

Message Series: The Whole Counsel of God, Message 7
The Requirements Of God's People. Book of Deuteronomy
Pastor Roger Ridley, Gretna Baptist Church – February 18, 2007

Have you ever purchased and read a book based on the recommendation of a friend or someone you admired greatly? I have many times. Because we are motivated by the recommendations of others, we have good reason to read the book of Deuteronomy. It is quoted in the New Testament more than any other Old Testament book. And it is frequently quoted by Jesus, in fact, when in the wilderness, tempted by Satan, Jesus quoted exclusively from the book of Deuteronomy. At the very least that should encourage us to read it and use it for ourselves. In 1 Corinthians 9:10, the Apostle Paul says that it was written for our sakes.

As I read it for myself, I was impressed with one question that seemed to stand out and tie the theme of the book together. In Deuteronomy 10:12 the question is asked of Israel, "*What doth the Lord thy God require of thee?*"

Have you ever wondered about that? What does God want of me? What does God expect of me? What does it take to please Him? That is the question being asked here, and you notice that it is also given for quick answers. With all our heart and soul God wants us to fear, obey, love, and serve Him. The heart is the center of our intellect and emotions. The soul is the core of our being; who we really are. So, with everything we are, God wants us to fear, obey, love, and serve Him.

As we consider the book of Deuteronomy, I want to do so in the context of those four answers.

I. God Wants Us To Fear Him

First, with everything we are, think, and feel, God wants us to fear Him.

When you hear the word fear, what does it cause you to think about? I think about a personal trait that I have. I am often fearful of the unknown, new surroundings, new people, large groups of people, or an intimidating person.

The biblical use of this word carries the same idea. In the opening chapters of Deuteronomy, Moses repeatedly says, *do not fear* or *be discouraged*.

In chapter three, the people of Israel went to war against King Og and King Sihon of the Amorites. These were great and powerful men. To illustrate this, 3:11 tells us that King OG was so big he had an iron bed 13.5 feet long and 6 feet wide. Do you know what God told His people before the battle? In 3:2, *“Fear him not.”* Don’t shake; don’t tremble at the thought of him.

However, we are admonished throughout Deuteronomy to fear the Lord.

Does that mean we should shake and tremble in His presence? Well, yes it does.

In chapter 28 it tells about the punishments that would come upon Israel for turning away from the Lord. In 28:58 it says those punishments would serve this purpose, *“That thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, The Lord Thy God.”*

In Matthew 10:28 Jesus says, *“Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”*

If you can stand in God’s presence without trembling then you are different than most of God’s people. I think of Daniel in Daniel 10 who kept collapsing while experiencing a vision of God’s presence. Or there is the Apostle John in Revelation chapter 1, who fell as dead while experiencing a vision of the glorified Christ.

If you think you can stand in God’s presence without trembling then you’re either arrogant or a fool and probably both. In Deuteronomy 25:18 it says that Amalek attacked the weak and feeble of Israel for that very reason, *“They did not fear God.”* They would learn later however, to tremble at the mention of His name.

But to fear the Lord means more than just that for His people. It especially means to honor, respect, be in awe of, and to have regard for.

In 5:29, after reviewing the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai, the people said what they heard they would do, but look at God’s response...

God wasn't talking about shaking in their sandals; He was talking about having regard for Him in their hearts; that emotional element that fills a life with appreciation and respect. See 4:39...

Consider it in your heart, there's none like the Lord.

Let me ask you, with heart and soul, when you hear the name, "*The Lord Thy God*", are you moved? Are you filled with awe?

That's what the Lord is looking for in my life and your life.

II. God Wants Us To Obey Him

Well, how is this fear lived out? It comes in the second answer of Deuteronomy 10:12, when we walk in all His ways, or obey Him.

Beginning at chapter five and all the way through chapter twenty-six, Moses restates and expands upon the commandments given at Mount Sinai; the moral, ceremonial, civil, and social laws which were to govern every aspect of their lives. In these chapters God's people are told to do, heed, keep, observe, and obey over 240 times.

Why are God's commandments so important? More than any other reason, 6:24 says, "*For our own good always, to preserve us alive.*"

Why do people die in car accidents? For more than any other reason, people fail to obey the traffic laws. Speed limits and seat-belt laws are made for our good, to preserve us alive.

Whenever we open God's Word and it warns us not to do something, it is never for our harm, but always for our good.

Camped on the eastside of the Jordan River, preparing to take possession of God's promise, it was the Word of God that would protect them from the enemies of God, it was the Word of God that would protect them from the temptations of sin, and it was the Word of God that would preserve them alive, if they would obey it.

In responding to the temptations of Satan in the wilderness, one of the passages Jesus quoted was Deuteronomy 8:6...

Life is found in obedience to the Word of God and that is why God wants us to obey Him heart and soul.

III. God Wants Us To Love Him

I am sure you have discovered though that it is a lot harder to obey when you're forced to than when you want to, and so the third answer to our question is a big help. The Lord not only wants us to fear and obey Him, He also wants us to love Him.

To me, this is the most exciting aspect of the book of Deuteronomy. Do you know how many times our love for God is used in the books of Genesis through Numbers? Just once! But spread across the pages of Deuteronomy it is used sixteen times and the word heart is used fifty-one times.

God wants us to love Him with all our heart. He is looking for an emotional response from us. See 6:5...

Do you then notice the connection in verses 6-9...?

When a person is in love it shows in all they do. If we really want to impact our children for the Lord, then they must see our love for Him in all we do and say.

7:6-8 explains the basis of our love for Him...

We did not choose to love God first, He chose to love us. 1 John 4:19 simply says, "*We love Him because He first loved us.*"

The people of Israel did not deserve God's love. In chapters 9-10, Moses says God's choice of them had nothing to do with their righteousness or uprightness of heart: they were stiff-necked and rebellious.

And there's not one of us that God loves because we deserve it either. Romans 5:8 says that God has manifested His love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

We did not deserve God's love, but He deserves our love.

Does He have it, heart and soul?

IV. God Wants Us To Serve Him

When it is in our heart to fear, obey, and love the Lord, then we are also going to serve Him.

The word serve, as used in Deuteronomy, means to bow down or to worship. Of the twenty-seven times it is used, nineteen are used negatively as warnings against serving, bowing down to, or worshipping other gods.

The people of Israel had already demonstrated a weakness for this with the golden calf at the foot of Mount Sinai. So, in chapter nine, Moses reminds the people of that and challenges them not to forget it. Idolatry would become their greatest threat in the land of promise, and they would eventually turn their hearts from God to serve strange and new gods.

Is idolatry still a problem for us today? Sure it is. Idolatry is more than images of wood and stone. Every time our heart is turned from God to anything else, we become susceptible to idolatry. That is why the Apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:31 that whatever we do we are to do it to the glory of God.

In 30:19-20, when Moses completed his instructions in the Law, he issued this challenge,

“I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live: That thou mayest love the Lord thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days.”

That’s the challenge I want to leave with you. We have considered what God wants from us, but you are the only one that can choose what you do about it.

What doth the Lord require of thee? To fear, obey, love, and serve Him with all our heart and soul.

Is that your choice?