hoofs. But more than just what they ate was what they did not eat. They do not turn to consume their own dung or that of other animals. When the Israelites followed the prohibitions and the commands of God, "none of those diseases" came upon them.

Another lesson I learn from God dealings with the Israelites is that nothing I have to use, can I claim as exclusively mine. Everything we have to use has come to us from God. "The Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away. Blessed be the name of the Lord." What God gives to us to use has certain qualifications associated with them. A percentage of everything belongs to the service of God for promoting His work through the hands of His servants. The practice of setting aside that which belongs to God first, and then using what we are allowed to have to meet our returning needs, indicates where we have placed our values. To give to God in a reverential way makes the use of finances a holy and righteous matter, rather than a covetous "me first" attitude.

Holiness in regard to burying the dead, and holiness in regard to what we eat, is both spiritual and practical. "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaketh." My inward attitude toward God and His blessings to me, are reflected by the way I live and act. What I pass on to further God's work should be considered a privilege in that I am permitted to participate in furthering what is important to God. I need to always put God first and honor Him with reverence and godly fear. May I never presume to take or keep for myself that which belongs to God.

Caring for the helpless and poor should be a part of my service for God. This does not mean that every person who demands money from me, I am obligated to support. There are widows, and there are "widows indeed." There are those who ask for money that "they may consume it upon their lusts." There are those who do not have food to eat and it is obvious to us they have needs which they cannot meet. There are reasonable and sensible ways of caring for the poor. An orderly approach to meeting another person's need does not cause embarrassment to the one who needs our assistance. When the "right hand does not know what the left hand doeth," the character of neither the one who gives or the one who receives is in anyway impugned. What is done for another is done "as to the Lord."

The faith of the people of God works in everyday life. In caring for the sick and afflicted, there needs to be compassion and grace. In meeting the needs of the poor and hungry, there needs to be provision and grace. In deciding what I should do or not do, eat or not eat, there should be common sense and grace. When

there is death in the family and sorrow claims our emotions with a strong grip, there needs to be dignity and grace. When giving to the Lord and the furtherance of His work, there needs to be generosity and grace.

The active, vital faith of a child of God, considers what pleases God in every action and decision we make. A good question to ask ourselves is, "Will it be honoring to my Lord if I pursue this path of action? Will the outcome of the course I choose now be to the glory of God, or only to my own satisfaction?" It is not uncommon for one who forgets he or she belongs to God, to promote themselves and their cause, and secretly hope others are put down and humiliated by their actions. Love rejoices when another person is exalted, not when they are abased. Faith is strengthened and active when we are conscious of the fact that I belong to God. Faith can bring us joy when I am confident that what I am doing in all areas of my life, is according to the will and word of God.

**Deuteronomy 14:2.** *"For thou art an holy people unto the Lord Thy God, and the Lord hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth."*

#### **PECULIAR PEOPLE.**

When one of God's people dies, we who mourn do testify  
By the way we respond to death, what we truly believe.  
We cannot help but cry, all the people around know why -  
It's alright, when we make sure our mourning is done with dignity.

To make a great "to-do", or be seen going into a swoon -  
Really casts a bad reflection on whether our faith is in the Lord.  
It will happen again quite soon, when we are called into a room -  
And watch another person we love cross over Jordan's flood.

Dignity in the face of death is a testimony of great worth -  
It shows we rest in Christ even when a loss is great.  
Facing things over which we have no control, we rest assured -  
Knowing God is in control, we are not at the mercy of fate.

Even the things we eat, or other things from which we forbear -  
Is a way we show to those who watch, we are a peculiar people.  
Some may misunderstand why we won't in their drinks take a share -  
Then we must explain it is because of conviction, not some imposed scruple.

When it comes to the use of our money, we are obliged to be very honest.  
All we have is by God's grace alone that we have money received.  
He has given it to be used faithfully, He has put in our hands as a trust.  
Peculiar people then are privileged to give back to God a tithe.

It belonged to God in the first place and is given to us like a loan.  
When we use it properly, God enables us to provide for others.  
After all, it is not like this money is given to us to own -  
We are giving back to God, when we meet the needs of sisters and brothers.

**"Father, grant to Thy people a sense of real dignity in times of sorrow and testing. Create within them a desire to abstain from anything that would dishonor Thy name. Give them the earnest desire to be honest in all their dealings and to never forget that all they are, and have, and hope to be - they owe to Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

#### **Deuteronomy 15**

##### **A RELEASE**

The Lord continued to use Moses to review and reaffirm all the issues that affect daily living so there will be no question as to what God expected from His people. One particularly impacting instruction was the sabbatical year, every seventh year was to be a year of release. By this means, hope and incentive was kept alive in people who through no fault of their own were poor. There were some who became indentured servants and labored for a creditor for six years without pay. But because they knew there would be a release from their debt when the seventh year came, and they would be given the means to make a new start, they would do their daily work as best they could. Poverty is not always caused by carelessness and laziness. Poor health in a family and the circumstances in which one is born has an effect on the conditions in which one is found. Some situations in life leave people without the means or ability to provide what they need. It is God's intention that care for the poor be made by those who are able to assist, either by one's

family by nature or by God's family. The biblical practice of labor expended for needs supplied is reasonable and acceptable. Farmers of old left the corners of their fields with standing grain for the poor to gather.

Today for those who are too ill to work and who have no support from family members, in this country there is provision by the government that taxes us to meet their needs. Not every place has this, and there are times when we are to provide the help the poor need. In this country and some others, there are social welfare programs that make provision for the basic needs of life. There are many countries in the world where none of this is available, and we are to meet the needs of family members, neighbors and friends in whatever ways we are able.

It is wrong for us to ignore the situation of the poor. The Lord Jesus said, "The poor you have always among you." When the Lord provides for us and our needs, He uses us to be a channel to provide for the needs of others. The only time we are freed from this responsibility is when there are no poor people. In any case, whatever a person's situation in life, it is right to treat people with dignity, respect and a sense of worth. They have been created by God and they are precious to Him. We are called upon by God to help them.

To avoid becoming poor, it is a wise person who does not borrow money. "The borrower is servant to the lender." Unless it is absolutely necessary, avoid borrowing because it puts a person and/or a family under bondage until that loan is paid off. In our present-day world economy, people are being urged to borrow money so the lender can get rich at the borrower's expense. One of the ways to support this binding habit of borrowing, is to make people discontented with what they have. Modern media and advertising exist to promote discontent by appealing to the covetous nature of people. The people of God need to be reminded we are not immune for such attractions. Our needs can be met by our Gracious Father who gives us "all things" in Christ. He makes rich and adds no sorrow with it. But of course, those things He provides are much more basic than the attractive trivial trinkets that appeal to the materialistic minds of modern men and women.

Hebrew servants were able to go free on the seventh year - the sabbatical year. When they left servitude, they were given enough provision to meet their needs until a new start could be made. If they chose to remain a servant of a benevolent master, they had a hole bored in their ear indicating they were a servant for the rest of their life. When we are called upon to meet the needs of the poor, we do well if in our provision for them, we provide some form of equity in which they can begin to supply their own needs. Sometimes for poor people who have health and strength, it is better to give them a net and some "fish", than a lot of fish. They way they can "fish" for themselves and perhaps start to make their own way by selling fish to others.

In the Hebrew economy the first-born animal belonged to God. It was the evidence in a household as to who they were, and what they were able to provide for their needs came from God. God was supplying their need. God was the Source of all they had and of the blessings they should never take for granted. Far too often we forget that "every good gift" comes from God. By setting aside the first-born, there was the reminder of who gave us what we have and who sustains our life day by day. That animal was not to be put to work but to be kept so there would be no blemish on it when the time came to give it to God as a thank-offering.

There were a number of very practical and workable instructions given to the children of Israel that can teach us how to best conduct our lives. A release from debt is great freedom. If you are a creditor or an employer and have been in debt yourself one time, you will know the value of being fair to employees and never mistreating them in any way. They deserve to be respected and treated fairly because they will be free to go their own way some day. Your reputation will soon be known by others with whom you do business. If you are a debtor, you owe your employer honesty and a good day's work every day. The way you apply yourself to your work will determine your future and what you will receive for your labor beyond the bare minimum. "What you sow, you reap."

Another lesson is, do not ever try to short-change God. We can never repay God for all of His benefits to us, so when He lets us know what He wants from us, it is our blessing to give from a warm and whole heart. Everything we claim for ourselves comes from God as the source. There is a principle to remember: the more you give, the more you get. We will never be able to out-give God. His abundance is there to dispense to those He can trust to gladly give to others what He desires through us. When He receives from us that which shows the attitude of our hearts toward Him, He releases to us that which reveals His heart of love and grace to us.

A lesson hard to learn is to be satisfied with what we have. "Having food and raiment, let us therewith be content" is a fundamental principle of living. The over-extension of credit to a dissatisfied person, places the

borrower in a bondage from which many never get free in their lifetime. Some people are paying off debts for a lifetime because they started out with an expectation that they had a right to have those things now, for which they have not yet worked. Many young people live with a sense of "entitlement" that has been generated by over-indulgent parents. They really believe they deserve now what hard working parents took a lifetime to accumulate. A dissatisfied generation of people bode very ill for the future - even for the people of God. Our children are not immune from this popular mindset. It is incumbent on those mature believers to guide young people in matters pertaining to daily living, even as Moses taught the Israelites many generations ago. They need our practical teaching and experience as well as our spiritual direction in order to live effective lives for God.

**Deuteronomy 15:12-13.** *"And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee. And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty:"*

#### **LET HIM GO.**

He was born with a sinful nature - like everyone  
He made mistakes when he was young - like everyone  
As a teen he would like to venture - like everyone  
But poverty was upon the home - he had to be sold

Poverty's bond is hard to break - by yourself  
An indentured slave finds it hard - by yourself  
Hard work gradual payments make - by yourself  
For the six full years you were sold - by yourself

Now the seventh year is here - you are free  
The debt has been paid off - you are free  
Life starts anew this year - you are free  
You have food and a flock - you are free

When a child wants to hear the Gospel - let him go  
When the Spirit of God leads him to Christ - let him go  
When he wants freedom from sin - let him go  
When he wants to serve God first - let him go

There is a desire on his part to pray - let him go  
There is work for him to do - let him go  
When he has words from God to say - let him go  
When his life God's grace shows - let him go

How sad it is when he turns away - but I have to let him go  
It grieves me that he has lost interest - but I have to let him go  
He doesn't want to hear what I have to say - but I have to let him go  
His whole life is lost to business - but I have to let him go

Lord, bring him back to Thee - in Thine own way  
Lord, do what needs to be done - in Thine own way  
Lord, open his eyes to see - in Thine own way  
Lord, chasten him as a son - in Thine own way

**"Sometimes Father, I wonder if I have been a faithful guide to my family. I want the best for them and they are all so very skilled in the things of the world. My burden for them is that they will see things around them as Thou dost see; that they will place value on what Thou dost value; that they will be preserved from doing their best for the wrong things. They are Thy children Father, keep them through these years that are so favorable to temptation and success. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

#### **Deuteronomy 16**

##### **COME TO THE PLACE**

Certain events in the course of a year need to be celebrated. There have been things that have happened in the past in nations, assemblies, families and in individuals lives that need to be reviewed because of their impact on us and on others. The nation of Israel was to remember their deliverance from bondage in Egypt annually in the month Abib. The fourteenth day of the first month on their calendar was the day of the Passover. For a week after there was to be no leaven in the bread when and after the sacrificial lamb was eaten. At the end of that week they all came together in unity. The Passover was eaten in the family setting

and when they assembled together, they would celebrate the result of their deliverance with others. We remember we have been saved by God's grace and set apart to Him. When we think of past blessings, we rejoice. The gathering of the Lord's people is a time when we remember "Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast." It is a sanctifying experience when we gather together in fellowship and remembrance. When we leave such a gathering, it puts all the things of life that absorb our daily attention, and that our minds have a tendency to dwell on, into proper perspective. We have remembered Him through whom all our blessings come, and are moved again to commit ourselves to holiness of life.

Blessings that abound in the present are a cause for great rejoicing. There is a strength that comes when we rejoice in the Lord together with God's people that we cannot get in any other way. When the Israelites came together there was a special feast set aside for rejoicing over the blessings God had given them. Amidst all the bad things that are happening in the world today, and the worsening conditions around the world morally, spiritually, economically and socially, we need these special times when the saints of God join their voices in praise and thanksgiving for the blessings God gives us. We should "not forsake the assembling of ourselves together" because these dark days are going to get darker as "evil men and seducers wax worse and worse." The strengthening effect on the people of God when they rejoice together is contagious and is a very important part of our lives. Many of God's people have very little to encourage and strengthen them spiritually in their home and work environment. To come together as children of God and look above the darkness to the Light of Life, and see the glory before us, strengthens our faith in the present.

The hope that we have in the future also is nurtured when we meet together in the place where the Lord has placed His name. The Lord's Supper is a reminder of the past when our Lord Jesus Christ fully satisfied God's just claims against us who had sinned against Him, by His sinless Person being sacrificed for us. The blessings of the present help us to keep a proper perspective on our daily living. We also are caused to respond with renewed vigor and commitment as we think of the future and His word, "ye do show the Lord's death till He come." It is not that we are keeping Jewish feasts that have long since passed their purpose, but when we meet as a New Testament church, we can see the reasons for the gatherings of God's people at the place of His choosing.

We can learn from the practices of those ancient people the value of bringing our offerings to God. Instead of having our pet projects that we think are more important than what God's people have as a company of saints, we are instructed to give our offerings in "the place." Our families that attend with us may only be looking on as observers, but they learn by what they see. For children to watch the reverently bowed heads of their parents and other believers in united prayer gives a sense of the awesomeness of our God that is not experienced in the times of prayer at home. There is an intimacy in the home setting, and there is an awe that comes over God's people as a large company is bowed before Him. The reading and teaching from the scriptures is quite different when the Word of God is opened in public. At home it has a quieting effect and is a companionable activity we share as each person reads a few verses and learns some practical lessons for the day. In public reading and teaching, one person at a time speaks God's truths that affect the lives of all those in attendance, and through them, communities and nations.

The public gathering of God's people provides a venue for giving our gifts to God in a way that can join our portion with that others give to meet some major need. In the place of gathering where we bring what we are able to give, our children who look on will hopefully understand that we all have an obligation and privilege to give back to God from the abundance of all He has given us. By observing our prayers, praise, teaching and financial responsibility to God and His work, they are in a position to learn that which will prepare them for adulthood and Christian service.

Among God's people, godly and just leaders are to take responsibility for maintaining order and caring for the people of the assembly. Those who lead must be able to make wise decisions after joint considerations and discussion among themselves. To come to a perfect consensus does not always happen, but in the course of decision-making, each can listen to, and evaluate the position of others, and adapt his own position as closely as possible to that of other leaders. In that way the affairs of the people can be fairly addressed and just decisions made. If one will not take counsel from others but insists that others acquiesce to his opinion, there will be serious trouble develop. For leaders to compromise truth for the sake of consensus is not right. But to insist that all must bow to my opinion would not be right either. We must let godliness, justice and joy prevail in the place where we meet together with our Lord and His people.

**Deuteronomy 16:11.** *"And thou shalt rejoice before the Lord thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levitie that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, in the place which the Lord thy God hath chosen to place His name there."*

### **REJOICE.**

Back to "The Place" they are coming again -  
With a song from their hearts and gifts in their hands.  
Coming to remember deliverance in the past -  
Coming to give God their very best -  
And to rejoice!

Along with them come their sons and their daughters -  
The whole household rejoicing with holy laughter.  
They have been given an inheritance by God Himself -  
They owe all to Him alone as the Source of their wealth -  
And they rejoice!

Not alone but part of a great company -  
Sharing blessings together - enjoying harmony  
As a nation that has been blessed with divine favor  
With sacrifices to give God and His goodness to savor -  
And to rejoice!

For those days of feasts in holy convocation -  
They stopped and considered how God blessed the nation.  
Coming to give as each one is able -  
Coming to remember at the Passover table -  
And to rejoice!

We come together as one in the Lord -  
We are His children; we honor His Word -  
Not for ourselves but in worship to Him -  
And yet we are blessed, redeemed and forgiven -  
And we rejoice!

**"O God of my salvation, and Giver of every good and perfect gift: knowing the blessings of the past, and assured that Thou art aware of every event in the future, I rejoice here before Thee as one who has been brought into a near place. There are so many reasons for joy and yet I confess that often my mind is focused on causes for sadness or uncertainty. Before Thee this morning I pray that I will look above and beyond these matters over which I have no control, and rest in confidence and joy, in Thee alone. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

*"...But at the place where the Lord thy God shall choose to place His name in [Deuteronomy.16:6]." "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee [Deuteronomy.18:18]." "... as the Lord God of thy fathers hath promised thee [Deuteronomy.27:3]."*

### **THE PLACE #2.**

**There is a Place**, where you shall go;  
**There is a Prophet**, Him you hear;  
**There is a Promise** God has given;  
When all your blessings do increase.  
From human-kind to us is raised.  
The land ahead - His holy home.  
Your tithes, your offerings, all your due  
This Prophet sent from God draws near,  
A land of Promise, though not seen,  
Is brought to Him who showed His grace-  
To God alone, we thank and praise.  
Where He and we share - not alone.

To you - unmeasured, boundless, free;  
Because this Prophet from above,  
That land so fair, the Promise says,  
Because God's love, in fullness great,  
Has come from God His truth to speak.  
Lies just beyond that final turn.  
Has granted blessings unto you, that He  
Like one of us, in boundless love  
The honey, milk, the promises  
Might there, your thanks accept.  
God's Word to us He does repeat.  
Are there for us from Him we learn.

