

Deuteronomy

An Exposition of The Book of Deuteronomy As Delivered in A
Series of Messages to The Congregation of Sequoyah
Sovereign Grace Baptist Church, Cherokee, NC.

by
Tim James

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A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

Let the reader be cautioned that the following material is the unedited, verbatim personal notes used to preach a series of messages on the book of Deuteronomy. It was never intended or even expected that these notes would be published or seen by anyone else. Therefore, expect to find errors in punctuation, spelling, style and some marginal and parenthetical notes which have no explanation.

However, even in this unedited format, the material is readable, simple, and profound and will prove useful to anyone who wants to gain a better insight into the book of Deuteronomy. For this reason, they are added to the library of works available on the Grace-ebooks.com website.

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PARENTHESIS

1, ¶ Then we turned, and took our journey into the wilderness by the way of the Red sea, as the LORD spake unto me: and we compassed mount Seir many days.

2, And the LORD spake unto me, saying,

3, Ye have compassed this mountain long enough: turn you northward.

Deuteronomy 1:1-3

This is the last book of the books of Moses. The Pentateuch is comprised of the first five books of the Bible and were all penned by Moses, except for the last 8 verses of the last chapter of Deuteronomy, which speaks of the final glorious episode in the life of Moses. The word Deuteronomy means “second law.” This has caused some confusion among commentators. Some say that it is a reiteration of the Law of Moses given in the Sinai covenant. In this they are right, and they are wrong. They are right in that the Decalogue or Ten Commandments are repeated almost word for word in the fifth chapter of this book. But they are wrong in that the ceremonial aspect of law is rarely mentioned in this book. There is no mention of *offerings* except that of free-will or voluntary offerings. The word *Lamb* never occurs, and the word *tabernacle* is only spoken of twice in these 34 chapters. The only sacrifice mentioned is the Passover sacrifice which preceded the law given at Sinai. The high priest and Day of Atonement are not mentioned in this book. The Ark of the Covenant is only referred to in recollection, not in use.

So, this is hardly a reiteration of the Law given at Sinai, and neither is it a “second law” except in the sense that it is a revelation of, or fuller illumination of the first, though that is a part of its meaning. Others have said that it is a repetition of the first law because those that were alive when the first law was given were but carcasses in the wilderness and those that now make up the tribes must have their memories refreshed. There may be some truth to that, but not enough to warrant it as a definition of the term “second law.”

In considering the scriptures many principles apply, the chiefest of which is the context in which the words are spoken. It is simply and precisely understood that God, in dealing with men always deal with them where they are. The people of God as well as everyone else are somewhere and are living at some time. That time is now. They may look to the future and consider the past but neither of these time frames is where they are. Now is where all people are. This may seem to be an over-simplification, but it is of paramount importance to understanding the scripture. Knowing this will help us to understand the concept of the “second law.”

Where are the people of God at this writing? They are at the borders of the Promised Land for the second time. The first time they were turned back into the desert because of unbelief and disobedience. They at that time had the law of God, and the promise of God but in unbelief rejected both. Now they are again at the borders of promise. The long journey in the wilderness is at an end and God gives the “second law.” This addresses the spirit of the law and not the letter of it. This addresses the life of faith rather than the life of unbelief. This “second law” is about the word of God in the

hearts and lives of His people rather than on tables of stone. By the first law and promise they were turned back into the wilderness, by the second law they will be equipped to live in the Land that they are about to possess. The second law is the law of belief and obedience—the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus.”

To note the lack of mention of ceremonies and days and sacrifices does not mean that these did not go on as ordained, they did so until the coming of the One to whom they pointed. What this suggests is that, like the Gospel, it is a report about what *has been* accomplished and the attendant results of that great work upon the hearts and minds of the elect. We preach Christ, *now*. We preach the One who *was* crucified. We do not look at the cross except in the past for there is where the cross is. Our savior is not on the cross; He is in the heavens seated at the right hand of the Father, exalted because He accomplished the work of salvation. We do not *apply* to the cross but rather the throne, because He who sits there for us *now* is the same who redeemed us by the blood of the cross *long ago*.

What then is our guide—our rule of practice? How shall we know how to live in this world? It is by faith in His word—by adherence to His commandments—by belief in the words that are “spirit and life!” Thus the “second law,” though conditioned wholly on the fulfillment of the first, is the law of living in this world with the people of God. It is akin to connection between science and applied science (Illus. polio cure and the sugar cube). [See: Hebrews 1:1-3; 10:12-17]). The just shall live by faith and that means more than trusting the Lord for food, shelter and raiment. Those things, by and large, are there for us in the Land of Promise. We

have experienced them in sweet munificent providence and abundant provision pressed down and running over (seek ye first...). The just (the justified) live breathe and function on the words of God; they thrive on that which is written. The Bible is their church covenant, their rules and practices, their government, their convictor and their comforter. It is their “second law” by which they will live in the Promised Land (Ps. 19:7-11; 119:9-12, 105, 130).

The first three verses of Deuteronomy 1 set forth this principle. In verse one it is declared that these are the words spoken by Moses on this side of the Jordan. These words, according to verse three are “all that the LORD (JEHOVAH) had given him in commandment onto them.” These are the commandments of their Savior (John 14:15, 23; 15:10; 1 John 5:3). Where were they or better when were they? They were 29 days short of entering the Land of Promise. They were 29 days short of the end of their fortieth year of wilderness university training (V. 3).

I want to draw your attention to verse two. You will notice that this is a parenthetical expression. A parenthetical expression is a phrase or word isolated in a thought by parentheses. The rule of parenthetical expressions is they may be lifted from the context without doing any harm or diminishing the context. This means that verses 1 and 3 can be read without verse two and the meaning will not be altered. Oh, but God thoughts are not our thoughts, and neither are His ways our ways. This little fact, that “from Horeb by the way of mount Seir unto Kadesh-Barnea” is an eleven-day journey is, I believe, the very heart of the teaching of the book of Deuteronomy. This fact is a stop sign! This fact is like a “Selah” in the Psalms. This fact demands that

we pause and consider one huge and astonishing truth. That eleven-day journey took this people 40 years to make.

Let us consider ourselves. How can it be that this short journey, a straight line as it were, took so long, or rather takes so long? How slow is our progress? How full of twists and turns is our journey? How often do we walk over ground that we had already covered? We are slow travelers because we are slow learners. If we learned from our mistakes, we would not keep on repeating them. One person said that it is a sign of instability and mental frailty to do the same thing over and over and expect different results. Oh, but we do!

Our slowness of heart, our unbelief, our dullness of mind makes our eleven-day journey take a lifetime. This is to our shame (Hebrews 5:12). How many of us have trod the road of doubt, believing that it was presumptuous to have the peace of assurance. How many times did we pass over the same foolish cursed path, kicking up the dust by looking at ourselves or to the law for assurance and wearing a rut in the road? What progress have we made in love when we can wound with ease a brother or sister with unkind words? That is a well traveled highway! Thanks be unto God that He is a patient teacher. Because of unbelief, eleven days will not suffice to bring us home (Luke 24:25; Gal. 3:3). We will not enter the promise land and live there by taking a cursory look at our necessary lessons. There are no CliffsNotes for this journey. He will turn us back again and again until we see that the life of faith is not a theory. It is a practical and usable lesson.

This little fact is the genesis for our understanding of the study of Deuteronomy. The second law is the law of consideration and recollection. It is the law of taking serious

notice of the reason for our eleven-day journey lasting 40 years. This book is about remembering as the impetus for obedience and faith. In this book we will find the command to “remember” no less than 14 times. Let me read the first time.

Deuteronomy 5:15 “And *remember* that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched-out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.” How many times a day do we walk that road? May God apply this “second law” to our hearts as we look at the book of Deuteronomy! May He teach us how to live with our brothers and sisters in the Promised Land!

THY COMMANDMENTS

1, ¶ Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you.

2, Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

3, Your eyes have seen what the LORD did because of Baalpeor: for all the men that followed Baalpeor, the LORD thy God hath destroyed them from among you.

4, But ye that did cleave unto the LORD your God are alive every one of you this day.

5, Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it.

6, Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

Deuteronomy 4:1-6

Since the first three chapters are a recollection of the 40 years journey in the wilderness, I have decided to leave off dealing with them now and look at them in the last part of

this study in Deuteronomy. I have chosen this text as a way of further introducing the substance of this great book of instruction in righteousness that is our privilege to study. As we saw in the first chapter this is a book of laws or commandments and statutes that the Lord has revealed to Moses for the people as they are to live as the people of God in the Promised Land.

