

# Hearing Gods Grace: Gods Commanding Word

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[ 0 : 00 ] Deuteronomy 4, verse 15 to 24, and that's on page 183. You saw no form of any kind the day the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire.

Therefore watch yourselves very carefully, so that you do not become corrupt and make for yourself an idol, an image of any shape, whether formed like a man or a woman, or like any animal on earth or any bird that flies in the air, or like any creature that moves along the ground or any fish in the waters below.

And when you look up to the sky and see the sun, the moon and the stars, all the heavenly array, do not be enticed into bowing down to them and worshipping things the Lord your God has apportioned to all the nations under heaven.

But as for you, the Lord took you and brought you out of the iron smelting furnace, out of Egypt, to be the people of his inheritance, as you now are.

The Lord was angry with me because of you, and he solemnly swore that I would not cross the Jordan and enter the good land the Lord your God is giving to you as your inheritance.

[ 1 : 31 ] I will die in this land. I will not cross the Jordan. But you are about to cross over and take possession of that good land. Be careful not to forget the covenant of the Lord your God has made with you.

Do not make for yourselves an idol in any form of anything the Lord your God has forbidden. For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.

Continuing at verse 32. Now ask about the former days, long before your time, from the day God created man on the earth.

Ask from one end of the heavens to the other. Has anything so great as this ever happened? Or has anything like it ever been heard of?

Has any other people heard the voice of God speaking out of fire as you have and lived? Has any God ever tried to take for himself one nation out of another nation?

[ 2 : 45 ] By testings, by miraculous signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?

You were shown these things so that you may know that the Lord is God. Beside him there is no other.

From heaven he made you hear his voice to discipline you. On earth he showed you his great fire, and you heard his words out of the fire. Because he loved your forefathers and chose their descendants after them, he brought you out of Egypt by his presence and his great strength, to drive out before you nations greater and stronger than you, and to bring you into their land to give it to you for your inheritance, as it is today.

Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the Lord is God in heaven above, and on the earth below. There is no other.

Keep his decrees and commands which I am giving you today, so that it may go well with you and your children after you, and that you may live long in the land the Lord your God gives you for all time.

[ 4 : 11 ] Thank you. Let's pray.

Assemble the people before me to hear my words, so that they may learn to revere me. And that they may teach them to their children.

Our Father, we gather around you through your word right now. And we want you to speak to us afresh, so that we too might revere you, to know what it is to honour you, to live lives of worship before you, and that we might also teach these same things to our children, and to our families, so

that they too might know the living God.

So please, by your Spirit, speak into our lives, and change us, we pray. Amen.

Well, he has been their leader now for over 40 years. As God's prophet to God's people, Moses was God's chosen instrument to speak God's commanding words into the lives of his people.

[ 6 : 23 ] Without Moses, they would never know what God had planned or promised. Without Moses, they would never hear from God.

He was God's mediator. God would speak to the people through Moses. He was that vital voice that kept God and the people in communication with one another.

Now they stand on the verge of entering the promised land. But something very sad was about to happen. Look at chapter 3, verse 27.

God is speaking to Moses. Chapter 3, verse 27. And God said to Moses, Go up to the top of Pisgah and look west and north and south and east.

Look at the land with your own eyes since you are not going to cross this Jordan. In fact, later in chapter 4, verse 22, Moses himself would say to the people, I will die in this land.

[ 7 : 37 ] I will not cross the Jordan, but you are about to cross over and take possession of that good land. So the great leader who spoke to the people on God's behalf was about to die.

He was not going with them into the promised land. So the big question is, who is now going to speak to God's people because Moses is going to die and he's not going to be there?

They're going to enter the promised land, so who is going to be the one who's going to speak for God? Because without God's voice, they will never know what to do.

Well, God's people never need a new voice. We need to hear the same voice. First, God powerfully speaks to his people.

Chapter 4, verse 1. Moses speaking to the people. Hear now, O Israel, the decrees and laws I am about to teach you.

[ 8 : 47 ] Follow them so that you may live and may go in and take possession of the land that the Lord, the God of your fathers, is giving you. Do not add to what I command you and do not subtract from it, but keep the commands of the Lord your God that I give you.