Thus to The Place that He shall choose,  
This Prophet came from God to us  
The Promise makes it very plain,  
With heartfelt thanks you must return.  
The Voice of God, without mistake.  
The Lord our God before us goes.  
There, where He with us communes,  
That we, His brethren always must,  
We now by faith the Promise claim,  
We fitly bring thank-offerings in.  
The will of God in flesh translate.  
And through God's Word all this we know.

To the Place of His dear name,  
This we do, that men around  
The land ahead, seems very far,  
In faith obedient, draw we near.  
Thus, to This Prophet, too will turn.  
Until the years of life be spent.  
Our young, our old - it's all the same,  
That they too know that life abounds,  
And then the promises so clear,  
The Place of meeting for all is here.  
When they, This Prophet no more spurn.  
Make all life's labors gladly lent.

The Place is where He meets His own,  
This Prophet, Savior, Priest and King,  
If only we made each day count,  
His royal dues from us receive.  
Has from our hearts true worship drawn.  
In each day faithful we had been.  
The Place from which on holy throne,  
Now to His holy Name we bring,  
But still the Promise brings about  
In truth, we worship who believe.  
All glory, honor, praise in awe.  
A daily gladness - fulfilled then.

The Place revives our flagging soul,  
This Prophet's word, His voice, His name  
The Promise is God's presence true,  
The Place renews our hearts again.  
In all its full authority.  
The Promise is God's leading.  
Because the Place, is where we're told,  
Has drawn us, saved us, made us His claim,  
The Promise means He'll see us through,  
Our Blessed Lord meets there with men.  
And made us His, eternally.  
Man's promise far exceeding.

**“O Father, the all-providing God who guides, protects, provides for and comforts us: We are thankful that thou dost go ahead of Thy people and leads us in a clear path. We have a tendency to look to each side as we move along. Help me to keep in front of me that fact that the promises of God are “Yea” and “Amen.” They are true, they will happen, there is no doubt that what has been promised will be fulfilled. Each day Thou hast given a little taste of the honey and a good drink of the milk. When I take what has been provided from this land flowing with milk to strengthen and sustain and honey to give joy, it makes this foretaste of heaven a good land. Thank You in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **Deuteronomy 17**

### **FORBIDDEN PRACTICES**

The maintenance of law and order as a nation does not only depend on having understandable laws, but enforcing them in a way that brings benefit to the greatest number of people. In Moses' final instructions, he again made very clear the seriousness of treating the commands of God carelessly. Whether it be the

religious life of the people, their daily life involving labor and business, or the role of leadership, God gave plain instructions. People need to know that among God's people His honor and His name are represented in all we do. His honor and His will have the first claim on every activity in which we are engaged. Perhaps some Israelites had already been bringing second-rate leftovers from their flocks and herds for sacrifices thinking that would not make any difference to God. That practice had to be stopped. Imperfect sacrifices reflected what the people bringing them thought about God and His provision for their acceptance. The attitude we have when we worship, praise God and read the Bible is a reflection of our attitude toward God. Indifference, carelessness and dishonor toward holy things are not going to go unnoticed by God, nor are they unnoticed by those who listen to and observe us. My family will know what the things of God and God Himself, means to me by my tone of voice, my handling and reading of the scriptures and my response to divine things, in comparison to the other things going on in my life.

Wrong must be judged. The idolater in Israel had to be stopped. If a person was seen giving obeisance to idols, that person was to be dealt with by the full extent of the law. Tolerance of evil by most people today would make most to say that God is very unfair in not accepting anyone's religion no matter what it is. Allegiance to idols is to give that idol the place of preeminence and authority in one's life. The only way it was to be dealt with was to permanently eliminate the person who had turned to idols from God, from among God's people. If he or she was allowed to continue in idolatrous practice, it would infect others around them with the same spiritual disease. Children may follow parents. Friends of the children may follow them. The parents of the children who follow the children who follow the parents, may be influenced by them, and it is the fault of those who did not carry out the discipline God intended. Before long the deadly spiritual infection has spread through the whole company (or nation as in the case of Israel). God insisted that it be dealt with by death to the offending idol worshipper.

When just judgment is to be carried out, there is more than one purpose behind it. The offender must be punished. Observers of the punishment are warned as to what will happen to them if they do the same thing. The one or ones who have witnessed the offense must finish what they started. Witnesses must take the responsibility of following through on the charges they make. That would tend to eliminate vindictive accusations that have no real evidence. More than that, there had to be more than one witness so the rights of the accused were safeguarded. In any accusation more than one witness is needed and the consequences must be severe enough to bring the desired result. There are a number of proper disciplinary responses given in the New Testament to be applied when a person has sinned. The action to be taken is to be suitable to the sin committed. From a word of correction given by spiritual men, to being put away from God's people, the reason for discipline is to change a person's behavior from what is wrong to what is right.

Witnesses must be able to identify the problem and that must be supported by two or three who have observed the wrong behavior of which a person is being accused. The way judgment is carried out must correspond with what the scripture says. It also must be consistent with the objective of the discipline. It is possible to misuse the authority of a disciplinary action for the wrong reason. When that happens, it increases the consequences of the problem rather than dealing with it.

In the course of daily living, there arise matters to be faced that go beyond our ability to know how to deal with. Wise counsel from those who are spiritual (in Israel the priests) and those who have experience (in Israel the judges) is needed to make right decisions. Even in that case, the same as when accusations of sinning are made, two or three advisors are needed, that "in the multitude of counselors" there will be safe and wise decisions made. "Off-the-cuff" answers will often cloud the issues at stake rather than clarify the appropriate solution. There is a certain strength of wisdom that comes from those who spiritually and experientially have lived a long time. When they take counsel together, they can hopefully give a solution to a dilemma that will benefit those who have asked for their guidance.

The Lord God did not propose that Israel would have a king. He was their King. But He who knows the future, knew there would be a time coming when Israel wanted a king. To make plain to them He would choose the king, the laws concerning kingship and the leadership of a king were already given. Who should be king, what he should not do and what he should do, were clearly stated so there would be no mistake as to what God wanted in leaders. They were not to overtax the people so he could have a whole lot of "horses" and all the expense that goes with having and maintaining a lavish lifestyle. God's intention for a king was to have a just and fair leader who lived modestly among the people and could guide and serve them under God's leadership. He was not only to be moderate in his lifestyle but in his personal life. The position of leadership is easily abused so that a leader can fulfill his personal lusts for pleasure at the expense of the people he is supposed to serve and lead.

For all his wisdom, Solomon failed in the fundamentals of kingship. He knew how to judge the people but he didn't know how to judge himself. If perchance he did know that, to the extent he could write Proverbs and Ecclesiastes, he did not act on what he knew and gathered to himself so many women he was led astray in spite of the warnings the Word of God gave him. Even the huge amounts of gold he accumulated was contrary to what God had commanded. It is possible for a person, whether he is a leader or not, to know what is right and still choose to do what is wrong. Usually there is some excuse made for wrong behavior, but that does not change the fact that wrong is wrong, no matter what it is and who does it.

God instructed His people back then, and intends for leaders now, to be men who are men of the word of God. They need to know it, what it means by interpretation, and how to apply it in situations that arise. The practice taught by Moses to those who would become kings, is a good practice for those in positions of leadership to follow today. The king had to personally write out the words of the law. In that way the majority of his senses were used to press the truth home to his mind and heart. Then the king had to keep a copy of it with him so it would be at his hand when he had to make a decision on the spot. Further, he had to read it daily. In that way he would be conscious of the impact of it on himself, if he could expect those he judged to obey it.

When a person learns truth from God Himself through the Bible, it becomes real to him as he gets a right understanding of himself or herself. We can know in a general sense the value of the Word of God and the teaching it gives. But when it comes to really understanding its meaning and putting into practice what is taught, we have to read it word for word. Then we know what we should or should not do when it comes to giving God our sacrifices of praise, worship and thanksgiving. We will know that making wise decisions often requires the wise counsel of others. We will also know what is the right thing to do when we are called upon to take responsibility for God's people.

**Deuteronomy 17:18-19.** *“And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of that which is before the priests and the Levites: and it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the Lord his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them:”*

#### **HE SHALL WRITE**

He is one of us - he knows the names - the habits - the culture  
He is not a stranger to the Lord our God - God chose him to lead  
He is our brother - that he may live like us - and among us  
He knows as our king he rules - under One higher than he - the Lord God reigneth

Not for selfish gain - not to accumulate possessions - but for God he leads  
Not to indulge in lust and pleasure - not to return to the world -he leads in separation  
Not for wealth and personal satisfaction - not as a priest before God  
He leads - he rules over the people by divine appointment - for God.

One of his first duties when he sits upon Israel's throne - is to learn  
The books of the law and the statutes he can read - but he must copy them - to learn  
Page after page the king reads and writes that the words might be in him - to learn  
Every day of his life he must read and re-read to fear his God - and to learn.

The heart of a reader accumulates a lot of information -  
A leader can be called to guide an assembly or a nation -  
One who commits to writing - beginning with the day of salvation -  
The words of God and perhaps his thoughts - will find divine illumination.

It is not enough to know things as a general rule -  
You can learn that at home or when you go to school -  
But when you write down what the Lord God says to you -  
Those words of truth and righteousness give light unto your soul.

It would be wrong to expect the obedience and esteem of others -  
If a leader of an assembly doesn't take the time to gather -  
Spiritual truth, and the grace it takes to be a genuine leader -  
Guiding God's people and feeding them from green pastures.

**“Father God, the reading of Your Word is precious to me. All these words I write I know are not important at all. But to me it is the best way I can express what the impact of the words had on my soul. If I go beyond the meaning of the words, please stop my pen. If I misinterpret some passage, give some kind of blockage so that I will**

**go back again and get it right. I am not a very smart person but I do love You and want to get right what is important to You and I ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **Deuteronomy 18**

### **PROVISION, PRACTICES, PROPHETS**

Not everything we read in one place in the Bible seems to have a connection with the subjects described in the same chapter. There is nothing disjointed about the way the word of God is written, but the underlying issues often are deeper in scope that can be seen by casual reading. The work of service in the kingdom of God by those who have been called by God to serve Him and His people full time, is not compensated for by man-made salaries. That would demean the work of God by placing it on the same level as the work we do for men. Service for God in a full-time way is compensated for by God through the offerings of His people. Priests and Levites were cared for by having a portion of the offerings and sacrifices the people brought to God in the place of His choosing. If there were only a few offerings, the portion of those serving was small. If there were many offerings, the portion of priests and Levites would be larger. The responsibility of the Levites was to teach God's truth by word and example. If they gave much in the service of God, their part would be much. If they gave little of themselves in the care of the house of God, service for the people of God, and the overall interests of God on behalf of the nation, they would receive little. "God is no man's debtor."

That principle is similar to the way full time servants who are called to spend all their time are able to have their needs met today. It is true that all of God's people are servants, but not all in the same way. We are told, "Whatever ye do, do it heartily as unto the Lord and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ." Some no person's labor is lacking the intended reward if the objective is to honor the Lord. However, there are those who have been called to give all of their time directly involved in the work of the kingdom of God. Their compensation is unsolicited, but is in proportion to the labor they expend and the legitimate needs they have. God knows what we need and He knows best how to supply that need.

When an evangelist goes forth to evangelize, there are costs associated with his work that are different than those of a teacher whose calling is with the people of God in the local assemblies. The needs are not determined by a designated amount determined by the hours of labor, but by God Himself. He knows the needs before they ever arise. The faithful servant presses forward in his calling under the direction of the Holy Spirit and trusts God to meet the needs of whatever nature they are. If there aren't sufficient funds to meet the obligations, then that work needs to be reevaluated by the laborer to see where he needs to make changes. We are not to "muzzle the ox" that treadeth out the corn. Those who are involved in the service of God teach as much by their example of giving as by their words. The giving of time, talent and goods are all part of this work.

Connected with the example of faith in this chapter when it comes to meeting needs, is the example of doubt. Doubt and deception often go together and are used to full advantage by the master-deceiver, Satan. His deception is not only to take control of the attitudes and activities of skeptics and those who find decision making hard, but to take control of the coming generation of children. Child-sacrifices were made by people living in the land God promised Israel. Copying those people was a danger to the people of God. Because subtle explanations of events are made by knowledgeable people, the simple, common, ordinary person can be manipulated into accepting their predictions. Horoscopes, tarot cards and other forms of occultism can be used to convince doubters that these practices are legitimate methods of gaining insight into areas of the unknown. Childhood games can be obtained that fascinate children and lead them farther and farther into darkness. Mysterious and unexplainable happenings are used by people under Satan's control to turn people away from faith in God and His word. People say, "I don't know how or why this phenomenon happens, but it does, and it actually works, so that is good enough for me." Anything like that is not of God.

Such dangers are around us all the time and can be found on the internet and are even incorporated into computer games that children play. Television programs and movies that deal with the occult are very popular among many young people. Satan doesn't change tactics that have worked in the past to produce his nefarious designs. He is still the master of deception. He still takes advantage of those who are discontented. He still seeks to distort the truth and ultimately damn the souls of those who follow his manipulative practices. There is only one way to deal with those dark things. If you have been involved with them, burn them, throw them away, put them away completely. "Touch not the unclean thing." Refuse to listen to or participate in anything that is mysterious and unexplainable. The scriptures of truth are able to be understood by those who read them. The word of God hidden in the heart will keep God's people from

sinning against God. "Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God and He will draw nigh to you."

God's holy Word is all we need as the source of our instruction as to what is right and wrong. The abominable practices of the occult will not have an attraction to those who know and practice biblical teaching. All of the areas of life, including doubts are addresses in the scriptures. God expects us to "search the scriptures" in order to walk in the light and have no fellowship with those who walk in darkness.

The light of truth has great impact for good on those who believe God. Righteousness of life is consistent with those who "walk in the light as He is in the light." Stephen in the book of Acts chapters 6 and 7 is an example of one who was full of faith and of the Holy Spirit. Even as he spoke publicly, he told of the Prophet mentioned here in this chapter who Moses said would come. Stephen identified that Prophet as the Lord Jesus Christ. His words are always truth. His doctrine is always right. The prophecies He makes will all come to pass - all of them, without exception. Those predictions in the scriptures that were given have been 100% fulfilled as to the time and activities that were foretold. Things that describe our present day were prophesied nearly 2000 years ago. Prophecies that relate to the future can be trusted because we know the truth of the ones already fulfilled.

The prophecies of true prophets happen even as they were predicted. Right from the one God made concerning "the seed of the woman" when He made the serpent to crawl in the dust, to the ones concerning the nation of Israel in their past, present and future - are true because they have happened and are happening. False prophets have said things, set dates about coming events and made unusual statements that do not come to pass as they said. Sometimes they will try to manipulate people by saying their statements have been partly fulfilled and the rest will come later. False prophets are exposed by their false predictions, and do not deserve our attention. Practices that are attractive because they are mysterious and unexplainable are from Satan. The people of God who serve Him will be cared for by those who accept the responsibility given to them by God.

**Deuteronomy 18:18.** *"I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him."*

#### **A PROPHET.**

A man called by God - he has a desire for God in his heart  
Raised up by God - set apart for God from the start  
Bringing words from God - speak all the truth, not a part  
Not self-ordained - not a self-opinionated upstart  
Divine approval on him - God placed on him a mark

From your midst - a man who is by you well known  
One of your brethren - proven that he is one of your own  
Not of the world - his real life in Christ is shown  
Trustworthy in his life - credibility seen at home  
One of the people - not looking for high place or a throne

He may come from a high position - he steps down to where people live  
If from a lower station - he understands it is God's word he gives  
Meekness is in this man - self-control is a trait of his  
As a reconciler - he comes from God to us  
As a leader - he speaks truth with grace

He speaks with authority - he represents Almighty God  
His words are not uncertain - his message is "Thus saith the Lord"  
His information is correct - it comes from God's holy Word  
He may speak of things that hurt - his word is like a sword  
His words may comfort - he knows to speak as he should

His prophecies must always be tested - if they are from God, they're true  
He doesn't base them on feelings - either from him or you  
They come from a proven source - not from something strange or new  
What he says is right - we must obey them and do  
Judgment results when we ignore what he will show

**"O God my Father, I am sure there are those of a younger generation who You are calling into divine service. A problem has arisen though, many speak and have nothing to say, others are silent who should be heard. Please move upon young men**

**and cause them to see it is a great privilege to speak for God to their generation. Help me to help them be guided by the truth of the Word of God that they may listen to the Holy Spirit when He rouses them to respond. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **Deuteronomy 19**

### **BALANCED JUSTICE**

In ancient times evenhanded justice was not a common practice in tribal societies. How to deal with murder has been an essential matter to deter potential murders from happening. To overlook and ignore it would lead to chaos and fear. To address it quickly and harshly has led to the conviction and death of innocent people. God gave to Israel rules to determine if a death was accidental or deliberate. Also, He designed a way that there would be a safeguard for the manslayer until the time a fair hearing into the matter could take place. In the aftermath of a killing there are hot tempers, emotional responses that cannot be denied. In ancient societies, many innocents were killed in the heat of the moment, and the guilty were let go because of position or prestige in the tribe. In His divine wisdom, God designated three cities on the east side of the Jordan River for those Israelites living there, and three on the west side for those people. These "cities of refuge" were "measured" between them so that it was possible for a manslayer to reach them and be safe inside the walls. The "avenger," probably a mature male who would seek to slay the slayer of his kinsman, would not be condemned if he overcame the manslayer. But if the one fleeing reached one of the cities of refuge, the avenger could not enter there to kill the offender.

