

HEARING AND HEEDING GOD'S WORD

Most people struggle with life's choices. It begins in school and covers such things as which courses to take, whether to play sports or be in the band. It continues on with choices of whether to go to college or find a job. If college is chosen, then what to study and then to choose between job alternatives. It doesn't end there. To marry or not to marry and whom to marry must be decided. How many children and where to live are just a few examples of the never ending series of choices.

If you haven't said it yourself, then you may have heard someone say, "I wish I knew what God wanted me to do with my life." We may not be able to find clear direction for many of the alternatives we face but we can certainly know what God expects of His people. By taking care of the known expectations, then the other choices become clearer to us.

DEUT 10:12-13 In just two verses we see many of the basic expectations of what God really wants us to do with our lives.

The starting point for our relationship with God is to realize Who He is. As we realize that we are being dealt with by the God of Creation Who is all powerful and infinite, then our attitude is one of reverence and awe and (if we will admit it) fear. It is from such a sense of awe that true worship happens as we try to grasp the concept of His perfect holiness.

Having encountered this awesome God calls for a response from us. We will either accept or reject Him as Lord over us. Acceptance means that we live our lives as He directs. This means that we add proper "action" to proper "attitude" by walking in all His ways.

The dual idea of getting attitudes and actions right is restated in these verses as "love and serve." Not only are we to walk in all His ways, we are to have ALL of our being involved in loving and serving God. The heart and soul represents the total person.

So many times we think or even ask

"What's in it for me?" Children ask their parent this same question many times. Parents sometimes say "Do it because I said do it." God could tell us to respect Him and walk in His ways just because He is God and He said do it. Such an approach is perfectly within the right of God (and of parents) to make such requirements; however, that would hide the truth that God's ways are really for our ultimate good. In the same way, most (if not all) things responsible parents require (or encourage) their children to do are for the good of the child.

Just as a child cannot understand why eating vegetable is good for anything or practicing the piano will ever come to anything good, we sometimes have trouble seeing how all of God's commandments are really beneficial to us.

It is truly amazing to see your children who detested vegetables return home as adults and their favorite food is now mama's home-cooked vegetables. As parents we chalk up such changes to maturity. It is also the mark of mature Christians when we can see God's commandments as being truly not only just good for us, but the best for us.

DEUT 10:14-15 Israel was in a covenant relationship with God Who created everything. It was a covenant that God Who owns heaven and earth initiated with Abraham and iterated with Isaac and Jacob. Through Moses His servant, God has outlined the requirements His covenant people are expected to carry out so they could benefit from the covenant relationship. Now we find the reason God has continued to work with the nation of Israel in spite of all their faults. It was because of His love for their forefathers. The faithfulness of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob made it possible for that generation of people to be chosen as a special nation that God would bless and use in His eternal plan to bring salvation to mankind.

It should be a sobering thought for every parent to realize that our faithfulness and being pleasing to God can affect the

opportunities our children have. However, the opportunity does not guarantee success. Faith and faithfulness is still required for our children. It was the same way with the generation of Israelites that we about to go into the Promised Land.

DEUT 10:16 As a covenant people, the Israelite had a covenant sign of circumcision of every male. All that God did for and required of physical Israel were examples of spiritual truths and applications that we (spiritual Israel) are to learn and heed. Moses statement in this verse shows a definite foreshadowing of the spiritual reality to which physical circumcision pointed. What was needed for success under the covenant was a putting away (cutting off) of the carnal nature (the way of the world) and an adoption of God's ways. This would require "heart surgery" of a spiritual kind that would remove the tendency to be self-centered and stubborn and want to do everything their own way. The tendency to be obstinate and hard to deal with had been learn well from their parents. However, it was this attitude and behavior that was evidence of their lack of trust (read that as unbelief) of God. A clear warning is here for us, also. If we are obstinate and difficult to deal with, then that may be evidence for us that we are not fully trusting God.

DEUT 10:17-19 God had chosen these Israelites because they were descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and He was given them an opportunity to possess the land He had promised to their forefathers. However, there was responsibility required on their part. If they did not have the proper response to God, then their opportunities would be hindered. It would make little difference that they were descendants of Abraham. Moses reminded them that God is not a respecter of persons. John the Baptist told the Jews of His day "Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham."

Not only is God not a respecter of persons, He is a Champion for those who are

disadvantaged. The disadvantaged in the social order of that day were the fatherless and widows and strangers (new comers to an area). The disadvantaged of today could be described in different terms, but whoever they are, we can recognize them. The Israelites were and we are expected to have the same kind of concerns God has. We are do the work He does. This is what Jesus told His disciples they were to do in John 14:12. He said, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father."

DEUT 10:20-22 The request Moses made was not anything unreasonable especially considering all God had done for them. God had done things described as "great and awesome wonders." If they had any doubts of how great God is, then all they had to do was to consider the nation God had raised up from a handful of people who went to Egypt to beg for grain during a famine. Now God was about to bring this group of former slaves into a great land and just give it to them. Certainly they should love Him because of His great love for them. Their experience is, in many ways, similar to our salvation experience. God has done great and awesome wonders for us in saving us from the penalty and power of sin to which we were enslaved. As John wrote, "In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins." And again he stated "We love because he first loved us." (1 John 4:10,19)

Our response to God's great love for us is love for Him. This is our proper attitude. The accompanying action for this attitude is application of the advice Jesus gave the apostles in John 14:15, "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." This is, in essence, what Moses told the Children of Israel as they were poised to go into the Promised Land.