

Taking God Seriously: 1. We must be faithful

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[0 : 00] Well, now we're going to turn to our Bibles and to our reading for this morning, which you'll find in Deuteronomy chapter 27, which is page 168, if you have one of our visitors' blue Bibles.

We're coming to the latter part of this book now. We've spent a long time in the very great central portion, chapter 12 to 26, laying out all the details of what it means to be loyal to God's covenant, to respond to his grace with obedient faith.

Remember we said right at the beginning that the shape of this book is actually governed by the shape of the covenant. So it begins in the first four chapters with the history of God and his people looking back.

It then gets to the very heart of the matter in chapters 5 to 11, where God lays out his great covenant. I will be your God and you will be my people and you'll love me with all your heart and soul and strength.

Then you have all the detail of what that looks like in daily life explained. And now chapter 27, we get to the point where we have the sanctions. This is what it means if you keep the covenant and faith and trust, but there are consequences if you don't.

[1 : 11] And then Moses' final urging, therefore choose life, keep God's covenant faithfully and loyally. That explains why really, if you look at the very end of chapter 11 and then move straight to the beginning of chapter 27, it looks as though you could read from one to the other because it's designed that way.

The central section in the middle is not to be left out, but it's there at the heart of the book and the story, as it were, starts at chapter 11 and goes on in chapter 27.

So I'm going to read from the beginning of chapter 27 down to the first two verses of chapter 28. Now Moses and the elders of Israel commanded the people saying, keep the whole commandment that I command you today.

And on the day you cross over the Jordan to the land the Lord your God is giving you, you shall set up large stones and plaster them with plaster and you shall write on them all the words of this law. When you cross over to enter the land that the Lord your God is giving you, a land flowing with milk and honey as he's promised you. When you've crossed over the Jordan, you shall set up these stones concerning which I command you today on Mount Ebal and you shall plaster them with plaster.

[2 : 25] There you shall build an altar to the Lord your God, an altar of stones. You shall wield no iron tool on them. You shall build an altar to the Lord your God of uncut stones. You shall offer burnt offerings on it and sacrifice peace offerings and shall eat there and shall rejoice before the Lord your God.

And you shall write on the stones all the words of this law very plainly. And Moses and the Levitical priest said to all Israel, keep silence and hear, O Israel, this day you have become the people of the Lord your God.

You shall therefore obey the voice of the Lord your God, keeping his commandments and his statutes which I command you today. That day Moses charged the people saying, when you've crossed over the Jordan, these shall stand on Mount Gerizim to bless the people.

Simeon, Levi, Judah, Isaac, Joseph and Benjamin. That's their six tribes. And these shall stand on Mount Ebal for the curse. The tribes of Reuben, Gad, Asher, Zebulun, Dan and Naphtali.

The Levites shall declare to all the men of Israel in a loud voice, Cursed be the man who makes a carved or metal image, an abomination to the Lord, a thing made by the hands of a craftsman and sets it up in secret.

[3 : 37] And all the people shall answer and say, Amen, let it be. Cursed be anyone who dishonors his father or mother. And all the people shall say, Amen, let it be. Cursed be anyone who moves his neighbor's landmark.

And all the people shall say, Amen. Cursed be anyone who misleads a blind man on the road. And all the people shall say, Amen. Cursed be anyone who perverts the justice due to the sojourner, the fatherless and the widow.

And all the people shall say, Amen. Cursed be anyone who lies with his father's wife because he's uncovered his father's nakedness. And all the people shall say, Amen. Cursed be anyone who lies with any kind of animal.

And all the people shall say, Amen. Cursed be anyone who lies with his sister, whether the daughter of his father or the daughter of his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen. Cursed be anyone who lies with his mother-in-law.

And all the people shall say, Amen. Cursed be anyone who strikes down his neighbor in secret. And all the people shall say, Amen. Cursed be anyone who takes a bribe to shed innocent blood.

[4 : 39] and all the people shall say Amen. Cursed be anyone who does not confirm the words of this law by doing them. And all the people shall say Amen.