As long as the accused remained inside the walls of the city of refuge, he was safe. Judges would convene and hear the case to determine what the judgment would be. If the person was innocent, they would be able to live in safety inside that city. If the person was found guilty, the avenger would be the chief executioner. That decision would have to be affirmed by two or three witnesses. In order to remain safe even after being found innocent the manslayer would have to stay in the place of safety - the city of refuge. Justice and mercy fit well together if the rule of law is carried out as God intended. Self-defense or accidental death not caused by negligence needs to be proved. Intended murder needs two or three witnesses to prove the intent behind the action. Whenever matters arise between God's people that have the potential of causing strife and division, it is well to have those who are impartial hear both sides of an argument and the testimony of witnesses, before making an impartial decision. That is one of the reasons plurality of elders, is necessary in an assembly of saints. Justice has to be maintained so order can be maintained. Mercy is also to be considered when unfortunate things happen. It may have been an act or word that happened by accident or thoughtlessness. The innocent need to be protected and safe, but the guilty needs to be fairly judged and steps taken to change whatever was wrong.

In Israel, those cities at a "measured distance" from each other were close enough to be reached on the east side of the Jordan River for those living there to be able to flee to. Justice and mercy were within reach of all the people. This reminds us that God is not unfair in any way. He is the ultimate, impartial Judge who "can by no means clear the guilty." But at the same time, He shows mercy upon those He chooses to show mercy. He gives us the ability to do that which is needed by us all so we can live in peace and harmony with our brothers and sisters.

There needs to be balanced justice when it comes to property ownership. Many disputes are caused because a landmark has been moved or removed altogether. One party will claim property that was originally designated by a pile of stones or a particularly obvious stone set up to mark the corner of a possession. These markers were not only to be permanent for the present owners of the piece of land and those who owned the adjacent land to know what were the boundaries, but was also that the generations following would know what is their land by inheritance. Far too often property to be passed on by inheritance has not been carefully designated by the previous owner. Wise parents will have made plain their wishes in regard to who gets what after they pass on. Landmarks are an essential benefit to those who come after us whether it be personal property we might own, or our spiritual inheritance that can be identified by those truths we hold dear. The first may be plain because of pins, pegs or rocks placed in positions that are not to be changed. The second set of landmarks are established by God, and our convictions in relation to the Bible, the way we worship and serve God, the practices of family life and of the assembly of which we are a part, mark the boundaries in which we conduct our lives. A balanced justice can be maintained and carried out when we have clearly defined what we believe and are consistent in living it out.

When accidents or crimes take place, it is God's intention that justice be served. In order for this to be so, there needs to be two or three witnesses who actually saw the event, in order to convict a person. Hearsay evidence is not acceptable as true evidence, even though it may be true. Balanced, even-handed justice will protect the innocent and convict the guilty if the teaching of God's Word is followed. Eyewitnesses of an

event are enough for judges to make a fair judgment. God also put a safeguard in place regarding witnesses. A false witness whose testimony was found out to be false, was subject to the same punishment as the one who committed the crime. Protestation of their innocence would not change the fact that their testimony against another person was false.

Balanced justice kept the judgment imposed on a convicted person from going too far and from it being too extreme. At the same time, it made sure that the punishment of the guilty did fit the crime. The guilty would feel the pain he had caused others when he had to experience the same thing. He would live with the consequences of his sin in the same way his victim had to live. So "an eye for an eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot," was both justice carried out on the offended, and a deterrent to others who might be inclined to do something and hope they would get away with a lesser punishment than the one they inflicted. Extremes on one side, and tolerance on the other, seem to be accepted today. A person who kills or injures an animal can potentially lose everything. Even a tree that cut down on one's own property, can lead to a serious fine and prosecution if it has been designated as endangered by a group that considers themselves the keepers of the planet. On the other hand, a drunk driver may cause the death of one or two people in a family when he hits them with the vehicle he is driving, and serve a few years in jail or even get a suspended sentence with a fine. This is not balanced justice.

When we have to correct our child, pass on our inheritance to our family, witness or commit a crime - balanced justice and mercy are to be used. Fairness without partiality, grace shown and truth maintained are divinely intended actions. Decisions made that affect others will not be made in haste. Corrections that have to be imposed will suit the offence. Mercy can be shown when repentance is genuine. Confidence takes time to be restored when serious offenses occur. We need to remember God is light, life and love. Those three attributes need to be exemplified by spiritual people who are called upon to make spiritual judgments.

**Deuteronomy 19:15, 21.** *"One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established... And thine eye shall not pity; but a life shall go for a life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."*

#### **JUSTICE.**

There are places to which a slayer can flee;  
On the west side three and across the river three.  
There the judges will gather to determine innocence or guilt -  
The manslayer is safe there until decided why blood was spilt.

Kadesh, Shechem and Hebron, each with a special name;  
The first, a fount for the unclean, the second, for the weary who came.  
Hebron, a shelter for the homeless - finding there, fellowship -  
Each a safe haven until judges mete out their clear justice.

Bezor, Yolam and Ramoth on the east side of the river for those  
Who needed a place of refuge not at a distance but close;  
Today we have such places of refuge, each one a "Church of God",  
Where discipline with grace is given, each person a time to be heard.

For each accusation there needs two or three witnesses,  
Who are not false but can give true and personal evidences;  
A false witness falls under the same condemnation  
As the accused person who is seeking vindication.

The removal of a landmark is an offense that is serious,  
It is evidence that one thinks what God gives is spurious.  
That mark must remain, placed there long in the past,  
Proof of ownership of property and justice that will last.

It is not for us to decide what should remain -  
The order was given by God and His laws we maintain.  
Truth is not a commodity that is bought or sold -  
God's established landmarks are right even when old.

Carrying out of justice is not to be undone out of pity.  
Righteousness doesn't change from city to city.  
God's system of justice was that His people live in peace -  
And yet even in righteous justice, there is still room for grace.

**“O Righteous God, there seems to be an idea about indicating people can get away with almost anything because Thou art a God of mercy. I am thankful for such mercy that withheld judgment from falling on me. At the same time, I know Thou art a just God, and there is recompense for evil and sin. When a person who has sinned and acknowledges that before Thee, how thankful I am able to tell him Thou art gracious and a ransom has been found to legally deal with his guilt. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **Deuteronomy 20**

### **FACING OPPOSITION**

All through the history of man, the independent spirit of self-will and the idea of "up with man" has been in opposition to the mind and will of God. Adam showed that first when he deliberately did what God told him not to do. Cain went farther in his self-will by refusing to do what God wanted. In essence he as much as said, "God, if you won't accept what I want to give you on my terms, then I won't bring anything as a sacrifice." The "up with man, down with God" attitude has been around a long time. God knew the Israelites would face that kind of attitude often in their own minds as well as those of their enemies, so He established a protocol for their army to follow when they had to go to war. We constantly face opposition when we go forward with the Gospel to "make disciples of all nations." God hasn't given up His plan to have peace on earth, but it is not going to be a compromised peace made on man-made terms. Man's method of peace making has been tried hundreds of times and has failed. There will be a time of peace on earth when the Prince of Peace comes and establishes peace on earth, but not before.

In the mean time, there will be battles for property, battles for political reasons, ideological battles and spiritual battles. Moses gave Israel instructions to follow when the battle was for property. First, before the battle would take place, they had to be sure this action was God's will. The priest would address the army in the name of the Lord and assure them that when they did what was right, God would be with them and they would overcome the enemy. Opinions of men over interpretations of scripture, are not necessarily right ones. However, when there are plain scriptural precepts and doctrines that are very easy to understand, we are not able to surrender what is right in order to show tolerance and have an unrighteous peace.

The next thing to be done was the officers spoke to the soldiers under their command to exhort them in a practical way. If a man has just finished building a house or planted a new vineyard, he was free to go home because he would be thinking about what he would miss if he died in battle. Even more so was if he was planning to be married or was newly married, his love and desire for his wife would jeopardize not only his life but the soldiers around him because he would be distracted in his mind and heart. That would endanger a lot of soldiers as well as himself because he would be less than whole-hearted in his commitment to winning the battle. When we feel like we are outnumbered by all that is going on around us, and our cause seems helpless and hopeless, we need to recall the command of the Lord and His promise as we carry out His commission, "Lo, I am with you, even unto the end of the world (age)."

God intended for there to be an offer of surrender to avoid bloodshed when a battle was for property. The offer would give the terms of surrender in which those who surrendered would serve the conquerors. A peaceful surrender would save lives and the property would change owners. Occasionally among God's people there are issues that arise that can be settled by coming together and seeking out ways that agreement can be reached without compromising God's Word. Such accommodation is not an attempt to "cross-pollinate" doctrinal positions held by different groups, but is to strengthen a scriptural testimony by unifying those who are seeking the same objective.

Some of the battles Israel fought would be spiritual battles of truth against lies; righteousness against unrighteousness; the kingdom of God against the devil. Right from the victory of Israel over the Amorites and in battles all around the promised land to the land of the Jebusites: those ungodly, licentious, idol worshipping tribes that had such evil practices, had to be totally destroyed in order to preserve the moral standards of the whole Middle East. The whole society of those tribes was so evil that the Lord God wanted them annihilated in order to save those around them from doing the same things. That was Israel's instruction but they did not carry it out. Because of that unwillingness in the past, millions of people have died there of people in those other nations and from the Israelites and their descendants. That antagonism against the Jews continues to this day. We need to remember in our calling as the people of God, that "we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers; against spiritual wickedness in high places." To allow sin to remain unjudged creates greater problems (in Israel, greater bloodshed) then if we follow God's word at the beginning of a "warfare."

Another instruction was given to the Israelites regarding facing opposition. There would be a new kind of warfare they had not yet experienced. They had fought and won by God's power on open terrain and in fields. Urban warfare was something they had not yet faced. This took more time because there were high walls to face and other obstacles around cities to keep enemies out. They were going to need trees to build bulwarks and siege engines to get them close enough to breach the walls. God had anticipated their victory ahead of time and knew the Israelites would need the fruit trees for food later on. They were not to cut down any fruit trees.

There are practices we follow that may vary in different assemblies. Usually the way a work begins and the practices they follow, will establish the way things are done for many years to come. The times of meetings, the ways chairs are set, the order of meetings are practices that differ from place to place. The teaching of the Word of God, the preaching of the Gospel and the carrying out of the ordinances have been designated by God and are not ours to change. Those "fruit trees" are there to provide on-going benefit to the people of God in spite of doctrinal opposition by those groups around us who make their own statement of faith. Other groups gather together occasionally to formulate their doctrinal beliefs and practices based on what the majority of people want. A scriptural assembly of God's people is not a democracy. The "voice of the people" does not establish the doctrines of an assembly. We are under divine authority and are like a living body, an organism with each part functioning within the body and fulfilling a role to which they have been suited by the Holy Spirit for the benefit of the whole body.

In facing opposition, our strength is in God, our orders are from Him, our plan of operation is in His Word and our goals are defined by God. The results of the united effort of the people of God are for the glory of God, the furtherance of His kingdom and the blessing of His people.

**Deuteronomy 20:3-4.** *"And ye shall say unto them, 'Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them; for the Lord your God is He that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.'"*

#### **FEARFUL AND FAINTHEARTED**

NOT ALL ARE ALIKE

Bold as a lion they sound - noisy swelling words and swelling chests - bravery?  
No obstacles seem to dampen their confidence - or quiet their noise  
Arrogant strutting as they parade before adoring crowds - they look the part  
And then the battle: self-confidence leaves - cowering, hiding alone - behind

Quiet-spoken - invisible sense of personhood - wary presence - conscious of surroundings  
Willing to listen and learn in silence - by observation and by quiet questions  
Mingling among his fellows - they sense a calmness - confidence in God - trustworthy  
And then the battle: eyes on the commander - moving on orders - efficient

Fear in their eyes at the word "war" - fainthearted - darting eyes expressive of terror  
No confidence - weak knees - hands wringing with sweat - yet cold - unable to war  
Uncertain of themselves and others - palatable fear - apart and alone - a problem to all  
And then the battle: don't take them - leave them with the stuff - he can't help it

Noisy and arrogant; quiet and courageous; fearful and fainthearted - there is work for all  
One rallies the people stirring the hearts of the masses - awakening them to the need  
One does the work - not for the praise of men - only to please the One who chose him  
One returns home - working in the quietness of a field - in safety - to provide for others  
And the battle: each one had a part - some live - some die - some pray: and victory results!

**"All-Powerful God, the battle is here and now yet many do not realize this. The enemy is working unseen forming bulwarks against our Gospel; making fear a reality to some. The fear of man is a real snare here and people hardly know they are afraid because they have gotten comfortable with the enemy. Rouse my heart and soul to rise to the challenges that lie before us in the coming months of Gospel outreach. May the saints be rallied, may the warriors be made ready, may those who supply be ready for their part in the struggle of life or death. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

#### **Deuteronomy 21**

##### **MAINTAINING ORDER**

In communities and families within those communities there is an order that needs to be maintained for the well-being and safety of all who live there. The Lord knew that there would be situations arise in which there would have to be decisions made that would be hard to carry out. Because of human nature and human sin,

we will have to address issues that are not just clear "black and white" matters. The grey areas of life may leave us uncertain as to how to proceed without ignoring what is wrong and at the same time maintaining a peaceful ordered society. The instructions God gave Moses to pass on to His people set out certain principles that guide us.

An unsolved crime, particularly murder, makes almost everyone in a community uneasy. If the matter is not addressed in some way there will come a resistance to those who are in authority. It is to be expected that some action will be taken to repair the situation, even if the root of the problem remains undiscovered. The illustration of the young heifer taken down into a rough valley where there is a running stream of water, indicates an action has been taken on behalf of the nearest community that would be suspect, even though the perpetrator of the crime was not found. The act they took in Israel was to recognize only God knew the answer to the problem and they were putting the whole matter into God's hands through the sacrifice they made. When there is neglect on the part of those in authority to correct a wrong, or pass judgment on a potentially divisive situation, God's people will be side-tracked from the goal and blessings of a well-ordered assembly.

There needs to be an awareness on the part of all of God's people as to what might be causing a problem, and responsibility taken on the behalf of all, by those who are spiritually mature, to solve the problem. "When one member suffers, all suffer with it." We cannot dismiss our responsibility towards others by saying, "I don't want anything to do with this problem." We are part of the situation whether we want to be or not. Anything that arises among God's people that affects them spiritually, morally, socially or even physically, needs our attention. It may be that a clear answer avoids us and we have to leave a matter not completed to the satisfaction of everyone. The important part of that situation is that we have done all we can do in as careful a way as possible. Then we have to leave the whole matter to our omniscient God. He knows what we do not know. He can do what we cannot do. Even then, an announcement to God's people or a public prayer to that effect can help people understand we have done all we know how to, so the problem could be solved.

Another matter the Israelites has to be taught was respect for one another as well as people who come into our lives from somewhere else. In the case of a man marrying a woman from another ethnic group, there was the responsibility on the man to guide her in the way to adapt to where she now was going to live; not to maintain the cultural mores from which she came. Her hairstyle and fingernails were often reflections of the place and religion from which she came. To maintain order among God's people she had to leave her past lifestyle and conform to where she was now going to live and to the man she married. A multi-cultured community of believers is not what God intends. If a person will not submit to the biblical changes in order to keep the pattern of life God expects, that person is allowed to go their own way without any censure.

Partiality among God's people because of personal likes or dislikes is not allowed among God's people either. For favoritism to be shown causes division among the people of God. When a person is a part of a fellowship of saints, the rights and privileges of the family of God are as much to one person as they are to another. "God is no respecter of persons," and to maintain order among the family, we need to avoid anything that would demean one person and exalt another. Personal rights of inheritance in families, marriages, assemblies or nations are not based on the personal opinions of those who are in a position to dispense privileges or property. Those things are rights because of the position one is in and who they are, not the rights of the administrator to decide.

Some people resist and rebel against authority in spite of the necessity of order being maintained for the benefit of all. To some people stubbornness is no more than a difficult character trait. In God's eyes rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. The attitude of one person can have detrimental effect if it is rebellious, or a positive effect if it is gracious and godly. A heretic is a self-opinionated person who takes the position that he is right and all others should accept him the way he is and conform to his ideas. "A heretic after the first and second admonition, reject." When a person resists the disciplined life that is expected in a society of people whether it be a nation, a city, an assembly of Christians or even a family, the order needed to keep from chaotic discontent is missing. That person will have to be disciplined in some way to maintain order.

Capital crimes in nations today are given great coverage by the media and everyone who wants to get all the gruesome details can find them out. It has led to some "copy-cat" crimes committed by some people who want to get notoriety or attention. God's way is to deal with the problem legally and quickly. Don't leave things hanging out in the open for everyone to gossip about. Act in whatever way is necessary to legally maintain order and then bring the whole matter to a close as soon as possible. When events and/or sins are made public and left out in the open, the problem will still be a source of unnecessary talk and speculation.

Orderly living focuses on that which maintains a society in the most useful and contented way possible. The lives of families and assemblies depend on those who are responsible for the well-being of others because of their maturity and experience in maintaining order. This can, and should be done in a gracious spiritual way.

**Deuteronomy 21:9.** *"So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the Lord."*

#### **INNOCENT BLOOD.**

Death has passed - blood has been shed - the cause is unknown  
Elders, judges, priest - the incident happened near their home -  
A decision has to be made - the blood of the innocent atoned-  
The God-given procedure to follow must be correctly done.

The clean animal is led down and must be slain -  
In the same way it happened to God's Perfect Lamb -  
He was taken and tested to try to find blame -  
He was perfect in holiness, bearing our sin and shame.

To the rough valley of death, they slowly descend -  
Priests draw near on their behalf to attend -  
For the guilt to be put away, blood must be shed -  
The watchers can see the Substitute is dead.

Those who have eyes of faith can behold -  
The Shepherd has died and we are safe in the fold -  
Up from the rough valley the story can be told -  
Grace has dealt with guilt by the shedding of blood.