Without dealing specifically with any particular commandment this hour, I want to consider two paramount principles that are necessary to understand this book. The first this; this is the word of God and is to be bowed to without any debate of conjecture. We know from the clear declaration of the New Testament that all of the OT is about the person and work of Christ accomplished for His people and designed to give all glory to God for the salvation of the elect.

This book is given by divine inspiration and is “profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness that the man of God might be thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” So, this book is here to teach or indoctrinate us and furnish us thoroughly to live in a pleasing manner before God. Reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness are often painful results of the “two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of the soul and spirit and of the joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. None of us will exit the study of this book unscathed. We will bear in our heart and souls some scars by the time we finish this study. God's word is truth and therefore not subject to our interpretation. It interprets itself and we understand it by comparing spiritual things with spiritual things, having been

given spiritual discernment by the grace of God bestowed upon us. Some might say that we are not under the law and in saying that they would be right.

We are not under the law as either a means of righteousness or the rule of life. However, as a result of imputed righteousness the “law” is written in our hearts and minds and our sins and iniquities are remembered no more by God (Hebrews 10:12-17). The law, the word of God, is in us, not outside us on tables of stone. When we read and study this book, we will find not that we have learned something new; but that what we study we will find to be already in our hearts and minds and will be awakened to our life. When the Gospel is preached it finds a responsive cord in the heart of the believer because it is already in the heart of the believer.

We say “yea and amen” because we know in our hearts what is true, not because we logically arrive at it by scientific methodology. The believer does not make a rational decision that the Bible is true but rather has a spiritual response to the truth of it because it is already written in his heart and mind. We know that this is God's word and therefore do not question it because our basis of discernment is as vital a principle in us as is the breath of life. So, the first principle is that this word before us is the same that is written in us by the grace of God.

The second principle is alluded to in the description of the word of God as a two-edged sword. I like the old saying that declares that it is called a two-edged sword because it cuts a'comin' and a'goin'. That's very true. But the fact of it being a two-edged sword accompanied by the realm in which is declared to operate, the heart and soul, the bones and the

marrow, this sword is the law written in our minds and hearts, and is that instrument; which continually employed, results in reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness and that which thoroughly furnishes us unto good works. The two edges of this blessed sword are defined in the scripture.

The two edges are the two principles upon which this whole book, this whole law hangs. They are the precise scalpel that cuts us the deepest and by wounding us, helps us the most. The two edges of the divine claymore, which govern inwardly all that the believer does or thinks, are these...to love God with all your heart and to love your neighbor as yourself (Deut. 6:5; 10:12...inward principle 30:6). This is set forth clearly in the teaching of the NT (Matthew 22:36-40; Mark 12:30, 33; Romans 13:8,9; Gal 5:14; 1 John 5:1-2).

Every believer knows that this double-edged principle that lives and slashes inside us is that thing that most occupies our minds and heart, that most often causes us inward pain and most often is the thing that makes life better and makes us desire to be better people.

It is these two principles that will enable us to understand and seek to obey the commandments that are before us in the book of Deuteronomy. No matter what the outward aspects of the commandments are, they are fruit unto death lest they flow wholly and heartily from the love of God that resides within. Our love for God and our neighbor exists because God first loved us. The law that He has written in our minds and hearts is the law of love.

Now I know that grand old principle of love has been reduced, decimated and bastardized in the vernacular of this

age. Love has come to mean primarily sex in any shape, form, persuasion, perversion or kind. Secondly it has been blasphemed to mean a total toleration and acceptance of all manner of religion, thought process, intellectual pursuit or debauchery. In this day, to openly disagree with someone or, God-forbid, to say that someone is wrong is to be guilty of intellectual bigotry.

I have yet to understand how my saying something is wrong makes *me* an intellectual bigot while those who say I am wrong for saying it does not make *them* an intellectual bigot. Today's definition of love is that it is a sin to say that something *is* a sin. The standard, however, had already been established and the laws and principles and written in the heart of the believer. Does he love God? Then he loves what God loves, hates what God hates and endeavors to keep himself away from what God prohibits (James 1:27; Jude 21-23). Love for God requires that anything that God prohibits be held in disdain and named for what it is, no matter the loud decrying of the morally and spiritually challenged multitudes (Numbers 33:52).

Believing God is not living in this world enwrapped in the soft down of a little comfy blue baby banky-banky, it is living in this world with a slashing broadsword in your bosom cutting away all that is against the love of God and all that is against the love of your neighbor. Loving God and your neighbor is not always playing nice. Every time our Lord displayed love for God and neighbor it resulted in men desiring His death. Do not expect otherwise. The most offensive thing in the universe is the preaching of the Gospel because it flows from loving God and loving your neighbor.

What is it to love God? What is it to love your neighbor? Look at Exodus 20:1-17. Verse 2 describes who the law is given to, in whose heart the law is written. The law is in the heart of those who have been delivered from the house of bondage by the sovereign power of God. Verses 3-11 describe what it is to love God! Those who love God will have no pictures, images, crosses, picture shows and such because they love God. They will not use the name of God in a vain way, stealing His glory, diminishing His power, will or purpose because they love God. They will rest in the finished work of Christ keeping that rest wholly every day they live because they love God. What is it "to love your neighbor? Look at verses 12-17 (Read and exp.). "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

This then is the measure, the standard, firmly fixed in the heart and mind of the believer, written there by the finger of God. As we study this book, this book of commandments, they all hang on loving God and loving your neighbor. The fact is that loving your neighbor is the fruit of loving God (1 John 3:16-18).

Read text: Deut. 4:1-6.

SIMILITUDE

5, Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the LORD my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the land whither ye go to possess it.

6, Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.

7, For what nation is there so great, who hath God so nigh unto them, as the LORD our God is in all things that we call upon him for?

8, And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law, which I set before you this day?

9, 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;

10, Specially the day that thou stoodest before the LORD thy God in Horeb, when the LORD said unto me, Gather me the people together, and I will make them hear my words, that they may learn to fear me all the days that they shall live upon the earth, and that they may teach their children.

11, And ye came near and stood under the mountain; and the mountain burned with fire unto the midst¹ of heaven, with darkness, clouds, and thick darkness.

12, And the LORD spake unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only² ye heard a voice.

13, And he declared unto you his covenant, which he commanded you to perform, even ten commandments; and he wrote them upon two tables of stone.

14, And the LORD commanded me at that time to teach you statutes and judgments, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it.

15, Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for ye saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire:

16, Lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female,

17, The likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flieth in the air,

18, The likeness of any thing that creepeth on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth:

19, And lest thou lift up thine eyes unto heaven, and when thou seest the sun, and the moon, and the stars, even all the host of heaven, shouldest be driven to worship them, and serve them, which the LORD thy God hath divided³ unto all nations under the whole heaven.

20, But the LORD hath taken you, and brought you forth out of the iron furnace, even out of Egypt, to be unto him a people of inheritance, as ye are this day.

21, Furthermore the LORD was angry with me for your sakes, and sware that I should not go over Jordan, and that I should not go in unto that good land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance:

22, But I must die in this land, I must not go over Jordan: but ye shall go over, and possess that good land.

23, Take heed unto yourselves, lest ye forget the covenant of the LORD your God, which he made with you, and make you a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, which the LORD thy God hath forbidden thee.

24, For the LORD thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God.

Deuteronomy 4:5-24

(Marginal heading: It is important to note that the New Testament, though not yet revealed, was in purpose and predestination already written. Therefore, the meaning of these Old Testament passages has already been established.)

In this passage Moses is calling on the people of God to obey the commandments that the Lord has and will give them for their life in the Land of Promise (v. 5). The people are commanded to keep the words given by God and are told that the result of doing so will be of great benefit to them and will redound to the glory of God (v. 6). In verses 6-7 our Lord speaks of the privileges of this people and the glory and greatness of the law.

Their privileges were great. The people are called to compare themselves to all other nations as to the magnitude of their blessedness. This nation is a picture of the church. Of all nations, there is none other like it. God is nigh unto this nation alone among all the nations of the earth. Its greatness does not lie in its vastness of visible numbers (7:6-8). Their greatness was found in the grace that was bestowed upon them (love, election, deliverance by sovereign might). Their greatness was that they were vitally connected to the God of all glory and grace. The blessedness of the church is that she belongs to God. He is nigh unto her, so nigh that He hears the voice of her supplications (Jeremiah 23:23; Psalm 145:18; Eph. 3:12; Heb. 10:19-22; John 14:13-14).

