

“By Every Word”
Deuteronomy 4:1-9
(Preached at Trinity, June 16, 2024)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. Moses has been carefully recounting the history of Israel since they were redeemed from Egypt. It had 40 years of wandering, of suffering under the consequences of sin. Their forefathers were faithless. Moses is pressing this new generation to maintain their covenant faithfulness.
2. As we enter **Chapter 4, Verse 1** sets the subject matter.
"Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform"
 - a. Moses is reminding Israel of the importance of God's Law within the framework of His Covenant. He will expand on this beginning with **Chapters 5**.
 - b. God's Law is something that must be taught and rightly applied.
3. The expression "statues and judgments" refers to the entirety of God's Law. It was at the heart of Israel's covenant relationship with God.
But the Law is binding upon all men.
Leviticus 18:4-5 NAU - "You are to perform My judgments and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the LORD your God. ⁵ 'So you shall keep My statutes and My judgments, by which a man may live if he does them; I am the LORD."
Deuteronomy 6:1-3 NAU - "Now this is the commandment, the statutes and the judgments which the LORD your God has commanded *me* to teach you, that you might do *them* in the land where you are going over to possess it, ² so that you and your son and your grandson might fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. ³ "O Israel, you should listen and be careful to do *it*, that it may be well with you"
4. The Law was to be an essential element in their life as they entered Canaan. They were to obey all of it. Nothing was to be excluded.
Deuteronomy 4:2 NAU - "You shall not add to the word which I am commanding you, nor take away from it, that you may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."
 - A. This is an important Biblical principle. God's Word is absolute. We'll see it again in Chapter 12. Nothing is to omitted or added to God's Word.
We must not bind men's consciences with that which the Word of God does not command but we must not dismiss anything that the Bible does command.
Deuteronomy 12:32 NAU - "Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to nor take away from it."

- B. The Bible closes with these words at the end of the Book of Revelation.
Revelation 22:18-19 NAU - "I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues which are written in this book; ¹⁹ and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his part from the tree of life and from the holy city, which are written in this book."
5. Their very life and existence depended upon the Word of God.
Deuteronomy 4:1 NAU - "Now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, so that you may live . . ."
Deuteronomy 30:19-20 NAU - "I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live, you and your descendants, ²⁰ by loving the LORD your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him; for this is your life"
Deuteronomy 32:47 NAU - "For it is not an idle word for you; indeed it is your life. And by this word you will prolong your days in the land, which you are about to cross the Jordan to possess."
- A. Moses then called their attention to a literal example – Baal-peor. Some in Israel had become enamored by the ladies of Moab and had embraced the idols of the Moabites. God’s wrath was kindled and many lost their life in God’s judgment. They died because they did not heed the Word of God
Numbers 25:1-3 NAU - "While Israel remained at Shittim, the people began to play the harlot with the daughters of Moab. ² For they invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. ³ So Israel joined themselves to Baal of Peor, and the LORD was angry against Israel."
Numbers 25:9 NAU - "Those who died by the plague were 24,000."
- B. Disregarding the Word of the Lord brought dreadful consequences. Moses contrasts this with the life of his hearers.
Deuteronomy 4:4 NAU - "But you who held fast to the LORD your God are alive today, every one of you."
6. Moses gives them several commands regarding the Law of God.
- I. First, it was imperative that they listen – **Verse 1**
- A. Listening demands paying attention.
1. It is far more than just hearing the sound of the words. You can hear without listening.
 2. Listening demands ears that are attentive.
 3. The Psalmist wrote.
Psalms 78:1 NAU - "Listen, O my people, to my instruction; Incline your ears to the words of my mouth."
 4. Jesus often commanded listening ears.
Matthew 11:15 KJV - "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."
 a. He was speaking of open ears. Ears that receive with comprehension.

- b. This demands a work of God upon our heart. It is the essence of regeneration.

Mark 4:10-11 NAU - "As soon as He was alone, His followers, along with the twelve, *began* asking Him *about* the parables. ¹¹ And He was saying to them, "To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables"

B. Listening demands a heart to receive God's Word.

1. During the days of Eli, the high priest, it was a dark time. God was not speaking to Israel. Imagine we didn't have our Bibles and God was not speaking. Such was the life of Israel when Samuel was born.

1 Samuel 3:1 NAU - "Now the boy Samuel was ministering to the LORD before Eli. And word from the LORD was rare in those days, visions were infrequent."