**"I recognize the foreshadowing of the death of Christ for me, O Father. I see these ways people of old were given insight into the reality of substitution. It never ceases to amaze me that in such a variety of ways, people in the past were able to discern the fact that One has legally settle every claim against us. I thank and praise Thee for this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

#### **Deuteronomy 22**

##### **LAWS FOR LIVING**

All over this world most people live in close proximity to others. Even in places where people are still hunters and gatherers there is social interaction. There is also an inner urge to possess things and claim them for ourselves. Children claim "my coat ... my bed ... my room ... my toys ... my books ... my friends." These things do give a sense of personhood to them at an early age. A little farther along in life we have "my work ... my home ... my family ... my car," and this establishes a sense of responsibility in which human relationships flourish. In our spiritual life we are conscious of "my sin ... my soul ... my need ... my Savior ... my salvation," and these make us aware of God and the standards of moral living He expects of people. In communities we speak of "my neighbor ... my street ... my assembly ... my friends," and these give a sense of communion in everyday living. In any of these areas of these areas of life, when we change the God-ordered state of things, it brings disruption in contented living, and can destroy the respect that is needed for living effectively. In order for the children of Israel to travel and live together for years in the wilderness there had to be laws for living. Those laws were to continue to be the guidelines for living in the communities of the promised land.

In farming areas where there are animals kept to provide a livelihood for families, it is inevitable that occasionally some animals would get loose and stray. Ownership is not established on the basis of where and animal or a lost possession is at the moment, but where it is normally. To keep for one's self that which we find without seeking for the rightful owner is the same as stealing. The game of "finders-keepers" is not God's way nor within the laws of living. Everything we claim for ourselves comes from God and yet many will never give Him thanks for the things He gives us. Others ignore His grace and think they deserve that for which they have never worked. If a person takes for themselves that which obviously belongs to someone else, they are breaking the laws of living. Respect for the property of others is one way of demonstrating respect for a neighbor - or for that matter, a stranger. That law of ownership is placed in our hearts so we will care for what has been given by God and allowed for us to keep. At the same time the same law makes us respond as the moral law states, "... and thy neighbor as thyself."

When we practice that law of respect towards others, we will find we also respect ourselves. To eat that which is not ours takes away the sense of worth we need. "Stolen waters " may seem sweet for a moment,

but when we kill an animal of our neighbor's and eat its meat as if it were our own, there will be a sense of guilt which we cannot avoid. There are consequences when we break any law, and guilt is usually strongest when we know we have broken a moral law. Included in that is the fact that God made us who we are and what we are. In spite of the man-made laws that people want to adapt to a sinful lifestyle they have chosen, a man is - and always will be a man no matter how he dresses, or what he may have done to himself. The same fact applies to women. The trans-gender culture that is in vogue does not change the genes of a person. People may allow perverted thinking about themselves and others, but God-given laws for living do not change because of the votes of a governing body.

All around us everyday and everywhere, the laws of nature are functioning as God intended, for our welfare. "Only man is vile." God created everything for our benefit and He declared it "good." "Every good gift, and every perfect gift cometh down from above." We can respect the laws of nature and we will be provided for as the Lord intended. To kill the hen that lays the eggs may give us one or two meals for the moment, but will effectively stop the source of life and the process by which our sustenance is maintained. When greed destroys the eggs of the fish in the water, we can effectively cut off the source of food that maintains millions of people. The hunter is wise who does not kill for his immediate gratification those creatures that reproduce and continue to supply our needs. Mixed seed in a field may hinder a whole harvest when one kind of plant grows higher than another. A larger plant may cover life-producing light, and stunt the growth and development of a smaller plant that produces a smaller plant that produces food for our use. At the same time both take moisture from the ground needed for plant growth, but there will not be enough for the seed to develop to full fruit as it should. Two different kinds of threads may be different in tensile strength. A garment may look nice with two different kinds of cloth, but the strength of the garment is compromised.

These kinds of lessons teach us that God intends us to conduct our community life, our assembly life and our personal life in a life-sustaining way that is consistent with God's unique and perfect plans for our good. When we act independently of God's will and ways, we may have short-term gains and long-term losses. Building a guardrail where it provides safety for our own family and others who may visit us, may not be esthetically appealing, but is a fundamental law for safe living. God knows the end from the beginning of things, and He knows what can happen when human beings act in their own sinful ways. By defining "common sense" laws for living, respect for others, for ourselves and for nature will make our lives much better.

An area of living where there is far too much disrespect is in the interaction of men and women. We have been created in such a way as to propagate the human race. The process is pleasurable and can be meaningful to both men and women when it is conducted in the way God intends. For men to take advantage of women and abuse the dignity and beauty God has given them, ruins the respect each should have for the other. Relationships between the sexes has been defined by God as to how it best works and what is safest and the most enjoyable. God's pattern for sexual life works well when followed. To take with unbridled lust from another person that which should be able to be given gladly, demeans the whole of a personal relationship between two people. What is lost in such a situation, can never be regained.

When a man gives of himself and his love for a woman, the best he can give, that will be received with joy and respect. It will not only establish the foundation of a good relationship, but the joy and respect given, will enhance the desire of that woman for her husband. When a woman gives of herself that which is uniquely hers to give, then her husband's respect for her is so high he will desire to preserve, protect and defend her with his life. Her joy is his desire. Her contentment brings him contentment. Her love when given, is not demanded and is real and lasting. Strong rules for living are given that life will be guarded as it should be, and life for both man and woman is pleasurable and fruitful. It will be safe and lived out in trust and respect. Relationships between the sexes when kept within the bounds of the laws for living keeps peace and tranquility in a community, a family and an assembly. Forbidden pleasures when people cross the boundaries of biblical, sexual conduct, destroy, demean and divide people in ways from which they can never be fully recovered. The rules for living create a solid atmosphere of solid marriages and children who feel safe and secure. Respect is established and maintained when God's directives are followed and lived by.

**Deuteronomy 22:1.** *"Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother."*

#### **RIGHTEOUS LIVING.**

"It is not mine, it belongs to another," is no excuse  
For not capturing an animal when it gets loose.  
Or when anything is injured and you are there -  
You are obligated to get involved and do your share.

These rules were given by God in an ancient time -  
And righteous living calls for the same here in mine.

Cross-dressing to pretend you are what you are not,  
Was an abomination then and had to be stopped.  
We have a similar problem but even worse today -  
People have gotten used to those around who say they're "gay."  
It has extended now from the streets into the church -  
But it still is not right and those who do it still are cursed.

Respect for nature and things in the wild is nothing new -  
Righteous living involves me taking the long view.  
So, look ahead and see what happens when we take  
From the wilds and from nature and do not replace -  
Soon all the hills and valleys will be bare,  
And the creatures of the wild will not be there.

Common sense in the simple things has a big impact  
In keeping alive or from injury; we dare not lack  
To see ways that we can protect others from a fall -  
It is necessary to build a fence or maybe a wall.  
Right living means that I look out for the welfare of others -  
Although it might cost me more and seem to be a bother.

God in His grace has allowed me over life to gather -  
Some things to use for work and sometimes pleasure.  
To use them wrong and mix them may create a danger  
That might not bother me at all but adversely affect a stranger.  
For me to be seriously committed to righteous living -  
Means I must be considerate in what I am doing.

The flesh is always open to the pressure of temptation -  
It is no different now today, than when Israel became a nation.  
Righteous living men and women must always be so careful -  
For what seems innocent at first can soon lead to something sinful  
And what began in the allure of attraction becomes wrong -  
The results of such can mean the potential of two lives is gone.

**“O Righteous God, there are so many things going on around me that must grieve Thee. It causes concern in me because even though I am just a mortal man, I can see the end of such living is disaster. Families, marriages, the lives of growing children - even the course of the nation is in jeopardy because righteous living seems to be of little concern to the majority of people. I don't have a lot of influence, O God, but help me to use what I have to Thy glory and the benefit of others. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

### **Deuteronomy 23**

#### **LAWS FOR INDIVIDUALS**

God takes seriously the attitudes and actions of His people. We are not a bunch of people who can do what we want in our own personal lives and still be accepted as a part of the fellowship of God's people. What affects one person affects everyone to one degree or another. In the same way a small splinter of wood in one's toe can have an effect on the whole body by bringing it to a stop until the splinter is removed, so the actions of a member of an individual can stop the work of an assembly and adversely affect its testimony. The private parts of an Israeli would never be seen, but there would be other evidence that his reproductive ability is gone for some reason. Sodomy and all that is associated with that lifestyle was not acceptable nor allowable in Israel. Neither was that which is known as an "alternate lifestyle" today, accepted as normal or in any way condoned. The common-law relationship of a man and woman would negatively affect their children. They were not considered to be a citizen of the nation of Israel and consequently neither would their children. Inheritances could not be passed on to them from those who were legally a part of the designated tribes and who owned property. The privileges and responsibilities of community life in Israel were forbidden to them. In a similar way, those who had been enemies from certain nations that had sought to stop them from claiming what was promised them by God centuries before, could not become a part of the nation of Israel. God was not going to allow what could have been a "fifth column," from undermining the security of the nation.

Some of those restrictions may seem too severe to our tolerant society today. We have come to the place where we want everyone to feel good about themselves no matter how badly they might behave or how wrong the lifestyle they practice may be. The gay/lesbian lifestyle is being accepted today as individual rights, and many insist that is normal to some because they say it is normal. People can say what they want, but that does not change the fundamental laws of humanity and personhood that God has made. Men were not created to take the place of women nor women the place of men. The emotional traits of a person do not change the physical characteristics with which we were born, nor the uses of our bodies.

Families without the commitment of marriage of a man to a woman were never intended by God. He made them "male and female" because He designed human bodies that way to propagate the human race. It was God Himself who brought Eve to Adam to be united emotionally, physically and spiritually. The unique differences between the sexes fill the need for fellowship and the fulfilling of a meaningful life. In order for this to be maintained, there were the bonds of marriage given by God to keep the purity of body, soul and spirit intact between a husband and his wife. Children born outside of marriage have no claim on anything of their forbearers. Many don't know anything about those from whom they got their personal characteristics. By God's grace, when a person is saved, they become "a new creation" and life begins new at that time. But the lifestyle of sexual promiscuity and the "alternate lifestyle" is not to be a part of the life of God's people nor is it right for us to condone this.

When those who have been enemies of the Gospel and have opposed the work of the Gospel decide they "want to change religions" and be a part of a scripturally gathered assembly, that desire is not the basis of our fellowship. Even if a letter is carried telling of being a member in good standing of some church, that is not a reason for accepting a person into the fellowship of saints. There needs to be the assurance that a person has been truly born again by the Spirit of God, and evidence of "newness of life" should be seen. Willingness to be identified as an individual with the Lord Jesus Christ by believer's baptism is very different than a denominational christening of babies or even adults. Baptism of an individual separates them individually to the Lord Jesus Christ. Care taken in this regard along with time to assess the reality of a person's request for assembly fellowship is needed to avoid Satan's subtle attempt to compromise truth. The attitude that anyone who says they are a Christian, is a Christian, can undermined the life of an assembly. The watering down of the Gospel message and a tolerance for people in spite of doctrinal differences has the effect of removing an assembly from being a "lampstand" to just another church from which to choose.

Every individual was to not only be morally clean, but physical cleanness was expected of the children of Israel. It was necessary to teach the children early in life so they would know how to maintain sanitary conditions in their homes, the camp of Israel in the wilderness, and the cities in which they would dwell. Uncleanliness from body emissions of whatever nature, was to be dealt with in the way God proscribed. Paddles were to be carried so they could cover what they left. Latrines are necessary even in an army camp to preserve health and cleanliness. Israelites were to cover with dirt whatever came from them. Washing with water was also necessary to remove odors that were associated with bodily functions and actions. Individuals were responsible for themselves, from their personal hygiene to moral conduct. Unfortunately, there are people who try to blame society for the conditions of squalor in which they live. They do not clean up behind themselves and think that others should do that for them. Others will blame their parents or peers for their own unacceptable behavior. Every individual is responsible to be the kind of person God intended them to be. The laws governing individuals are simple, plain and make common sense.

There were some who had been slaves to others probably through no fault of their own. They had been enslaved by conquerors or money seeking slave-traders. God does not condone slavery even though He allows it to exist because of willful human sin. Mankind has brought this about because of sin. When a slave escaped and came to Israel, life started over for them. They were not to be considered a lesser person but were to be accepted for who they were as a person. The past life of a believer should not be held against them by God's people. Those who have been in the bondage of sin, will still have a hard enough time recovering from the consequences of their sinful past without God's people adding to their challenges by considering them a lesser person.

There were differences of trust among those who were the people of God and those who were not. An Israelite was considered to be a person of integrity who, when he borrowed money, would pay it back at the earliest possible time. The lender was not to charge interest but was to trust the borrower to meet his obligations in a timely fashion. Not everyone who asks money from us has a good intention behind it. When it is one of God's people, the trust we show in that person is a strengthening act to one who is a genuine believer. To be trusted in this way, challenges a person to live up to the expectations others have of them. To lend money without interest is one of the greatest expressions of trust we have in a person's word and character.

God's view of a human body is much different from that of those who only see their physical body as a tool with which to make money. The Christian's body has had a high price paid already for it by the Lord Jesus Christ. In ancient Israel when they were about to enter the promised land, religions in the tribes around them used paid prostitutes to keep people coming to the place where they worshipped idols. A variety of sexual pleasures almost guaranteed that lustful men and women would come to where their lust could be satiated. Israelites were not to allow such things to happen in their nation. God's intention is that sexual fulfillment be found within the boundaries of marriage between one man and one woman. A right attitude about who we are and who our spouse is, builds a right relationship between two people that extends to all parts of our lives.

Premarital sex was never in God's plan for the happiness and welfare of mankind. The bond of marriage and marital fidelity maintains not only marriages and families intact, but strengthens society. Our society today is disintegrating because of the lack of commitment of husbands to wives and vice versa; of parents to children and vice versa. A huge percentage of children today are being born who have no real family. Confusion reigns in many homes where the children of one woman have different fathers. As individuals, people need to see how serious a social problem self-centered living is. Children raised without a father, often become dysfunctional adults because they never learned the laws for individuals to live by, nor were they taught them by the model of responsible parents. Christians need to commit themselves to fulfilling the vows they make: to the institution of marriage, to the person they married, and to the children God has given them as a heritage from Him to us. When these principles for living are followed by individuals, our lives will be lived as God intended.

When a person in Israel passed by a fruit tree or along a field of grain as they traveled, they were allowed by the laws for individuals, to pick an apple or fig or some other fruit off of another person's tree to eat as they went along their way. They were not harvesting the fruit and claiming the profit from the fruit for themselves. However, if they had a container and put the fruit of another person's tree into the container, that was forbidden. That would be the same as stealing that which belonged to another as a means of their livelihood. There are laws today in some schools that forbid plagiarism. Different places define plagiarism in different ways. The principle that governs the action is that if I use an idea another person has to produce something for my profit, I am a plagiarist. Others will say words used in similar contexts is plagiarism. Others will say it is using phrases word for word that is plagiarism. Whatever it is, if my purpose is to take what another person has done and claim it for myself for financial or personal gain, I am stealing. The intent behind an act or an action is known by God and I must be committed to personal integrity in regard to the laws that govern my life.

**Deuteronomy 23:21.** *“When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee.”*

#### **DON'T DO THAT.**

God sees what I cannot see - hidden things - hidden reasons - unknown to me  
Behind each door - each garment - each word - are secret thoughts  
God knows them - the intents of the heart - the channels of the mind  
And in no uncertain terms says, “Don't do that!”

God knows the dangers - from nations without - from cultures strange to truth  
He looks down through days, weeks, months, years and centuries - and knows the end  
The results of letting things go for friendship - for acceptance - for peace  
And the final serious consequences are so damaging, “Don't do that!”

Unqualified acceptance is so nice - you are everyone's friend - but wait -  
God's house is a holy place - “Holiness becometh Thy house” -  
A holy people cannot accept ungodliness - some things are still an abomination  
Even though the majority, and the law says, “Okay,” “Don't do that!”

Profits are there to be made - at another person's expense - they are in real need  
This is a time a lot of money can be made - exorbitant interest is there for the taking  
Everyone else is doing it - “That's just good business,” they say - but wait  
He is your brother, and he has a need - when it comes to charging interest - “Don't do it!”

Vows are made before men and before God - promises are to be kept -  
You are going give to God a certain amount - be sure you give what you say you will  
If you are going to give your time to God - be sure you give it - all of it  
If you are going to give yourself to God - be sure you do - otherwise - “Don't do it!”

You see a way your can help your brother meet his own need - leave the corners  
A neighbor offers you some thing - do not take undue advantage of his generosity  
A person offers you some help - be thankful for what he is willing to do for you  
When the opportunity comes to take more than was agreed upon - "Don't do it!"

**"I know every act I do and word I say is seen and heard by Thee, Father. I never want to dishonor Thee by taking wrong advantage of others even though they may offer something out of the goodness of their heart. Keep me with a sense of what is good and proper rather than what can I get out of this. And when I commit myself to Thee in some way, please give me the ability to keep my word lest I cause someone to stumble and dishonor Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **Deuteronomy 24**

### **LAWS BETWEEN PEOPLE**

It never was, and is not now, God's intention that married people divorce. However, the fact remains that people do. The practice takes place and the effects of it are felt in families, communities, countries and assemblies. There were those in Israel who divorced their spouse for very insignificant reasons. That was what the Lord Jesus Christ spoke about when He was asked by the Pharisees to comment on what Moses said here. The Lord clearly addressed the matter by stating the fact that adultery was the only reason for this action to be taken scripturally. Most people who divorce today are not believers and still the practice of divorcing a spouse on a whim takes place. The divorce of a man and woman was a permanent act. Moses said they were not able to be remarried to the same person again after they had been with someone else. The seed was adulterated and would not be allowed to be mixed. A casual attitude toward marriage is not consistent with vows that are made. A separation and divorce over frivolous matters still did not make it possible to remarry the same person. That light approach to the ordinance of marriage was not right, so a divorce was final, permanent and there was no going back. It is important for every person to seriously approach marriage in the fear of the Lord. He initiated the institution, and He recognizes the breakup of a marriage. The relationship of Christian marriage is illustrated by Christ's love for the church and His willingness to give His life for His spiritual bride.