Yes, absolutely. So let it be. And if you faithfully obey the voice of the Lord your God being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today the Lord your God will set you high above all the nations of earth.

These blessings shall come down upon you and overtake you if you obey the voice of the Lord your God. Amen.

May God bless to us his word. I'll do turn with me to Deuteronomy chapter 27 page 168 I think in the church Bibles.

Now the last verse of chapter 11 before the great excursus we've been looking at for many weeks now in 12 to 26 it ends in the same way that chapter 27 begins.

[5 : 43] When you cross over and possess the land that are dwelling in it be careful to do all the statutes and the rules that I'm setting before you today.

Verse 1 here keep the whole commandment that is the whole covenant of God. In other words God gives the reality of his great promise to his people and then says take me seriously.

God is the God of grace and redemption but there's no cheap grace in our Bibles. And that's the message light and clear both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Note the kindness and the severity of God says Paul to the Roman church in Romans 11. Severity to those who have fallen but kindness towards you provided you continue in his kindness.

Otherwise you also will be cut off. You can't treat the commandment of God lightly. God's gospel word is a word of command.

[6 : 51] It's not just for hearing it's not just for pondering it's not just for discussing it's for doing. Be doers of the word says James not hearers only deceiving yourselves.

It's not saying Lord, Lord that's of any value at all says Jesus remember in Matthew 7. It's doing the will of my Father in heaven. It's the one who hears the words of mine and does them who builds his life upon the rock not the sinking sand of self-deception.

In other words it's those who take God seriously in his command in his call to be faithful to be loyal to him to trust and obey him not to to trifle with him not to disobey his lordship.

And that is the message very clearly of these two chapters chapter 27 and 28 of Deuteronomy take God seriously. We saw last week at the very end of chapter 26 that it lays out the respective responsibilities of both God and his people.

So verse 17 there of chapter 26 lays out Israel's responsibilities to be faithful to walk in his ways to keep his commands to obey his voice. And chapter 27 then here is fleshing out that responsibility.

[8 : 09] It's saying you must be faithful. You must heed these commands of God not by being disobedient. That will lead to disaster. And that's pressed home isn't it?

Twelve times as the people say Amen. Yes, let it be so. Absolutely. That will lead to curses if we're disobedient. And then you see verses 18 and 19 of chapter 26 they lay out God's undertaking.

He's chosen them to be a treasured possession a holy people a people to obey his commands. And chapter 28 then you see lays out just as solemnly God's undertaking and his undertaking is that he will be faithful to that call in abundant blessing or God forbid or in devastating punishment if those that he has called to that marvelous privileged relationship should shun him and scorn him and turn

their faces away from him and rebel against him.

So these chapters you see they shout their message loud and clear today just as clearly as they shouted their message across that valley between Mount Ebal and Gerizim all those hundreds of years ago don't be deceived people of God take him seriously.

We must be faithful to God's covenant call because he most certainly will be faithful both in salvation but also yes in judgment.

[9 : 43] We must be faithful and obedient people if we take God and his gospel seriously. That's the message here of chapter 27 with its great attention to the commands of God to their preservation and their proclamation among God's people.

But of course it's the message also of the whole New Testament isn't it because as John the Apostle reminds us this is the love of God to keep his commandments. So I want to look at this chapter then I'm going to try and summarize it under five headings.

First of all the place of God's commandments, and this chapter shows us very clearly vividly that God's law finds its true home inside inside his kingdom of grace.

Not the phrase in verse 1 that we see many times throughout this book already the whole commandment that is the whole of God's covenant revelation with all its promises and with all its requirements for obedience.

It's what God revealed to Moses in Mount Sinai in chapter 5 it's what from chapter 6 onwards Moses begins to explain what it means to walk in the way that the Lord your God has commanded you.

