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DEUTERONOMY 4:41-5:33

Last week we left off after seeing how Moses had exhorted Israel to obey God's commandments and then gave them several reasons why they were to do so.

Today, we're going to see Moses as he actually gives the people what we know as the Ten Commandments.

Before we get to these commandments, however, let me just summarize for you what Moses says in the last part of **chapter 4**. **Verses 41-43 of chapter 4** tell us that Moses had set aside **cities of refuge**. These cities were set aside for folks who were guilty of unintentionally taking someone's life.

If a person accidentally killed another person, he could flee to one of these cities and find refuge from those who would come against him because of what he had done.

Verses 44-49 are verses that serve as a summary of the history of the Israelites. They speak briefly of victories and occupations of the land east of the Jordan River.

But it's in **chapter 5** that Moses begins to really **teach** the Law to these people. And we need to remember as we go through this book that the people to whom Moses is speaking are the children of the folks who had been delivered from Egypt and most of these folks are hearing the Law for the very first time.

Why is this being repeated? The Ten Commandments were given to the parents of these folks back in **Exodus 20**. But God is such a good and gracious God! He wasn't going to hold these folks accountable for not obeying what they themselves have not first had explained to them.

Deuteronomy 5:1...

(Have someone read this from **KJV**)

Now, from the **KJV**, I want us to notice **four very important verbs** in this verse. In fact, these verbs represent **four important steps** we each must take in relation to the Word of God.

- 1) we must **hear** it...and this word for "hear" in the Hebrew means much more than to listen casually. It means **to listen attentively, to understand, to heed**.

These people had no Bible to sit down and study as you and I do. They had to **hear** the Word of God. God was gracious enough to send someone to give it to them and they had the responsibility to **listen attentively** to it.

Paul tells us that faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. And I've always thought of this verse when I see my children or myself or anyone else growing lax in hearing or reading God's Word. I think that if faith comes by hearing, what comes by not hearing? I believe doubt and unbelief does. I believe when we don't hear God's Word doubt creeps in. The enemy comes in and plants doubt in our minds.

And God wanted to make sure that these folks heard the Word so that they would be able to exercise the faith they would need to accomplish all that would be required of them when they entered the Promised Land.

It is imperative that God's children hear and read God's Word!!!

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But not only do we need to hear it, another thing we see from this first verse is that

2) we must **learn** it...

Some folks just love to learn, don't they? I mean, there are classes folks can take on just about everything. We can take cooking classes and sewing classes and knitting classes and tennis classes. We can even take classes on learning to be organized enough to take a class! And there's absolutely nothing wrong with any of these classes. But the most important thing you will ever learn is God's Word!

3) we must **keep** it...

As important as the hearing and the learning of God's Word is...we mustn't stop there. The KJV "keep" means to have the Word of God down in our hearts.

David said, *"Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against Thee."*

When we learn God's Word and we hide it in our hearts, we will be far less likely to sin against God and when we do sin, we will be far **more** likely to be convicted of it!!!

Another thing this verse tells us is that

4) we should **do** it

I believe the Word should be in our head as we hear it and learn it, and it should be in our heart as we keep it, but then, it should get down to our feet and our hands as we do it. If the Word gets to our feet and our hands and our mouths, we will be far less likely to do what is right and *not* do what is wrong. Sin is both...there are sins of omission as well as sins of commission.

This was God's ideal for His people, wasn't it? **Hear** the Law. **Learn** the Law. **Keep** the Law. **Do** the Law.

See, the Law actually is like a plumb line. The Law is like a mirror that is held up to the heart. David said, *"Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path."*

God's Word lights each step we take and it also lights the path beyond as we look ahead to the steps we **need** to take.

We said last week that the Bible teaches us that the Law is good. But the Law cannot make us right before God. The Law cannot justify us. Why? Because no one has ever been able to do all the works of the Law.

See, the Law was given for the sake of defining sin.

Paul tells us in **Galatians** that the Law was not contrary to the promises of God. And he says that apart from the Law, man would never have known what sin really is. Paul goes on to tell us in **Galatians** that the Law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ.

The Law...and I know I'm repeating myself...but I'm trying to get you to understand that this Law that we're going to be looking at for the next couple of months served an important purpose!

Without the Law we would never have known how in need of a Savior we really are!

The Law takes us by the hand and leads us to the Cross and says, *"Okay, little child, you are a sinner and you need a Savior."*

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The Law reveals to us the mind of God!

The Law reveals to us that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God!

There's not a one in this room who can look at God's Law and say, "I have kept them all!" James tells us that if we're guilty of breaking one of these commandments, then we are guilty of breaking them all. No one ever kept them all except our Lord Jesus Christ! But, still the Law is good. It serves a tremendous purpose.

Verses 2-5b...

Moses says that the covenant wasn't made with their fathers. I take this to mean not their fathers who were led out of Egypt, because the covenant **was** made with them...but rather the **patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac and Jacob**. The Abrahamic Covenant was made with them but not the Mosaic Covenant, which Moses is teaching them here.