When people are first married there needs to be time and care devoted to establishing this new relationship on solid principles. There are distractions and pressures put on newly married people as they learn to accommodate themselves to one another, and to the likes and dislikes of each other. Outside influences from two different families also enter into the picture. The model one partner had from his family may be very different from what she learned from her family. To blend these as well as different backgrounds together and form a unique, workable relationship of their own, takes time, prayer, accommodation, discussion and compromise. The uniqueness of a new family unit is formed and it may take some characteristics from both families, but a new social unit is formed between these two people. There are burdens that have to be faced in the first year as this blending process takes place and roles are defined by practice and the process of give and take. The strengthening of a new marriage comes when the division of labor becomes clear to each person, and our expectations are modified to what is realistic to expect. All is not only "sweetness and light," but as days and weeks pass, the pleasure and expectations are established in the framework of what is real and workable between two people. The ethereal dreams of childhood fade and become real life with unexpected joys and pleasures that take the place of dreams. For these reasons a man needs to be with his wife and free to bring her the happiness and security she deserves.

Sometimes we may be in need of borrowing a particular item or even some money from a friend or neighbor for a certain task or need. Something of equal or greater value is given as a pledge to return that which was borrowed. That item of security was to be returned when the borrower returned the item he borrowed in good condition, but he could not demand the pledge of security by going and taking it. The lender had to be satisfied that what he had loaned was returned in good order before he had to return the pledge of security. He also had the privilege of inspecting what was returned without the borrower looking over his shoulder. After the lender was satisfied, he would voluntarily return the item of security to the borrower. The principle still remains, the borrower is servant to the lender, and the borrower is at the mercy of the lender's decision. God knows the reason for everything we do and it is a wise person who does not try to cover any aspect of business between himself and others.

There are crimes in almost every society that are considered extreme and are known as "capital crimes." Kidnapping is one of the most heinous of those, especially if it is a child who is kidnapped. The result of one person holding another against their will for a ransom, security, or any other reason, will be the full extent of the law is used against that kidnapper. Age does not enter into the consequences levied against the offender. A child is as important as a well-to-do man. In Israel the death sentence was imposed on the

kidnapper. In many parts of the world today that is still the punishment for that crime. Each person is of equal value in the sight of God. He is as involved in the life of a child who is just beginning life as He is in those who are nearing the end of life. We need to look on each person and see them as God sees them. That will motivate us to reach out and meet needs as we seek to preserve their physical and spiritual life.

To jeopardize the lives of people by spreading fatal disease without consideration of the well-being of others is wrong. The transmission of disease has become a world-wide problem with the ease of world-wide travel. A person may make contact with someone who has the ebola virus in Africa and be anywhere in the world in one day. The bird flu in China can travel in a day to North America and in a week, thousands can be struck down with that sickness. Aids was a serious spreading problem that killed thousands and still does affect many after thirty years. It was God's way of dealing with communicable disease to isolate that person until the disease left them. It is selfish and wrong for a person to knowingly keep on with his business or pleasure and at the same time expose people to the potential of contacting the disease that he has.

Another area of interpersonal relationships with a potential for serious problems is that of an employer and employee. No matter who he is, the laborer should be paid a fair wage and be able to count on receiving it at the agreed upon time. Day laborers should be paid at the end of the day's work. Each person who contracts to work for another should give a good day's work for a day's pay. Between two Christians the practice should not be different. An employer shouldn't expect more from the employee because he is a brother in Christ. Likewise, the employee should not expect more pay or favors than anyone else who is doing the same work. A principle that should guide us as to our labor is, "Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do it heartily as unto the Lord, knowing that from the Lord ye shall receive the reward."

Children that have been brought up in our home should have been taught to do what is right, but they don't always do that. When a son or daughter runs into problems of their own making and are facing severe consequences because of it, we are to let them bear those consequences. Spoiled children often have never learned that there are consequences to accept for every action - good or bad. We do our children a disservice if we let them sin and get away with it. The laws of the country will not overlook what indulgent parents often overlook.

The same is true if a parent has a lifestyle such as an addiction that leads them into serious consequences. The son or daughter may be in a position to use their influence to let the parent free because of some obligation a person has to the adult child. But it is not right for us to try to influence some legal decision that should be carried out. The law should be able to take its course in order to maintain the demands of society, and the reputation and integrity of a person should not be compromised for the wrong behavior of a parent or a child.

The welfare of strangers who come among us is not to be ignored by the citizens of a place. To demand some compensation from the homeless or aliens before we give assistance to meet their need, is to forget that all we have and are, we owe to the Lord. "What dost thou have that thou didst not receive." We owe our life, our breath, our everything to the Lord who has provided for us. We are to be willing to provide for others.

An effective way of meeting the needs of the poor in the Bible times was to glean in one's field or orchard after the harvest has been taken off. Owners were to leave behind forgotten sheaves of grain and fruit that still remained on the trees after the harvesting for those who were needy to collect for their own use. The poor were free to come into a person's field and gather the left behind grain, or in the orchards the olives, figs or nuts that were still there. This promoted initiative on the part of the needy to take responsibility to help meet their own need. It is better for us to give a person the opportunity to work, than to give a handout that will not be enough to meet a real need, but will only partially salve our conscience. By opening up a labor opportunity we supply a need, give a person self-respect, and accomplish a goal. The poor will always be among us and we will always have an obligation to assist those who are less fortunate than we are.

The relationship between individuals is one that has to be nurtured and faced with respect for all who are involved. In the situations that arise that have to be acted upon we need God-given wisdom, and human common sense. There are ways to avoid problems in marriages, neighborhoods, the work-place, and when we have poor among us. The Lord knew what they were and gave us instructions ahead of time as to how to deal with them in the best possible ways. He gives us grace when grace is needed; strength when strength is needed and faith when faith is needed. These are all needed when we deal one-on-one with other people.

**Deuteronomy 24:19.** *"When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgotten a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the Lord thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands."*

### **CONSIDERATION.**

We are not alone in this world we live in -  
We are alike in that we all have sinned.  
Some need our help and when that time will come,  
Remember the tables may turn soon and you will need some.

When you help another, don't make demands too great -  
Or set deadlines for repayment he cannot easily make.  
His limitations will help you know what to expect -  
Don't make his debt be like a chain hanging around his neck.

Never avoid a matter you are responsible for -  
Issues have to be faced before a problem is over.  
Promises and payments are obligations we must keep -  
When we are up to date with them a clear conscience lets us sleep.

We can't ignore the fact, there will always be the poor.  
When we know of their conditions, some things we can't ignore.  
We don't have the ability to meet their every need -  
But there are always ways help, when can give them heed.

Leave the corners of a field or a sheaf we have forgot -  
Don't take every fruit or vegetable from your garden plot.  
In other words, take steps to make sure the poor survive -  
Do what you can to help them using what you have.

All through our lives there will be need for consideration  
Of other people's problems, it happens in every generation.  
We'll not meet every need or change the course of events for them -  
But in Christ's name we will give them help and say, "In Jesus' name."

**"I see poverty O loving Father, almost in every place I go. Yet sometimes I hold back helping because I don't know what the need really is. Some who ask for help will never be satisfied; others will use what help is given carelessly; others will use it for the wrong reasons entirely. I am thankful that some help that has been given seems to be appreciated, but even if it is not, if it is used for the right purposes, I am happy to give. My prayer, Father, is give me the right understanding when a call for help is made. I cannot see exactly what is right to do, but I believe in the Spirit bearing witness with my spirit even in times like this. I ask this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

### **Deuteronomy 25**

#### **FAIRNESS, FAMILY, FREEDOM**

Laws really have no value if they are not able to be enforced by a punishment imposed on one who breaks those laws. We have laws by which the government controls and restrains the population of a country and by which means they are able to maintain order and freedom. The point of having laws is so that citizens can live free from fear and raise their families safely. Law breakers can disrupt the lives of a lot of people if they are not caught and punished so they will not do those same things again. The same holds true for family life and assembly life. In order to be fair towards everyone, just laws are in place and need to have just punishment that can be laid on those who refuse to discipline themselves to cooperate with the social unit of which they are a part. In Israel when a court case had been heard and the judgment passed on the offender, there was physical punishment for the one convicted of the crime. Punishment was not overlooked or put off until the offense committed was forgotten by the people. The punishment by beating was with a certain number of stripes to be laid on a person's back right in front of the judge as soon as the sentence was passed. That action was not only punish the offender, but to serve as a warning to others looking on lest they do the same thing. The number of stripes to be laid on a person was to suit the consequences of the act he committed in a just and fair way. It took place at the sentencing and the punishment reflected the seriousness of the offense. The law of fairness kept the punishment from being too great or too little, but enough to change the behavior of the person being punished.

In family life there is the need of rule and order to maintain a domestic atmosphere that is beneficial to all the family members. Children need to know where the limits are when it comes to behavior and what the consequences will be if they go beyond those limits. Family tranquility is very hard to maintain without just rules and fair punishment to enforce those rules. Rules for appropriate behavior are to be taught and

enforced in church life. The degrees of corrective action are clearly taught in the New Testament and are enforced by appropriate discipline carried out. It is not fair to a person to withhold from them the kind of consequences they face if they will not conduct themselves in a disciplined and righteous way. It is not fair to those who are part of an assembly and the miscreant if punishment is not imposed in a scriptural way.

Order and fairness, extends even to the way we treat our animals. To work an animal until it drops is not right. Animals are to be able to eat what is necessary to maintain strength to labor. An ox working at the grinding wheel was to be left without a muzzle so it could put its head down and get something to eat as it was laboring for the benefit of the owner. Horses that are "worked to death" have been abused and that is not fairness either to the beast or the person who owns the beast. When left to themselves, animals spend all their time eating and sleeping. That is the nature God gave them for their survival. By giving man dominion over the beasts, man can benefit from the strength of the animals. Their natural tendency is to eat more or less constantly to maintain that strength. Fairness gives them time to replenish what they lose in their work. It is important that we treat animals with care and concern.

Family life is important to maintain in spite of the disintegration of family units today. A heritage and the inheritance that goes along with it was of major importance in Israel to provide care for the aged and provide for the young. Much of the inheritance to be passed on from one generation to the next was physical assets. Animals were important sources of income, worship and the maintaining of life for the family. They were sustained by the animals they owned. A person with a large number of animals, was considered to be a rich person. Other articles could be passed on that were worth a certain amount and were fairly divided. The firstborn son was the one who inherited the family title and the family goods. When he married, his wife and children would come into the first of the inheritance.

If a man died before having children, his wife was not in the line of the inheritance unless she married another family member. The social structure of families more or less determines how the inheritance will be passed on. There needs to be fairness in delegating material benefits. Daughters will usually go into a different family by way of marriage. Unmarried daughters are the responsibility of the original family and are entitled to their share of the inheritance. The oldest son is the first to start out life on his own normally and needs assistance to begin assuming responsibility for his own family. It takes wisdom and tact to act with fairness in a family setting so that descendants will maintain the integrity of the family name.

Sometimes events near us seem to be taking place without an equal fairness about them. Our inclination is to interfere and put our weight behind the person we favor. It is not always our place to step in and meddle in a controversy other people have between themselves. If we do not know all the facts behind a thing nor what has led up to the controversy taking place, we should stay out of the matter. The person we favor may be in the wrong. By putting our opinions or actions into the situation, we may be responsible for the wrong outcome. In the interest of fairness, it is best if we "mind our own business." Those who are involved in a dispute need to work out the solution in as small a group as possible. If for some reason we are asked to arbitrate a dispute, our opinion and judgment must be made impartially no matter who is involved.

Business matters lend themselves to the temptation to move things around to make them come out to our advantage unfairly. The standards we are to go by in our business life should be righteous and accepted by all with whom we do business. Manipulating things in our favor will soon irreparably damage one's reputation in a community. If a person is unfair in money matters, most people will take serious offense at that and will consider you personally a person not to be trusted, and your character flawed. Unfair profit margins, unfair business practices, unfair wages and unfair expectations of others will cause damage that will never be repaired. Even more than what people come to think of us and judge us by, is the fact that God is the unseen observer of every transaction. Unfairness and crooked dealing with others, means that to God, that person is an abomination. How far-reaching are the acts of covetousness! They reach all the way to the "Judge of all the earth!"

Amalek is a type of the flesh that preys on the weakness of God's people. There is nothing in our natural man that can be salvaged and made acceptable to God. In Israel that particular enemy came behind the children of Israel like a scavenger pack of dogs to kill the weak and helpless who were lagging behind the rest of the travelers. Wolves, coyotes and other carnivorous beasts, follow hard behind the herds of caribou, antelope, deer and other animals that cannot easily defend themselves when they are alone. The people of God need the fellowship and support of other believers to be safely preserved and to maintain the freedom we have in Christ. The flesh will stalk us and make us think we are in danger if we do not add to the work of God with our own works in order to be right before Him. Some attractions are added to the simplicity of the Gospel to make it more acceptable to people. The flesh likes sensual things that appeal to our senses rather than to our spirits. When that appeal becomes so strong, we will find ourselves coming into the bondage of

the flesh rather than living in the freedom of the Spirit to do God's will from our hearts. Laws that govern fairness in a society and family, may not appeal to the flesh but they are best for us because they keep us in the blessed bonds of grace and gratitude to God for the freedom to walk in the path He chooses for us.

**Deuteronomy 25:17-18.** *“Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt; how he met thee by the way and smote the hindermost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God.”*

#### **LOOK OUT BEHIND YOU.**

Difficulties arise - controversy - contentions between brethren  
It has to be stopped - but not by one man alone - call the judges  
In the multitude of counselors there is safety.  
The judges meet together - not trusting the arm of the flesh  
Listening - praying - asking questions - communicating  
Seeking God's mind - aware of their humanity - wrong decisions are easily made  
Aware of human duplicity - aware of God's omniscience  
Making a sound judgment after due consideration.

Some are working at it - the Lord's work - the sameness may be drudgery  
Step by step - day after day - year after year - quiet, consistent but producing  
Others move out in the open field - freshness and change all the time  
Freedom of movement - no limitations - but there is one working away alone  
Treading out the corn to feed the hungry - preparing food for others - let him feed too  
You may be way out in front - all eyes are on you - waiting for your words  
Look behind you - you wouldn't be where you are unless the ox keeps walking - alone  
If the patient ox didn't keep walking - in measured pace - who would feed you?

Watching from hidden places - or from places nearby to spy on you  
Laying secret plans to defeat you - Amalek (the flesh) watches and waits  
You are moving along at a normal pace through life - eyes watch and wait  
Fleshly eyes from without watch to accuse - fleshly eyes from within to lay guilt  
On the feeble - we move in the strength of the Lord - except for a few who are feeble  
Faint-hearted, some look for shade in the heat of the day - feeble knees - weak hearted  
Hands hanging down after hard labor - and then - Amalek attacks!  
When you've had enough - are fainted-hearted and weary - Look out behind you!

**“They are there O God, always ready to bring me down; those fleshly lusts that war against the soul; those attractions of the earth that find a response in my times of being off guard. I am asking, O God, for awareness when the dangers from within are obscure. I am asking for discernment when decisions are to be made. I am asking Thee to show me when I need to encourage someone who seems to be less than appreciated for the labors put into a long discouraging work. I petition Thee in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

#### **Deuteronomy 26**

##### **GIVING TO GOD**

The life of God's people is dependent upon Him for our very survival. We need to be constantly reminded that all we have we owe to Him. In order for this to be truly appreciated, there needs to be ways and times when we review the things, He has done for us, and the blessings we have received from Him. The Lord's Supper is a way we are reminded of the Lord Jesus Christ and review together with others His death on the cross and all that has come to us because of the sacrifice He made for us there. By having been given this way of remembrance, we are renewed in our appreciation of Him and reminded freshly of God's grace and goodness to us. By going over our lives with God from the first day we knew Him until now, we will be caused to appreciate our relationship with Him in a special way and can pass on to others what that means and what we have learned by experience. When an Israelite brought the first produce from his ground in a basket and set it before the Lord, he would have been appreciating the first evidence of the blessing of his new life in the promised land. His wandering days were over. He had reached this goal in his life and he acknowledged God as the Giver of every good gift. A testimony to the goodness of God that can be passed on to our family is of benefit both to the one who tells the spiritual history of their life and the ones who hear it.

To give a testimony as to God's goodness in saving us, His provision for us by the way since He saved us, and the blessings He has promised, is good and important. We should further give testimony to God's grace, that attribute of God that provides for us what we could never do for ourselves. His goodness adds His blessing to the work of our hands. His grace freely gives us that which we could never have without Him. As

strangers to God and His grace, He has not in any way limited His grace to what we think we deserve. We are nor deserving of any of His grace. But He has saved us by His grace, and maintains us by His grace. In the future He will display the exceeding riches of His grace through us to watching angels and a watching world of the families on earth and in heaven.

The basket of first fruits would not only be a testimony to God's goodness and grace, but was also a testimony to His greatness. The produce to supply all we need comes from the ground beneath our feet in which the fullness of Lord is contained and released to bless us when we plant the seed. The words of testimony spoken by the person bringing the basket of first fruits, would be an audible expression of his appreciation of God and His blessings. Prayer and supplication go along with thanksgiving to God. This is an acceptable way of approaching our God of goodness, grace and greatness. That kind of testimony is probably one of the best ways we can pass on our faith in God to our children and to those to whom we seek to witness. Our history has value and hopefully it will inspire our children and grandchildren to have a spiritual history of their own of which they are not ashamed.

