

Deut. 17:1 ¶ Thou shalt not sacrifice unto the LORD thy God *any* bullock, or sheep, wherein is blemish, or any evilfavouredness: for that *is* an abomination unto the LORD thy God.

This chapter begins with the command that only unblemished animals are acceptable for making sacrifices to YHWH. A *blemish* is a reference to deformity, injury or any visible evidence that the animal is not perfect. *Evilfavouredness* is a reference to disease, which might not be visible. The principle: We are to give God nothing less than our best. These sacrifices were pointing to the coming sacrifice of Jesus, the perfect and unblemished Son of God, on the cross; anything less than perfect would not rightly picture that truth.

Deut. 17:2 If there be found among you, within any of thy gates which the LORD thy God giveth thee, man or woman, that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the LORD thy God, in transgressing his covenant,

Deut. 17:3 And hath gone and served other gods, and worshipped them, either the sun, or moon, or any of the host of heaven, which I have not commanded;

Deut. 17:4 And it be told thee, and thou hast heard *of it*, and enquired diligently, and, behold, *it be true, and the thing certain, that* such abomination is wrought in Israel:

Deut. 17:5 Then shalt thou bring forth that man or that woman, which have committed that wicked thing, unto thy gates, *even that man or that woman, and shalt stone them with stones, till they die.*

These verses declare that the sin of idolatry is worthy of punishment by death. It is important to note that judgment was to be certain (established as fact, sure, without doubt). The method of execution—stoning.

God is very clear in the scripture that He is a jealous God and that He will not condone His people giving glory or worship to anyone or anything else.

Ex. 34:14 For thou shalt worship no other god: for the LORD, whose name *is Jealous, is a jealous God:*

Is. 42:8 *I am* the LORD: that *is* my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.

Jer. 25:6 And go not after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and provoke me not to anger with the works of your hands; and I will do you no hurt.

I was about to move on when I noticed the phrase “that hath wrought wickedness in the sight of the LORD thy God.” You would think that with such a severe penalty, anyone who might choose to worship idols would try to hide their actions. The truth is, however, that you can’t hide from God. Everything you do is “in His sight.” The psalmist expressed this truth beautifully.

Psa. 139:7-12 Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou *art* there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou *art there*. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not

from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light *are* both alike *to thee*.

Deut. 17:6 At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; *but* at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death.

Deut. 17:7 The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So thou shalt put the evil away from among you.

It is important to note that there must be at least two witnesses who verify the accusation—two people who have personal knowledge through observation. These witnesses will be required to throw the first stones in implementation of the death sentence. I am sure this was meant to deter collusion in false accusation. Although not a guarantee of justice in judgment considering what men have been shown capable of doing to each other throughout history, it's probably as good a safeguard as there can be. We know that God will ensure justice is done.

I couldn't help but think of the example in the life of Jesus when the Pharisees brought before Him a woman caught in the act of adultery, and the Lord used this very principle in response to their accusation (John 8). Though their accusation was probably true, the Lord worded His answer so as to emphasize their own sin even in making accusation against the woman.

John 8:7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

If she had been caught, then the man was caught also. Where was he? He was just as guilty as she, and they had let him go. If they were really concerned about judging sin, they would have brought both. Their evil motives were exposed.

The important truth that Moses is declaring is that the people of God should not tolerate evil in the community. Israel was being addressed as a nation, but this principle is just as applicable to the church today.

Deut. 17:8 ¶ If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, *being* matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the LORD thy God shall choose;

Deut. 17:9 And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and enquire; and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment:

Deut. 17:10 And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which the LORD shall choose shall shew thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee:

Deut. 17:11 According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, *to* the right hand, nor *to* the left.

Deut. 17:12 And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the LORD thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel.

Deut. 17:13 And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously.

In reading the different translations, it becomes clear that verse 8 is referencing cases that are difficult to judge because of controversy over the facts. Those cases are to be brought to the priests, identified as belonging to the tribe of Levi. It would seem that there was a particular priest, probably in each city of the Levites, who was appointed to serve as judge. Once the priests and judge had pronounced judgment, they were to accept it as final. Anyone who tried to take the law into his own hands in disregard of the judgment of God's established authority (the priests and judge) was to be sentenced to death.

God is very clear throughout scripture that His people are to obey the authorities that He has established. The only justified exception is when we are directed to disobey God in the process.

Rom. 13:1 Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

Acts 5:29 Then Peter and the *other* apostles answered and said, We ought to obey God rather than men.

Deut. 17:14 ¶ When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, I will set a king over me, like as all the nations that *are* about me;

Deut. 17:15 Thou shalt in any wise set *him* king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: *one* from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which *is* not thy brother.

Again, I think it is important to note that Moses is giving instruction regarding "when" not "if" they take possessions of the land YHWH is giving them. Moses is prophesying that the time will come when the people of Israel will ask for a king. Their main reason—They want to be like all the other nations.