2. God raised up Samuel and gave Him another heart. A heart to listen.

1 Samuel 3:7-10 NAU - "Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD, nor had the word of the LORD yet been revealed to him. ⁸ So the LORD called Samuel again for the third time. And he arose and went to Eli and said, "Here I am, for you called me." Then Eli discerned that the LORD was calling the boy. ⁹ And Eli said to Samuel, "Go lie down, and it shall be if He calls you, that you shall say, 'Speak, LORD, for Your servant is listening.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. ¹⁰ Then the LORD came and stood and called as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for Your servant is listening."

3. At the transfiguration God commanded all to listen to His Son, our great Prophet.

Matthew 17:5 NAU - "While he was still speaking, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, with whom I am well-pleased; listen to Him!"

a. We must hear Christ, we must listen and heed.

b. The great problem of humanity is ears that are closed. They cannot hear.

John 8:43 NAU - "Why do you not understand what I am saying? *It is* because you cannot hear My word."

John 10:27 NAU - "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me;"

II. Second, it was imperative that they keep the Word of God – **Verses 2, 6**

A. Listening demands action.

1. The word for keep refers to guarding, preserving. It's the word that describes Adam's duty to manage the Garden. He was to watch over it with care and attention.

Genesis 2:15 NAU - "Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it."

2. Moses is teaching with an expectation that they would hear and give heed.
Verse 1 - "which I am teaching you to perform"

3. **Verse 2** implies universal obedience. They were not to add to or take away from the Law so that they would keep it in its entirety.
 4. In **Verse 5** Moses says he is teaching them the Law so that they would put it into practice when they entered Canaan.
- B. God's Word is not optional.
1. We are not allowed to choose which sections we will heed and obey.
 2. Every failure to obey is sin.
- III. Third, listening to and keeping the Law of God demands clinging to God.
- A. Moses is declaring that they were alive because they held fast to God and His Word.
- Verse 4 – “But you who held fast to the LORD your God”**
1. In other words, their obedience was motivated by their desire to honor God. They desired His presence and His direction. This was the heart of Moses and it must be the heart of this generation as they prepare to enter Canaan. And it must be our heart.
Exodus. 33:15-16 NAU - "Then he said to Him, "If Your presence does not go *with us*, do not lead us up from here. ¹⁶ "For how then can it be known that I have found favor in Your sight, I and Your people? Is it not by Your going with us, so that we, I and Your people, may be distinguished from all the *other* people who are upon the face of the earth?"
 2. This was the ultimate charge to Israel—to hold fast to God and His Word.
Deuteronomy 11:22-23 NAU - "For if you are careful to keep all this commandment which I am commanding you to do, to love the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and hold fast to Him, ²³ then the LORD will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess nations greater and mightier than you."
Joshua 22:5 NAU - "Only be very careful to observe the commandment and the law which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you, to love the LORD your God and walk in all His ways and keep His commandments and hold fast to Him and serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul."
 3. In the Book of Proverbs Solomon gives this as his chief and highest instruction from God.
Proverbs 4:1-4 NAU - "Hear, O sons, the instruction of a father, And give attention that you may gain understanding, ² For I give you sound teaching; Do not abandon my instruction. ³ When I was a son to my father, Tender and the only son in the sight of my mother, ⁴ Then he taught me and said to me, "Let your heart hold fast my words; Keep my commandments and live;"
- B. This is God's charge to us.
1. Paul described it as the essence of our salvation. We are to hold fast to God and His Word.
1 Corinthians 15:1-2 NAU - "Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, ² by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believed in vain."

2. The author of Hebrews also affirms the importance of holding fast.
Hebrews 3:6 NAU - "Christ *was faithful* as a Son over His house-- whose house we are, if we hold fast our confidence and the boast of our hope firm until the end."
Hebrews 3:14 NAU - "For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end,"
Hebrews 4:14 NAU - "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession."

Conclusion:

1. Our duty is to follow Christ. To hold fast to Him, to cling to Him and to obey Him.
2. Israel never learned to follow God. They continually had divided hearts, clinging to their various idols.
3. How are we doing on our journey to eternity? John Maxwell describes it well: "Our "promised lands" never come cheaply! We never accidentally arrive at them, and we always face barriers traveling to them. We may cover the same ground several times and bump into the same obstacle more than once. Only when we've learned to successfully follow God through the twists and turns of life will we be able to quicken our forward pace."¹
4. Following God and obeying His Word is the secret to success. It IS success, the true measure of success.
Joshua 1:7-8 NAU - "Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. ⁸ "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have success."

¹ John C. Maxwell and Lloyd J. Ogilvie, *Deuteronomy*, vol. 5, The Preacher's Commentary Series (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Inc, 1987), 36–37.