[10 : 55] It's a language Moses used walking in God's way it's where Paul gets his language in his letters isn't it about walking in the truth of the gospel. See especially in Galatians very particularly in Ephesians walk in a manner worthy of your calling walk as children of light that's what keeping God's commandments is walking in the way that's true to your calling and back in chapter 6 Moses said God's commands therefore must be on your heart always so that you love him with all your heart with all your soul with all your strength obeying all his direction for your life do that he says in chapter 8 and you will live and flourish and inherit his promises keep the whole commandment he says so that you will be strong and possess do this he says repeatedly in chapter 11 loving the Lord your God walking in his ways holding fast to him and the Lord your God will drive out all your enemies before you so you possess your promised inheritance and as I said chapter 11 ends with a forceful commitment and it speaks about Mount

Ebal and Gerizim and this great ceremony that's going to happen and it urges do all that I command you today and so it is here in chapter 27 1 and 2 keep the commandment on the day that you cross over the Jordan in other words you see he's saying God's law finds its true place in the hearts of his people yes on their way to the promised land but above all within God's promised land of grace because his command is what marks out and defines the land of God and that's why we have this very symbolic planting if you like of God's law in the land as the very first thing that they're to do when they cross over verse 3 a very public display of God's word on these very stones because what they're saying is this will be the kingdom where God's righteousness reigns it's the sort of thing you know that the pilgrim fathers did when they first landed in their ships in the new world in North America they set up memorials and carved the words of God upon them

I suppose the problem is that since then quite a lot of folk in the United States have actually thought that United States is the promised land that they are the promised people of God and that's a bit not quite right and a bit unfortunate but you see the pilgrim fathers their instincts were right weren't they what they were saying was we're Christian people and we're coming to a place where we want God's rule to be acknowledged we want to set his banner above our lives and their instinct was right because the place where God's law find its true home is within the kingdom of his grace among his chosen people and that's the whole symbolism here they'd arrived in the land of promise all by the promise of God all by the grace of God three times here notice in verse one and again in verse three and again in verse four it's there when you've crossed over that you set up these stones and you placard these commands for your life where well

Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim as chapter 11 tells us are across the Jordan by Gilgal by the Oak of Moreh if that doesn't ring a bell you need to go back all the way to Genesis chapter 12 and you discover that that was the very place where Abraham first entered the promised land after he obediently left his old life and followed God's promise and it was there at that place that God first appeared to him and gave him that marvelous promise that to your offspring I will give this land a

promise of sheer grace and so you see these stones were planted with God's law written on them in the very soil of the promised land of grace a land now possessed all by God's grace so as Christopher Wright puts it so well even even in its physical symbolism the law is grounded on God's grace and that's so so important to grasp many Christians are very confused about this many Christians think well as soon as we come under God's grace surely we can throw off his law throw off his commands because doesn't Paul say in Romans chapter 6 we're no longer under law but under grace no no no no no that is to totally totally misunderstand what the apostle is saying there of course he's saying when we come to new birth and faith in Christ we're no longer under the law's condemnation but Paul's whole point there is that we are redeemed for God precisely so that we will now live under

God's command as his people listen to what Paul actually says in Romans chapter 6 you're slaves to the one whom you obey either of sin which leads to death or of obedience which leads to righteousness but thanks be to God that you who are one of slaves of sin have become obedient notice the word obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed covenant gospel of God and having been set free from sin you have become slaves of righteousness slaves of God himself he says so now you present your members as slaves of righteousness that's what leads to sanctification that's what leads to your holiness your destiny you see you are redeemed to be under God's proper command now not under sin's command anymore and that's just what Jesus says in John chapter 12 those who do not receive his words his commands he says the word I have spoken will be their judge on the last day for the father has given me a commandment what to say and what to speak and his commandment is eternal life says [17:20] Jesus God's covenant word God's gospel doesn't change it's the eternal gospel that's what the angel calls it in Revelation chapter 14 an eternal gospel to proclaim to all the earth and it's this fear God and give him glory that is bow to the command of your Lord and God through Jesus Christ the saints in that chapter are called those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus well of course because the whole promise of the new covenant was that God would at last write his law permanently upon the hearts of his people forever and ever and ultimately that's what we'll see isn't it when God's people finally cross over at last into the new heavens and the new earth is eternal his everlasting kingdom the home of righteousness but wherever God's people are his command must be in evidence over their lives the foundation for their whole way of life in