The laws that they have been given, the very laws that are written upon their hearts and minds are like none other. They bespeak the very righteousness, holiness and perfection of the God who gave them. These beautiful statutes and judgments fulfilled in love for God and love for neighbor answer every possibility and every situation. There is nothing so simply divine as the law of God. There is no situation or circumstance, no trial or tribulation, no moral or spiritual choice that is not answered fully and immediately by these blessed commandments. Whatever you face in this

sojourn in the world is covered by the love for God and the love for your neighbor (read v. 8).

In the verses that follow (including vv. 21-22 where Moses speaks of being disallowed the Promised Land [Num. 20:7-12]) a central theme emerges. The theme that emerges is that faith is the way, the only way, that the commandments are obeyed. Since the law is written on the heart, they are kept from the heart (Romans 6:17). This theme of obedience of faith is declared by God by using two principles and is established, and logically understood by one word. That word is “similitude” (vv. 12, 16). The commandment being addressed is the first law given from Sinai (Ex. 20:3-4). It concerns idolatry and is a constant theme throughout this book and is thus a constant reminder of the first precept of the law written in our hearts; “Love God with all your heart, soul mind and strength.”

The two principles that are set forth are these. First the people are told to remember what they have seen, and secondly they are told to remember what they have not seen. These two principles define the concepts of works and faith; law written on stone and law written on the heart.

The first thing has to do with what you have *seen*. What had the people seen? They had seen the presence of God manifest in the giving of the law on tables of stone. They had not seen God, but they had seen and felt the effect of the law given by Him. Before our Lord reminds them of what they had seen, He makes it clear that the law that He gave, though written on stone, is both holy and good, and worthy of obedience (vv. 9-10). The children of God both love and delight in the law of God and endeavor to keep its precepts and teach their children to do so knowing that it is right and

good and will eventuate in a moral and upright existence on this earth.

They also know that the principle of sin in their flesh inhibits and prevents them from keeping the law for righteousness or as a rule of life and apply rather to the Christ of God for their righteous standing before Him (Romans 7:12, 22-23). After asserting that the law is good, God then calls upon the people to remember what they had seen when they had heard the law that was written on stone and their reaction to it (V. 11, 13). How blessed is the word of God to remind His people that the law given on Sinai did not result in peace of mind but rather engendered fear. This is the effect on those who hear the voice of God in the Law, unless they are dead in trespasses and sin (Hebrews 12:18-21; Romans 7:12-14).

Legalists live in a state of fear They build their churches on fear and guilt. They not only preach the law as if it were yet on tables of stone but invent new rules and regulations, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. They fast for strife and debate and wield the fist of wickedness as the proverbial blunt instrument to keep people afraid of disobeying their convictions and make them fearful of suing for mercy based on the imputed righteous of Christ. Remember what you have seen ye who have applied to the law for righteousness...remember the terror of that mountain...remember the fire and the darkness ...remember that what you saw was Sinai without Calvary. Ye who would be under the law, do you not hear what the law saith. What the law saith it sayeth to them that are under the law; that every mouth might be stopped and the whole world become guilty before God.

The second thing has to do with what you have not seen. How sweet and precise is the principle of faith here presented (v. 12). The basis for obedience to the law prohibiting idolatry is not what you have seen or can see...those things produced only fear and dead works. The basis for keeping the law, the ground upon which the law is both revered and honored is what you have not seen but rather what you have heard. You saw no similitude of God; you heard the voice of His words.

Is not this the exact manner that Paul asserts is the very heart of faith? Look at Romans 3:24-31. What you saw and what you felt when the law was written on stone was that the very elements around you became fearful (Hab. 3:3). The atmosphere became fire and darkness. The boogey-man awaited around every corner. Every look from the eyes of religion brought guilt and shame. Every compliment was qualified. Every smile was suspect. What you saw was the effects on the world of the absolute God in the Law. Scary business that!

Shall we obey there? Can obedience occur where fire and darkness and shaking and terror attend every consideration of motive? Wait! You didn't see God there. You saw no similitude. You heard rather the voice, the words (John 1:17:18; 6:45, 63). The just shall live by faith. We walk by faith and not by sight and it is faith in the words of God that causes us to obey the commandment of God (vv. 15-19). How foolish this is to the world; that belief is based on us not seeing God. Think of it! The reason that we disavow and disallow any image of God, discount any religious indulgence, disdain any symbol or religious paraphernalia or

contraband is because we saw no similitude. Faith is so very logical and practical (vv. 23-24).

(v. 20) God brought us out of that iron furnace of the slavery of Egypt but we saw no similitude. He led us with fire and cloud, but we saw no similitude. He delivered us from our prison, but we saw no similitude. On Sinai His presence was manifest in fire and cloud but we saw no similitude. He spoke and we heard his words and believed His words because they were written on our hearts and because we saw no similitude. His words were that we were to love Him with all our hearts; Him whom we have not seen and so we do and will have no image because we love whom we have not seen (1 Peter 1:8-9).

So, we come to this hour. The world yet divided by faith and sight, by faith and works, by faith and law and the message is still the same. We yet see no similitude; we by faith understand the words that God has spoken. From the heart we obey the doctrine that was delivered unto us (Gal. 5:1-6; 1 John 5:1-5).

Read vv 23-24.

Faith which worketh by love.

THE TRUTH ABOUT GOD'S PEOPLE

25, When thou shalt beget children, and children's children, and ye shall have remained long in the land, and shall corrupt yourselves, and make a graven image, or the likeness of any thing, and shall do evil in the sight of the LORD thy God, to provoke him to anger:

26, I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that ye shall soon utterly perish from off the land whereunto ye go over Jordan to possess it; ye shall not prolong your days upon it, but shall utterly be destroyed.

27, And the LORD shall scatter you among the nations, and ye shall be left few in number among the heathen, whither the LORD shall lead you.

28, And there ye shall serve gods, the work of men's hands, wood and stone, which neither see, nor hear, nor eat, nor smell.

29, But if from thence thou shalt seek the LORD thy God, thou shalt find him, if thou seek him with all thy heart and with all thy soul.

30, When thou art in tribulation, and all these things are come upon thee, even in the latter days, if thou turn to the LORD thy God, and shalt be obedient unto his voice;

Deuteronomy 4:25-40

In the 103rd Psalm our Lord graciously reveals that “He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust.” In this

passage the truth that our frame is *dust* is revealed as well as the *grace* of God toward us.

After the Lord had commanded the people concerning His singularity and His law against the raising up any idol because, having never seen any similitude, their man-invented image would have been a god of their image-manufacturing mind. The warning was clear. If they pursued such vile activity, God would prove Himself a consuming fire because He was a jealous God.

Our text begins with the word “when.” It follows then that what is being spoken of will most assuredly come to pass, if not immediately; it lies somewhere down the road. Our Lord does not say “if” (that would state a possibility) but “when,” declaring that the sad report that He is about give concerning His people will come to pass. In doing so He is declaring the reality of our depravity realized in a continuous state of disobedience to the commands of God. Further He is declaring that the enjoyment of what we have received by grace is often lost or injured because of the old idol worshipper that resides in our bosom.

Our sad state of affairs is that though we would have it otherwise, the sin in us causes us to be unable to do what we would (Romans 7; Gal. 5). Idolatry runs amuck in us. Our biggest and the most prominent image that we create is the image that we have of ourselves. We find little difficulty in recognizing that others are depraved because we build our esteem by doing so. Unbelief in Christ is revealed in our belief in ourselves. We may not like to think about it but the fact that we apply to God only after exhausting every effort of our own, seeking our own counsel and finding ourselves woefully lacking. In doing so we disobey God, not loving Him

and not loving our neighbor. This brings trial and tribulations upon us. This causes us to forget what God has done for us. This is caused by taking our eyes off of Christ and turning them on ourselves. There is no possibility that this will change as long as we are in this body. So, concerning our future behavior, it is not in doubt. Our Lord thus begins the rehearsal of our depravity with the word “when” (Read v. 25).

