

THRU THE BIBLE EXPOSITION

Deuteronomy: Moses' Great Appeal For Israel To Obey God For Blessing Part V: Specific Treaty Stipulations Of The Great King, Deuteronomy 12-26 U. Focusing On Scripture For Protection From Errant Peer Pressure (Deuteronomy 26:16-19)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We face a lot of strong, errant peer pressure from a variety of sources, and it can all be rather intimidating:

(1) We face errant peer pressure from the mainstream media: in a letter to The Wall Street Journal, March 8-9, 2014, p. A12, Raymond Brown of New Hampshire wrote: "The . . . preponderance of talking heads, . . . commentators and . . . columnists not only lack any appreciable theological knowledge . . . they don't even know . . . such knowledge and worldview actually exist and that this was a predominant feature of western life until relatively recent times."

(2) We face errant peer pressure from the government: (a) in a letter to the journal by John Sorg of Indiana (Ibid., March 10, 2014, p. A16), he claimed: "A watchdog press always keeps tabs on those with different views from its own. At critical points in our history, courageous people stepped up and said, 'enough' as during Watergate [but] (t)here seem to be no courageous leftists in government or the liberal press because they all share the same views."

(b) We have even faced errant peer pressure from some of our presidents: ((1)) a memo released February 28, 2014 by the National Archives and the Clinton Presidential Library and written on January 22, 1994 by White House aide Todd Stern about a draft of the State of the Union address commented: "We have a line on p. 10 that says, 'You'll pick the health plan and the doctor of your choice' . . . I know that it's just what people want to hear. But can we get away with it? . . . I am very worried about getting skewered for over-promising here on something we know full well we won't deliver." (Ibid., "Notable & Quotable," March 1-2, 2014, p. A15). ((2)) Then, Ezekiel J. Emanuel, brother of former White House chief of staff, Rahm Emanuel and a White House special adviser to President Obama for the forming of the Affordable Care Act, wrote in his article, "The Making of Obamacare," Ibid., March 8-9, 2014, p. C3: "The president himself repeatedly insisted on the principle of fidelity: Campaign promises weren't to be contravened without a very good policy rationale." Thus, by the testimony of a White House insider, at the start of his presidency, President Obama intended that if "a very good policy rationale" arose, any of his campaign promises could be broken!

Though Obamacare has been shown not to allow people to choose their own plans and doctors, many media records cite President Obama as initially repeatedly telling voters just the opposite, so, both the Clinton and the Obama administrations at least intended to promise voters one thing relative to a health care law while doing just the opposite if an expedient enough reason arose! That's errant pressure from very influential peers.

(3) We as a Church face potent, errant peer pressure even from some evangelicals: our stands against issues like divorce and remarriage or like evolution or in support of doctrines like unconditional salvation security are often called "arrogant" or "too dogmatic" by some evangelicals! God calls us in 2 Corinthians 1:17-20 not to vacillate between "yes" and "no" in ministering His Word, but to assert a dogmatic "yes," yet the errant peer pressure persists!

Need: *Thus, we ask, "HOW would God want us effectively to handle strong but errant, ungodly peer pressure?!"*

I. In closing Moses' long Deuteronomy 12-26 section that specified God's treaty stipulations for Israel in typical Ancient Near Eastern suzerain treaty format (Bible Know. Com., O. T., p. 308), Deuteronomy 26:16-19 **RATIFIED the treaty in the **CONTEXT** of **RESISTING PAGAN PEER PRESSURE**:**

- A. In our **last** sermon out of Deuteronomy 26:1-15, we learned Canaan's pagans **firmly** held to their local "creator god" Baal for rain for their crops (Z. P. E. B., v. One, p. 432-433; B. K. Waltke, Creation and Chaos, 1974, p. 1-72), so God told Israel to resist such potent peer pressure by holding to Him as the Creator of the Universe.
- B. Thus, the Deuteronomy 26:16-19 closing **ratification** section we study today is set in the **context** of **Israel's need to offset potent Canaanite pagan peer pressure to worship Baal over the true Creator of the Universe!**

II. Of note, Deuteronomy 26:16 told Israel HOW to hold to God versus such potent, errant peer pressure:

- A. Israel's people were first to "keep" (KJV), or "be careful" (ESV) or "carefully" (NIV) [do something], with the verb **shamar** (Kittel, Biblia Hebraica, 1962, p. 303) meaning to "be on [one's] guard; take care." (B. D. B., A Heb.-Eng. Lex. of the O. T., 1968, p. 1036-1037). This command in **this context** has a **two-fold** application:
 - 1. First, Israel was to counter the potent, pagan peer pressure by a **mental attitude** of **upright defensiveness!**
 - 2. However, mental defensiveness alone merely creates a vacuum of thought that needs to be filled with the **content** of **God's Law, the Word of God**, so Israel was to heed God's Word, Deuteronomy 26:16b.
 - 3. This two-fold application of **shamar** in Deuteronomy 26:16b has great application for us believers today:

