

Message #7

Deuteronomy 4:1-8

The emphasis and heart of this book of Deuteronomy is that God's people need to carefully hear and obey the word of God so God can give them His blessings and His victories.

When Jesus was here He reiterated this point that if God's people will heed God's word, it not only proves you love Him, but He will disclose Himself to him (John 14:21); and the one who abides in Him will bear much fruit (John 15:5).

Now not every believer will do this. The blessings spoken of by Moses and by Jesus Christ will not be experienced by every believer because being a child of God is one thing, but being an obedient child of God is quite another thing.

Let's say you have two children. One of your children only thinks in terms of pleasing himself, of pursuing his own will and of gratifying his own desires. That child never thinks of doing what would please the parents. That child could care less if he ever does what his parents want him to do. He disobeys his parents' instruction and despises his parents' admonitions. Oh he wants what his parents can give him. He is ready with his hand out to receive money, clothes, groceries, but don't ask him to do what his parents want him to do.

The other child is just the opposite. This child finds his greatest joy and happiness in being a delight to his parents. He loves being with them. He listens to their counsel. He obeys the admonitions. He loves what his parents think, say and want. He loves them not for what he can get, but because he wants to please them.

Which child would make you happy? Which child would you bless? Both are legitimate children. But in which child would you find your greatest joy? Would you find your greatest joy in a self-indulgent child who never listens to you or in one who loves you and your word?

Do you get the picture here? Not all of the children of God will experience the rich blessings of God, but those who take the word of God seriously and obey it will be spiritually rich.

That is what Moses wanted Israel to know as they were about to cross over into the Promised Land.

GOD'S PEOPLE NEED TO HEAR GOD'S WORD AND OBEY GOD'S WORD REGARDLESS OF OBSTACLES BECAUSE THE RESULT WILL BE THE GREAT BLESSINGS AND VICTORIES OF GOD.

Notice how Moses begins **verse 1**, "now." That connects us to the preceding context which develops this text based on the previous text. So the previous text was not giving a history lesson to remind God's people of interesting stories of how he failed and didn't get to enter the Promised Land; Moses reminded God's people of this so they would learn the lesson of the importance of obeying God's word.

Moses wanted this new generation to realize if we trust God and obey His word, we will be blessed of God regardless of major obstacles and intimidating giants. There are eight very clear teachings that Moses gives in these verses:

TEACHING #1 – If God’s people want to receive everything God wants them to have, they must carefully listen to a man of God, who expounds the word of God, and they must seek to obey the word of God. **4:1**

Moses says I am teaching you the word of God and you need to hear it and heed it. This is a key part of Deuteronomy and it is a key part of life. Having a rich, abundant life is contingent upon listening to and obeying God’s word. Moses says I am not teaching you the word of God for the fun of it. I am teaching this to you so you will listen to it, understand it and obey it so God will richly bless you. **Hearing and obeying the word of God is the very key to a blessed life.**

The words “listen” or “hear” the word of God are used about 100 times in the book of Deuteronomy. If God’s people want God’s blessings, they must listen to the word of God. Paul said in Romans 10:17 that faith comes from hearing the word of God.

Now Moses uses a couple of technical words in **verse 1** to describe the word of God:

- 1) statutes (huqqim) - God’s definite and established written laws or ordinances
(William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 301)
- 2) judgments (mishpatim) - written laws that teach what is just, right, lawful from God’s perspective in a forensic sense (*Ibid.*, p. 519)

Both of these words teach that the written “words” of God are very critical to the life and existence of the people of God. **God’s word is not given for mystical contemplation or academic postulations; it is given for real life application in real life situations.**

These two words do not simply mean that the word of God is designed to lay down a bunch of legalistic rules of dos and don’ts. These words suggest that God has laid out, in writing, things for His people to carefully follow that will lead them to a happy and blessed life.

These instructions are not for the purpose of bogging down God’s people with a bunch of unnecessary rules so they cannot enjoy life. It is just the opposite. These instructions are that which lay out teachings to help govern all areas of life so people may live a happy and successful life. This is a great formula for successes in any area of life—hear the word of God and obey it.

Some people do not realize how important church is and frankly many churches aren’t important. **It is the responsibility of a church to carefully teach the word of God to the people.** If the church is doing that, it is the responsibility of the people of God to go hear it and obey it.

TEACHING #2 – If God’s people want to receive everything God wants them to have, they must not ever add to the word of God. **4:2a**

This is a point that shows up time and time again in God’s written word: don’t add to it and don’t subtract from it (Deut. 4:2; Deut. 12:32; Jer. 26:2; Rev. 22:18-19). We must not ever make the traditions and rules and commandments of men to be equal additions to the word of God.

God has given us enough to learn and know without adding things beyond what He has given us.

Unfortunately today, many churches are adding things that are not in the word of God:

- 1) Some are adding things about same sex and transgender stuff that is an abomination to God - Deut. 22:5.
- 2) Some are adding things about having women ministers which is a violation of the word of God - I Tim. 2:12.
- 3) Some are adding water baptism to salvation.
- 4) Some add their legalistic rules that are not in the Bible.