Verses 26-28 declares the horrible dilemma that will be ours when we look away from Christ and imagine another god (us) to guide us in the way. Nothing will work for us. Every work, every effort will be as if the very heavens are brass to us and the earth and its forces are in league against us. Things around us, things we do never change much. There is nothing new under that sun. Whether we enjoy the benefits of heaven depends upon whether we see all things in Christ or through the false image we have created of ourselves. For the believer the world is a prison or a palace with few, if any, distinguishing degrees (v.26). Verse 27 is very real to the believer who has made his idols.

There is no lonelier feeling than to be out of the way. Our relationships as well as our thoughts are scattered. Even the brethren become a burden. We sometimes even stop availing ourselves to the Gospel time of worship finding that the longer we stay away the more difficult it is to return. We feel alone when we look away from Christ. For His appointed time, we will be scattered and brought to horrible places until He turns us back to Himself with new lessons and reminders of our utter dependence upon Him. As we have received Him by faith so we will walk with Him. As we have received in great need, so we will walk with Him or we will be

scattered and alone. Verse 28 reveals the depth and depravity of disobedience. The longer we stay in that estate, the more dependent we become on the image we have created. What we find at the end of that road is that the god who we have created in our minds is of no value. We have been seeking counsel from a blind, deaf and mute deity and it is *us*.

The remedy is embarrassingly simple; embarrassing because we find that Christ has not left and is still right where *we* left Him (v. 29). Note it does not say seek to redeem yourself by seeking the law or seeking to do the commandments, you have already proven your inability to obey the Lord. No, seek Him, with all your inmost being—seek Him from inside (all thy heart and soul), why? Because that is where He lives. The length of time you have been in tribulation doesn't matter—patience must have her perfect work—turn to the Lord and you will find Him (v. 30; Jer. 29:13). The reason that you will find Him is plain. He has considered you in the covenant of His mercy. He has chosen you and has sworn never to forsake you. He has not forsaken you; you have forsaken him. When you forsake Him, as we all surely will; turn and seek Him. He gives abundant reason why we should turn to Him and be confident that he will receive us.

In verse 32 He calls us back to one of the major themes of the book; to *remember*. Remember what? You have heard his voice (v. 33, 36; John 6:45; 10:26). He has, by His sovereign power, delivered you from the bondage of sin and has covered you, protected you, set a table before you in the presence of your enemies (v.34). He did all this to reveal Himself to you (v. 35). He has chosen you, elected you,

selected you and picked you out to be delivered by His almighty gracious hand (v. 37). He revealed to you that it was not by your strength but His and the purpose was to give you an inheritance (v. 38; Coll. 1:12; Eph. 1:11). He makes you to consider and know that the images that you have created, served, worshipped and sought are no gods at all (v. 39).

Just as he began with the absolute “when,” He ends with the absolute “Thou shalt.” Thou shalt keep therefore his statutes and His commandments. Only faith can grasp this. After the previous verses have declared that we will not keep his commandments, He declares that we *shall* keep His commandments. Oh, the glory of His grace. Oh, the unsearchable riches of His unchanging love. Our disobedience always affects our relationship with Him but never changes His relationship with us (Heb. 13:5-6).

How can disobedient servants be obedient servants? Look at Romans 8:1-4. He sees us in Christ and having given us faith to believe He declares that we establish the law (Romans 3:31). Us poor incapable disobedient children, idolaters all, have perfect righteousness charged to our account because Christ has fulfilled the law in both penalty and righteousness for us, and our Holy God who cannot lie says “thou shalt keep my commandments.” With the words “that it may be well with thee,” He declares our righteousness (Isaiah 3:10). He has given us eternal life (v. 40).

We grieve and well we should when we turn our eyes from Christ and end up in a world of trouble. We are ashamed of ourselves and must bear the trials and tribulations that attend our ignorant and sinful behavior but

though our confidence is shaken in ourselves, as it ought to be, it is never shaken in Christ. The moment we look to Him a flood of assurance rolls over us and we know in our heart and soul that all is well. How precious is His grace to the poor wayward saint. Grace and mercy are for sinners. Where sin does abound, grace has abounded more.

THY WORD

2, Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.

Deuteronomy 4:2

Many years ago, I heard Pastor Henry Mahan make a statement after having pastored for over 40 years that if he had it to do all over again, he would spend at least the first two years declaring the necessity of respect for the word of God. If one thing can be laid as an indictment against so-called Christianity in the last century and a half, it is that the word of God has taken a diminishing and even subsidiary role in churches throughout this land (e.g. Marvin and couple). Men in pulpits have convinced men and women in the pews that they hear from God in visions and dreams, that they have a direct line to new and exciting revelations from God and feel no reticence in claiming that God spoke to them personally (e.g. Swaggart, hell, bigger God). Extra-biblical revelation is the order of the day in religion. Men and women gladly wrest scriptures to their own destruction without even batting an eye.

Heresy abounds on every hand. Heresy simply means "opinion." However, heresy is conditional, it cannot exist unless there is absolute truth. Where there is no truth there is no heresy. Where there is truth, which by definition is *absolute*, any opinion is therefore heresy. To prove heresy, one does not need a theological counsel, a synod of clerics or an inquisition; all that is necessary is for one to hear the

truth and render an opinion (That's your truth!! = heresy). All that is necessary for you or me to be guilty of heresy is to offer an opinion in the light of what the Word of God has clearly declared.

Truth is to be believed, bowed to and embraced without question and is not the subject of debate or conjecture. Consequently, for a worm of the dust to presume to have the intellectual prowess to opine upon the truth is simply and precisely consummate heresy. Numerous scriptural illustrations of this are in this Holy Book. (Romans 3:19; shut up—your guilty; Romans 9:13-20; you are created; you have no right to question the doings of Him who created you; no rights! Job 33:13).

God has chosen the medium of words to convey to His people what they need to know. He has not spoken from Heaven in over 2000 years. He will speak once more when he sets this globe afire and makes all things new. Until that great day, we have what He has said, nothing more, nothing less and nothing else. God has spoken, it is written. Thus saith the LORD! Will you opine? If you do you are a *heretic*. Will you see that God's word teaches His sovereignty, predestination or election, and then, as many do, say that these things are too controversial, too hard to understand because the cost of bowing to the truth will more than likely bring about public censure? Then you are not only a heretic but a milquetoast cowardly one at that.

Thanks be unto God that He has fixed it so that His people, those whom He has made spiritually alive, know that there is no occasion or time that they may offer rightfully an opinion concerning the truth. They are not debaters, they are not logicians, they do not postulate, nor do they seek proof

by method of scientific trial and error—They are believers and as such they believe. (One day unbelief and the next belief.)

They are as Jasper, that old black preacher, ex-slave and believer when questioned by the scientists and neo-theologians of his day, about his message on God making the sun stand still for the battle in Joshua 10:13. “And the sun stood still and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Jasher? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hastened not to go down about a whole day.” The scientists and theologians, having learned from the astronomers that the sun didn't move but that the earth rotated about it and only made the sun appear to move, corrected Pastor Jasper for his ill-advised and uneducated statement. Jasper fixed his eyes on the scoffers, pointed to the Bible in his hand and said, “God said the sun stood still and if the sun stood still, then the *sun do move*.”

A believer believes—end of argument. What does a believer believe? The believer believes what God has written (1 John 5:13). The believer knows and understands what is true because he believes the word of God (1 Cor. 2:14-16; 1 John 2:18-21, 5:20). How does the believer know these things? He knows them by revelation! Something most wonderful took place when God, with the word of truth birthed His people anew. Look at Hebrews 10:12-18. This is the record of the glorious salvation accomplishing work of Christ on the cross and the regeneration of those for whom His sacrifice was made. They were perfected forever and made holy (v. 14).

They were given the Holy Ghost (new birth, regeneration) as a witness to them of what? The Holy Ghost bears witness to those perfected and holy ones of what God had said before—His word (v. 15). And what had God said? He had said that upon the completion of their redemption and salvation and sanctification and righteousness that He would write His laws (this word) in their minds and hearts (v. 16). Look at I Corinthians 1:30. Note well the order that God placed these things that Christ is made to the believer.

The first is wisdom! Why? Because without wisdom (faith, believing), righteousness, redemption and sanctification could not be understood much less believed. Believing is to them wisdom's response to the truth. No one may then ever claim to have arrived at faith or come to grace or understanding by study or intellectual pursuit. If you believe the truth, it is because God, upon regeneration, had supernaturally implanted His word in your mind and hearts, given you faith so that when you heard the truth, the Gospel of your salvation, you believed (Eph 1:13; Gal. 1:15-16; Romans 10:8).