You see, with his death in mind and knowing that he's not going into the promised land, Moses reminds God's word to them.

Hear what I teach you. Follow what I give you. Keep what I command you. You see, the people don't need a new voice.

They need to keep hearing the same voice as they move into the promised land. Verse 5. See, I have taught you decrees and laws as the Lord my God commanded me so that you may follow them in the land you are entering to take possession of it.

God is always a speaking God and his voice is continually heard when his same word is taught. Look at the end of verse 9.

[ 10 : 04 ] He tells them to teach them these words to your children and to their children after them. So it's not a case of hearing something new but listening carefully to what God has said.

And this is always primary and it's foundational for God's people. There's two things we want to look at under this. First, that God has spoken.

Look down at verse 10 still in chapter 4. He's reminding them of an event that happened 40 years ago. He says, Remember the day you stood before the Lord your God at Horeb.

This was Mount Sinai. Remember what happened when he said to me, Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children.

You came near and you stood at the foot of the mountain while it blazed with fire to the very heavens with black clouds and deep darkness. Then the Lord spoke to you out of the fire.

[ 11 : 17 ] You heard the sound of words but saw no form. There was only a voice. Now you try and picture yourself there.

It must have been an incredible and memorable sight. Thousands of God's people gathered round this mountain which looked like to them that it was on fire but at the same time it was covered in this deep dark black cloud.

And as they're watching all of this suddenly from this mountain comes an audible voice. And who was speaking?

Well look at the beginning of verse 12. Then the Lord spoke to you out of the fire. And what did God look like when he spoke?

Look at the rest of verse 12. You heard the sound of words but saw no form. There was only a voice. You see it's not what they saw that was important but what they heard.

[12:31] They don't know what God looks like but God was speaking to his people. Now we need to ask ourselves at this point is this the way we should be expecting God to speak to us?

Do we all have to take a bus trip down to Cairn-Tool and gather round the base and wait for fire and dark clouds and for a voice to come?

How is God going to speak to us? Well keep your finger in Deuteronomy 4 and flick forward to Deuteronomy chapter 18.

Deuteronomy 18. Remember the whole of Deuteronomy is a series of sermons if you like or talks that Moses gives to the people just before they cross over into the promised land.

He's reminding them of all that God has said and here he speaks to them again. Chapter 18 verse 15 The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers.

[13:44] You must listen to him. down to verse 17 The Lord said to me what they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers.

I will put my words in his mouth and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name I myself will call him to account.

So God is going to raise up other prophets other speakers like Moses who will continue to speak God's word to the people.

Not a different word but the same word. Not a different voice but the same voice. And so again we might ask the question well where is this prophet today?

Who is going to speak to God for us? Because many people claim to speak to us on behalf of God. They might say something like well God has told me or God has said to me I've heard God speak to me and now I must tell you.

[15:00] Well how should God speak to us? Well flick further on to Hebrews chapter 1. I haven't got a page number.

Hebrews chapter 1. You see this is the pattern that God takes his people that he speaks through and in Hebrews chapter 1 and verse 1 we read this in the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets.

So in the past as in the time of Deuteronomy he spoke through the prophets at many times and in various ways but in these last days and we're in the last days he has spoken to us by his son whom he appointed heir of all things.

You see the last and ultimate and if you like final prophet is Jesus. He is God's final and complete word to us today.

So like the people of Israel we don't need a new word. We need to keep hearing the same word, the voice of God through his son Jesus Christ.

[16:25] So God has spoken to us. His word is fulfilled completely in Jesus. But let's go back to Deuteronomy chapter 4.

And the second part of this, not only has God spoken, but God speaks powerfully. In chapter 4 verse 11 we have this amazing scene of the mountain and we read in verse 11 you came near and you stood at the foot of the mountain while it blazed with fire.

And in verse 12 then the Lord spoke to you out of the fire. Or look at verse 36. From heaven he made you hear his voice to discipline you.

On earth he showed you his great fire and you heard his words from out of the fire. Now I hope we've made the connection. Fire and words.

Why did God's word come out of the fire? Well one commentator helpfully puts it like this that fire can be both beautiful and dangerous.

