

"Live Like a King! [God's King]"

Deuteronomy 17:14-20

At the end of this message I'm going to challenge you to engage in a short term discipline of writing out some Scripture. I'll give the details then. And I'm asking you to try this an application from our passage in Deuteronomy 17. Yes, it was a command for Israel's kings, that's true. But if as Paul said in 2 Tim. 3:15-17 that

All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,¹⁷ so that the servant of Godⁱ may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.

...then there are numerous principles we can derive from this passage and apply to our lives. Deuteronomy means 'second law'. Not that it's a different law than what Moses first received back in Exodus and Leviticus but the second time he's given it. The reason for the second giving of the Law is Moses is about to die and the Israelites are camped across from the Jordan River ready to go into the Promised Land under Joshua. So, this is 40 years later. It's a new generation of Israelites who need to be reminded again of what God instructed them to do when they get in the land. Because much of the Law refers to how they were to live once they had their own homes in their own land with a stationary place of worship.

In this section of Deuteronomy Moses has been explaining how justice should be handled. He writes about the appointing of judges at the end of Ch. 16. Here in Ch. 17 he talks more about judges and priests work together in making just decisions. Now he talks about a future day when Israel might have a king. And in Ch. 18 he talks about prophets, even referring to the ultimate prophet, the future Messiah, in 18:17-18. But our focus is the king this morning. Why was a king of Israel to be so different than kings 'like the nations'? And what did God require from them that He requires from us too?

God (through Moses) does not rebuke future Israel's desire to have a king nor does He commend them. He just acknowledges their inevitable desire to have someone rule over them. They are going to the land of Canaan that god has promised them but they also know it will involve war at some point. Why would people want a king or a leader over them? Kings were often military leaders who hopefully could protect you from attacks, defeat your enemies, increase your territory and make life better for you. That's how the world defines a successful king. But is that how God defines success?

¹⁴ *When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, "Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us,"¹⁵ be sure to appoint over you the king the LORD your God chooses. He must be from among your own brothers. Do not place a foreigner over you, one who is not a brother Israelite.*

People would define a successful king as one who would protect them and give them what they want. The temptation for kings and people in authority is to use their influence to gain what they want (status, wealth and indulgence. But God defines success differently, doesn't He?

'Success' Only Comes when We Trust God
(Deut. 17:14-17)

Since we know what will happen to Israel, we know they tell Samuel after losing a battle against the Philistines that they want a king like the nations (warrior) and God in His grace allows them to make their choice; Saul. Later on after Saul demonstrates his immaturity and spiritual weakness, God makes His choice, David, a man after His heart. So here God already says when that day comes make sure the king is the one God chooses. Which means the people have to trust God and be walking with God. They have to think above not think of the way the world works. The reason why they needed to trust God in this was because

God's chosen represents God Himself (vv.14-15)

God's King were to follow God's ways. To trust God's unconventional ways of defeating enemies. To trust God when they didn't know what to do, when everything looked hopeless. To show and speak when they defeated God's enemies that they do so in the name of the Lord Almighty. And here's a connecting point that we can make. We are chosen by God to be His representative on earth.

Eph. 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. ⁴ For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love ⁵ he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— ⁶ to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Rom. 1:1 Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God— ² the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures ³ regarding his Son, ... ⁵ Through him and for his name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience that comes from faith. ⁶ And you also are among those who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

We are “a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.” (1 Pet. 2:9). And in 2 Cor. 5:20 Paul tells us who we represent

2 Cor. 5:20 We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. ²¹ God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Jesus, as God's true King, has given us the responsibility to continue His work. We represent Him and God. God makes His appeal to the lost through us as we share His message of grace. Whether we're God's king or God's peasant we all serve Him and need to trust Him to help us do that in His power and protect us and meet our needs when things don't go well, because we're seeking to trust Him.

Success for the child of God is defined by our trust in God, not in outward appearances or accomplishments which are the ways of the world. Note what else God warns the future kings of Israel about:

¹⁶ The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the LORD has told you, “You are not to go back that way again.” ¹⁷ He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.

When people get in positions of power the temptations to use it for selfish reasons is always there. So God warns the people about this too and reminds them

God does not define success by power, relationships or wealth (v.17b)

God's king was not to rely on the nation's methods of warfare. Horses are needed to run chariots, a favourite weapon in war. God said through David "Some trust in chariots and some trust in horses but we trust in the name of the Lord our God (Ps. 20:7). And guess where you can buy horses? Egypt. The Egyptians excelled at raising horses and using them for warfare (like chasing after the Israelites when the exodus happened. By the way, how did that end again? The guys with the horses and chariots lost to God's people, who had to stand and see what the Lord would do.

Horses meant warfare, which lead to trusting in your army and weaponry to defeat your enemies. God says, I have a better way. Trust Me to fight your battles. It won't be conventional. It may seem crazy from a human perspective but trust Me and you'll see My hand.

The prohibition against taking many wives was not just to encourage the king to be more moral but not to depend on what these relationships were for. The reason Solomon and other kings would have multiple wives was because they were forming alliances with other nations. Here's my daughter, says one king to another, so we will be united in battle or at the very least not fight each other. The more alliances you have, the greater security you could procure for yourself and nation. But God says, I can protect you. Mine is the only alliance you need. And there's a price to pay when you marry people who don't believe in God. They will sway your heart. Because you don't want to hurt them.

