

Deuteronomy 4:9

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons;

Analysis

The double command 'take heed...keep thy soul diligently' employs intensive Hebrew construction ('shamar...shamar me'od') demanding utmost vigilance. The warning against forgetting God's mighty acts addresses the human tendency toward spiritual amnesia. The command to 'teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons' establishes transgenerational covenant responsibility. This verse articulates the Reformed principle of covenant succession—believers must intentionally disciple their children and grandchildren. Forgetting God's works leads to covenant unfaithfulness; remembrance sustains faith across generations. Scripture functions as covenant memory, preserving redemptive history.

Historical Context

Moses addresses the second generation who personally witnessed or heard testimony of miraculous deliverance from Egypt, Red Sea crossing, Sinai revelation, wilderness provision (manna, quail, water), and recent victories over Sihon and Og. The danger was that future generations, enjoying Canaan's prosperity, would forget the God who delivered their ancestors. This command established the pattern of fathers teaching children redemptive history (Deuteronomy 6:6-9, Psalm 78:1-8).

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Ephesians 2:8 — Salvation by grace through faith

Study Questions

1. How does this verse emphasize the vital importance of remembering and rehearsing God's mighty acts in redemptive history?
2. What specific practices can you implement to faithfully teach your children and grandchildren about God's works and ways?

Interlinear Text

כ ק	וּשְׁמֹר	לְבָ	וּשְׁמֹר	נַפְשְׁךָ	מְאֹד	פֶּן
H7535	Only take heed	H0	Only take heed	thy soul	diligently	H6435
	H8104		H8104	H5315	H3966	
תִּשְׁכַּח	אֶת	הַדְּבָרִים	אֲשֶׁר	כָּאֵל	עֵינֶיךָ	וּפֶן
lest thou forget	H853	the things	H834	have seen	which thine eyes	H6435
H7911		H1697		H7200	H5869	
יִסּוּרוּ	מִלֵּבְךָ	כָּל	יָמֶיךָ	חַיֶּיךָ	וְהוֹדַעְתָּם	
and lest they depart	from thy heart	H3605	all the days	of thy life	but teach	
H5493	H3824		H3117	H2416	H3045	
בְּנֵיךָ:	בְּנֵיךָ:	בְּנֵיךָ:				
and thy sons	and thy sons	and thy sons				
H1121	H1121	H1121				

Additional Cross-References

Deuteronomy 6:7 (Parallel theme): And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Deuteronomy 11:19 (Parallel theme): And ye shall teach them your children, speaking of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, when thou liest down, and when thou risest up.

Genesis 18:19 (Parallel theme): For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

Deuteronomy 32:46 (Parallel theme): And he said unto them, Set your hearts unto all the words which I testify among you this day, which ye shall command your children to observe to do, all the words of this law.

Ephesians 6:4 (Parallel theme): And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

Deuteronomy 29:29 (Parallel theme): The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.

Proverbs 23:26 (Parallel theme): My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways.

Revelation 3:3 (Parallel theme): Remember therefore how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee.

Proverbs 1:8 (Parallel theme): My son, hear the instruction of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother:

Psalms 71:18 (Parallel theme): Now also when I am old and grayheaded, O God, forsake me not; until I have shewed thy strength unto this generation, and thy power to every one that is to come.