Raymond Brown, in his commentary, said, “Throughout the centuries, some people have made the immense mistake of supplementing, mutilating or ignoring the word of God” (*The Message of Deuteronomy*, p. 63).

There are those who read the word of God and then make some judgment on it and actually add things the word of God never intended. We could give multiple examples of this. These additions will not ever lead people into the blessings of God.

In the course of over 40 years in ministry, I have had the opportunity to talk with some couples who went to a minister for premarital counseling and the minister told them things they could and could not do in their intimate life based on his own quirky ideas and notions. In every case, I simply took the couple to passages in the Bible that dealt with their issue and in each case they concluded the minister was adding stuff not in the Scripture. That is a clear violation of God’s word. There is plenty in the word of God without adding other stuff to it and if you add things to God’s word, you will not receive God’s blessings, you will receive chastising judgment.

TEACHING #3 – If God’s people want to receive everything God wants them to have, they must not ever subtract from the word of God. **4:2b**

The other side of the coin is that people subtract from the word of God and what it actually says.

Let’s cite a couple examples. Many subtract the subject of “hell” from their theology even though it is mentioned many times. The main four words are Sheol, Hades, Tartarus and Gehenna. It has been calculated that there are 162 references to hell in the N.T. and Jesus warned of hell some 60-70 times. People don’t like the threat of hell so they pretend it isn’t there.

Here is an example from Deuteronomy right here on communion Sunday. The subject of wine (yayin) and new wine (tirosh) shows up multiple times in Deuteronomy:

Yayin - 14:26; 28:39; 29:6; 32:33; 32:38

Tirosh - 7:13; 11:14; 12:17; 14:23; 18:4; 28:51; 33:28

Now when you examine all of these passages, you cannot come away with the conclusion that it makes God happy and it makes His people more spiritual if His people never drink a glass of wine.

God will bless you with new wine. 7:13; 11:14

God wants you to drink your new wine at the worship place He establishes. 12:17; 14:23, 26

God wants His freed people provided with a liberal amount of wine. 15:14

God expects His people to give Him an offering of wine. 18:4

God permits an enemy to take away wine as a judgment. 28:39, 51

God did not allow His people to drink wine because they did not know Him. 29:4-6

God was angry with His people, and their offerings of grapes and wine were evil. 32:33, 38

God will bless Israel one day in a land filled with new wine.

Now I don't know what your position is on the subject of wine and drinking wine. You have a right to your own convictions. Stick to them. What we do not have the right to do is to tamper with God's word and subtract what it says. Believe me there are many who tamper with God's word to support their position.

As we mentioned, two different Hebrew words are translated "wine" - yayin and tirosh.

Typically tirosh is translated new wine. Yayin is translated wine.

Wine is an alcoholic beverage pure and simple. The process comes through fermentation and not distillation, which is the difference between wine and burgundy or cognac.

Now what people who tamper with God's word typically say is that this is not a wine that can get you drunk. The problem is both words are used in a context of wine that does get you drunk.

In Hosea 4:11, both yayin and tirosh are translated "wine" and "new wine" in a context that says they both "take away understanding." In other words, too much wine and too much new wine can get you drunk.

Yayin is used of Noah in Genesis 9:22 and it says Noah drank wine and became drunk.

Tirosh is used in Judges 9:13 and it is stated that new wine not only cheers God, but it cheers men.

Here is my point. Legalists do not like this so they either add something to it such as make up the fact that it isn't real wine or they subtract from it by saying it is sinful to drink wine.

In either case, God's word is not being carefully or accurately taught.

Now in any issue if it becomes a sin matter, it needs to be eliminated. For example, some people should never drink a glass of wine or any alcohol because they really struggle with it and alcoholism is a sin that can ruin them.

In my view some people should not have the internet or cable TV. They are sinning by looking at unclean immoral things and they are ruining their lives from experiencing the ultimate blessings of God simply because they will not obey God that says, “abstain from fleshly lusts that war against the soul.”

But that’s not the point. The point is we have a responsibility to accurately know and understand and apply God’s written word and not add to it or subtract from it.

TEACHING #4 – God’s people need to remember what they saw God do to punish His people who worshipped false gods. **4:3**

The potential of being punished is a great deterrent to people who think right about God and His word. No one in his or her right mind would want to do something that they know will bring the punishment of God (i.e. Ananias and Sapphira–Acts 5:1-11).

To impress on God’s people the importance of obeying the word of God, Moses reminds them of what they actually saw in an episode that occurred in Baal-peor.

Just a few weeks before this address, some of the Israelites got involved in godless, immoral idol worship (Num. 25:1-9). They were involved in immorality with Moabite women and God killed 24,000 of them right then and there. Those who chose to disobey God and sin paid a high price.