Israel in ancient days in the promised land of Canaan but how much more says the New Testament in these last days now that the kingdom of Christ has been inaugurated here on earth among his people in the church and that's why the apostle Paul you see who was as we know the great defender of the free grace of God in salvation even even in his most vehement letter defending that to the Galatians he never ever suggests that obedience to God is now no longer something that matters quite the reverse that's his whole charge isn't it you're not obeying you're not conducting yourself in step with the truth of the gospel what's hindered you he says who's hindered you from obeying the truth and you must walk in the truth walk in the spirit of truth not abandoning but fulfilling the law of Christ whoever walks by this rule says Paul peace and mercy be upon him so don't be confused God's law finds its true home inside the kingdom of his grace and those who have inherited the promises of his grace will be of course those who bow gladly willingly to his gracious command over their lives that's the teaching clearly of the whole new testament and that's what these verses are picturing for us so very vividly these stones plastered and written on in the land the true place of God's commands and hence you see secondly they demonstrate very vividly also for us the permanence of God's commands commands are permanent they don't change and so they must be preserved and they're preserved so that they can be proclaimed perennially year after year to

God's people that's surely the point here isn't it this permanent written record of God's command on large stones verse 2 plastered written on very clearly apparently it was in an Egyptian technology to do this sort of thing and God took that pagan technology and used it for his purpose just as he took the printing press 500 years ago and used that for the dissemination of his gospel word right across Europe but notice the insistent command it's repeated there in verse 3 and in verse 4 and again in verse 8 write all these words and write them verse 8 very plainly you see a permanent clear record of God's written word in order that it might be proclaimed always as long as it's called today as the Hebrews writer says in chapter 3 that's why surely it's noted in verse 1 that it's not just Moses here it's Moses and the elders and in verse 9 it's Moses and the priests in order this is not just a

one-off this is to go on and on because it's always today for the people of God once you become his people his words are yours to obey every day of your life do you see God's word written is for proclaiming it's a permanent word to be perennially proclaimed and that's why God gives leaders here it's the elders and the priests but he gives leaders a sacred duty to ensure that that is always done and he lays upon all his people the same sacred duty always to respond to the proclaimed words of God hence the repeated amens 12 times yes let it be so everybody has to say it and that's certainly no less true for us today than it was in ancient Israel the apostles are absolutely clear aren't they about the permanent the perennial need for

God's word written to be heard these words are written for us says Paul for our instruction Romans 15 so that through the encouragement of these words of scripture we might endure in hope and so that he says in first Corinthians 10 so that we will stand and not fall being overcome by just the same temptations that are common to us as they have been to God's people all through the ages and they're written to be proclaimed he says to Timothy in second Timothy 3 so that we will also be wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus and so that we'll be equipped for every good work these words are permanently preserved in scripture for us and proclaimed repeatedly and received by us today and they're vital for our salvation says Paul they're vital for our service in the kingdom of Jesus Christ God's words the true words of the true God of heaven they're not they're not a religious text for a special priestly class and only for them no no no they're written clearly permanently visibly to be heard to be proclaimed by all the people always and that brings us to the next thing here which is surely the great privilege of God's commandment our God's requirement of man is not something that's hidden it's not some mystery mystery religion it's something that is clearly available to all people it's written large on large stones very plainly as one scholar says it's available to all it's intelligible to all it's observable by all and it was entrusted to the priests and to the leaders not to hide it but to herald it to make sure that it's heard so so there can be no appeal to ignorance no one can say oh we don't know what God wants we don't know what God demands you see that is the very opposite of pagan religions of man-made religions with all their rituals with all their their mysteries all their secrets people don't know how to satisfy the gods you can never be sure if you've done what the gods really want you're never sure if you've offered the right thing given enough been in the right places that's what I'll see this week in India it's a land of endless shrines endless offerings endless religious bribes endless payments to get merit to get good karma but you never know if you've done the right thing if you've done enough you can never be sure you live in fear not so with the God of the Bible the immense privilege of biblical faith is that we can know and we do know all that God has said and all that God requires history this public truth his law has no uncertainty I came across a remarkable statement of the importance of this in in an autobiography of