And Moses tells them what God said:

Verses 5c-7...

I believe God is saying, "You lived among heathen people in Egypt. You saw many idols in Egypt. But it was **I** who delivered you from the land of idols. The **gods of Egypt** could not keep you there. The **army of Pharaoh** could not keep you there. I delivered you from that heathen land. **And you shall have no other gods before Me.**"

God is establishing at the very outset that **He alone is sovereign** over them.

See, God is telling them this just before they are to enter another idolatrous land. And He is saying,

"My children, there are 'gods' all around you in these pagan nations. They are not to become **your** gods. I am the Lord your God and you shall have no other."

Verses 8-10...

This commandment actually amplifies the first commandment, doesn't it? We think of carved images and stone likenesses and we say,

"Whew, I'm glad God's not talking to me on this one. I don't have any idols sitting around my house."

But, what is an idol? An idol is **anything or anyone that comes before the Lord in my life**.

Think about what or who can come before God in you life...

Do you have a **television**? It can surely come before God, can't it?

Do you have **books...good books**? They can surely come before God, can't they?

Do you have hobbies...good hobbies? They can surely come before God, can't they?

Do you have a **husband**, or a **grandchild** or a **job** or an **organization** that's coming before God. Anything that takes first place in your heart is your idol.

God says in His Word, "I, the Lord your God, am a **jealous** God."

We don't often think of "jealousy" as being one of the characteristics of God, do we? But, God Himself says He is jealous. He is jealous of our **affection**, our **time**, our **loyalty**, our **devotion**.

Look at the latter of **verse 9 and 10...**

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We said a couple of weeks ago that the Lord doesn't punish the children and grandchildren because of their ancestors' sin, but God can permit the sad consequences of their sins to afflict future generations.

Children so often follow the same pattern they have seen their sinful parent set before them...alcohol, drugs, abuse, etc. The children of the Israelites suffered the defilement of idolatry because of the idolatry of their fathers. **EXAMPLE: Ted Renfrow**

But, the cycle **can** be broken! Look at **verse 10** again... The Lord blesses successive generations who honor and obey them. That's why it is so very, very important that our children learn godliness from us.

Verse 11...

Repeatedly, God's Word tells us that the name of God is holy and exalted. We are to lift high the name of our Lord.

Don't you cringe when you hear our Lord's name taken in vain? The media has no regard whatsoever for our Lord and delights in using our Lord's name in vain!

But, we as Christians bear the name of Jesus Christ. We take His name in vain each time we fail to live the Christian life before others. When we go places we shouldn't go...when we read things we shouldn't read...when we watch things we shouldn't watch...we take the name of Jesus in vain.

Remember when Peter denied Jesus? The Bible says he cursed...and he may or may not have taken the Lord's name in vain when he cursed...but he most certainly did take His name in vain when he denied he knew Him.

There's a very interesting verse over in the book of Ezekiel...

"My holy name I shall make known in the midst of My people Israel; and I shall not let My holy name be profaned anymore. And the nations will know that I am the Lord, the Holy One of Israel."

I look forward to the day when the Muslims - the Palestinians, the Afghan people, the Pakistanis, the Arabs...all will know that God is the Lord...the Holy One of Israel.

From the tape of Osama Bin Laden that was released this past week, we saw that Bin Laden thought folks were coming to Allah in great numbers after September 11... Well, Bin Laden is wrong and one day Bin Laden's knee will bow and his tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Verses 12-13...

Nine of the Ten Commandments are repeated in the New Testament epistles for the church to obey...the lone exception is this commandment. WHY? Because the Sabbath Day was a specific sign between Israel and the Lord.

We do not observe the Sabbath...we observe the Lord's Day.

The Sabbath symbolizes the Old Covenant of Law: you labored for six days and then you rested.

The Lord's Day commemorates the New Covenant of grace: it opens the week with rest in Christ and the works follow.

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The first four commandments have to do with man's relationship with God...but the last six commandments have to do with man's relationship with each other...beginning in the home. God expects us to honor our father and our mother.

This is the only commandment with the promise that if kept our days will be prolonged.

You may disagree with me on this, but I have a real problem with folks who write "tell all" books about how they were mistreated by their parents or how their father was an alcoholic or how their mother abused them. I believe it would be terrible to have had an abusive parent...but I believe God still expects us to honor our parents.

I was asked to read a manuscript of a book a young lady had written on her life story. She wrote at length about her alcoholic father and how he verbally abused the family.

In the book, she also wrote of some intimate details of her and her husband's marital relationship.

She had asked me to critique this manuscript. So, when she gave it back to me, she asked me for my honest opinion of it.

And I told her she thought it was a pretty good book with the exception of one problem area. She smiled and said, "Oh, I bet you didn't like the part about my husband and my marital relationship."