Belief is the response of what God has written in your minds and hearts to the hearing of the Gospel, not learning something new. Is it a sure thing? *Choosing* in light of truth is heresy (opinion). (See John 10:26-30—which comes first the believer of the belief?) The Holy Ghost in us is the witness to us of the truth heard by us (Romans 1:15-17; 1 Thes. 2:13; Romans 8:16). That is why a believer believes and an unbelieving religionist renders an opinion and proves himself a heretic even if he has a good opinion (John 3; 2:23-3:3). Faith puts the crown of revelation on the head of the Savior (Matt. 11:27).

Read the text. God makes it clear to the people that nothing is to be added to His word and nothing is to diminish ought from it. He said the same thing in other places in His word (Deut. 5:32; 12:32; Proverbs 30:5-6; Revelation 22:18-19). This is not difficult to understand. It is cut and dried. Don't render an opinion in the face of truth, rather believe. Lest we, as believers might get the big head and become high-minded, we are admonished in the word that we are to be cautious lest when we think we stand, we fall. We are told that to think we are something when we are nothing is to deceive ourselves.

Paul had an opinion that if he performed some Jewish rites in the book of the Acts, he might have some influence among the Jews toward Christ. His ceremonial, heretical doings only accomplished more hatred for Him and the Gospel among those who he was endeavoring to win.

Mark thought that he had been a servant long enough and had the opinion that he was ready to be an evangelist in his own right and Paul cut Him loose saying that Mark didn't like to serve.

Simon Peter is a prime example that the very revelation of God to us is not a removal of the old man from us. We whom God has graciously and sovereignly saved, who have had the word of God written in our minds and hearts are only an opinion away from heresy (Matt. 16:13-17 then vv. 21-23). Praise be unto God that Christ has paid all our sin debt and God remembers our sin no more (2 Tim. 2:13).

How does religion add its *opinion* and therefore diminish the word of God? Generally speaking, the opinion that religion—the heresy put forth by them—has to do with righteousness before God. They opine that man is saved by

his righteousness, his meritorious service or if not saved by it, he is sanctified by it. In either case such belief is heresy.

The word of God is clear, precise and exacting. The righteousness by which a sinner is both saved and sanctified and accepted before God is the righteousness of Christ accomplished by the interceding life and vicarious death of Christ; which is received by the faith that only God gives for believing from the heart (Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:15-16; 2 Corinthian 5:21). Christ is our righteousness. No explanation is necessary or warranted because God has spoken, and it is done. Unbelieving religion is uncomfortable with a righteousness that they themselves do not have some part in, so they go about to establish their own (Romans:10:1-4). They earnestly feel that though grace may be sufficient to save it is deficient to keep.

They have not the word of God in them so they cannot respond to the truth by believing but rather opine (John 8:43-45, 47). They seek out many inventions, putting forth their personal convictions and regional sanctifications and speak of being led this way and that, being told this and that and seeing Christ here and there. Having heard from God, so they say, they convince foolish, silly men and women that their commandments have credence. They control men with their opinions by stating that their opinions, their heresies are the doctrine of God (Matt. 15:7-9). They prohibit men from enjoying what God has declared to be good, by perverting the truth with their opinion to gain advantage (Coll. 2:22; 1 Tim 4:1-3). They add to His word and prove heretics all.

God has spoken, there is no room for any opinion.

THE SABBATH

1, And Moses called all Israel, and said unto them, Hear, O Israel, the statutes and judgments which I speak in your ears this day, that ye may learn them, and keep, and do them.

2, The LORD our God made a covenant with us in Horeb.

3, The LORD made not this covenant with our fathers, but with us, even us, who are all of us here alive this day.

4, The LORD talked with you face to face in the mount out of the midst of the fire,

5, (I stood between the LORD and you at that time, to shew you the word of the LORD: for ye were afraid by reason of the fire, and went not up into the mount;) saying,

6, I am the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

7, Thou shalt have none other gods before me.

8, Thou shalt not make thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the waters beneath the earth:

9, Thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me,

10, And shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me and keep my commandments.

11, Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain: for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

12, Keep the sabbath day to sanctify it, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee.

13, Six days thou shalt labour, and do all thy work:

14, But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thine ox, nor thine ass, nor any of thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates; that thy manservant and thy maidservant may rest as well as thou.

15, And remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day.

16, Honour thy father and thy mother, as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

17, Thou shalt not kill.

18, Neither shalt thou commit adultery.

19, Neither shalt thou steal.

20, Neither shalt thou bear false witness against thy neighbour.

21, Neither shalt thou desire thy neighbour's wife, neither shalt thou covet thy neighbour's house, his field, or his manservant, or his maidservant, his ox, or his ass, or any thing that is thy neighbour's.

22, These words the LORD spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. And he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me.

Deuteronomy 5:1-22

One particular thing that stands out in the book of Deuteronomy is that though numerous commandments are given concerning life in Canaan, there is a continuous repetition of the Ten Commandments given on Mt. Sinai. Concerning the tribes of Israel, there were three reasons for this. The first is that they were in need of continuous warning about mixing with the gods of the pagans. The second was that these laws were the basis of all the commandments that would follow (being fulfilled in loving God and loving your neighbor). The third was that the words of God written on stone were the only written words that they had from God at all. So Moses, before he stated some different principle or commandment for life, repeated the written word and thus reminded the people that he was speaking for God (vv. 3-4).

Since the scripture clearly declares that all these things were written to picture Christ and His work for and in the church, these constant rehearsals of the written word are for our understanding. The reasons for the continuous preaching of Christ and Him crucified, the Gospel, are

basically the same for the church. Though false religion soon tires of the line upon line, precept upon precept, line upon line, precept upon precept manner of gospel preaching and sits in the marketplaces calling the preaching just a bunch of piping and mourning, wisdom is yet justified of her children.

The preaching of the Gospel warns us over and over of mixing or even tolerating that which is false. The preaching of the Gospel continually reminds us to love God and our neighbor. The preaching of the word of God is accomplished by the preaching of the Gospel, which is in fact the word of God, the written word as a record of the doings of the Living Word. One does not preach this word unless he preaches the Gospel. The Gospel is not contained in the word of God. The word of God is contained in the Gospel (1 Peter 1:25; Romans 1:16-17). The preaching of the Word of God is nothing more, nothing less and nothing else than a resplendent, redundant, reverent veneration of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

To say that there is more to preach than Christ or something other in this Holy book to preach than Christ is merely a revelation that the one who says such things has never met and does not know Christ. To know Him is to be forever enamored with Him and is to be consumed with Him; so much so that not to speak of Him is impossibility. If He is in you, He will leak out on you (Illus. Man and lion). This passage, as all others, if rightly understood, is the Gospel for it finally and gloriously points to the only one who ever kept this law, Christ. He having fulfilled it imputed the righteousness of it to every one of His people and then forever set it aside (Romans 8:1-4; Heb. 10:9).

Keeping that in mind, I want us to look at one aspect of this law reiterated by Moses; the law of the Sabbath (vv. 12-14). There are efforts among many well intentioned people (I'm sure), though decidedly in error, to make the first day of the week (Sunday) into the new Sabbath, or the New Testament Sabbath. It is not.

If the meaning of the Sabbath is to designate a day of the week, the Sabbath is Saturday and will always be. There are eight Sabbaths in the book of Leviticus, and all specifically relate to the first one mentioned, the seventh day. In these intricate and wonderful ceremonies of the other seven Sabbaths are pictures and types aplenty of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. The final Sabbath mentioned is the year of Jubilee which beautifully pictures what Christ did for us on Calvary. He returned to us what we lost in Adam, forgave us our debts, and freed us from the slavery of sin.

In all these detailed demonstrations of the work of Christ, one would be hard pressed to make it all about a day of the week. They, as well as the seventh day in the OT, are about a finished work and the blessed rest that follows. Paul, in no uncertain terms, declares that we, as believers in the person and finished work of Christ are never to allow anyone to judge us on the basis of the Sabbaths (Coll. 2:16-17). Why? (Look at vv. 13-15 "let no man therefore.") Remember too that no patriarch from Adam to Moses ever kept the Sabbath day until after Sinai. Were these patriarchs in a state of disobedience who found grace in God's eyes, whom God called the father of the faithful and who spoke to God face to face as a friend?

