

L E S S O N 1

For December 5 • Page 5

Justice and Obedience to the Law

The morning we'd been looking forward to for months finally arrived. We were dressed for the beach. We had in tow everything needed for two parents and two children to have a fun time: beach chairs and towels, sand buckets and shovels and rakes and sifters, toy dump trucks and excavators, snacks and drinks. All four of us were excited for the day that lay ahead as we took the elevator down and headed out of our hotel. On the other side of Atlantic Avenue was beautiful Virginia Beach with the sun already glistening off the ocean.

Our son was holding his mama's hand; our daughter was holding mine. The orange "Don't Walk" sign was flashing as we approached the crosswalk. Three of us saw it and stopped; our daughter did not. Still holding my hand but anxious to get to the beach that she had in sight, she kept pace and stepped onto the avenue in front of an oncoming car. In a split second I yanked her out of the roadway and back up to the sidewalk to safety. All four of us took a deep sigh of relief, our hearts still racing over what could have happened. Seconds later, when the white "Walk" sign began to flash, the four of us looked both ways as we, much more cautiously than we ever would have done before, crossed the avenue toward the beach.

Signs, rules, laws, commands—they serve an important purpose. They are designed for our protection. They are there for our personal and community good. That's why it's so beneficial to pay attention and adhere to traffic signals. And it's why we should pay attention to and adhere to God's commands.

- 1. *What are some signs, rules, and laws that are designed for our own good and protection?***
- 2. *Why would you not follow good rules and laws?***
- 3. *Why are obedience, love, and service to God the best way for us to live?***

LESSON FOCUS: Obedience, love, and service are God's commands for our good.

Hear God's Decrees

Deuteronomy 5:1b-3; 10:12-13, KJV

5:1b Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them.

2 The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb.

3 The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.

10:12 And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,

13 To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

Deuteronomy 5:1b-3; 10:12-13,

NIV

^{5:1b}Hear, Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them. ²The LORD our God made a covenant with us at Horeb. ³It was not with our ancestors that the LORD made this covenant, but with us, with all of us who are alive here today.

^{10:12}And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, ¹³and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

Moses called his people to hear the statutes and laws of God before entering the promised land. It is impossible to overstate how important it is for God's people to hear what He has to say through His Word. The Hebrew word for "hear," *shama*, is also translated "hearken, discern, and understand." Hearing God involves actively listening to Him from His Word and seeking to understand His will for us when we do.

Moses reminded the people that the Lord made the original covenant with this generation's "ancestors" (vs. 3), but it was timeless. All succeeding generations including those "who are alive . . . today" should have a living relationship with God.

Moving ahead to chapter 10, we find Moses asking his people a rhetorical question about what God required of them. When God's people hearken to Him as He speaks through His

Word, their hearts will be filled with a holy fear and awe-filled reverence for Him. In turn, they will keep His commandments and love and serve Him and others with everything they are. Thus they will strengthen their fellowship with God and enjoy the fullness of life that comes with a closer walk with Him.

4. *What were God's people to do with His decrees and laws?*
5. *With whom did God make His covenant?*
6. *What does God ask of His people?*

Hold Fast to God's Commandments

Deuteronomy 27:1-5, KJV

1 And Moses with the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, Keep all the commandments which I command you this day.

2 And it shall be on the day when ye shall pass over Jordan unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaister them with plaister:

3 And thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law, when thou art passed over, that thou mayest go in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, a land that floweth with milk and honey; as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee.

4 Therefore it shall be when ye be gone over Jordan, that ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in mount Ebal, and thou shalt plaister them with plaister.

5 And there shalt thou build an altar unto the LORD thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up any iron tool upon them.

Deuteronomy 27:1-5, NIV

¹Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people: "Keep all these commands that I give you today.

²When you have crossed the Jordan into the land the LORD your God is giving you, set up some large stones and coat them with plaster. ³Write on them all the words of this law when you have crossed over to enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey, just as the LORD, the God of your ancestors, promised you. ⁴And when you have crossed the Jordan, set up these stones on Mount Ebal, as I command you today, and coat them with plaster. ⁵Build there an altar to the LORD your God, an altar of stones. Do not use any iron tool on them."

Here, Moses again reminded the people of the importance of holding fast and keeping the commandments that God had given them. The Hebrew word for “keep,” *shamar* (vs. 1), means to observe, preserve, and protect. It speaks of the night-watchman who stands alert and is ever vigilant and watchful for the first sign of danger or attack. This is the picture of keeping God’s commands that Moses gave the people. He was preparing them to enter the land that God had promised them, a land that flowed with “milk and honey” (vs. 3).

But in the land of abundance, spiritual danger awaited, for the people of the land worshiped idols. By keeping God’s commands and thereby setting up a spiritual watchman, the Israelites would be protecting themselves from the enemy. To do this, they were to hold fast to all God had told them.

After they had crossed the Jordan, they were to gather large stones uncut by human tools and build an altar to the Lord on Mt. Ebal, near modern-day Nabalus. Once the stones were in place, they were to coat the altar with plaster and write God’s commandments on it. This would help them remember that they were His people and that He had given them the words of life to hold fast to in the warfare they were about to face.