The care for the poor and needy in Israel had an order to it that was effective in making sure they were cared for. At the end of every three years, ten percent of a landowner's harvest was stored in the village where he lived so the Levites who served God, the foreigners who had no inheritance of their own and the widows and orphans could come and get food. Each landowner would bring his tenth and present it with a ceremony in which he publicly stated that he did not take from that tithe anything for himself for any reason. The tithe belonged to God. When we give to God that which we owe Him, we can trust Him to meet our needs as He chooses to from His knowledge of the needs we have.

Israel was a nation of high morals and high standards of conduct given them by God, which made them different from all the tribes living around them. That uniqueness would make them unusual even though they might have been comparatively small in number. The size of a group of God's people does not indicate the correctness of their practices. The standard of holiness maintained in an assembly is more important than the number of people who may attend. The comfort of those in a church meeting or the public success people may feel and the size of the crowd attending, doesn't indicate the rightness or wrongness of the church.

As individuals among the people of God, we need to continue our commitment to give God the proportion of what we have received to support the work of the assembly and its interests. Missionary endeavors are supported by the giving of God's people to those who labor abroad. The poor and needy in those places are in turn helped by God's people there. There are some poor and needy where we live who are dependent to a certain degree by those of us who are in a position to help meet their needs. A people who are holy unto the Lord, may not be understood by those who are not committed to the word of God and the work of God. However, that should not affect our responsibility to help meet the needs of others.

We may never know the outcome of our labor nor what has been accomplished when we give of our substance to the Lord. But it is not necessary that we know the outcome, we only know we are responsible to meet the need. Our Lord knows what we can give, what we do give, and where it needs to go. He knows who is most suitable to assure that it arrives at the place of need. We give; God guides; people are blessed and God is glorified.

**Deuteronomy 26:10-11.** *“And now, behold, I have brought the first-fruits of the land, which Thou, O Lord, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the Lord thy God, and worship before the Lord thy God: and thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the Lord thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you.”*

#### **GRATITUDE.**

How can I express my thanks for all the good God has given me?  
Words alone fall so far short, yet I use them gratefully  
To say some things that are in my heart to say as best I can -  
“I am thankful Lord; you have brought me here into the promised land.”

God's name is here, He has chosen a place where I can come and sit -  
In quiet worship and in praise seeking ways and words that fit  
The descriptions of the blessings He has bestowed abundantly -  
But I am here with gifts to bring and place before Him thankfully.

I confess I was ready to perish, a “Syrian” with no claim on God -  
In grace He has bought me and brought me to hear His Word -  
The provisions He gives are bountiful pressed down and running over -

The "milk and honey" that flows right here, my blessed soul can savor.

Sitting here before the Lord with a "first-fruits" basket filled with plenty -  
I am made to think of all the miles that passed that I could come here safely.  
I worship as I think of His graciousness in making all this possible -  
To those I tell of the way He led, they have to acknowledge it wasn't just probable.

Worship and rejoicing often go together when we trace the end from the beginning.  
When called by God to follow Him, it didn't call for great understanding.  
Worship comes from words I think, then I find a way to say them -  
The first-fruits I bring in the basket are evidences of my appreciation.

**"I fear, O God my heavenly Father, I sometimes am not expressive of how I appreciate all the ways on this road of life Thou hast led me. Here today I want to say my sincere and heart-felt thanks for every blessing I have received from Thee over the years of my life, the work Thou hast let me be involved in, and the place where I am found today. Thanks so much for trusting me with such holy matters, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

## **Deuteronomy 27**

### **MONUMENTS AND MEMORIALS**

It has been a practice since the dim and distant past of human history right down to this present day, that monuments have been raised to commemorate important events of people that have changed the course of a nation. This can be a good thing or a bad thing depending on the reason and the person being honored. The tower of Babel was a bad thing because its purpose was to exalt man to the position of God. The one Moses commanded the children of Israel to make was a good thing. When children would ask their parents, "Why is this big pile of stones here?" the parents would tell them about their journey from Egypt when they were young, and about living in the wilderness and crossing the Jordan River into the promised land. But most importantly was the fact that this pile of stones was plastered over and there was writing on it. The words of the law were written plainly on the plaster so the people could read what God had commanded. The standard of righteousness God expected of them was right there in the open before their eyes. There was no excuse for anyone to say they didn't know the words of the law. Our children have the opportunity to read the Word of God for themselves, but they won't do it unless they are taught the value of what we have in the scriptures. By nature, they will have no interest in divine things until they see the value of them in the lives of believers. A casual approach to God's Word and spiritual things will leave the impression to our children that these are not very important. Even a careless reading of the scripture means it is not more important than any other book.

The monument that was to be raised in the promised land was made of stones that were not cut by human hands. The Israelites would have been used to cutting stones for pyramids and the buildings in Egypt to make them pleasing to human eyes and a tribute to man's ingenuity. This monument was to be a testimony to the people of the holiness and righteousness of God. Egyptian buildings had faces and forms of men and animals on them. This monument had the wisdom and authority of God written on it in readable words. Faces, forms and images have a tendency to humanize or even demonize spiritual things. The written word of God lifts spiritual truths above human wisdom that speaks to the senses, and reaches to the mind and heart where the real person can act with understanding by believing what God has said. God wanted the stones of the monument to be left the way He made them without the sin-polluted effect of man's works. The plaster men put over these stones was only to make the writing of God's word unmistakably plain.

Beside the monument that was raised, an altar was built out of uncut stones for the children of Israel to offer their sacrifices of worship and fellowship. The large monument had the written words of God to man on it, and the altar made of similar stones was for men to give their response to God. When God speaks to us, He makes His will unmistakably clear in His written word. When we speak to God and give Him our offerings of praise, worship, thanksgiving and fellowship, He knows exactly what we mean. He knows the "thoughts and intents" of our hearts. Our actions and words need to be consistent with His revealed will. Watching this is a new generation of people to whom all of this is new. The joy that results from our fellowship with God is one of the ways the younger people will learn the value of hearing God's word and worshipping Him in spirit and in truth.

As a new generation of believers comes to take responsibility of the things of God in public testimony, it is important that we give them sound reasons for doing God's things in God's way. Each individual has to decide whether they are going to follow the Word of God or not, and to what extent are they going to take His truth literally. It is incumbent on those who are older to give warnings about the facts of righteous living

according to God's word. There are curses put on those who won't listen to what God says and act upon it. Idols are always detestable to God even if they are kept secret from other people. Our attitude toward our parents is always to be honorable. If we don't give them due honor and respect there is a curse from God on the offender. The property of the neighbor is to be respected; the infirm are to be helped not mocked or hindered. Justice is to be fair for everyone no matter who they are or where they are from. Any immoral action, from adultery to murder is condemned by God. The law of God is to be maintained. Any wrong doing toward others has serious consequences that we cannot avoid.

The truth of God is not only negative, but there are blessings associated with doing what God wants. The people had to hear both sides and had to verbally agree with what God's commandments stated. Blessing comes with obedience and cursing comes with disobedience. The memorial service of consecration was something in which everyone participated audibly. By saying, "Amen" to each statement made, they took responsibility for carrying out the actions that were right and refusing every one that was wrong. Restrictions in families, assemblies and governments are intended to be a warning act of love to keep God's people away from the danger of wrong-doing.

When we know what God commands from His written word, and respond with thanksgiving and worship, our children and the generation of which they are a part will know that God does not change from one generation to another. That in itself is a form of security in that the boundaries for right and wrong living are clearly defined. Their audible response will indicate they know what God intends and they understand the consequences of disobeying what is clearly taught. The incentive to follow God's word is that blessings are promised in the future and we will experience peace inwardly even though there may be turmoil in the world around us.

**Deuteronomy 27:8.** *"And thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly."*

**VERY PLAINLY.**

Down one bank - across the dry river bed - and up on the other side -

They are coming.

New ground under their feet - never trod on before - now it is theirs -

They are claiming.

Looking around at the land promised - four hundred years ago -

They are rejoicing.

Great stones set up on high - covered smoothly over to write on -

They are remembering.

An altar built without marks of man's opinion - ready

They are offering.

Careful hands carve into the plaster of the pillar - words of God -

They are obeying.

Animals brought to the altar - in their beauty and perfection - sinless

They are identifying.

There is no mistaking the words, they are written very plainly -

No additions of man are added, these words are God's words only.

When God give directions to follow, carry them out promptly -

Do what God says rejoicing, fully follow His divine will gladly.

From different homes doors open and close - leaving where they are -

They are coming.

Different ages - different stages in life - all with the same objective - Christ is here .

They are claiming.

Looking at the table - hearts rise in anticipation - heads bow in adoration - hymns sung -

They are rejoicing.

Quotations read - quoted from memory - from the scripture - sweet sorrow and gladness

They are remembering.

Thoughts expressed audibly and silently - of the suffering Savior - of His Person -

They are offering.

The bread taken in hands reverently - the cup partaken of as from the Lord -

They are obeying.

Our hands and hearts stretch toward the unseen Person in our midst.

They are identifying.

A command was given from our Lord with full authority -

Each one has come to worship and remember gratefully -

The words are written in the Book carefully and plainly -

We all look on the Pillar and the Altar remembering gladly.

**“We do not make some casual stroll by a cross, Father, when we come to the chosen place of remembrance. With the joy of redemption raising our songs of worship to Thee, we stop and read the words of truth - very plainly, and act upon divine authority as we take the bread and cup. What grace is Thine to have provided such a pillar of testimony in this place. How much we cherish this altar of remembrance where we can offer to Thee our sacrifices, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

## **Deuteronomy 28**

### **DISOBEDIENCE IS NO JOKE**

To many people in this generation, to disobey those in authority doesn't elicit much more than a "Tsk, tsk," and the command is repeated until the disobedient person finally gets his own way. This can be with children in a family who seek from an early age to take control of the family by wanting (and often getting) what they want without consequences. In assemblies where practices have had a biblical basis since the beginning or the testimony, changes are being made in spite of what the elders may want, to accommodate to the "changing times" and the desire to mix God's things and the world. The pressure is applied by saying, "If this doesn't happen soon, we are leaving." Some seem to think the scriptures do not mean what they say, "Friendship with the world is enmity with God." In society when a law-breaker is caught, even though all the evidence points to his guilt, a person will almost always plead, "Not guilty." Even judges expect that to be the answer they get when they ask how a person pleads.

To be fair to people, we need to let them know there are consequences to their disobedience. A person's reputation is being formed right from childhood. God blesses those who obey Him and act upon His word appropriately when it is given. But there are very serious consequences to disobedience. They may not all be faced now, but payday is coming. God is able to make possible to us that which we could never do for ourselves. Obedience keeps a person in a right relationship with God. It is His delight to guide His children in paths of righteousness and give from His own fullness that which will be for our lasting good. For His people to commit themselves to do His will, is a choice we make and from the storehouse of His goodness, He enables us to live day after day to His honor and glory, and to our great benefit.

On the other hand, the same One who blesses because of obedience, can withhold blessing and either allow the enemies of the children of God to have their way with us, or move the forces of nature to do that which is out of the ordinary to bring us to a place where we will stop and repent, and turn again to God. To the children of Israel, God gave warnings through Moses of the severe consequences of disobeying His will and commands. The curses of disobedience would come upon them in every part of their physical, human life. Crops would fail, the animals wouldn't produce useful offspring. Drought and various kinds of plagues would come and their whole livelihood would be affected.

The difficulties caused by disobedience would even come into national life and the nation would be overcome and defeated by their enemies. There would be no power in them to avoid slavery and their reputation among nations as a powerful nation would be lost, and they would be known as a helpless, defenseless nation. The social disarray would affect every part of their community life and would lead to moral decay, family disintegration and mental pressures that would drive them mad. All of this would go even further into defeat, exile and dispersion among the nations until they would hardly be recognized as an identifiable people. All of this would happen because of disobedience to God's commands.

We are not immune from a similar result in our day. The unique features of a scripturally gathered assembly that goes by the word of God in Gospel preaching, the teaching and practice of scriptural truth, can be ignored and eventually lost entirely. When that happens, assimilation into the culture of counterfeit Christianity will take place. The only strength we have is the promise of the Lord to be with us when we preach the Gospel biblically, make disciples as He told us to, baptize them in the way He instructed and teach them to do what God says. Our Lord Jesus Christ is the One with "all power in heaven and in earth." If or when we fail in carrying out this mandate, we will cease to be a body of believers where God can dwell among His people. Letters to the seven churches of Asia are given to us to read and learn from. Hopefully we will never be a church where the Lord is standing outside knocking and waiting for even one man to open the door so He can come in. The Lord Jesus knows what is going on in each assembly and He also knows each person who is in the assembly. It is foolish for us to change what He has told us to do to suit Christendom around us. It is wise for us to constantly keep before us the One who has called us, and what He has called us to do.

This chapter in Deuteronomy is given to us as a warning. The things that happened to them were "ensamples: and are written for our admonition," so we can learn from the things the Israelites did wrong,

and avoid doing them ourselves. Examples of failures are given as lessons to us so that we do not repeat them. Our weakness is real and our inability cannot be ignored. But we need to remember that God can use "the weak things to confound the mighty." It is a wise nation, assembly and family that is committed without reservation to do what we know is God's will, and not turn away from the commands of the Lord.

**Deuteronomy 28:10, 23.** *"And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the Lord; and they shall be afraid of thee... And the heaven that is over thy head shall be brass, and the earth that is under thee shall be iron."*

#### **SERIOUS CONSEQUENCES.**

How will they know that I am real -  
Not a fake, not a sham, not a fraud.  
There has to be a way to reveal -  
That the words I preach are from God.  
God Himself said He will take care of this -  
When I keep the commands that He gives.  
My role is to not walk my way but His -  
And He has promised His Word to bless.

But if I want and choose my own way -  
Things will get serious after that.  
The work I seek to do will surely fail -  
And the heavens overhead will be like brass.  
No matter how hard to sow I try -  
Nothing will result but futile work.  
The ground I seek to plant will be so dry -  
No heavenly rain will fall upon the earth.

May I never think I am in control -  
The Lord alone can bless and also curse.  
No efforts I put forth can save a soul -  
It is the Spirit and the Word that gives new birth.  
Far be it from me to think I can -  
Do any more than faithfully sow the seed.  
Life springs from a once dry and barren land -  
When God establishes His Word and meets the need.

**"I never want to be found at that awful distance Father, where there is brass overhead and the rain is powder and dust. Keep me, O God of my salvation, in the condition of soul where I can get well soaked with the life-giving rain of the Word of God. The seed of the Gospel message is so perfect, that I seek to use it with care and prayer. I know the consequences are serious if I get cocky or self-important, thinking I have some power or authority to make it spring forth and grow. This week coming, is a new series of Gospel meetings, Father, and I am here seeking assurance that Thou will give me the right words to say in the right way so the heavenly rain will cause the seed to spring forth in new life. I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

#### **Deuteronomy 29**

##### **SEEN, YET NOT SEEN**

The learning process takes a lot of time because the natural heart of man is very self-centered and independent. The experiences of the people of God have often been told us and have been reviewed from time to time, but each succeeding generation seems to think the things that happened to others will never happen to them. Examples of God's dealing with Israel are written in the Bible so we can learn from them and not make the same mistakes they did. But many who should know better because they have been taught the truth of God from their youth will say, "The Old Testament is not for us. That was for those who lived before Christ came. I am not going to waste my time reading the Old Testament." That attitude is one which is not uncommon among those who have a wrong understanding of God. God is revealed to us in many important and impacting ways in the Old Testament that will do us good to review often lest we sin against Him. The God of the Old Testament is the God of the New Testament. He is the same and His character and judgments do not change. Fortunately, we are living in this day when the Gospel of God's grace is being preached to people all over the world. In Old Testament times, even as today, "In every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness, is accepted by Him." God has always had those people who believed in Him by faith "without the works of the law." Those people have believed on Him and come to Him by faith based on the light God has given them.

Strangely, many who have been blessed and favored, like the Israelites, have taken God for granted or formed their own opinions as to who He is and what He is like. The children of Israel had seen evidence of God working on their behalf when the plagues fell on the Egyptians and they were freed after 400 years of bondage. They had crossed the Red Sea on dry land, been fed with manna from heaven, had their thirst quenched with water flowing out of a rock. There had been to them miraculous victories over their enemies. Their shoes and clothes had not worn out. Time after time God had been disobeyed and yet He was gracious and continued to bless them. Many of the new generation had heard these stories from those who had experienced the events but for some reason it did not always resonate with them. They had seen the results of disobedience when they buried their parents in the wilderness. They had not seen God physically because they would have died before His holiness, but they had experienced the evidence of God with them every day. How often we have experienced God working for us in our daily living and in the work in which we have been involved! How many times we have thanked Him for His grace and longsuffering toward us! Yet there is even with us who know Him personally, the tendency to take all His benefits for granted. "O that men would praise Him; for His wonderful works to the children of men!"

In spite of all we have experienced and been able to pass on as best we can to our children and their children, we cannot make it real to them. For some reason, almost always, they think they have to find out for themselves, everything they have been taught by us. The learning process goes all the way back to square one, and each generation goes through the same things the one before them went through.

The children of Israel had been taught the abominations of idol worship and what would happen to their own children if they got mixed up with the world-system, but they did not learn. Consequently, the evils of the cosmos came home to roost right among their own families. The problems still remain: the things that are seen are more important to most people than the things that are not seen. Physical eyesight has claimed the attention of those who knew the blessings of living by faith, but were never willing to have their eyes anointed with heavenly "eye-salve." The result is, and will continue to be, the generations ahead will go farther and farther away from God, and the influence of godliness will become less and less.

