

OBEY GOD'S LAWS AND ACKNOWLEDGE THAT THE LORD, HE AND HE ALONE IS GOD DEUTERONOMY 04:01–08

Introduction

Disrespect for authority is sweeping the earth today. People want few restrictions: they desire to do what they want, when they want, like they want. For years now there has been a continued deterioration of respect for such authority figures as...

- teachers
- ministers
- policemen
- politicians
- physicians
- business persons
- lawyers
- judges
- government employees

The slide of respect has slipped so far that even parents are dishonoured and treated disrespectfully. Parental disrespect is serious, very serious, but there is a disrespect that supersedes all bad behaviour toward others: the disrespect of God Himself. When a person shows dishonour to God, he does so to his own detriment. He is daring the judgment of God to fall upon him, and it will. Scripture declares this loudly and clearly.

God must be honoured, and He is honoured by being obeyed. To show respect for God is to show respect for His law, His commandments. This is the subject of this most important passage of Scripture: The Strong Exhortation to the Second Generation of Israelite Believers: *Obey God's Laws and Acknowledge That the LORD, He and He Alone Is God*, Deuteronomy 04:01-08.

- I. Listen to God's laws and obey His laws: that you may live and inherit the promised land of God (a symbol of heaven, of spiritual conquest and rest) (vv. 1-5).
- II. Remember the results of obedience: what happens when you carefully obey God's law (vv. 6-8).

I. Deuteronomy 04:01–05 Obey God's Laws and Inherit the Promised Land

Listen to God's laws and obey His laws. If a person listens and obeys, he will inherit the Promised land of God.

Note the word "now" in verse 1. This refers back to what Moses had already preached:

- => The great hope but tragic failure that kept the first generation of Israelites out of the promised land — the sins of unbelief, grumbling and rebellion (see notes, Deut 1:6-2:15).
- => The triumphant victory and warning given by God to the second generation of Israelite believers (see notes, Deut 2:16-3:29).

"Now" — in light of the lessons learned in the past — listen to God's laws and obey His laws. If you will listen and obey, you will not fall into sin and face the judgment of God as the first generation did. Rather, you will live a fruitful and productive life. Moreover,

you will experience the power of God, conquering all the enemies who oppose you as you march into the promised land. You will be victorious and take possession of the promised land. You will know the spiritual conquest and rest of the inheritance promised by God. But note what Moses declared: to know such a fruitful and victorious life God's people must do three things.

1. They must not add to nor subtract from God's commandments, but simply obey them (v. 2). God has spoken, stated exactly what He wants to say to man. Nothing more, nothing less is needed. Man is not to tamper with God's holy commandments, His Holy Word:

=> Man must not add his own ideas or thoughts to God's Word nor the ideas and thoughts of other people.

=> Man must not take away from God's Word, must not omit any statement or requirement of God's Word.

=> Man is to accept God's Holy Word just as it has been given by God. No person is to attempt to explain away God's clear commandment in order to justify his sinful behaviour. The commandments of God are adequate, sufficient for life: they are exactly what man needs in order to live a fruitful and productive life, a victorious life conquering all of the enemies of life.

1 Th 2:13 And we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

Rev 22:18-19 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. And if anyone takes words away from this book of prophecy, God will take away from him his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book.

Deu 12:32 See that you do all I command you; do not add to it or take away from it.

2. God's people must not commit the sins of Baal Peor, the sins of immorality and false worship (see notes, Num 25:1-18). This is a primary example of disobedience to God's commandments. The sins committed at Baal Peor stand as a strong warning against disobedience. While camped by the Jordan River, thousands had become involved with their pagan neighbours and indulged in sexual relationships. But this was not all: their pagan neighbours had eventually invited them to share in their worship services and socials. The result was inevitable: many of the Israelite believers began to participate in the false worship and commit the gross sin of idolatry. They became guilty not only of immorality but of idolatry as well. They broke the clear commandments of God against idolatry and adultery. They broke the heart of God. The result was the judgment, the chastisement of God's hand. Because

of their disobedience, over twenty-four thousand Israelite believers died. It was in this particular rebellion that the last of the first generation died and passed off the scene of human history. Tragically, they had all died because of sin and the inevitable judgment of God against sin.

But this is not the whole story. Note that all who held fast to the LORD lived and escaped the judgment of God. In fact, note exactly what Scripture says: they were all — the obedient — still alive. They were all standing there listening to this sermon preached by Moses. The point is electrifying: the believer must obey the commandments of God. He must not commit the sins of Baal Peor, the sins of immorality and false worship. He must never follow in the footsteps of the disobedient. Disobedience arouses judgment. And judgment falls upon all the disobedient.

Mat 5:27-28 “But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”

Rom 1:18-23 The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness. Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities — his eternal power and divine nature — have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles.

1 Cor 6:9-11 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Cor 6:18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body.

1 Th 4:3-5 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honourable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God

2 Th 1:7-9 And give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power.

Rev 21:8 *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars — their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur. This is the second death.*

Isa 42:8 *“I am the Lord; that is my name! I will not yield my glory to another or my praise to idols.”*

3. God's people must obey God's law even after reaching the promised land. Even after they achieve the spiritual victory and rest of the promised land, they must still continue to obey God's law. There was to be no room for complacency or worldly comfort and rest. So long as a believer was on the earth, he was to be diligent in his worship, in living a holy, distinctive life, and in bearing a strong testimony to his neighbours.