It is also interesting to note that after our Lord was crucified and buried, He was dead on the Sabbath. Does this not agree with Romans 7 that if we are married to Christ that we are dead to the Law and the Law is dead to us. We meet on Sunday, the first day of the week, because that was the practice of the early church in that Christ rose on the first day of the week. The Sabbath is not a day for the believer; it is the life of the believer who rests continually in the finished work of Christ (Hebrews 4:1-11). The believer keeps the Sabbath every day of his life.

Look at verses 12-15 of our text. Now turn to Exodus 20:8-11. I want you to notice that there is a different basis declared for the observance of the Sabbath.

In Exodus the basis for the observance of the Sabbath is the finished work of creation. In our text the basis for the observance of the Sabbath is redemption from the bondage of Egypt. Though the basis for keeping the Sabbath is different, the reason for keeping it is the same, namely, that the work of creation and the work of redemption were finished works. In both, human beings played no part in their accomplishment and all of the glory belongs wholly to God. Concerning the Sabbath (the rest), it is not to be kept based on what we have done, but on the basis of what God has done. Keeping the Sabbath is *resting* in the accomplished work of Christ. It means, as is made clear in the teaching of all the Sabbaths, that we have no part in the accomplishment of our salvation, and faith is simply laying down in the comfortable bed of spices called the *finished* work of Christ. Religion balks at this because its existence and its proliferation are conditioned upon works for righteousness. Religion is labor-intensive and multi-tasking

to the extreme and therefore disdains and slavishly fears any notion of doing nothing for salvation. Resting is anathema to religion but is the glad and full joy of the believer.

Both the finished work of creation and the finished work of redemption are the basis of resting in Christ, because they are but different aspects of the same thing; the salvation of the elect. The one thing that is paramount to us is that God in Christ is the actor and the believer is the one for whom and upon whom God acts. We will look at these as aspects of the rest wherein we find sweet rest in reverse order of their chronology in Scripture.

First in Deuteronomy 5:15 we find that redemption from slavery is the basis for our rest in Christ. The redemption here is by the substitutionary blood of the Lamb of God. Because of the blood, God passed over Israel in judgment, but remember that He poured out His wrath on every house in Egypt and got the blood of *every* first born there. He either got blood personally from *the firstborn* of every Egyptian or He got the blood of the *substitute*, the paschal Lamb (His Son), slain for His chosen race. The paschal Lamb was a type of the Lamb of God, Christ our Lord (1 Cor. 5:7; Rev. 5:9). (*Teleo*: John 19:28=accomplished; 30=finished; Romans 10:4=end; Heb. 10:14=perfected).

Salvation—redemption—belongs to God and He gets all the glory. The reason we rest in Christ is because in the matter of redemption, there is nothing left to do. To presume to do something or to have any part in our redemption is to declare that Christ did not finish it, and therefore make Him to be a liar. Because Christ has finished redemption and has entered into His rest, we keep the Sabbath by resting in Him. Religion's redemption is “do.” The believer's redemption is

“done.” Religion’s hymn is “we’ll work ‘til Jesus comes.” The song of the believer is “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain” and “‘tis done the great transaction is done.”

In Exodus 20:11, the basis for keeping the Sabbath is that God finished the work of creation in six days and on the seventh day, with nothing left to do, He rested. In the New Testament salvation is said to be a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17; Gal. 6:15, Note in 2 Cor. Old things are gone, e.g. the Sabbath, law, ceremonies) and all things are of God (v. 18). In Galatians neither the keeping nor *not* keeping of the law is anything, but rather a new creature and all is based on the work of Christ [v. 14, 17]). See: Revelation 4:11, Ephesians 4:24, Ephesians 2:10. Believers are a new creation, a thing called into existence by the word of God. No man would be so foolish as to assert that he created himself, or that he had any part in creation. Yet, many are so foolish as to attribute their salvation to their will or decision.

Salvation is a new creation, the bringing forth of a new creature and only God is the creator. In fact, the creation of the world is nothing more than a picture of God saving the sinner. Look at Genesis 1:1-5. Here is the account of the creation of the natural world. It is a statement of fact, but not one that can be proven by scientific principle, though many a fine individual have spent their life trying to do so. It is a fact received by faith (Heb. 11:3). Being of faith, it has to do with salvation (Eph. 2; 8-9. John 6:45). It may be said that God created the world in the manner that He created it to show us how He accomplished the new creation (Luke 24:45-46).

How did He do it? Creation/salvation begins and ends with Christ (Gen. 1:1). (See: Isaiah 46:9-10: John 1:1-3: Rev.

1:8. 3:14). It is clear that there is a change between vv. 1 and 2 in Genesis 1. The original word for “was” literally means “became.” Many emphasize this and insert what many theologians call the “gap theory” asserting that God would not make anything that was without form and void. I do not disagree with the assertion of this but rather the reason for inserting a theory used to explain the spans of unrecorded history enveloping the different ages put forth by the evolutionists. We need not spend our time trying to disprove evolution because it can no more be proven than what we believe.

The creationists, though well intentioned, miss the boat when they try to make the creation about the natural world—it is about salvation. Let the evolutionists speak their piece. They are just trying to explain why man is so great, as compared to the apelike creatures and saying, “see how far we've come.” The believer looks at Christ and says, “see how far we have fallen.” Verse two of Genesis is a picture of the fall of man, the crown of God's creation becoming ruined, dead, formless and void, and falling into utter darkness.

Verse 2b speaks of the Spirit of God moving upon the face of the waters. This is an interesting phrase and paints a wonderful picture of the work of the Spirit of God in the revelation of the salvation wrought by Christ. The word moved depicts hovering or fluttering as an Eagle hovers and flutters over her young watching and protecting them. This is the security of the elect even before they hear the Gospel. One man said that you are immortal till God is done with you. The Spirit is said to move “upon.” This is not speaking so much of a location but rather the basis upon which the

Spirit moves (hovers) or the *ground* upon which the Spirit operates.

We know that *ground* to be the person and work of Christ (John 16:8-11). He hovers upon the ground of the “face of the water.” Waters point to Christ—the water of life—and the word of God employed in regeneration (Titus 3:5). The face is where the glory of God in salvation is revealed (2 Cor. 4:6). Verse 3 speaks of the revelation of Christ by the word of God. The sun, moon and stars were not created till the fourth day. This is the first day, the day of salvation and the first word of salvation is let there be light. Christ is the light of the world He is that light that shines out of darkness. He is the light of understanding, “the entrance of thy word giveth light and giveth understanding to the simple” (James 1:18). The light was good (v.4), which is part and parcel with the revelation of the glory of God (Ex. 33:18:19).

In verse 4b we see the results of election. God divides the light from the darkness. Remember, He has not yet created the sun to rule the day and the moon to rule the night. This is the dividing of His redeemed ones from the unredeemed ones (Ex. 8:22, 23; 9:4; 11,7; 12:43). Look at

In v. 5 God calls the light Day (Luke 1; 16; 2 Pet. 1:19). The darkness He calls night (John 3:19-21). Rest in the fact of the finished creation and redemption.

SUCH AN HEART

22, These words the LORD spake unto all your assembly in the mount out of the midst of the fire, of the cloud, and of the thick darkness, with a great voice: and he added no more. And he wrote them in two tables of stone, and delivered them unto me.

23, And it came to pass, when ye heard the voice out of the midst of the darkness, (for the mountain did burn with fire,) that ye came near unto me, even all the heads of your tribes, and your elders;

Deuteronomy 5:22-33

As we look at the book of Deuteronomy it is important to keep in mind that the laws and commandments given to the people are conditional. The blessings and or penalties attached to the commandments were executed based on the obedience or disobedience of their federal head and representative, Adam (impossible). Under the New Covenant revealed in the New Testament, the laws and commandments were still conditioned upon obedience by their mediator and representative, the Lord Jesus Christ. In Adam, the people's first representative and federal head, the people were already guilty of Adam's sin and were all thus transgressors of the law.