Matthew Paris some of you will probably read him in the Times newspaper as a columnist he was a formerly an MP he's an atheist and he's actually very hostile to Christianity increasingly so it seems but he has written at times with some with some grudging acknowledgement of the good that Christians have done he spent much of his early life in Africa and he saw firsthand many missionaries and he had to recognize all the good that they did but he's hostile to evangelical Christians he's chosen to be to live a homosexual lifestyle so you can understand that he's inevitably hostile to Orthodox Christian faith and he's very critical of of people he would call fundamentalists who who take the Bible too seriously to literally say it's all too clear but listen to what I find in his book when he's writing about the law the law of the land and what we need in a country to have peace to have prosperity to have a good law listen to what he says Matthew Paris the atheist in our relationships and dealings with other people we set much store by what we call consistency and what we call trust you need to know where you are with somebody and that he'll not change with the wind so far as those he must live and work with are concerned consistency in an individual's nature is as much of a virtue as virtue itself it's the same with the law or it should be first and last we need to know where we stand stick to the letter of the law and you cleave at least to what anyone can look up and read for himself in black and white resolve to alter or reinterpret statute and precedent as little and as infrequently as possible and you minimize the occasions on which people will be confused about their rights and duties try to guess the spirit of the law and your guess might conflict without of others I prefer certainty the imperative that a citizen should know his position under the law and be able with confidence to predict what legal consequences will flow from whatever course of action he may contemplate deprive a citizen of certainty and you've taken away as important a right as any we may have to natural justice you've infringed his rights to

understand how and where the law will protect him and to know how others arrangements will bear upon him and his upon theirs uncertainty is the greatest inequity of all isn't that striking because that is exactly the privilege that the revelation of

[27 : 48] Christian scripture gives to us clear public certainty that anyone can look up and read for himself in black and white which is what Matthew Paris wants of the law of the land but not apparently of the law of eternity it tells us plainly how to find salvation from God's anger and how to receive God's blessing forever in buying to his absolute lordship through faith in Jesus Christ and trusting him with our hearts as his as a savior and confessing him in our lives bowing to his lordship buying to his sole command and rule listening and obeying his word and this eternal truth is available in clear black and white with absolutely no uncertainty at all isn't that an extraordinary privilege from almighty God to ordinary people like us in this world that's the great truth that's pictured so vividly in these stones but what's the heart of that privilege public truth of God for those who will be his people well this is the fourth thing and it's the priority of God's commandment look at the very first thing that he wants from his people as they enter the land it's to obey his voice it's to show the obedience of true faith it's to take his word seriously verse 1 keep the whole commandment that I give you today look down to verses 9 and 10 repeats doesn't it the very foundation of the covenant keep silence in here be quiet listen listen good this day you have become the people of the Lord your God so what does that mean it means you obey him every day from now on therefore you shall obey the voice of the

Lord your God keeping his commandments his statutes that I command you today you see how verses 1 and verses 9 and 10 bracket this whole section they say you must obey and in between it's explaining isn't it what that means that from the get-go a people who truly serve God who worship God they must have his words written and proclaimed at the very heart of everything that they do that's the worship that God wants a heart response to his words of real obedient faith that's what you want isn't it from somebody that you love somebody that you cherish you you want them to respond to your words you don't want them to ignore your words turn their back and not answer your words you want them to respond you want them to respond with with warmth with attraction with love and that's what this great drama at Ebal and Gerism was meant to display it's an it's an act of real seriousness real solemnity of the people responding to God their Savior with real heart commitment and in a real and honest confession before God you can imagine can't you the impact of this two mountains six tribes on each and hearing the words shouted from the middle of the valley by the Levites about all of these curses and all the people shouting together amen let it be yes absolutely as you say real personal heart commitment to obey God's word and notice real honest confession you see what's rehearsed here in verses 15 to 26 isn't the curses themselves but it's the things it's the behavior it's the rebellion that brings