- a. First, we believers today must mentally defensively resist accepting demonic doctrines, 1 Timothy 4:1. Such beliefs were predicted in 1 Timothy 4:1 to arise in our era, the latter days of the Church age, and men like Brannon Howse (Religious Trojan Horse, 2012, p. 15-16 et al.) and Dave Hunt and T. A. McMahon (The Seduction of Christianity, 1985, p. 73-90 et al.) have reported on such doctrines and their influences.
- b. Then, to **fill** the *vacuum* of *thought* left in *defensively resisting demonic doctrines*, 1 Timothy 4:13-16 directs all believers today to **focus** on **heeding written Scripture itself**. (cf. 2 Timothy 4:1-5)
- B. With such a right focus of one's attention, one was to "do" (KJV and ESV) or "observe" (NIV) the Law, that verb being *'asah* (Ibid., Kittel) which means "do, act, carry out" in daily living, Deut. 26:16b; Ibid., B. D. B., p. 793-795. The people of Israel were not just to focus on reading the Scriptures, but to **apply** them and not be hearers only but doers of the Word of God, a directive similarly taught for us in the Church era at James 1:22.
- C. Finally, Israel's people were to obey God's Word "with all your heart and with all your soul," Deuteronomy 26:16b (NIV, ESV): the "heart" (KJV) is the *lebab* in the Hebrew text (Ibid., Kittel), the "inner man; mind" (Ibid., B. D. B., p. 523-524) and the "soul" (KJV) is the *nepesh* (Ibid., Kittel), the "life principle; living being" (Ibid., B. D. B., p. 659-661; Robert B. Girdlestone, Syns. of the O. T., 1973, p. 56-59). Such wholehearted obedience to God for Church era believers today is commanded in Philippians 3:8-15 and 1 Corinthians 15:58.
- D. Such a high level of motivation from the entire inner man is attained today as the believer relies on the indwelling Holy Spirit of God for the motivation to function this way, Romans 8:3-4; Philippians 2:12-13.

Lesson: *For Israel effectively to handle the potent pagan peer pressure she would face upon entering Canaan, she was to (1) FOCUS on (a) DEFENSIVELY AVOIDING PAGAN BELIEFS, to (b) REPLACE those errors with a FOCUS on SCRIPTURE CONTENT and then (2) APPLY SCRIPTURE to LIFE (3) WHOLEHEARTEDLY.*

Application: *(1) May we trust in Christ as Savior from sin to be a child of God and be indwelt by the Holy Spirit, John 3:16; Romans 8:9b. (2) Then, may we offset errant peer pressure by (a) focusing on defending our minds from error while also saturating our minds with Scripture truth, (b) being committed to applying that truth in our lives (c) in wholehearted devotion in relying on the Holy Spirit's power to accomplish it all, Gal. 5:16; Rom. 8:3-4.*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the message . . .)

Resisting potent, errant peer pressure may seem a hard task in the short-term, but God provides the power to accomplish this task, and He has shown that it is the **only edifying** route to take in the **long-term** (as follows):

Some years ago, a relative of a believer I knew here in Connecticut had met and wanted to marry a former evangelical pastor in the Midwest who had been divorced. The Connecticut believer asked me about his relative's plan to wed this divorced man, so I replied that Matthew 5:32b claims such a marriage is adultery in God's eyes!

When this Connecticut believer reported my stance to his relative, and she told it to the man she wanted to marry, since he belonged to a large evangelical denomination, he asked his denomination about the matter and the 90 plus pastors in the denomination consented to his remarriage! The Connecticut believer's relative decided, "Since it's Pastor Shell's word versus that of 90 plus pastors, I will side with the vast majority and will wed this divorced man!"

The Connecticut believer asked for my response to this his relative's decision, so I told him how in 1 Kings 22 the prophet Micaiah predicted Israel's king Ahab would be slain if he went to Ramoth-gilead to battle, but that 400 other prophets countered this prediction, telling Ahab to go, ". . . for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king." (KJV) Ahab chose the majority view of the 400 prophets and went to Ramoth-gilead only to be slain! I thus told the Connecticut believer if Micaiah rightly opposed the errant view of the 400 prophets in his era, I in my era should keep my Biblical stand on divorce and remarriage opposite the errant stand of the 90 plus evangelical pastors!

The Connecticut believer's relative went ahead and married the divorced former pastor. Then, when her new husband asked his denomination to open up one of their churches so he could pastor it, they refused, citing his divorce record, that passages like 1 Timothy 3:2 forbade a man with divorce in his record from being a pastor!

The newlyweds were upset! They wondered why the 90 plus pastors would approve of his remarriage after his divorce while not approving of his return to the pastorate due to that same divorce!

This all left me very grateful for having taken the stand I had, and taught me a big lesson: as in the case of Micaiah of old, if one stands **consistently** for God's truth, **even** if he is in the **vast minority**, he does **NOT** have to feel **intimidated!** God's written Word is so interconnected with itself that consistently standing on that Word only eventually leaves one being honored where being inconsistent with Scripture eventually backfires to one's dishonor!

May we trust in Christ. Then, may we focus on guarding our minds from error while heeding Scripture in the power of the Holy Spirit to heed all of God's Word wholeheartedly in offsetting errant peer pressure.