This was proved by two undeniable facts. Everybody sinned, and everybody died even before the law was given on Sinai (Romans 5:12-14). In Christ, the second man, the last Adam, the federal head of the elect, the people of God are made righteous by the obedience of Christ. Their redemption complete and their salvation accomplished, they live in the

righteousness imputed to them, just as the descendants of Adam lived in the sin that was imputed to them (Romans 5:19). Because they were already guilty of Adam's sin, there was no possibility of them keeping the law, because every effort was brought forth from a sinful mind and heart. Neither could the elect of God keep the commandments, but their representative did and accounted it to them as if they did (Romans 8:1-4). So when we read these commandments, resist the temptation to think that we can keep them. They are worthy to be kept but are death to those who try (Romans 7:10-11). Thanks be unto God who, by Christ, kept them for us and *imputed* the righteousness of keeping them to us. In the Old Testament “ye shall keep” means that *you* must keep them; in the New Testament “ye shall keep” means that *you will* keep them.

In vv. 22 and 23 Moses rehearses the account of God giving the law on Sinai, relating it to hearing the voice of God from inside the fire that lit up the mountain. In vv. 24-27 Moses recalls the reaction of the people as they spoke to Moses about what they had seen and heard. In verse 28, Moses tells the people the reaction of God to their remarks about what they had seen and heard. Look at verse 28. Our God says of this people that “they have well said all that they have spoken.” This is quite a thing for God to lavish such a compliment upon this people. It would be worth our time to consider what they said that brought about this response of God.

First they spoke of the glory of God in His gracious dealings with them and their unworthiness to have been afforded such a privilege (vv. 24-26). In awe and gratitude and reverence they speak in amazement that God has

spoken to them and they are yet alive to tell it. Having heard the voice of God, they are also concerned that having been allowed to live after hearing his voice, they are afraid to hear it *again* because they fear they will die if they hear it again (Heb. 12:19-22). Their fear was reverential, realizing who God was and what they were.

Secondly (v. 27) they spoke well by asking for a mediator, a daysman, someone to stand between them and the Holy Majesty that spoke through fire. Having a sense of the nature and character of God, they saw that they needed someone who could approach God and also approach them. Though Moses was to be this mediator, this request of a fearful people is only met perfectly in the one mediator between men and God, the man Christ Jesus who, as God can meet face to face with God and as man can meet face to face with men (Job 9:33; Heb. 8:1-7; 9:15; 12:24). Thirdly, they spoke well (though lacking in understanding) in that they intended to hear and obey the statutes that God gave to Moses (Romans 7:25).

In verse 29 we see the truth of the matter. Though the people's intentions were good, they were not equipped to keep the promise that they had made. This is not the lament of a wishful God but is rather a gracious word of upbraiding. The words can be rendered "who will give (it) that they should have an heart." It is painfully clear that such a heart does not exist in the people to keep the promise and fulfill the desire that they have expressed. "Who will give it?" They cannot give it to themselves, nor can any man give it to them! Unless and until God gives them a new heart, they will do nothing more than to speak well, desire well and make empty promises (Ezekiel 36:26; Jer. 32:38-40). It is upon the

new heart and the renewed mind that God writes His laws. With a new heart people will fear (reverence, worship, love, serve) the Lord (v.29). With a new heart people will “keep all of God's commandments, always.” With a new heart it “will be well with them forever” (Isaiah 3:10)!

In verse 30 and 31 we see a transition. God sends the people to their tents and begins to speak to Moses. How blessed this is, how sweet the music of eternal purpose. God speaks to the mediator “But as for thee.” We are privy to enter into the eternal councils of God as He commissions His Son, the mediator of the New Covenant, to do for the people what they *cannot do for themselves* (Read: Psalm 110). “But as for thee”; stand here by me” (Proverbs 8:23-31; John 1:1) —“and I will speak unto thee all the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which thou shalt teach them” (Isaiah 54. 11-14; Matt. 7:28-29; 13:54; Matthew 28:19-20; Gal. 1:11-12; Gal 3:19). “Ye shall observe to do therefore as the Lord your God hath commanded you” (John 6:38; 10:14-18; John 17:1-4). “Ye shall not turn to the right or the left.” (Isaiah 50:6-7; Luke 12:50; 13:32; John 12:27-33). “Ye shall walk in all the ways which the LORD your God hath commanded you, that ye may live” (Matt. 28:6; Luke 24:5; John 14:19). “Well with you” (Phil. 2:8-11). “That ye may prolong your days” (Isaiah 53:10; Romans 6:9). “In the land which ye shall possess.” Note the pronoun (Ye shall possess). (Read Deut. 4:21-22). God is speaking to the Mediator, not Moses—Christ possesses the Promised Land; it is Immanuel's land, Zion bought with a price (Psalm 24).

ONE GOD

1, Now these are the commandments, the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go to possess it:

2, That thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all his statutes and his commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.

3, Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee, in the land that floweth with milk and honey.

4, Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD:

5, And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.

6, And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart:

7, 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.

8, And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes.

9, And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

10, And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which he sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not,

11, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full;

12, Then beware lest thou forget the LORD, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

13, Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name.

14, Ye shall not go after other gods, of the gods of the people which are round about you;

15, (For the LORD thy God is a jealous God among you) lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth.

Deuteronomy 6:1-15

Here in this passage Moses begins to teach the commandments of our Lord to the people who will go and possess the land that the Lord has given them (v.1). In verse 2 he reveals the reason why these commandments are to be taught to the people. The first reason is that the hearing and observing of His words would bring about a healthy and reasonable fear of the Lord. The children of God know that the word fear does not mean a slavish, superstitious fear but rather a true reverence for the person and character of God

that result in love, worship and service to His name. This does not, however, discount that, part and parcel, with the respect we have for God is an understanding that He is God and that He is high above us in thought, word and deed (Gen. 19:27). The child of God does fear God in the true sense that he never wishes to presume anything, and because the believer is yet a sinner, he fears ever coming to the place of believing that anything he does, thinks or says will stand on its own merit. The believer's fear of God drives him to the blood and righteousness of Christ alone for acceptance.

Verse 3 is a gracious promise to those who believe God, hear and observe His commandments. Understanding that this is a spiritual truth for true Israel, the church of God, we know that this is not a condition placed upon the believer's obedience (Christ obeyed for the believer), but rather a warning or admonition to the believer that while in a state of disobedience, the benefits that Christ has wrought for the believer cannot be enjoyed. The standing of the believer before God can never change. He will and does possess the land, the grapes of Eschol are his as well as the milk and the honey but if he fails to see that they are all by grace he will not enjoy them and the relationship he has with God will be marred (v.10-12) {you did nothing, you have what you have because God saved you...don't forget that}.

Verse 4 is the reason why hearing, observing, fearing, and obeying the word of God is required. He is God, the only God and the one true and living God. Knowing Him is life eternal (John 17:3). These commandments are not the result of the efforts of a political body, the vote of some legislature, the by-laws of some religious organization, some ancient

confession of faith, some monthly business meeting or church council. The weight of these things, the gravity and power of these things is that “the LORD our God is one LORD.” Many use this verse to deny the trinity, but “they do err not knowing the scriptures nor the power of God.” The verse itself is ample proof of the trinity.

Two names of God are set forth in this text. The name LORD is Jehovah. This name means the existing one and is primarily used in reference to Him being the one Savior. Christ used this language to describe Himself (Rev. 1:4 [existing one]; John 10:30; Col. 2:9). The second name used in our text is (God) Elohim. This name means “to worship” or the “One to be worshipped.” What is interesting about this name is that though it is written as if singular, Elohim is a plural noun*” It is plural for the name “Eloahh.” The intimation, rather declaration, is clear. This speaks of the triune Godhead (Matt. 3.16-17; 1 John 5:7). Rather than being a proof that there is no trinity, this passage is a proclamation of the trinity. He is One Lord in singular glory and is thus worthy of the honor and glory due his name (Psalm 29. 1-2, 9). Why worship Him? Why serve Him? Why obey Him? Because that is His *due* “the LORD our God is one LORD”

Verse 5 begins with the word “And.” This is the natural progression of the realization that He is *who* He is. Since “the LORD our God is one LORD,” He has absolute claim on all your love. The hearty soul and mind represent our whole being and makes us exclusively bound to worship the LORD our God. This is the first and greatest commandment (Matt. 22:36-37). As all the laws were given not to raise us to some higher level but to reveal our utter ruin, this is then the first

measure of our depravity (Gal 3:19-25). Thank God that though we would if we could, but we can't, our blessed Savior did love God with all His heart, mind, soul, and might (Rom. 8:1-4). Though the believer is a miserable failure in this, it is still the primary and guiding principle of his life. The law of it condemns us. the grace bestowed upon us puts love for Christ at the forefront of our thoughts and choices (Romans 7:25). Love for Christ is the only acceptable incentive for doing what we do. Thanks be unto God that He has written the law in our hearts (v.6; Psalm 37:31; 2 Cor. 3:3)!