God's judgment and every person is saying yes let me be cursed if I should so reject the living God why are they doing that why does everybody have to say amen well notice notice the particular focus on the secrecy of all of these sins it's explicit in verse 15 secret idolatry and in verse 24 murdering your neighbor in secret but it's also there implicitly in almost every other one of these things isn't it by nature they're done covertly and unseen moving a landmark verse 17 mistreating the blind who can't see you verse 18 sexual sins versus 20 and so corrupting justice taking bribes all things that people don't see there are all these things that we've seen through these great chapters aren't they taking up God's great concerns about God and true worship about family about the poor and the vulnerable about the place of sexual purity about truth and about life itself and what this is saying you see is that well look you might get away with some of these things you might be clever you might be covert and hide away and do some of these things and avoid human justice yes but not

God's justice God sees and you can't fool God and you are saying that you will acknowledge that you bring that curse upon yourself 12 times over if you live in defiance of him no plethora of sacrifices or of offerings or anything else will cleanse the heart that refuses to obey God's rule because the overriding priority of God's commandment is the obedience of his people's heart in public and in private in the light and in the secret darkness that's the worship that God wants from his people and it's the only true worship King Saul found that remember in the story in first Samuel 15 he thought he could disobey God's words and that he would then offer sacrifices and offerings that would make it all okay no says Samuel the man of God behold to obey is better than sacrifice to listen is better than the fat of rams rebellion is as the sin of divination of occultism and

presumption is iniquity and idolatry because you have rejected the words of the Lord he has rejected you and that's the same great truth that all these people are standing and having to say amen to 12 times over lest they should ever forget it's not great sacrifices and burnt offerings it's not loud songs sung 20 times over with glazed eyes and waving arms that God wants it's what David says in Psalm 51 a broken spirit a broken and a contrite obedient heart that obeys God's voice that's the worship that God desires you see what this this great drama is saying to God's people and to God's people ever since it's saying take God seriously and take your own sin seriously if you read later on in Joshua chapter 8 you'll read about how this event took place just exactly as Moses commanded and you'll read a detail that's very very significant we're told all Israel was there including all the little ones the children including the sojourners the aliens the non-israelites the visitors you could say it's the first recorded family service and guest service in the Bible but there weren't any games there weren't any jokes there wasn't any clowning around or choruses with actions there was no dumbing down of the message was there just the people solemnly declaring and taking the Lord their God very very seriously solemnly swearing allegiance to him acknowledging publicly the kindness of God and the severity of God friends we've had a baptism this morning and let me just say this to all of you who are parents here and to all of us there is no more important thing that parents or the church can show our little ones than their parents and all the grown-ups in the church taking God seriously not flippantly and there's no more important thing I think we can show visitors outsiders inquires about the Christian faith than a people who take the God of heaven seriously and worship him in reverence at all that's what the apostle tells us we must do isn't it in Hebrews chapter 12 and he says if they didn't escape then under Moses when God warned them from earth how much less will we escape when he warns us from heaven itself for our God says the apostle is is a consuming fire so don't harden your hearts he says be careful unless any of you should be hardened by the deceitfulness of sins obey the voice of the Lord your God that's the priority of his commandment always then and now take him seriously but finally we must notice the true purpose of God's commandment look at verses 1 and 2 of chapter 28 God's goal is not to curse but to bless if you do all these commands all these blessings will come upon you he says they'll overtake you they'll overwhelm you yes it's true forever after those two hills Ebal and Gerizim rising above Shechem the gateway to the promised land they stood for Israel as a reminder that every day of their lives they faced a choice the way of trust and obedience to God that is the way of joy and blessing or the way of distrust and disobedience and the road to certain ruin but notice God's command is not obey or disobey it's your choice see if I care is it look at verse 10 you shall obey you shall obey and be blessed you'll see it again when we come to chapter 30 Moses says see I've set before you this day life and death blessing and curse good and evil now choose life choose life because God's purpose for us is good it's blessing always come to me says Jesus come to me and I will give you rest I'll give you the blessings of God's kingdom the peace and the joy I am the way I am the