Mat 7:21 *“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”*

Mat 7:24-25 *“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock.”*

John. 15:10 *“If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love.”*

John 15:14-15 *“You are my friends, if you do what I command.”*

Deu 26:16 *The LORD your God commands you this day to follow these decrees and laws; carefully observe them with all your heart and with all your soul.*

1 Sam 15:22 *But Samuel replied: “Does the LORD delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the LORD? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams.”*

DEUTERONOMY 04: 01—02 LAW, TORAH, COMMANDMENTS

*“Now, Israel, hear the decrees and laws I am about to teach you. Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land the LORD, the God of your ancestors, is giving you. Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the LORD your God that I give you.” **Deuteronomy 04:01–02***

Several words are used in this chapter to describe the law of God. Each word is used to stress a different shade of meaning.

1. The word *statute* or *decree* (vv. 1, 45, choq or hoq) means a rule, regulation, decree, statute, commandment or law. The word has the force of being determined once for all, of being cut or chiselled in wood, metal or stone. The statute or decree

is fixed, set as a law forever. It has the force of being issued by a king or some legal authority. The statutes of God's Word are determined and established forever by the King of the universe, the supreme legal authority over all.

2. The word *judgments* or *laws* (vv. 1, 45, mispal) means a judgment, a legal decision passed down by a judge (Wenham, Gordon J. *The Book of Leviticus*, p. 253); a just decision that must be kept; a law or regulation of true justice; a law that has to be obeyed in order for justice to be done.
3. The word *commandment* or *command* (v. 2, mitsvah or miswah) means a law, order, instruction, ordinance, rule, charge, commission or command given by some authority, whether human or divine. When a commandment is given by God, it is to be done. The commandments of God are to be obeyed.
4. The word *testimonies* or *stipulations* (v. 45, edah or edut) means a testimony or witness that is given; a stipulation, regulation or requirement that is demanded. The idea is this: the laws and commandments of God are testimonies to His nature. They are stipulations or requirements of His righteousness.
5. The word *law* (v. 44, Torah) means a precept, statute, regulation or instruction. It includes the idea of teaching, pointing out, informing, instructing. The picture of the law is that of an arrow shot by an archer. The arrow flies straight to the target, straight to the goal, the objective. So it is with the *law* (Torah). The *law* points, directs a person straight to the goal of righteousness, to the objective of *right living*.

But note: the word *law* (Torah) means more than just statutes and regulations. Basically, the law (Torah) means all the instructions and teachings of God. It refers to the entire Pentateuch or Decalogue, the first five books of the Bible. The law includes all that the LORD commanded (v. 3): the Ten Commandments, the civil and religious laws, and all the other instructions given by God to His people. It is the wonderful law of God (Torah) — the full instruction and teaching of God — that tells people how to live life to the fullest. □

II. Deuteronomy 04:06–08 Results of Obedience to the Law of God

Remember the results of obedience, what happens when you carefully obey God's law. This is a strong charge: obey — be careful to obey God's law. It is the law of God that sets God's people apart and makes them distinctive, a holy and righteous people. When you, as one of God's people, obey God's law, three significant things happen. Note the Scripture and outline:

1. You will bear a strong testimony and witness to your neighbours (v. 6). The law of God is full of wisdom and understanding. Any person who studies God's law clearly sees the wisdom lying behind the law, the impact the law would have upon human behaviour. Any people who would adopt and obey the Ten Commandments would

be declared a great nation, a wise and understanding people. This was exactly what God was declaring to the Israelites: if they obeyed His law, they would bear a strong testimony and witness before the world. The world would declare that they were a great nation, a wise and understanding people. Note that Israel's greatness was not to lie in military strength nor economic wealth; their greatness would lie in the great laws that governed their nation, even the law of God itself, in particular the Ten Commandments..

***Psa 19:7** The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the LORD are trustworthy, making wise the simple.*

***Prov 28:7** A discerning son heeds instruction.*

***Psa 19:8** The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.*

***Psa 119:5** Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees!*

***Psa. 119:130** The unfolding of your words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.*

***Hosea 14:9** Who is wise? He will realize these things. Who is discerning? He will understand them. The ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.*

***Rom 7:12** So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.*

***Rom 11:33** Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!*

***Mat 7:24** "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."*

***Heb 4:12** For the word of God is living active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.*

2. You will have the presence and the power of God when you pray (v. 7). Obedience will result in answered prayer. A personal, intimate relationship will be established with God. If a person kept the Ten Commandments, the presence and power of God would be with him, looking after and taking care of him.

***John. 15:7** "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you."*

1 John 3:22 *And receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him.*

2 Chr 7:14 *If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land.*

Psa 66:18 *If I had cherished sin in my heart, the LORD would not have listened.*

Isa 59:2 *But your iniquities have separated you from your God; your sins have hidden his face from you, so that he will not hear.*

Jer 29:13 *You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.*

3. You will learn to cherish the law of God — all because the law was righteous and fair and just (v. 8). The law of God established fair and just treatment between neighbours. By obeying the law, every person will be treated fairly and justly. No partiality or favouritism will be shown; no lawlessness or violence will be tolerated; no unjust weight or treatment will be allowed.

Rom 7:12 *So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.*

1 Tim 1:8 *We know that the law is good if one uses it properly.*

Exo 12:49 *The same law applies both to the native-born and to the foreigner residing among you.*

Lev 24:22 *You are to have the same law for the foreigner and the native-born. I am the LORD your God.*

Num 15:16 *The same laws and regulations will apply both to you and to the foreigner residing among you.*

Psa 37:31 *The law of their God is in their hearts; their feet do not slip.*

Psa 40:8 *I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.*

Psa. 119:47 *For I delight in your command because I love them.*

Psa. 119:72 *The law from your mouth is more precious to me than thousands of pieces of silver and gold.*

Psa 119:97 *Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.*

Psa 119:140 *Your promises have been thoroughly tested, and your servant loves them.*

Jer 31:33 *“This is the covenant I will make with the people of Israel after that time,” declares the LORD. “I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people.” ■*