This desire to be like everyone else, to fit in with the crowd, to not stand out as different has given the enemy an easy platform from which to tempt the people of God throughout history. Peer pressure is a powerful influence in the lives of individuals, especially during the formative years. Peer pressure can work for the good, but far more often results in the bad. I can't help but think of the following verses.

Matt. 7:13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide *is* the gate, and broad *is* the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

Matt. 7:14 Because strait *is* the gate, and narrow *is* the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

Moses goes on to declare that YHWH will grant their wish, but He will choose the king. His choice will be one from among the children of Israel. Again, this should serve as a safeguard against sin. A child of Israel should be grounded in

the truth of God's law and be obedient to the God of Israel. Sadly, this does not prove to be the case.

Again, this is a principle that is applicable to the church today. We don't have a king, but we do have pastors that lead congregations. You would think that pastors identifying themselves as "Christian" would be focused on knowing the word of God and leading and teaching their flocks according to that truth. Sadly, just as shown by the kings of Israel, many teach according to their own wisdom and lead according to their own purposes.

Deut. 17:16 But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, to the end that he should multiply horses: forasmuch as the LORD hath said unto you, Ye shall henceforth return no more that way.

Even though this instruction will not be needed for hundreds of years, Moses goes on to instruct the people regarding appropriate behavior of a king. Evidently, the nation of Egypt was known for its horses. The kings of Israel are not to seek to equip their army with horses. YHWH has declared that they are not to turn to Egypt for help or imitate their ways. He goes on to declare in chapter 20 that He is sufficient for their protection against their enemies no matter how many their might be or how well they may seem equipped.

Deut. 20:1 ¶ When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, *and* a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God *is* with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

Again, sadly, history shows that they ignored this instruction as well.

Deut. 17:17 Neither shall he multiply wives to himself, that his heart turn not away: neither shall he greatly multiply to himself silver and gold.

Another important instruction for the king—He is not to have multiple wives. This instruction seems to have been ignored by every king of Israel. It's interesting to me that the reason given for the instruction was not because it went against God's plan for the home, but because it would turn his heart away [from God seems to be implied, which would also imply toward something else—idols].

Neither is the king supposed to direct his attention toward accumulating material wealth—silver and gold. The heart of the king should be to trust God to supply according to His will.

I couldn't help but think of King Solomon as I read through this section. Solomon was supposed to be the wisest man that ever lived, yet He disobeyed God in each of these areas.

1Kings 10:21 And all king Solomon's drinking vessels *were of* gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon *were of* pure gold; none *were of* silver: it was nothing accounted of in the days of Solomon.

1Kings 10:23 So king Solomon exceeded all the kings of the earth for riches and for wisdom.

1Kings 10:28 And Solomon had horses brought out of Egypt....

1Kings 4:26 And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen.

1Kings 11:2-3 Of the nations *concerning* which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: *for* surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines...

And where did it lead him?

1Kings 11:3b-4 ...and his wives turned away his heart. For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, *that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was* the heart of David his father.

And how did Solomon describe his actions?

Eccl. 2:7-11 I got *me* servants and maidens, and had servants born in my house; also I had great possessions of great and small cattle above all that were in Jerusalem before me: I gathered me also silver and gold, and the peculiar treasure of kings and of the provinces: I gat me men singers and women singers, and the delights of the sons of men, *as* musical instruments, and that of all sorts. So I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me. And whatsoever mine eyes desired I kept not from them, I withheld not my heart from any joy; for my heart rejoiced in all my labour: and this was my portion of all my labour. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had wrought, and on the labour that I had laboured to do: and, **behold, all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun.**

Deut. 17:18 And it shall be, when he sitteth upon the throne of his kingdom, that he shall write him a copy of this law in a book out of *that which is before the priests the Levites:*

Deut. 17:19 And it shall be with him, and he shall read therein all the days of his life: that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, to keep all the words of this law and these statutes, to do them:

Deut. 17:20 That his heart be not lifted up above his brethren, and that he turn not aside from the commandment, *to the right hand, or to the left: to the end that he may prolong his days in his kingdom, he, and his children, in the midst of Israel.*

Each king was to take the time to write his own copy of God's law copying directly from the one used by the priests. He is then to keep that copy with him and read from it "all the days of his life." Why? To produce in him a fear/reverence for YHWH and obedience to His word. It will also ensure that he not fall into the sin of pride and thinking that he is better than other people and will ensure God's blessing in prolonging his life and reign and the continuing reign of his children.

I have learned much from having to pay attention to each word in scripture as I have undertaken to work on each of these journals. Scripture is clear that the word of God is powerful when applied to one's life.

Heb. 4:12 For the word of God *is* quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and *is* a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Is. 55:11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper *in the thing* whereto I sent it.

1Th. 2:13 ¶ For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received *it* not *as* the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe.