

Dueteronomy ch14-

The emphasis over the last couple of chapters or so has been that of personal commitment to God and His word over that of any other thing regardless of what or even who it might be. Moses will be dead in a matter of days from now, a few weeks at best, and so he's taking the time to go over how they're to conduct themselves once they are in the Land that God has promised to bring them into. He's told them that no longer will each man get to worship just however he sees fit, but that there will be one central place that they will be appointed to go and there alone are they to worship God, in and through the sacrifices and their tithes and all. And that was going to speak to the nations around them of the fact that there is only one true living God, and He alone was to be worshipped and served. They weren't to be making all kinds of altars in all kinds of places to worship all kinds of gods, because there was only one and there was a prescribed place of worship. Which ultimately of course became Jerusalem, and they were to gather there (the men at least if the whole family couldn't come) 3 times a yr at appointed times. And of course we spoke of how that would unify them as one nation under God and give them that sense of unity as they would gather to worship in a corporate or really even a national manner. And they were warned not to be looking into other forms of pagan worship or to allow their curiosity to overtake them as it related to how the other people in the land were worshipping their gods lest they become entangled in them as well and be destroyed even as they were. And in keeping with that thought they were told in ch 13 that even if a prophet arose and spoke something that came to pass or even gave some miraculous kind of sign. And yet he sought to entice them to serve other gods that they were to reject that man as a false prophet and he was to be put to death. And the reason (God said) that He would even allow a man like that to surface in their midst was to test them to see if they would in fact be faithful to Him and to His word. Or if they would believe their eyes or their emotions over the word of God, the bible says the man who trusts in his own heart is a fool, "*but whoever walks wisely will be delivered.*" How does one walk wisely? Ps 111:10 says this, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; A good understanding have all those who do His commandments.*" Prov 2:6 *For the LORD gives wisdom; From His mouth come knowledge and understanding.*" From His mouth, whose mouth? God's mouth, in other words wisdom is found in the word of God, who is the one who walks wisely and who will be delivered from the snare of his own heart and his own emotions, or even what seems so convincing as it takes place even in front of your face? The one who takes heed according to the word of God over and above all of those things, if it's not founded or instructed in God's word, or in any way that object or that person seeks to influence you away from God, they are to be severed. It doesn't matter if it's your mom or dad, son or daughter, best friend or whatever, if it's an unhealthy relationship, spiritually speaking, then we aren't to be weaving intimate ties with that people or group of people. Remember last week I mentioned Haggai to you as it related to this topic but I didn't really quote it or anything, well this week I wanted to read to you exactly what it said so that you would know for yourself.

The Lord asked the priest a question and this is what He said. Hag 2:12-14 "*If one carries holy meat in the fold of his garment, and with the edge he touches bread or stew, wine or oil, or any food, will it become holy?*" ' ' " *Then the priests answered and said, "No."* And Haggai said, "*If one who is unclean because of a dead body touches any of these, will it be unclean?*" *So the priests answered and said, "It shall be unclean."* Then Haggai answered and said, " *'So is this people, and so is this nation before Me,' says the LORD.*

In other words it's not you that influence the unclean before God, it's them that influence you and you need to know that. As innocent as your intentions may be, you can put a million gallons of pure water into a container that only has 1 drop of impure water and what do you get? You don't purify the one drop, instead you have a million gallons of impure water, so it is in relationships that aren't God centered, the NT counterpart is one that I often quote, *1 Cor 15:33 Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts good morals."* It doesn't work the other way around no matter how sincere you may be, now the dangerous part is that sometimes bad company can come under the guise or the pretense of a seemingly Christian individual. But just because someone calls themselves a believer don't just automatically assume that you are of one accord. Use your discernment and listen carefully to the things they speak to you and if it's drawing you closer to the Lord that's great, but rather if maybe it's adding confusion to the pot or somehow stumbling you, then hey, pull out. Pray for them, but move on, and the reason for all this council we read in the 1st 2 vs of ch 14.

Vs1-2

Now there in vs 1 where it says you are the children of the Lord your God, it could've just as easily been translated you are the *sons* of the Lord your God. What's the point of all of these warnings and exhortations to keep ourselves unspotted from the world and to lead life wholly set apart to Him. Because we're His children and because we're His children we are to take on the attributes of our Father. In Leviticus we would read it like this, "*You shall therefore consecrate yourselves, and you shall be holy; for I am holy.*" In the natural we inherit certain characteristics and attributes of our parents. And in the supernatural it works much the same way, you are to inherit certain qualities of our heavenly Father simply because we're His offspring, we are His children. And one of those qualities is holiness and purity, a sanctification from the world and unto Him, and this shaving of the head and cutting yourself was a pagan practice and something they would do as a sign of mourning for the dead. God says I don't want you to do that, I don't want you to imitate the world, we're to be imitators of God not imitators of the world. And having been created by Him, it wasn't His desire to see those who were created by Him defiling themselves by slicing themselves all up and doing all these things in honor of the dead.

And we know that obviously this was a word directly to the nation of Israel that they might not be followers of the world around them, but rather that they might be examples to the other nations of what it means to live a life set apart to God. But we do have a NT counterpart to this whole thing. In 1 Peter 2:9-10 Peter in writing to believers said this, *“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.”* So as you can see though this was specifically for Israel, God has the same desire for us as His children today to be set apart from the world and to be imitators of God. Not following after the pagan practices around us so that we might be witnesses of what it means to lead a godly life in the midst of a godless generation so that they might see Jesus Christ in us and be drawn to Him as well. God’s desires for His people hasn’t changed, we still serve the same God and it’s His desire for us to be consecrated over to Him, not partially, not on Sunday’s and an occasional Wednesday, but everyday.

Now, in vs 3-20 Moses basically reviews those things that are clean and unclean for them as far as eating went, be it animals of the earth, birds of the air, or fish. And He lists for them those things that they could and couldn’t eat and gives them the means of discerning that which is clean and unclean in each of the 3 categories. And they could eat anything clean, and were to avoid anything unclean, in vs 3-8 he list the animals, in vs9-10 he lists the fish, in vs11-18 he mentions the clean birds and the dirty birds, (which seem to continually increase) and in vs 19 he speaks of insects. We went over these already in Leviticus and so I’m not going to belabor you with that again in review. In vs 21 we read that they weren’t eat anything that had died of itself, be it of old age or whatever, but I thought that it was kind of funny that they could give it away or sell it to someone else who wasn’t an Israelite. (Read)

Vs21

And of course we spoke of that when we went through Exodus as well when it was mentioned there in ch 23. But notice the emphasis placed on being a holy people set apart to God we see this over and over again, God wanting this principle to be ingrained in His people.

Vs22-26

So another repeat of the tithing principal, God considers the tithe an aspect of our worship, and so it wasn’t to be neglected and they were to give according to the degree that God prospered them. And Paul the apostle carries this same principal into the NT where he says, *“On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper.”* Now obviously the word tithe means tenth that’s where the whole 10% principal comes into play, but in the NT we really don’t have a legal command of a certain amount that we’re to give.

That just seems to be a good starting point and it's consistent with the rest of the scriptures. But the main emphasis we find in the NT is much like what we read here in vs 26 and that's that whatever we give that we are to do so willingly and with rejoicing and gladness of heart. Apart from what I read to you a second ago, for the most part this is what we read, Paul writes in 2 Cor 9:6-7 and says this, *"But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver."* But one thing God doesn't like is a whining and griping giver who's always complaining about what they give, it's best in that case not to give at all, because God wants us to rejoice in our worship of Him us and our whole family with us. So if you want to reap a little in the kingdom, be a miser and sow sparingly, if you want to reap big dividends in the kingdom then sow bountifully and with out restraint with simplicity and gladness of heart. The proverbs tell us that, *"There is one who scatters, yet increases more; And there is one who withholds more than is right, But it leads to poverty."* And that's what Paul was talking about, if you're honoring God with the 1st fruits of your increase, He'll honor you in that. If you try and hold out all the time and make sure that all your bills are paid off 1st and then if there happens to be enough left over for God then you'll consider giving it. Then it's obvious to God that He's not your priority in that and that you don't trust in His word as it pertains to that knowing that He'll take care of you as long as He's your priority.

Now, if they had a long journey to Jerusalem from where they were, they could sell whatever it was that they were going to offer to God. And then take that money to Jerusalem and buy whatever it was that was purposed on their hearts and then offer it there as unto the Lord, and they were to rejoice in their time of fellowship with God.

Vs27-29

So if they did as the word of God commanded, then He promised to prosper them and bless their lives, again the common thread that we've been seeing is that God's blessing follows obedience to His word.

Ch15

Vs1-6

Did you notice what was insinuated there in vs 4; God was saying that if they were to do all that He instructed them to do. If they didn't hold to tightly to the things of this world and weren't greedy for gain but gave generously to those who were in need and then erased whatever part of the debt that was still owed to them after 7 yrs. Then He would bless them so abundantly that there wouldn't be any poor people among them, but rather He would extinguish poverty in the nation of Israel. Now if they had loaned money or resources to someone who wasn't of the nation of Israel then the loan still applied and it was business as usual.

But as far as debts owed amongst themselves they were to wipe them out every 7yrs and everyone would once again be on equal ground and given equal opportunity to excel, being debt free. I wish banks and home financing establishments and all operated under that rule today. But you remember that they were to let the ground lie fallow every 7th yr, they weren't to sow the land. And so if that was to be obeyed then come the 7th yr the party in debt wouldn't have much of a means to generate income and so all debts were to be released. And if they would be obedient in that then as it says in vs 6 (read again) and of course that never really happened because Israel wasn't obedient to the word of God as it pertained to these things.

Vs7-8

God has a soft spot in His heart for poor people and His word encourages us to not refuse those who are truly in need but rather to do what we can to extend ourselves to them as the need arises. James puts it like this, *"If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Depart in peace, be warmed and filled," but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?"* That's the same principal that we're reading of here, now I'm not saying that you need to go on the hunt for poor people to give money to wherever they may be. But I am in regards to as James put it a brother or a sister in Christ, if you find out someone in this body is struggling to feed their family. And you have the means to buy them some groceries or get them a meal and yet you harden your heart against the situation, then there's problem in your heart. God's blessed you so that you might be a blessing to others, it goes back to that "gathering, scattering" principal that we were speaking of earlier. And if I find out of a situation of that sort, then I try to do what I can to minister accordingly, now if a man won't work then he won't eat, that's what the bible says. But if people are trying to do what they can to make an honest living and the ends just aren't meeting, then that's a different story.

Vs9-11

In other words don't think that when the 6th yr comes around and someone is in need that they are asking for help knowing that whatever they borrow they'll be exonerated of in a yr and so they're seeking to scam you and get a little something for nothing. God's says don't go there in your heart. It doesn't matter why they're doing what they're doing, what matters is the position of your heart in the midst of it, and if your heart grows callused about the issue, then you're the one with a sin problem. And the Lord tells them in vs 10 that if they give willingly a hilariously as unto the Lord, not begrudgingly or out of constraint, then He's going to bless them abundantly. Again the Proverbs tell us that, *"He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given."* Prov 19:17

And God pays better interest than any bank or money market ever will, you can't out give God. Mal 3:10 "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this," Says the LORD of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it." Jesus said, "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you." Luke 6:38

Now back in vs 4 we read that if they were careful to obey all that God had instructed them to do that He was going to bless them so much that there would be no more poor people in their land. Now here in vs 11 He says that they will always have the poor, what's the deal there? The deal is that He told them how to remedy poverty, but since He knows the heart of man and the greed of man, He knew that they wouldn't be obedient to His word. And that they wouldn't put their trust in God when it came to this issue, therefore there would always be poor people among them. And you remember just a few weeks ago on Sunday morning when Mary broke that expensive flask of fragrant oil over the Lord's head and anointed His feet with her hair. Judas incited the others by saying man what a waste; this could've been sold for a year's worth of wages and given to the poor. And Jesus reflecting or referring to this vs said hey, "Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always."

Vs12-15

So if someone got in a bind and offered to sell themselves to you as a servant, you could only keep him for 6 yrs, the 7th yr he went free. And you were to give him a healthy severance package so that he had an opportunity to get started off right, you send someone away with nothing then how is he going to do any better than the 1st time. They'll be gone for a couple of months and since they can't get something for nothing they'll find themselves in the same boat again and be pushed into another 6 yrs of service just so that they can eat. God says that's not right, he's served you well, now reward him accordingly and give him a fresh start.

Vs16-17

Of course this is the law of the bondservant, the servant for life by choice. This is what Paul would refer to as his relationship to Christ. A servant by choice for life because I love my Master Jesus Christ and so we often read "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ." A neat thing to consider even for ourselves.

Vs18-23

Again God doesn't want our cast offs, but rather our very best and the 1st fruits of all our increase.