7. *What were God’s people to build after crossing the Jordan River?*

8. *What were they to write in the plaster and why?*

9. *How do God’s people remember His truths today?*

Herald God’s Commandments

Deuteronomy 27:5-10, KJV

6 Thou shalt build the altar of the LORD thy God of whole stones: and thou shalt offer burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD thy God:

7 And thou shalt offer peace offerings, and shalt eat there, and rejoice before the LORD thy God.

8 And thou shalt write upon the

Deuteronomy 27:5-10, NIV

⁶“Build the altar of the LORD your God with fieldstones and offer burnt offerings on it to the LORD your God. ⁷Sacrifice fellowship offerings there, eating them and rejoicing in the presence of the LORD your God. ⁸And you shall write very

KJV

stones all the words of this law very plainly.

9 And Moses and the priests the Levites spake unto all Israel, saying, Take heed, and hearken, O Israel; this day thou art become the people of the LORD thy God.

10 Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the LORD thy God, and do his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day.

NIV

clearly all the words of this law on these stones you have set up."

⁹Then Moses and the Levitical priests said to all Israel, "Be silent, Israel, and listen! You have now become the people of the LORD your God. ¹⁰Obey the LORD your God and follow his commands and decrees that I give you today."

Not only was the altar to be a sign of remembrance, but it was also to be a place of holy sacrifice and worship before the Lord. Moses proclaimed that these sacrifices would be burnt on the altar as "peace" (KJV) or "fellowship" (NIV) offerings to God. The Hebrew word for this offering, *shelem*, speaks of completeness and thankfulness for a restored relationship. This helps us understand that having peaceful fellowship with God means having a fully restored relationship with Him.

Furthermore, in conjunction with the sacrifice, there was to be a time of feasting and rejoicing in His presence. With their sacrifice would come great joy in Him.

Finally, Moses again admonished the Israelites to obey the Lord's commandments. And they should do so because they were His people whom He delivered out of Egyptian bondage, protected for 40 years in the wilderness, and was bringing into the land of great abundance. The same is true for God's people today. He has delivered us from the bondage of sin, is with us every step of our sojourning here on earth, and will one day bring us into eternal glory with Him.

10. *Along with writing God's commandments on the altar of stones, what else were the people to do on it?*

11. *What admonishment did Moses again give the people at the end of this passage?*

12. *How can we lovingly obey and serve the Lord today?*

Justice, Judgment, and Obedience

We are commanded to live just and holy lives in the midst of a perverse and crooked generation. As the prophet Micah said, “He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Micah 6:8, KJV).

Perhaps more now than any time in history, every Christian must shine as a light out of darkness. We can do that when we press toward the Lord by obeying His Word, serving Him through service to others, and loving those we would prefer not to love.

Evil men are waxing worse and worse. Innocent blood is being shed every day. People practice idolatry by worshiping false gods of money, power, and pleasure. Immorality is hailed as the new standard while religious freedom is under attack. Still, we must remain a light that shines out of darkness even so “much the more as you see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:25).

Although we may be angry because we sometimes see the unjust application of the law, we must not sin! Rather, let us lead the harvest toward the true Judge, the Righteous One, for salvation. It does us no good to just talk about loving and obeying the Lord if we are useless examples. “The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (Jas. 5:16), but we must be serving God ourselves in obedience and love if we are to point people to a saving knowledge of the Lord.

Ultimately, we must follow our Lord’s lead and example—not our emotions—as we pray and believe that God rewards the righteous and punishes the wicked. We must not promise what we have no intention of doing but repent and do the will of God from our hearts.

13. *How can we keep God’s commands each day?*

14. *In what ways are justice, judgment, and obedience connected?*

15. *How do we demonstrate that we are ready to serve the Lord?*

We Are What We Do

The Lord repeatedly told Israel to keep His commandments before them, for He knew who and what they would encounter once they entered the promised land. When you acknowledge the Lord in all of your ways, He will direct you down the good path. His Word keeps your faith high, removes your fears, and transforms your life.

► *Is your service to the Lord from your heart? Are you obeying His commandments every day? If so, write Yes and Yes here. If not, what do you need to do to change that?*

KEY VERSE

And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, to keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

—Deuteronomy 10:12-13, KJV

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God ask of you but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in obedience to him, to love him, to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to observe the LORD's commands and decrees that I am giving you today for your own good?

—Deuteronomy 10:12-13, NIV

DAILY BIBLE READINGS

Week of December 6 through December 12

(See *The Quiet Hour* for devotionals on these passages.)

- Mon.** 2 Samuel 1:1-12—Deaths of Saul and Jonathan Mourned.
- Tues.** 2 Samuel 1:17-27—A Lament from a Just Heart.
- Wed.** Luke 18:1-8—A Cry for Justice.
- Thurs.** Matthew 20:29-34—Mercy from the Son of David.
- Fri.** 2 Samuel 3:1-5; 5:1-5—David Made King over All Israel!
- Sat.** Psalm 21—The King Rejoices in God.
- Sun.** 2 Samuel 9:1-7, 9-12—David Shows Kindness.