People today try to find security in multiple alliances/relationships. Some sexually, but many people think the more friends they have the less likely they are to be hurt. More friends means more 'protectors'. But we simply can't maintain a myriad of relationships. The more we stretch ourselves out the less we have to offer to people. And our closest be with those who know the Lord.

And being the king means you need taxes to run the kingdom but the temptation is there to amass more for yourself than what you need. Which always hurts the people you need to get money from.

So a king of God or a child of God finds success by thinking above, trusting in all we have in God through Jesus. What did God say the king needed to do to keep his mind focused on what God wanted rather than the way the world works?

Trusting God Requires Personal Interaction with His Word (Deut. 17:18-20)

Like Namaan the leper who when told by Elisha to go wash in the dirty Jordan River to be healed of leprosy, thought there should have been something more spectacular that he was to do, so we might be similarly surprised that God's solution to battle the temptations of position and power is to write out your own copy of God's Word! Writing out God's Word would take time. 'I'm a king! I've got so many responsibilities. So many people are knocking at my door wanting something. I have all these decisions I need to make.

Busyness is no excuse (v.18a)

... to being in the Word of God regularly. God knows what the king has to do. He knows what you and I have to do. But He still says, you need to meet Me in My Word. Why wrote it out? Well, the priests kept the original copy and so the king had to slowly write down some verse everyday and in doing so listen to what God is saying.

When we hear something and see it and repeat it by writing it down, it sticks with us longer. To write out the Word of God takes time. You think more about what you're reading. The more we interact with God in His Word the more we pay attention to it. If you've never done this I strongly encourage you to try it. None of us are so busy we don't have time to listen to God. Actually the busier we are, the more responsible we are

We need God's wisdom for our responsibilities (v.18b)

¹⁸ When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the priests, who are Levites.

He's responsible for an entire kingdom. He has the priests and Levites who know God's Word to guide him. He'll have many decisions to make. Other nations will want his attention. To make alliances. Other nations will offer trade and commerce. Is it a good deal? What will he have to give in return? Who will have to work to get what they need (or is it just something cool for the palace)? How does he make financial decisions? How does he not overburden the people he needs and trusts? Whose advice is sound and biblical? What relationships should I pursue or should I avoid? What problems do we have that we need wisdom to resolve? That we need God's wisdom? Who can help me as I learn and grow in His Word? You see, its not just a king who has to make decisions like this; we do every week. Many on a smaller scale but no less important. He who is faithful in a little is faithful in much.

Think of some decisions you made in the past month. Did you pray about it? Did you decide based on common sense (not always bad) or did you make them based on how God has helped you through his Word to make God honouring decisions? No one can do this for us.

God wants to interact with us personally (vv.19-20)

¹⁹ It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees ²⁰ and not consider himself better than his brothers and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel.

It is to be with him every day. He is to read it every day obviously after he has finished writing out a copy for himself. Make it personal. This is God speaking to you. Seek His face. Get His wisdom **so that** ... And here are two purposes for why he/we should write it out and be in it daily:

So we will carefully obey God (v.19b)

he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees

I can't 'carefully' follow God's word if I'm not carefully reading it and internalizing it somehow. Whether that's through memorization, meditation, writing it down, journalling what He's telling me, studying it with other people to gain the Spirit's collective insights – whatever and however you spend time in God's Word, figure out a way to make it stick. Pray verses that are applicable for your work, your home, your relationships, etc. I'm a big fan of reading through the Bible in a year but I also know the need to read it slowly and carefully too. Right now I'm writing out Revelation. It's almost the need of January and already in Ch. 7. And I'm writing out those one or two prominent memorable verses as well. We have Col. 3 on the back of the prayer bookmark to help us repeatedly pray

them for one another again and again. The more ways I figure out how I can internalize it the better equipped I'll be to carefully obey it. James said don't just hear the Word and so deceive yourself that that is all you need to do; but do it. And when we obey it,

Obedience builds character (v.20)

Purpose No 2:

and not consider himself better than his brothers and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel.

God's Word gives us a healthy picture of ourselves and everyone around us. We were in Ps. 139 last Sunday and Wednesday night. It's not enough to read 'I am fearfully and wonderfully made' and say thank you Lord! But its also true for your spouse, family, friends, boss, co-workers, the person at the cash register, even that guy that just honked his horn at you because you were 1 second slow in responding to the green light. Many of them don't know they are fearfully and wonderfully made. Only because of the grace of God so you know that. And so the Word of God changes how we look at everyone.

2 Cor. 5:14 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. ¹⁵ And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again. ¹⁶ So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view

See what Paul is saying. Before I was saved I used to look at the world through my own selfish lens. Not that I'm saved and realized Jesus died for everyone (not just me) I need to look at people differently. From now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view.

Shouldn't we walk away with that reminder every time we spend time with God in His Word. 'Thank you Lord for reminding me in Your Word how I'm supposed to live and how I'm supposed to view the people around me You have made. Help me to love them, serve them, help them grow in you or help them know you through Jesus.'

That's what God wanted from His chosen King (preferably someone after His own heart) and He wants the same from us; called, chosen royal priests who need to stay close to God through his Word so we can have a healthy view of everyone obeying his Word carefully so we can enjoy this eternal life God has given us.