When people cannot see beyond what is physical and fleshly, and do not act with faith in God, they begin to experience the difficulties God promised would follow unbelief. The attention given to that which is able to be seen outweighs the actions of faith in God. The things that are eternal are ignored - like truth, holiness, love, grace and mercy - and are supplanted by money, possessions, physical pleasure, visible attractions, and even religious buildings and symbols take the place of God in human hearts and minds. The fact that God means what He says, escapes them until there is physical pain sent along and a person says in the middle of the night, "O God, help me!" If the pain is gone by morning, seldom do people stop to give God thanks and respond with worship and faith. Success in business is claimed for one's self because they were "shrewd" in dealing with others. When riches increase their attention is focused on more riches, until all is lost and then they blame God for wars and events that caused them to lose what they thought they had.

When a person begins to take God, His will, and His Word for granted, and ignore the truths they have been taught, they begin to think, "Not to worry. God, if there is one, is merciful. He wouldn't dare make anything bad happen to me." They have not remembered or paid attention to the warnings given by those who taught them: God does what He says. They have not personally experienced what happens when God turns away from His own people, or steps in to chastise them in order to change their behavior. Even though others have experienced the "Chastening hand of the Lord," they do not believe it will ever happen to them. It is hard for parents and spiritual fathers to watch what happens to disobedient children. But we have to leave them to God who knows who they are and what needs to be done to correct their behavior. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth," and we have to be content with that even though it is hard to watch.

We teach those we love and seek to help along in their spiritual life, the fact that there are lasting seriously bad consequences when a person goes their own way. This happened to the nation of Israel, and they became the focus of attention of other nations because of their great fall from God's favor. For hundreds of years, that nation has been hunted and haunted as a result of their disobedience to God. He still loves them in a special way but that does not make them exempt from His chastening. The principle remains, "Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." We don't give up on our wandering children because of evidence of their disobedience. We don't stop loving them even though we hate what they are doing. All we can do for those who ignore, resist and reject what they have been taught, is to pray as intercessors for them and leave them to a righteous, loving and gracious God who knows what is best for them.

It is often startling and disturbing for the people of God to experience what unbelievers will say and do to them. Just because believers do not go along with the popular trends of the day, they often will find themselves the objects of scorn at first. Then comes derision, opposition and persecution. When the saints

of God, will not accept the laws men make as superior in authority to God's laws, there may be the force of human government turned against the people of God. Some of those attitudes already are happening as religious groups that will not accept the Bible as authoritative. When it comes to truth, they will attack the Christians in an attempt to stop the power of the Gospel. We may never know why God allows difficulties to happen to His people because "the secret things belong to God." However, the things He has revealed to us, need to be passed on to our children so they will do what is right by repenting and believing the Gospel. Then we need to urge them to follow the Lord and help them to yield to God's Word and please Him when they live by faith.

**Deuteronomy 29:5.** *"And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes have not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot."*

#### **NEW CLOTHES... NEW SHOES.**

I've had these clothes for forty years -  
And they're still as good as new.  
There's been no unraveling or wearing out -  
And look - these aren't new shoes -  
But for some secret reason only God knows -  
He has made sure that all we wear -  
Whether shoes or these new looking clothes,  
We won't need another pair.

These clothes God gave me many years ago  
Are garments of righteousness He has made  
To wear on my journey to my new heavenly abode.  
The hands that provided, and to me this garment gave  
Were nailed to the cross in order that I might go  
Through this life with feet shod with the Gospel of peace -  
That others on life's journey also can know -  
The blessings of God's redeeming grace.

For all this time He has been meeting my every need,  
Daily food comes from His bounteous supply.  
The clothes He gave do not wear out or the shoes on my feet -  
Spiritual food I eat, and the supply of water does not run dry  
So, I have no need to worry about simple things -  
My Lord completely takes good care of them  
Trusting Him for these, has taught me when big things rise -  
I don't have to fret; I just leave them all to Him.

**"O God of bountiful supply: how thoughtful it was of Thee to meet the needs of those people with the little things as well as the big things. We have experience that too Father, even supplying my need of medicine by a motel clerk giving us a free sample pack. I am still amazed at the way You had all that arranged long before we got to Boise. Now here in this foreign country again we are being supplied with daily food and raiment. I thank you sincerely and offer praise for Thy goodness, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

### **Deuteronomy 30**

#### **A CALL TO COMMITMENT**

There were times in the lives of the Israelites when they turned away from God and because of this found themselves under the blight of failed growing seasons, bondage from other people and all for which they had hoped and enjoyed, had been taken away from them. Yet God assured them if and when they returned to Him, He would receive them. If they followed His way, their prosperity would return and they could again enjoy His blessings. In our failures, short-comings and disobedience, God is willing to show his mercy toward us. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Those who wander far from His will and His way, can find acceptance when they come back to Him. He will give us a new beginning. To walk in God's ways and do His commands are within our reach. He will restore to us "the years that the locusts have eaten."

God does not hide Himself to remain secret or to keep far away from us. His words are not hidden from us. They are not beyond our reach nor our understanding. God Himself is "near unto all that call upon Him out of a pure heart." Obedience to God is reasonable. His demands are expressed in ways that make sense. The laws He gave are good laws and right for the purpose for which they have been given. The proper conduct of life is able to be maintained and will keep confusion and chaos from running rampant in countries, communities, assemblies, families and personal life.

Not only are God's commands reasonable, but they are sensible. They are not obscure words that need some kind of mystical powers to grasp nor are they so obfuscated that we cannot understand them. They are clear, concise and easily understood when we apply the principles of righteousness to them. There is a sensibility to what God says that is not accepted by those who want to find excuses for their sin. When the stated principles of God's word are obeyed, there is a beneficial effect on many areas of our lives. God sets them before us clearly, and very plainly tells us the consequences that can be expected if we follow what He says - or if we don't. "Blessing and cursing" are not hard concepts to understand. Blessings mean spiritual and perhaps even physical benefits will come to us. Cursing is a way of expressing not only loss, but the effect it will have on other around us.

The contrast of life and death impresses us with the fact that growth to maturity, a quality of living, a sense of meaning and purpose to our existence is one option we have. Death indicates that we will be separated from all that has value and purpose. There is uselessness that is associated with death that makes human experience hopeless and valueless. Separation from God is spiritual death. Separation of the physical body from the soul and spirit is physical death. Eternal death is permanent separation from God, hope, purpose, meaning of existence, but also separated to hell and ultimately the lake of fire. Good and evil have no connection, only contrast. Even the spelling of the words: God is good; the devil is evil, is a contrast. To love God means I appreciate Him, value Him and will gladly follow Him. To follow Him gives me a reason for living and assurance when dying. To live for Him now means I have made a commitment to God that I will gladly yield my will to His revealed will and do entrust myself and everything about me to Him.

It is wise parents who recognize the impact of their choices upon the children in their home. We cannot excuse ourselves from the consequences of our decisions, whether the results are good or bad. Love for the Lord and an earnest desire to please Him will promote my desire to obey Him and cleave to Him. Paul said, "For me to live is Christ," and there was no question to the fact that he did not only live for Christ, but Christ was his life.

The real meaning for our lives comes when we see ourselves as God intends for us to be and we strive to fulfill that expectation. In a family or even an assembly of God's people, there is a positive impact on other members when one or more in that group love God to the extent that they are prepared to do whatever God wants in spite of the personal cost. The ultimate result will be a confident person who trusts the Lord, will love Him, serve Him, obey Him and follow Him. Then we can trust God to lead those who follow our lead to take them where He wants them and to accomplish that for which He has equipped us.

**Deuteronomy 30:19.** *"I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."*

#### **BLESSING OR CURSING.**

The warnings have been given - the challenges and the blessings -  
The good that can come if God's word we will obey.  
The statements are clear - either blessing or cursing -  
Depend upon my choices and I do not dare delay.  
All the rest of life is ahead - what really should I do?  
This matter is important - what will I do and say?  
Others wait and watch, for my choices affect them too -  
Life and death are waiting for the choices I'm going to make.

In each decision - God lets me make a choice -  
There's the matter of my will that enables me to use  
My mind when counting the cost - never let the noise  
Of all those voices around me pressure not to refuse.  
Life and death are issues in which I dare not make mistakes.  
I chose life when as a sinner, I knew that I was lost.  
Now alive in Christ, choices affect the way I take -  
To lose my life to the world is such an awful cost.

Behind me is my family, they are watching what I do -  
They each made decisions different than those of mine.  
Their expectations are, that I continue right on through  
My life without turning to some different way or line.  
Yet though some things are different, yet all have chosen life -  
They know what they do now will affect those that follow them.  
It is important to us all that they stay living in the light -

Others know they love the Lord and want their lives to count for Him.

When I make such choices may I never careless be -  
A lot depends on what I do when it is time to make decisions.  
As a Christian father may I remember they are watching me -  
Are children and grandchildren who are from another generation.  
Consistency in life and full-hearted commitment to the truth -  
May seem obsolete but okay for a grandfather's style.  
Still I know I have influence on these children in their youth -  
I never want to stumble them, lest they fall for Satan's wiles.

**“O God of great mercy, this challenge to wisdom in making choices makes me consider how often I have acted in haste. I am thankful that the choice for life was made long ago and I am safe in Christ. The choice for blessing seems to have to be made more than once. If this is the case, then Father God, enlighten me to the right choices because I want all of my children to live eternally with Thee. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen.”**

### **Deuteronomy 31**

#### **LAST BIRTHDAY**

He was getting old it was true, but even more important than Moses' 120th birthday was the fact that Israel was to move into the land of promise and he wouldn't be going with them. There comes a time in every person's life and work, when God wants others to finish or continue what we were doing. We may wonder whether they are able to do it, or how well they are going to do it, but that really isn't our business. We have had our day. We have done what we believed was God's will. Now the time has come to let it go and let others take the work from here. They probably will do some things differently than we would. The work will take on a different characteristic than we gave it. That doesn't mean it is more right or wrong than when we were involved. It is just different. Part of our responsibility in view of this day is to make sure there are those we have helped prepare for the work. "The things thou hast heard of me, among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also."

Joshua was a tried and proven man. In his attitude he was willing to serve and live in the shadow of Moses for many years. In aptitude he was a capable soldier, one who was able to grasp a dangerous situation and lead others through a battle to victory under the power of God. In fortitude he was willing to take on dangerous and hard tasks and complete those tasks. And when others showed fear and trepidation, he stood against that crowd. His courage had been demonstrated and his strength of character as well as physical strength were channeled by his willingness to do the service of God.

The Lord's people are not blind nor dumb. They know a person's character by the way he reacts under pressure. They know whether he knows when not to speak as well as when to have something profitable to say. They know when a person lives with the consciousness of the presence of the Lord with him. Courage in spiritual life is often tested and God's people can tell when one acts with faith in spite of the difficulties he faces. A person who is acquainted with God's Word has a credibility that cannot be gained in any other way. A man who has these characteristics usually has the confidence of God's people and is easily recognized as a leader who can be trusted.

In the midst of Moses' busy leadership schedule, he was used by the Holy Spirit to write down all these laws, commandments and statutes to be read to the future generations of God's people. These were kept by the priests who carried the ark when it was moved. The words he wrote were carefully kept and then in the seventh year when indentured servants were released, it was read publicly in the hearing of everyone. The children born over the last seven years would be old enough to listen with respect and understand what they had heard. The fourteen-year-olds would be reminded again of their own responsibility to make decisions under the direction of the laws of God. Those who were twenty-one would again remember that now they have adult responsibilities that rest on their shoulders. The reading of the law would remind them of the boundaries of God's will that they must stay within. Each seventh year all the people would hear the words of the law read at the last feast, the feast of booths, and they would have time after the reading to discuss it among themselves over the seven days and also with other people. They would all be expected to know the law and act accordingly. No doubt much of it would have been memorized. If not word for word, at least subject by subject so no one could claim ignorance as an excuse for breaking the law.

The Word of God should be in our hearts and minds, hidden there so we will not sin against the Lord. Its truths are there to guide us in character development, decision making and when judgments are passed. We

have no excuse for ignorance of God's Word because we have it in written form in our own language, and our own copy is available to us. The importance of teaching the truths of God from scripture to our children cannot be overemphasized. It needs to be read and studied prayerfully and carefully with correct interpretation and reasonable application. The teaching of the word of God to our young people needs to be stressed, beginning when they are young and being reaffirmed constantly.

Moses' service was coming to an end, and on this 120th birthday his final instructions must have meant a lot to him as well as to those to whom he spoke for God. He knew the children of Israel would fail to keep the commandments of the Lord, but that did not stop him from loving them and caring for them as a father loves and care for his children even though he knows what they are like. The neglect of God's things and taking God's blessings for granted have a great cost that cannot be avoided. We can teach and plead. We can give the exposition and application of the word of God to the people. We can warn them of the consequences of disobedience and carelessness. But ultimately the decision for righteousness and truth, or disobedience and rebellion, rests on each individual person. Stubbornness and a hard-hearted rebellious nature, ensures there will be a high price to pay. The Israelites were a rebellious people by nature and Moses knew that. Even though we know what some people are like, and we try to help them understand God's will and word, the time comes when they will decide for themselves how far they are willing to go in the life of faith.

Probably the best way we can help our young people is to give them the Word of God, "line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little and there a little;" then guide them how to apply those truths to themselves. That takes time, perseverance and patience but it is worth the effort. Moses knew what the people were like but he did not give up on them right to the end of his life. Those of us who are older need to maintain our convictions and our calling with consistency right to the end of our lives. This is the legacy we can give to our children and our children's children.

**Deuteronomy 31:26.** *"Take this book of the law, and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord your God, that it may be there for a witness against thee."*

**DO IT GOD'S WAY.**

"It's time to move", the priests move in  
With fear and trembling lest they die.  
They move with baited breath and eye,  
As they move toward where God doth lie  
In Holy Splendor, Awesome Truth,  
Dwells with men.

The covering veil that hung between  
Is first to fall on seraph's wings.  
Then over that, the badger skins,  
Which thickly guarded all within;  
That Ark so fearsome, the Place where God,  
Dwells with men.

Then hands so wet with nervous sweat,  
Reach out to covering of heavenly blue,  
With careful folds each golden hue  
Is covered, lest wrong eyes would view,  
Which only high priest can see, where God,  
Dwells with men.

But what is this? A thick rolled scroll,  
Wrapped so carefully is placed  
Beside the Holy Ark that graced  
The Holiest of all in light, that space  
Reserved for God alone, who truly  
Dwells with men.

With careful hand, and faith-filled heart,  
The man whom God saw face to face;  
Sat down, the law to fully trace,  
That from now on in every place,  
Where those who love the Lord, will know, God  
Dwells with men.

That Word of God so true and full of light;  
Is placed where all men know God lives.  
That place where saving blood spots seen, is

Shared with words from God's own lips;  
Those words which guide the sons to come, God  
Dwells with men.

**“O great and holy Covenant keeping God: Help me this day to learn more fully the importance of, and awesome truth contained in Thy Word. There probably is no way to impart to others the sense of responsibility to pass on truth to my generation unless they read it for themselves. Is there some way, Father, that I have not yet found, to make more clear, more real, the high estimation with which You hold Your Word? My words and expressions seem so weak and feeble when I seek to pass on what I have found in this Treasure. Do my lips need to be touched with a coal from off the altar? If so, burn them soon so the scar of holy anointing can be evident to all who hear “this book of the law.” In the name of Him who is the Truth. Amen.”**

## **Deuteronomy 32**

### **MOSES' SONG**

The last words we hear someone close to us speak, are usually remembered as being quite special if they are some kind of blessing. Moses' was not fading away in weakness this last day of his life and leadership. He was giving a final benediction and passing on from God, important instructions and lessons from which they should learn. Remarkably this was not given as a speech but sung like a historical ballad. Maybe this was a more impressive way to give these truths so they would remember them better and sing them over themselves. They were reminded of the past, given warnings in relation to their behavior and offered hope even when they failed. When our trust is in God and we commit ourselves to following Him, God is like a shepherd to us - guarding, guiding and leading us and then by His gracious hand guiding us through the difficulties of life we face.

Moses' song began with reminders of the doctrine of God and all that His teaching does for us. The word of God when received and applied produces life and freshness in the souls of His people like no other source can. The human spirit is borne witness to by the Holy Spirit when we read, heed and act upon the precepts, statutes, commandments and laws of God that are contained in the scriptures. God is the subject of the Bible and His name is the authority by which we live and move and have our being.

The greatness of God in all His power and wisdom; the greatness of His love, grace and mercy are themes by which believers in Him live. God's works are perfect and His ways with us are in the interests of guiding us into all truth. We are not left to speculate about life and death. God has given plain teaching to direct us into the ways of truth, righteousness and holiness. When we follow what God teaches, we have confidence, and when we step out of the path of truth revealed in His word, we are convicted.

Moses also sang about the nature and character of God as he gave these historical reminders of how God dealt with His people in the past. God is the truth, both inwardly and outwardly in all of His being and doing. "I am the way, the truth and the life." Moses knew who the Lord Jesus Christ was and what He was like. He urged the people of God to gladly submit to divine authority. In all God's ways with us, God is fair and righteous because that is His nature. God desires holiness in His people because He is holy. Fellowship is established and maintained when both parties have the same characteristics and the same nature. We have been made "partakers of the divine nature."

The contrast between Israel and God was a major part of Moses' song because he knew those people well and knew they were unlike God. God desires His children to bear and exemplify the characteristics of their Father. But instead, far too often, like the Israelites, we have corrupted ourselves and instead of being trustworthy, we have become obstinate and perverse, wanting our own way. That happens when we get taken up with our present life in the world and forget all the blessings we have received, and the Source of those blessings. It is a positive and important thing to do to stop and remember how we came into this place of blessing in the first place. We are who we are, and have what we have entirely because of God's grace to us.

