

February 9, 2020

HONORED

DEUTERONOMY 4:1-9

INTRODUCTION

Honor is something that we do not quite understand in the United States. We understand what it means but our culture is not an *honor* culture and, therefore, the depth of the term and its varied applications escapes us. In honor cultures individuality is shunned. One's name – last name – identifies them in all of life. To live in such culture means to live in honor of those whose name you represent. You are to honor them, care for them and be concerned, ultimately, for and about them. Anything less is dishonorable and to behave in this way isolates one socially in ways that can be debilitating and irreversible. This is the culture into which we find the people of God. They have been claimed by the Lord and, therefore, His name is their honor and is also to be honored by them. They are to not lose their identity in the land that will pose social, political and religious challenges to their honor of the Lord. They are to do three things to retain honor for the Lord.

LISTEN (Deuteronomy 4:1-5)

At the heart of what it means to be a follower of the Lord is to listen. Listening involves much more than the hearing of what God has required. It necessitates an active obedience to what is heard. Listening, in this context, is passive in the sense that what is being said by the Lord man is commanded to *"not add anything ... or take anything away from it, so that you might keep the commands of the Lord your God I am giving you* (Deuteronomy 4:2). This same command is given by Christ in the book of Revelation (Revelation 22:18-19). Its repetition demonstrates that if the people of Israel, and we, also, the church, were add to the Word of the Lord we would find ourselves in error and rebellion. For we would be following a mixture of truth with human wisdom which, in essence, is failing to follow the Lord. To further drive home this command Moses reminds the people of Baal of Peor and the act of idolatry in which the people tolerated the Moabites. Moses reminds them that *"the Lord your God destroyed every one of you who followed Baal Peor"* (Deuteronomy 4:3). As the people of God enter into this new land, filled with a multitude of peoples whose worship of rooted in idolatry, they must give themselves to following the statutes and ordinances the Lord gave to Moses that they might live in honor of the Lord (Deuteronomy 4:5). Idolatry is always to fruit of minimizing the Word of God and maximizing our opinions. Paul's words in Romans 1:21ff highlight the foundation of idolatry where man refused to honor the Lord and His word but were futile in their thinking...their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise they became fools..." (Romans 1:21-22). To live for the Lord demands that we submissively listen to Him and give our allegiance to what He says and not to what we think.

HONOR (DEUTERONOMY 4:6-7)

We are told to *"Carefully follow"* the statutes and commands of the Lord (Deuteronomy 4:6). The words *"Carefully follow"* convey two ideas worthy of note. First, the people of God are to show that they live by a standard different from the surrounding culture. They are to be disciplined and precise in their living in order to honor the Lord by reflecting His character among the nations which, like being salt and light of the word (Matthew 5:13, 16) will cause others to honor and praise the Lord (Deuteronomy 4:7-8). Then and now, believers are called to one ethic - the kingdom of God. The purpose, then and now, is the honor and praise of the Lord. To live and to permit spiritual mediocrity is to dishonor the Holy Lord who has called us to shine like lights in the world (Philippians 2:14-15). Second, to carefully follow the Word of God highlights the necessity of retaining His Word, in our minds, in order to be able to use

them when needed. Memorizing the Word of God is essential to living for the Lord in a contrary culture. Psalm 1 teaches us what Deuteronomy 4 commands: that the blessed life (the set part life) is rooted in our keeping the Word of God by memorizing (meditating on) it (Psalm 1:2).

TEACH (Deuteronomy 4:9)

To forget is not only human, but it is spiritual warfare. To stay alive, spiritually, in a place where your faith is constantly tested is incredibly difficult. If we, as God's people, are to keep the faith burning and strong Moses tells us three things to do. First, *"be on your guard and diligently watch yourselves"* (Deuteronomy 4:9). Stand watch over yourselves. Note the plurality of the command. No one person is to only stand watch over him or herself, but is to fight to see that they help to guard others from being deceived and walking away as well. Second, Moses says *"don't forget the things your eyes have seen"* (Deuteronomy 4:9). This reflects specifically back to Baal Peor, where in their idolatry God destroyed the faithless. We should never forget or be made to think that the Lord is anything other than Holy and will destroy all and any who live contrary to His character or outside of Christ. But one could also remember the great and awesome things the Lord has done as well. When we are prone to slip or to lose heart or faith, remembering His goodness and His mercy as well as the many ways in which His hand has saved and rescued us can be a compelling power to fight to honor and obey Him. Third, Moses commands, *"teach them to your children and grandchildren"* (Deuteronomy 4:9). The late R.C. Sproul has said that we are always one generation away from losing the gospel. I think we see the truth of this sentiment in the falling away of many in the so-called Millennial generation. If we long to see the gospel's continued power for generations to come it begins with our present faithfulness to teach and train those who are young to be strong in the faith and devoted to the Lord.