[38 : 50] I am the way to life God did not send his son into the world says the Lord Jesus to condemn the world but in order that the world might be saved through him whoever believes in him says Jesus is not condemned that's God's purpose God's purpose is life and salvation and blessing in abundance for his people but Jesus says whoever does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only son of God he has said amen and put himself under the curse you see God's purpose God's command is eternal life it's we it's we it's we who can insist upon pronouncing that curse upon ourselves but that is not God's desire for us look at verses 5 to 7 here in chapter 27 right in the midst of all this commands of God being preserved being proclaimed at the center do you see what it is it's a picture of these stones being built into an altar that's a mini temple where God can be met where God can be encountered in the midst of sheer joy do you see that among his people you shall rejoice before the Lord your God together that's the purpose of God's commandment that's the purpose and goal of his whole great covenant of peace to bring people into his presence with joy with great rejoicing and this is a picture it's just a microcosm of the whole purpose of the land of Israel do you remember back in chapter 12 we saw it again and again in the place the Lord your God will choose you will rejoice in the presence of the Lord it's a little picture it's a microcosm of the whole of God's great covenant purpose in salvation as Jesus put it to bring the lost back into the father's house do you remember the story in Luke 15 of the lost son to bring them into the father's house and what is the father's house it's the place of celebration and of joy and of gladness and of wonder that's the purpose of God's commandment that we should obey his voice so that he can lead us to that place of joy and feasting and wholeness

and fulfillment and life life in its abundance life in his presence life without end that is everlasting that's God's purpose he calls us to obey so that as Peter says having purified our souls by obedience to the truth being born again of the imperishable word of God the living and abiding word the same word written on those great stones now preserved and proclaimed to us in Jesus Christ so that Peter says we will be built like that altar into living stones into a spiritual house into a temple an everlasting altar where God will live with his people forever through Jesus Christ the purpose of God's commandment is not to burden our lives it's not to bury us in the curse of death they're to bless us with the abundance of life that's why the apostle

John can say his commandments are not burdensome though this world is passing away he says whoever does the will of God will abide forever it's blessing that's why the psalmist says I long for your salvation Lord and your law is my delight I will never forget your precepts for by them you give me life I'm yours the purpose of God's command is to make us his it's to give us his life forever and ever but you see the Israelites needed those two hills to remind them it's not automatic there are two ways and there are only two ways to live your life there is the way of abundant blessing through obedience to God's command or there is the way God forbid there is the way of unthinkable disaster the Lord Jesus said just the same didn't he two gates leading to two places two trees one fruiting to life the other cast into the fire two houses only the one built on the rock of responding to his word with obedient faith only that one will stand in the judgment not the other it will collapse and we need that word of permanent gospel truth to remind us of God's great priority for every human life which is to bow to his lordship to bow to his rule which is now made known to the whole world in Jesus Christ but we have it don't we written large with great clarity what a privilege it is to have and to know the gospel of Christ and to know its great purpose which is to lead us to that great life and surely then we of all people will be people who welcome its true place that is in our lives and in our hearts to be a lamp to our feet to be a light to our path until as Peter says the day dawns and the morning star of Christ's coming arises in our hearts that's when we'll see at last the fulfillment of all that it promises in the home of righteousness for you and I can belong and will belong if only we'll choose life that's his purpose friends don't don't make your purpose don't make your purpose at odds with the purpose of almighty God for your eternal future don't do it choose life let's pray hear oh Israel this day you have become the people of the Lord your God you shall therefore obey the voice of the Lord your God as Paul says likewise since we live by the spirit of God let us also walk keep in step with the spirit of God and so fulfill the law of Christ and as for all who walk by this rule peace and mercy be upon them

Israel of God and so almighty and everlasting God give unto us the increase of faith and hope and love and that we may obtain that which thou dost promise make us to love that which thou dost command through Jesus Christ our Lord is got and how well and and how and a those and