[17:39] There is something attractive about a fire. A fire can draw you and warm you. But there is something destructive about a fire.

As we've seen in the fires in Australia it can consume you and destroy you. You see God's words are both beautiful and dangerous.

His words bring life and they bring death. Listen to the words of the final and ultimate and great prophet Jesus.

We opened up with these words at the very beginning this morning. They come from John 5 verse 24. I tell you the truth whoever hears my words and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be condemned.

He is crossed over from death to life. You see to hear God's words to obey God's words is life in all its fullness.

[ 18 : 47 ] To ignore God's words and to disobey God's word is death and chaos. You see we can't treat God's word with indifference.

We can't approach God's word and read it and say it doesn't matter. We can't kind of pick and choose the bits that we like and say well I don't want them saying this but I'm quite happy with this. It does matter. It's the difference between life and death. So we don't need a new voice.

We need to keep hearing the same voice God speaking powerfully to us through his word. So what does God actually say to us?

What is his word to us? Well second God's binding words for his people. Look at verse 15 chapter 4. This is what God says to them.

[ 19 : 53 ] He said God says to you God warns us about idolatry.

Idolatry or an idol as we've often said before is a God substitute. It can be someone or something that we put in place of God.

So your family, your spouse, your husband or wife or your children can become an idol. Health and beauty can become an idol.

Work, education, money, leisure, any of these things, anything that is more important to you than God is an idol. So verse 19.

And when you look up to the sky and you see the sun, the moon and the stars, all the heavenly array, do not be enticed into bowing down to them and worshipping things the Lord your God has apportioned to all the nations under heaven.

[ 21 : 08 ] In other words, we're not to give ourselves to anyone or anything that God has created. We are to worship God, not his creation.

we are to give ourselves completely to God. He owns us, he wants us. But why?

Why should we give ourselves to this God? Well, the answer is this, because God has given himself completely to us.

Two things. First, God is jealous for us. look at verse 23. Be careful not to forget the covenant of the Lord your God that he made with you.

Do not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything the Lord your God has forbidden, for the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. Now, all of this is said within the context of the covenant.

[ 22 : 12 ] A covenant is God's binding commitment to his people. It's what brings them together and unites them together. So God is saying to them, I have given myself to you.

I am bound to you. That's what the covenant is. I'm bound to you. I am jealous for you. Now, we often see jealousy as something that's quite negative.

And we tell our children, you're not to be jealous. I want what you have. That's a negative jealousy.

It's not healthy. But there's also a positive jealousy. So let me give an example of a husband and wife who are in that loving, passionate, committed relationship, that covenant where they are bound together.

Now, that husband and wife don't share that intimate love with other people. It's for themselves. themselves. So if I discovered Kirsty, this isn't true, if I discovered Kirsty was giving her attention to some other man, if she was walking into another room and spending all her time talking to them, well, I would become very jealous.

I would become angry, a right kind of anger, because in marriage you don't share that same intimate love with somebody else. My love is for Kirsty, and her love is for me.

[ 23 : 48 ] And that love is a jealous love, and we're to protect that love. So God's word to us is this, I have bound myself to you, I am passionately committed to you, I am jealous for you, I've given my life for you, I don't share my love easily with other people, it's for you.

So why, going back to verse 23, 24, why would you want to give yourself to someone else or something else? Why would you replace God?

Why would you have a God substitute? Idols will only corrupt you and destroy you, but I'll die for you, I'm jealous for you, I'm bound to you.

But not only is he a jealous God, he is merciful to us. God's word is so honest about what we are like.

Look at verse 28. Here Moses actually predicts, having said all of that, he predicts the way the people are going to go. There you will worship man-made gods of wood and stone which cannot see or hear or eat or smell.

[ 25 : 11 ] In other words, they're powerless. But if from there you seek the Lord your God, you will find him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Verse 31, for the Lord your God is a merciful God. He will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your forefathers which he confirmed to them by oath.

God doesn't quickly forget his commitment, his covenant to us. In fact, he will do whatever it takes to keep that together. Now again, to use the illustration of marriage, the marriage relationship, the vows for those of you who have been married or married taken the vow that is eternal till death us do part.