The young people behind us often take for granted what they have without considering how all this came about. The Israelites of the new generation were to ask those who were older to tell them how they got their land and the circumstances surrounding their national history. Young people need to learn the value of what they have is not measured by money. The work of God has been done by people who stepped out in faith to act upon the mandate the Lord gave His disciples at the beginning of this age and has been acted upon all down through the generations of God's people until this time. God's portion as a result of the labors of His people is not only a proportionate amount of your weekly income. God's portion is His people. God can easily make gold and silver. He makes diamonds out of coal. But He doesn't make the hearts of men and

women grateful. He doesn't create thanksgiving for Himself. There are things that only come from people. We are God's inheritance, not the land we own or the portfolio we might hold. We are what God claims for Himself, even when we were lost and ready to die.

By His divine mercy and grace God has led, guided, guarded, taught and safely kept His people. He had protected them as a man instinctively protects his eye when something threatens its safety. God trained, protected and motivated His people in Moses' day according to the words of his song. He connected Himself to His people. The same happens today. As God's people for His possession, He does the same for us as He did for the Israelites. He has committed Himself to us in a holy relationship and has the right to expect our true commitment to Him.

God brought His people into a place of prosperity and plenty, but when they got all they wanted, they rebelled and turned away from God. There is more to Christianity than being saved by God's grace. Love for God should lead us to seek His interests above our own interests, whether it be His people or His work. The Israelites turned to other gods and other religious forms because it appealed to their own fleshly interests. There will always be an appeal available to our religious flesh the same as sensual flesh. However, we must remember there are consequences to endure when one caters to the flesh of whatever nature it is. Idolatry appeals to those who like religious forms mixed with sinful desires. Worldliness appeals to pleasure seekers who live for the moment no matter what future consequences may be. Opposition, fears and defeat are consequences that follow a willful turning away from God.

It is sad but true that the people of God will often practice the same things as those who are not believers, thinking that there is something they are missing out on by following the Lord whole-heartedly. In spite of all our failures, sins and shortcomings, the Lord still wants us for His portion and is ready to receive again those who have repented and turned again to Him in confession and faith. To know what God says and wants should stir us to observe His words and follow Him. On Moses' final day as the leader of the nation, he impressed the Lord's people with the blessings of obedience and the consequences of disobedience. The Lord told His faithful servant what he was to do and then when to go to mount Nebo. The final song, on the final day and his final blessing of the people would have left the people of God with a strong impression regarding who God is and what He expected of them. Final words have a valuable impact when God uses His servants right to the end of life.

**Deuteronomy 32:4.** *"He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all of His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He."*

#### **THE SONG.**

A song with a message from God is important  
The message to be sung by all people at once.  
In this way the words can not be mistaken -  
Everyone sang the same words of the song.

Their song was first a song of God's blessing -  
Giving the doctrine God wanted them to know.  
He is the "Rock" whose words are perfection -  
Look around you, His creation works do show.

But they lightly esteemed the "Rock" of salvation -  
Forgetting the "Rock" who had saved them at first.  
So the "Rock" would sell them to another nation -  
Their rock who bought them was not the "Rock" with a heart.

God's truth given to us is never to be taken lightly -  
We've been entrusted with light from our "Rock" who is Lord.  
The songs that we sing should never be flighty -  
As united, our voices in song teach the Word.

Some songs in the Gospel we sing to give warning -  
Other hymns we sing to give God our praise.  
Together in songs we worship Lord's Day morning -  
Words of remembrance together we raise.

O let us not forget the blessing of song in communion -  
As God's people as one, raise their voice unto Him.  
Worshiping and praising our "Rock" of salvation -  
With songs that are spiritual and the words of our hymns.

**“There is a simple beauty in the oneness, O God, when Thy people join voices to sing. We think the same thoughts and express them together as we focus, as one, on the message in words. Whether the number who sing is few, or a great congregation, the sound of voices joining in praise, testimony and worship warms my heart. We sang yesterday in a small mountain village, with only a few voices, but it lifted my heart as we exalted the Lord Jesus Christ. May I always have a song in my heart to share with others and together give praise to Thee. Amen.”**

### **Deuteronomy 33**

#### **MOSES, THE MAN OF GOD - BLESSES**

The final public act of a leader has a certain significance that cannot be easily overlooked or forgotten. Moses was forty years old when he "chose rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season." The next forty years of his life were spent learning practical lessons of faith from God as a shepherd and a servant. This training time would serve the man of God well in the years of service ahead. Survival in a wilderness is not possible without learning that even in inhospitable situations, God is there to preserve, protect and defend the man or woman of faith. The title, "man of God," is not one to be taken lightly. One who follows God in spite of discomfort in body, but with determination to please God in his spirit, and delight in his soul to go where God leads, can be called a man of God. The last forty years of Moses' life were a combination of leading God's people and serving God Himself by serving His people. That principle still remains. We serve God today when we serve His people. It will not always be appreciated and, on some occasions, your efforts will be rejected and you will be criticized unjustly. But service done for God is acknowledged by God, and His approval is all we need.

Moses had been with God's people long enough that he knew their idiosyncrasies and personality characteristics. There are certain traits to be found in people that are passed on from one generation to another. It was a remarkable thing that for four hundred years, each of Jacob's sons kept their tribal identity. There didn't seem to be much blending between the tribes even though they had spent years in close proximity when they were slaves in Egypt. Parents pass on genetic characteristics to their children, and they also model their convictions and lifestyle to the next two generations. Consequently, many children do things the same way their parents did. In assembly life spiritual habits and traits are passed on as well. Each assembly is a unique organism with certain identifiable features that mark them. Spiritual children will take things that their fathers taught and act upon them. They in turn will pass those on to succeeding generations.

When Moses blessed the Israelites as his last act for their good, he identified the different character traits and the results that would come from each. From the basic acts of survival of Reuben, to the fullness of Gad because they had successfully driven out the enemy, each tribe was identified in a personal way. Judah stands out as a leader, and Joseph as a successful people. Levi was faithful in spiritual service and Asher would prosper materially. The differences in people often affect where God chooses to place us and how He chooses to use us. We are not independent entities, even though we are different. God does not make us all alike but we all have one objective in view - the glory of God. The uniqueness of every person makes them fit properly in the body of Christ as well as in the local assembly. In the case of Israel, the variety of each tribe made them a potentially strong nation.

Differences in people are a positive thing. The variety of uses of different body parts make the body useful and able to accomplish the purpose for which it was made. It is important that each one of God's people understand who we are personally, and at the same time appreciate the value of the differences in our brothers and sisters. Scriptural assemblies are not a lot of franchises in different areas. Each one is a unique fellowship adapted by God to meet the needs in that particular location. There is never a reason for envy of the gifts that others have. Each person has been qualified by God to do what He wants. In Israel there was given to one tribe the best property and to another the safest place to live. One tribe brought food from the sea and another produced crops from the land. The nation needed them all to function in the way that was best for everyone. We need every gift God has given to a local assembly to be able to fill our purpose in a location and to bear testimony to the Lord's name.

It fell to the tribe of Gad to punish the enemies that had polluted the land of promise. Justice had to be carried out. It is not a pleasant task to deal with evil, but evil can not be left unchecked. There are times when we have no choice but to act scripturally and righteously for the benefit of all of God's people. Discipline is necessary to develop character in children. It is also necessary to maintain order in any group of people who are united in a common cause. In a military unit, discipline is needed for both offensive and defensive reasons. The same is true among God's people. A principle to follow in carrying out discipline is that it must be just. When it is possible to produce the result needed and yet be merciful, that too is acceptable.

An important thing to remember is that God is for His people. Even when we have to be corrected to change our wrong behavior, His discipline is also for our safety and security. He is our refuge and will do whatever is needed to bring us to be what He intends. Israel was different from all other nations. They stood alone; they were self-sufficient and secure in the place where God intended. It was never God's intention for them to adapt to the nations around nor be like them. They had been rescued and preserved by God and should have found their joy and satisfaction in being the kind of nation God wanted. It is the same for God's people today. God does not want us to adapt to the ways of the social, religious or political systems that please men. Our obligation is to do what we do as to the Lord and not to men. The political powers change often from one group to the next. What was illegal at one time is with the signing of a man's signature, changed to be legal. God's commands and laws are unchangeable. The social conduct of the majority of people is very different than the scriptures teach. Parental control, marital fidelity, family responsibility has had been taught in the scripture but changed in society. Religious practices have been changed to suit what the majority of people want now - something like a democratic society. But the truth of God does not change and we are not in the place of authority to change what God has decreed. Our commitment is to God and His word and must remain so. He is the eternal God and "underneath are the everlasting arms."

**Deuteronomy 33:3.** *"Yea, He loved the people; all His saints are in Thy hand: and they sat down at Thy feet: everyone shall receive of Thy words."*

#### **HE LOVED THE PEOPLE.**

Not all are the same - either then or now -  
God's people are different - yet in some ways alike.  
Some are impatient - others are terribly slow -  
Still, because they are the Lord's, they are called to be light.

Some exercise their strength - others are relatively weak.  
Some will always need help - while others are able to give.  
The only explanation of their differences we seek -  
Is, God made them different - and the way we choose to live.

Our daughters are both different, yet from the same line -  
In some ways, likes are the same, and in other ways unique.  
Some characteristics are from their mother - others are mine -  
They are both special to us - nothing changes our love for each.

A Sovereign God has called us making each believer His own -  
Not because we are important, but because He is God.  
By grace we've been elected, His work has begun -  
My response to Him should be faithfulness, for I have been loved.

The eternal God is my refuge, and like a soaring eagle in flight -  
He bears me through life, though all dangers abound.  
His arms are beneath and the many enemies in sight -  
Are thrust out so I can dwell in His safety alone.

God's people should be happy because we are loved -  
His help and protection are given to keep us from harm.  
There is a uniqueness in His people, by the Lord we are saved -  
And to keep us from falling are His everlasting arms.

**"There certainly are many reason, Father God, for me to be happy. Being saved is one very great reason: saved from sin and its power, saved from a life of sin, saved from the eternal consequences of sin, saved for Thy use now, saved for heaven. May I never overlook or think that the "precious" things are my right. Whether it is the "precious things of heaven," "precious fruits" brought forth by the sun or put forth by the moon, the "chief things" of the mountains, or the "precious things of the earth," I know all of them are from Thee and I appreciate them greatly. Heart-felt thanks, in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**

#### **Deuteronomy 34**

#### **MOSES DIED THERE**

There comes a time in the lives of God's servants when our work is done. It is not easy to face the fact that God has chosen others to carry on the work in which we have been engaged. They will not do the same things nor will they do the work to which God has called them in the way we might have chosen. But they are servants of God too, and the Lord suits them to the work before them in a way that is most appropriate

to their personality and the needs to be met. Moses knew when he was finished his work, and God did not leave him there in the camp of Israel to intimidate Joshua or to get the minds of the Lord's people distracted by having two leaders in one place. He wisely accepted God's discipline without bitterness or rancor. He accepted the fact that he was not going into the promised land with the characteristic meekness for which he was known. "The meekest man in all the earth." God in grace had him to go to mount Nebo at the top of the hills of Pisgah, and pointed out to His servant the places where the tribes would settle. He could see to Dan in the north, over to where Naphtali would settle all the way to the Mediterranean Sea. He could see the southern plains and closer, the city and plains of Jericho where Israel would cross the Jordan.

We may not accomplish in our lifetime all we had hoped, but we must remember the work is not ours but God's. What God has done through us and for us is worthy of our praise and thanksgiving from full hearts. To be allowed to speak for God to the people is a great privilege. To have pointed precious souls to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation is a great privilege. To have been allowed by God to participate in the life and testimonies of local assemblies is a great privilege. To have been able to have the gift God gave us blend in with that of other members of the body of Christ is a great privilege. To be able to be in fellowship with the people of God is a great privilege. "I am the Lord's, O teach me all it meaneth, all it involves of love and loyalty."

Moses was "slow of speech" he said, when he was in Midian forty years before. But the three eloquent speeches he gave in the book of Deuteronomy indicate God had made him to become a very articulate orator who spoke with power and authority. God is able to do what He wants with His servants to bring about His own plans and purposes. No one in Israel could doubt that Moses spoke for God. Whether they would act upon his words was now their responsibility. It is our responsibility to pass on to people the truths of God's Word and do it in fellowship with God as best we can. Not all of God's servants are the same, but if in the spirit of "meekness and lowliness," we preach the word, then we can trust God to use it as He sees fit.

Moses was a humble man who could, and did, identify himself with the people of God. He was a courageous man who did not quit when things got very hard, and even when he personally was unjustly criticized. There was a wisdom in the man that he learned through the years of following God, that couldn't be ignored by those he led. Humility, wisdom, and courage need to be characteristics of any man who leads God's people today in assembly leadership or in public service. Moses never let his success or position go to his head and become arrogant and domineering. There needs to be a gracefulness and compassionate spirit about those who guide the saints of God. A prideful attitude and an arrogant authority will not endear a leader to God's people. That person will soon find himself resented and his opinions resisted. If he does not change, there will be people who will ignore his leadership and perhaps some will even leave.

Moses didn't stop growing spiritually at age eighty. In fact, he became the greatest prophet in Israel until the Lord Jesus Christ came. The Lord knew him face to face. Nobody else has ever had experienced that. The signs and wonders God did in Egypt through Moses, were unprecedented. The miracles performed through Moses from the crossing of the Red Sea through forty years of wilderness travel and living, had an impact on the nation of Israel that continues to this day. Enemies of Israel in areas around the Middle East were caused to fear Moses because he was the man God chose to use, and could use without Moses claiming credit for himself. It is important that we all know who we are before God and never attempt to take credit ourselves for success in the work of God. To give God all the glory for souls saved, saints strengthened, assemblies established and teaching received, is absolutely essential for a servant of God. There can be no place for self-exaltation in the work of the Lord.

The Lord had kept His servant with full strength and clear eyesight right to the end of his days. The journey of the life of Moses is a story of a remarkable man who was kept from dying as a baby because his parents who knew he was a "proper child," did all they could to preserve him for God. He was in the safest possible place in Egypt in Pharaoh's palace, naturally speaking, for the first forty years of his life. He was exposed to all the world had to offer, but saw that was only temporary. For forty more years he learned principles of leadership by being a shepherd of sheep. In the years ahead the patience and meekness he learned in the wilderness of Midian would stand him in good stead. The last forty turbulent years were a testimony to the triumphant power of faith in God. How he died is not mentioned but the keys that only God holds were used in the way God chose. His death wasn't due to weakness or sickness. God just decided it was time to take his servant home and bury his body in an unknown place where it wouldn't become a shrine or a stumbling block to God's people. There was even a contention between Michael the archangel and the devil about the body of Moses.

There is no substitute in the life of faith for going through testing times. We will learn more of ourselves and of God through the difficulties of life that any other way. It is in the problems we face that we learn who we

really are. We might think we have certain strengths and God has to show us that His strength is made perfect in weakness. We may think our intellectual reasoning will give us the solution to the issues we face or the challenges that arise before us. When we come to our extremity, we find that what is needed is real faith in God. Not just talk or teaching about faith, but believing that God can and will do the impossible. There is no better teacher to let us know what is right, than the failure when we act independently of God's will.

God did not abandon His people Israel, but stuck with them through all their failures until they reached the land of Canaan. Later, in their smug complacency, they forsook God, and to this day are suffering the consequences of self-will and willful disobedience. There is no reason for us to think God has abandoned us because we are getting smaller in number, if we are doing His will and following His Word. The problems will come when we try to do God's things our way because that would be more convenient to us and less stressful. If we are trying to be accepted by everything, every church group or everybody around, we will find we have nothing to offer the people that they can't get better in some other place or way. Our commitment to God is not in the form of a written contract, but we are to "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and I will be a Father unto you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty."

**Deuteronomy 34:10.** *"And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face."*

#### **ONE OF A KIND.**

From the first baby cry in the home of parents who lived by faith - one of a kind.  
Who else but him his life saved by an ark in a river - one of a kind.  
Nurtured in slaves' home, raised by a princess, trained by a king - one of a kind  
At maturity chose to be with slaves (the people of God) rather than reign - one of a kind.  
Learned world's wisdom from men, learned God's wisdom from sheep - one of a kind  
Weak in self-esteem, strong in self-control - a man of meekness - one of a kind.  
  
Learned obedience from God, taught obedience to men - one of a kind  
Withstood wrong government - established right leadership - one of a kind  
Believed the impossible - carried out the improbable - one of a kind  
Led with authority - prayed with importunity - one of a kind  
Mediated with consideration - served with compassion - one of a kind  
Unquestioning in his faith in God - aware of the weakness of men - one of a kind  
  
Called by God to stand before Him - allowed by God to look upon Him - one of a kind  
Saw stones changed to gravel - solid rock turn like gems - one of a kind  
Carried the writing of God's law in his hands - saw them broken - one of a kind  
Prayed for miracle food - saw millions of tons provided - one of a kind  
Drank water from the Rock - sinned by hitting a rock - one of a kind  
Saw the results of sin in a nation - saw the repentance of a nation - one of a kind  
  
Heard the words of God out loud - wrote the words of God with his pen - one of a kind  
Gave instructions for the tabernacle - saw God dwell in the tabernacle - one of a kind  
Saw the promised land from a distance - buried by God Himself - one of a kind  
Actually, all of God's people are individuals - each one - one of a kind  
We have never seen God face to face - but each one saved by grace - one of a kind  
May I remember each day, in all I do or say - that each one of God's people individually  
IS ONE OF A KIND!

**"O God my Father, a review of all Thy ways with us is certainly given importance as I read the book of Deuteronomy. May this practice increase among us as Thy people. May we not take for granted any or all of the instructions we find in Thy Word as not deserving of going over again and again. May I personally take to my heart the lessons learned again, as well as new lessons learned from the reading of this book. Give me the willingness and understanding to use these illustrations and principles as guidelines for any work I am called to do. In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, Amen."**