That is what God wants His people to know. **Always remember there is a high price to pay for disobedience. As we have said many times, we may choose to disobey God’s word but we may not choose the consequences that God will send to us for disobeying His word.**

If any group of people should take the word of God seriously, it should be Israel here. They actually saw God destroy those people among them who did not take the word of God seriously.

One of the quickest ways for God’s people to bring about their own destruction is to worship something false.

TEACHING #5 – God’s people need to realize God did not destroy them and they are alive. **4:4**

Moses says remember you “held fast” to the Lord. The word “held fast” (dabaq) means to intensely cling tight to God and His word. There are things we face in life and that is all we can do because we can’t explain them or figure them out. But we can cling tight to God and His word and that is the thing that will lead us to a blessed life.

Moses reminds the people to realize they themselves did not get involved in this and they were still alive. The point is just as you obeyed a few weeks ago and were blessed for doing so, as you go forward into the future keep that focus. Sometimes one of the great evidences of the blessings of God is our very existence.

TEACHING #6 – God’s people need to obey the things Moses taught them as they enter and possess the Promised Land. **4:5**

Moses wouldn’t be going with them. But he was giving them the word of God. The key to going into the land and defeating enemies and experiencing victory was knowing and obeying the word of God. Moses says don’t get forgetful, don’t get sloppy or careless, and remember when you get over there, what got you there. You obeyed the word of God. That is the key to your life and victory.

It was not their military and it was not their weapons. It was not their self-confidence that gave them success. It was their hearing and obeying the word of God that brought them the blessings of God that they had seen and experienced.

Moses again stresses the fact that he taught them the “statutes” and the “judgments.” Moses had been teaching the word of God for 40 years. He had very carefully laid out what God wanted His people to do and how God wanted His people to live. Moses is trying to get God’s people to realize the importance of this.

We try to do our best to get people to understand the importance of going straight through books of the Bible so we can see and understand everything God wants us to see and understand. One person connected to this church said there should be standing room only in this church. But the sad reality is, there are plenty of empty seats. Why? People don’t get it.

TEACHING #7 – Obeying God’s word will make a statement to the rest of the world that God’s people are wise and understanding. **4:6**

By obeying the word of God, God’s people make a powerful, attractive statement to the world. When God’s people purpose to truly and accurately know and obey the word of God, they make a statement to the world that this is the best way to live life and the best way to blessings. Living life according to God’s word is the key to blessing.

One of the main problems we have is that God’s people have not actually obeyed the word of God, because they do not actually know it. As a result, they do not make a statement to the world that they are a wise and understanding people. Many people have been involved in religion, but not accurately understanding the Scriptures.

Some people know more about religious rules and traditions of men than they do the word of God and, as a result, they do not make a positive statement to this world. In fact, it is just the opposite.

Some make a statement that they are a bunch of emotional and irrational religious dimwits who do and say crazy things. Others make a statement that they are rigid legalists who never smile or are happy with anything.

Others do not follow God's word when it comes to morality or business ethics. As a result, they are not viewed as wise and understanding people. They are viewed as hypocrites and crooks.

There was a person I know who loved the Lord and gave generously to the work of the Lord and the people at the bank noticed it. They noticed that every week he gave a generous amount of money to the Lord's work. They also noticed that his bank account kept growing. Finally one person at the bank questioned him about this and he was able to say, you cannot out give God. When you love the Lord and when you give God the first fruits, He fills your barns with plenty. What a witness that was to the people at this bank. The world took notice of his quiet faithfulness. That's what obeying the word can do on any issue.

TEACHING #8 – If God's people obey God's word, the world will realize the very presence of God is with His people. **4:7-8**

Here is one of the great blessings of obedience; the close presence of God is with His people. Since God is Omnipresent, He is obviously everywhere present. But what this means is that God will Personally be with His people to bless His people. In the case of Israel, His very presence was visible. If God's people obey Him, they can talk to Him and He will answer them.

Notice again the emphasis is on obeying the "statutes" and "judgments." The statutes and judgments of God are "righteous." If you want the best for your life from now on, get serious about understanding and applying the word of God. You will have victory and you will have God's blessings.

So let's suppose you are here today and say I am going to do that. I am going to go to a church where I can be carefully taught God's word so I may obey it. What will happen to me?

- 1) You will receive many good things in life God will give to you. Deut. 6:24
- 2) You will survive in life and will not fall apart. Deut. 6:24
- 3) You will know what things you should choose in life; make right decisions. Ps. 25:12
- 4) You will have the goodness of God in your life. Ps. 34:9
- 5) You will have an abundant level of wealth and riches. Ps. 112:2
- 6) You will have an enduring righteousness and stability. Ps. 112:4-6
- 7) You will have a courage in the midst of adverse situations. Ps. 112:7-8
- 8) You will experience many desires and dreams that will be fulfilled. Ps. 145:19a
- 9) You will see many answers to prayer. Ps. 145:19b
- 10) You will have great wisdom and knowledge. Prov. 1:7
- 11) You will have stability from God and many treasures of God. Is. 33:6

There are a few things God's word says you will receive if you take God's word seriously. You will have many wonderful things in your life.