And I said, "No, that didn't bother me...you and your husband got those things worked out. What bothered me were your remarks about your Dad." I said, "Honey, you say your Dad isn't saved. What do you think the chances of his coming to Christ would be if your book gets published and he reads it? I believe you should show your Dad honor regardless of what he did in the past."

God doesn't say, "Honor your father and mother if they deserve to be honored" does He? No, He said, "Honor your father and mother." PERIOD!!!

Verse 17...

We're to honor human life. We're not to commit **murder**. We're not to commit **euthanasia**. We're not to commit **abortion**. God is the Giver of life and only He has the right to take it. Because we're made in God's image, murder is an attack against God!!

Verse 18...

God demands sexual purity. God has ordained marriage as His appointed way for us to fulfill our human sexuality.

God can forgive sexual sin, but He doesn't promise to interfere with the painful consequences of it.

In ancient Israel, adultery was considered a capital crime. In today's society, it's hardly considered a sin, let alone a crime. I believe the folks who head up the entertainment industry will be held accountable for the way they have treated sex in the movies and on television.

Verse 19...

God is not only concerned about the way we treat other people but also about the way we treat other people's property. The eighth commandment simply states "you shall not steal." It is brief and to the point, but it covers a multitude of offenses.

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You mustn't steal another person's **property**, or a person's **good name**, or a person's **spouse**. You mustn't cheat on an **examination**, or on your **income tax**. ***Put simply...you shall not steal...***

Verse 20...

This commandment forbids lying about other people...either in the newspaper or on television or online or over the telephone or over the back fence in person!

Truth is the cement that holds society together, and things fall apart when people don't keep their promises, whether contracts in business or vows at the marriage altar. **God's people should be known for speaking the truth in love.**

Verse 21...

With the exception of this last commandment when we break one of the Ten Commandments the violation is evident, open, obvious. For instance, if we **have other gods**, people will usually know it.

If we **make for ourselves idols**...people will usually know it.

If we **take the Lord's name in vain**, people will usually know it...and on down the line.

But, covetousness is a heart attitude, isn't it? In this day of materialism, it's awfully hard not to covet, isn't it?

And covetousness is a real problem. Breaking this commandment can lead to breaking a lot of the others. **Because of covetousness people have robbed, committed adultery, lied and even murdered.** Folks may not be able to see into our heart, but they can certainly see the manifestations of covetousness, can't they?

Verses 22-27...

Here we see Moses reminding the Israelites of the scene that transpired when these commandments were given to their fathers.

Can you feel Moses doing his very best to paint the picture for them of the awesome fact that their fathers had indeed heard from Almighty God?

Do we sometimes forget that we too have heard from the Almighty, Sovereign Creator of this universe?

We hear from Him every time we read from His Word...every time we hear a lesson or a sermon that is based on "thus saith the Lord."

But, do we sometimes become too familiar with Hearing from Him?

Do we allow His love letter to us, the Bible to sit around our house unread, unheard, unlearned, unheeded and unkept? Does coming to Sunday School and church become routine?

Verse 27...

I believe this tells us that these folks intended to be obedient, but just like us, their spirit may have been willing...but their flesh would prove to be weak.

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Verses 28-33...

These verses are so bittersweet...

Can't you just feel the heart of God for His people?

- how He longs for His children to obey Him...
- how He longs for His children to enjoy His blessings...

But later in ***Deuteronomy***, God will tell Moses how the people will turn to idols...but as we've said before this does not mean that the Law served no purpose.

Let me just say this in closing...

It's really easy for us to look at these commandments and say, "Well, we're not bound by the Law...so we don't really have to worry about them."

But, even though God's children live under grace today and not under the Mosaic Law, it's important for us to know the Law of God so that we might better know the God of the Law and please Him. Christ has fulfilled the types and symbols found in the Law, so we no longer practice the Old Testament rituals as Israel did. Christ bore the curse of the Law on the Cross so that we need not fear judgment.

But the moral law still stands and God still judges sin.

It is as wrong today to lie, steal, commit adultery, and murder as it was when Moses received the Law at Sinai. In fact, it's worse, because today we have the full revelation of God's will through our Lord Jesus Christ, and we have the entire Word of God and when we break these laws we sin against so much more light than these folks had.

In fact, in the Sermon on the Mount Jesus actually enlarged upon these commandments in the sense that He made them more stringent...

He made them harder to keep and easier to break...

Jesus said that if we are angry with our brother without cause, we are guilty.

Jesus said that if we look upon someone with lust, we are guilty.

Jesus had a way of cutting right to the heart of the matter, didn't He?

But the Law was given for this reason...

that we would realize our unrighteousness and that we would come to salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, as we really get into this wonderful old book of ***Deuteronomy***,

let's see Bible history...

let's see Bible geography...

let's see all the "ins and outs" of the Law,

But let's do more...

Let's let it change our lives

Let's see God's great love for His people...then and now.

And let's thank God that we have been justified, but not by the Law, for we could never keep the Law, just as the Israelites couldn't...but we have been justified by faith in Jesus Christ!