It's that passionate commitment to be bound together forever and never to break. Now, should I fail in my marriage and should I give my love to another, well, I would deserve to be put out.

I would deserve to be rejected, to leave one and go to another would be breaking it. I would deserve to be rejected.

[ 26 : 43 ] But if Kirsty, in keeping with her promise to that covenant, would take me back again, well, that would be sheer mercy.

So God is saying to us in this, when you fail me, because we will, when you replace me with an idol, when you set up a God substitute in your life, when you make your children more important to yourself than me, when you make education and your career more important than me, when your happiness becomes more important, when you replace me with something else, remember this, when you turn back to him and look for him, verse 31, remember this, the Lord your God is a merciful God.

He will not abandon or destroy you or forget the covenant with your forefathers, which he confirmed to them by oath.

God has made a binding commitment to us. He is jealous for us. He is merciful towards us.

And that binding commitment has been sealed now and for all eternity through the death of his son, Jesus Christ. Christ.

[ 28 : 19 ] So what is our response to this amazing God? Well, third, God's gracious demands on his people.

Look at verse 33. he's reminding them of all that God has done.

Has any other people heard the voice of God speaking out of fire as you have and lived? Has any God ever tried to take you for himself one nation out of another nation by testings, by miraculous signs and wonders, by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, or by great and awesome deeds, like all the things the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your very eyes?

Has anyone done this for you? Have they? Has anyone ever done this for you, what we've just read? Well, God has done this for you, and for me, and so much more.

The word of God that spoke out of the fire, that very word that spoke from the mountain to the people all those years ago, that word became flesh, became a human being, and came to earth for us.

[ 29 : 58 ] That very word that spoke from the fire, Jesus Christ, the voice of God, came into the world for us and called us out so that we might belong to him.

By miracles and signs and wonders, Jesus proved that he was God. And by a mighty hand and with outstretched arms, he died on the cross for you and for me.

And he took the sin, he took the fire of God which fell on Jesus and he was destroyed for us.

He was the one cast out for us so that we might never ever be destroyed, that we might never be abandoned or let go. Has anyone ever done this for you?

Would you find anyone on this planet who could do this for you? The fact is we will never find another God like the God who speaks to us.

[ 31 : 11 ] Look at verse 35. You were shown these things so that you might know that the Lord is God. Besides him there is no other.

Verse 39. Acknowledge and take to heart this day that the Lord is God in heaven above and on earth below. There is no other.

God is altogether different. He is altogether wonderful, altogether gracious and good and great. We don't find another God other than the one who speaks to us like this. So how do we even begin to respond to all that he has done?

What are we to do? Well, look at verse 40. keep his decrees and commands which I am giving you today so that it may go well with you and your children after you and that you may live long in the land the Lord your God gives you for all time.

[ 32 : 34 ] You see, the only right response is simply to be people who learn to listen, who learn to hear.

Over 50 times in the book of Deuteronomy it says hear or listen and in Hebrew the word hear also means to obey.

So hear his word, read it, keep his word, teach it to your children, talk to them about it, talk to each other about God's word.

And if we do, we will discover as we have done this morning an almighty God who is jealous for you, a God who is merciful towards you, a God who not only speaks to you, but a God who came and died for you, gave his life for you, so that you might have everything.

Hear what he is saying, keep his word, and teach this word to your children, so that they in turn can teach it to their children.

[ 34 : 04 ] Let's pray together. Father, we have come to gather together, and we haven't been standing around a mountain, there has been no fire, but yet you have been speaking to us through your word, and through your son, the Lord Jesus, reminding us of all that you have done, and the kind of God that you are.

God to hear, please would you help us to be good listeners, to hear what you say, so that we might learn more about you, what you are like.

Help us to obey your word, so that we might become more like you, that we might reflect this great God to those around us.

Help us to teach this word to one another, to our children, to our families.

We thank you that you are a jealous God for us, and a merciful God towards us, never giving up on us, patient, kind, and good.

[ 35 : 52 ] we praise you for who you are. Help us to walk with you, to worship you, to take out all the God substitutes, all the things we replace God with during the week, and may we find our only hope and our satisfaction in you.

Thank you for who you are and for what you have done. In Jesus' name, Amen.