Verses 7-9 are an illumination of what Moses said in verse 2b "all the days of thy life." The word of God is to be perpetually taught and rehearsed. The gospel is not a simple plan of salvation which men think they have learned and therefore feel free to venture into some other area such as eschatology of ecclesiology. The Gospel is "the unsearchable riches of Christ." "Teach them diligently" is one word and the word is "whet," as in sharpening a knife or sword. As a knife dulls with use so it must continually be honed. That it is to be a perpetual venture is declared in no uncertain terms; talking, sitting, walking, lying down and getting up—teach (2 Tim. 4:1-4). Bind them on your hand (remember them); as frontlets between thine eyes (look constantly to them); and write them on the door and gates of your house (Fill your vision and your view with them—live in them). Teach the Gospel to your children and your children's children (Eph. 6:4) all the days of your lives.

Verses 13-15 are the conclusion of the matter. Fear (love, worship, adore, reverence, be in awe of) the LORD. Serve the LORD, give Him glory and take care of His people. Swear by

His Name. Invoke no other name. “The LORD our God is one LORD” therefore there is only One person to count on, One person that is everlasting—One person to swear by. Particularly this refers to other gods, which are but idols (v. 14). Since “the LORD our God is one LORD,” there is no other god to consider. All false gods and their false religion are to be disowned and never sought after. Why? Verse 15. “The LORD thy God is a jealous God.” Jealousy is, for lack of a better description, an emotion. This emotion has to do with entitlement. On a human level, people get jealous because they believe that they are entitled to the affection of the one they love. A simple understanding of their consummate unworthiness and depravity would dispel any notion of entitlement. With humans beings jealousy is groundless vanity. With God, however, Jealousy it right and warranted. He is entitled to your absolute affection, allegiance, and loyalty (v.5). To go after another god is alienation of the affection that is due God alone and He is thus rightfully jealous because He alone is entitled to your singular, loyal worship.

The latter part of verse 15 declares the end of such alienation of affection. The last phrase of verse 15, “lest the anger of the LORD thy God be kindled against thee, and destroy thee from off the face of the earth,” means that the people would be overthrown, taken captive and scattered throughout the earth. There are three applications here. First, under the old covenant, it means exactly what it says and is proved by the fact that Israel was overthrown, taken captive and scattered. Secondly, for those who profess faith in Christ yet seek other gods, their end will be destruction. Finally, for the believer who falls into the net of idolatry, he

will be overthrown by it until the Lord delivers him from it. While he is in that estate, he will have no fellowship with God and the joy of salvation will not be had. Be warned and beware. God will have the affection of His people because He is *entitled* to it.

YE SHALL NOT TEMPT THE LORD

16, Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah.

Deuteronomy 6:16

Generally speaking, this passage is most often used in reference to careless behavior. (Illust. Clara on the mountain—She was right). Because of a fatalistic view of the sovereignty of God, men and women put their lives at risk, or practice all manner of behavior because they believe that things are going to be how they are and that makes them to be *not responsible* for their actions. The devil can use the doctrine of sovereignty as well as he uses the doctrine of free-will.

Fatalism forgets, by choice, that God is a God of means and as such has ordained those means, often unknown to man, to bring things to their appointed end. The fatalist believes what will be will be and therefore feels that it is permissible to prove God, to try God and see if He will really keep His word. The believer believes that what God *wills* will be and as such is sovereign over all things, but He has revealed that sovereignty in His word, and thus, as a believer, he is to hear and obey the admonitions and warnings of scripture. The fatalist looks at sovereignty in a vacuum. He sees it as alone, powerful, and undeniable. To the fatalist sovereignty is an unchanging god. The believer sees sovereignty as an attribute of the sovereign God who rules this universe according to His *word* (Psalm 138:2). He thus looks at sovereignty as it is revealed in the person of God, by the Word.

The fatalist believes sovereignty removes accountability. The believer holds that sovereignty demands accountability. The necessity of hearing the Gospel, believing the Gospel and repenting according to the Gospel are edicts from the sovereign God. Some would say that, if God is sovereign then the preaching of the Gospel is not necessary for salvation, or that if God has elected who He will save, they will be saved whether they hear and believe the gospel or not (Why preach, Why pray?—these are means ordained by the sovereign God). They *use* sovereignty to *deny* the sovereignty of God. Fatalism is only logical if one is willing to deny that God has said how things are and are to be. Ultimately, it is the old sophomoric argument, that if God is sovereign then I can run out in front of a car, and if it is my time I'll die, and if it isn't I won't. Our Lord had something to say about that. Look at Matthew 4:5-7).

A fatalistic view of sovereignty is a practical denial of the existence of sin. A drunkard can believe that he's right with God because God is sovereign and controls all things and therefore, He must have meant for me to be a drunk. He can't find fault with me if He made me like I am. Romans 9:19-23 makes it clear that God will put up with you and use you in your stupor for His glory and the salvation of the elect and all the while hold you accountable for your drunkenness, because He has forbidden drunkenness in his word (1 Cor. 6:9-10). He can and does do this because He is God and cannot be questioned on any level as to His doings. "He does not give account of His matters." The believer seeks to understand what God has declared in His word, that he might do what God has said for him to do. Why? Because God is sovereign!

In our text, however, the words “Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God” spoken by Moses are not referring to a general view of sovereignty. These words are specifically related to the Gospel of Christ. Notice that Moses qualifies the tempting of the Lord with reference to a particular incident “as ye tempted Him in Massah.” We must look at how the people (as ye) tempted the Lord at Massah in order to see what this tempting of the Lord is.

Turn to Exodus 17:1-6. In verse 2 Moses asks the question “Wherefore do ye tempt the Lord¹. At first glance it seems that this tempting has to do with their thirst. I expect I would complain if I was in the desert without water. It is not the complaining that tempts the Lord but rather the *manner* in which they complained. Scripture declares that “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” What is *in* their heart is revealed in the fact that they chided *Moses* because there was no water (v.2). Secondly, they turned the work of God into the work of man by accusing Moses of bringing them out of Egypt. They were glad enough when they sang on the shore of the Red Sea watching Pharaoh's army sink to the bottom like a stone. They were glad enough for deliverance but not ready to believe God (v.3). In time they would even desire a man to take them back in Egypt (Num. 14:4).

The gracious remedy of their plight was delivered *in spite of* their sin. God gave them water from the smitten rock. That rock was Christ (1 Cor. 10:4). All the benefits that God has for man are in Christ and Him crucified. Even those who live and die in their sin owe the fact that they are recipients of the sunshine and the rain and are not immediately punished in hell for their sin, to the gracious fact that God has put all

things in the hands of the mediator for the salvation of the elect. All of these who drank from this rock, who were over twenty when they came out of Egypt ended up as carcasses in the wilderness. What benefits have they who live in the Gospel age, who live and flourish in the world yet perish in earshot of the Gospel? These tempted the Lord by looking to Moses as the source of help rather than believing God.

We know that all these things are typical, and this particular incident is about the crucifixion. Here is the God of Glory standing on the rock (Christ) as Moses (the law) smites Him for the sins of the people (imputation, substitution satisfaction). Of this there can be no doubt. What then is the manner in which the people tempted the Lord? Look at verse 7. They tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us or not.” At the heart of their tempting was *unbelief*. They did not believe and sought the help of a man (Moses, the Law) to meet the desires of the flesh. So we have Christ, who is received by faith alone. We have the people in unbelief, seeking the law for the satisfaction of the flesh.

Keeping that in mind I want us to look at the first Bible conference ever held and the issue that brought it about and the subject of every Gospel Bible conference until this day. Look at Acts 15:1-9. Paul and Barnabas had been preaching the Gospel to the Gentiles. They had believed, and upon their confession of Christ as their salvation, they had been received by Paul and Barnabas as well as the church as full, complete brethren. These had never been under the law of Sinai and knew nothing of the circumcision. They were believers. They drank from the rock and “out of their bellies flowed living waters.” They were believers and therefore were saved, plumb saved, freely saved and fully saved. They

worshipped God in the Spirit, rejoiced in Christ Jesus and had no confidence in the flesh. They were free from the constraints and the ordinances of the law. That which was contrary to them had been nailed to the cross and they were the Lord's freemen.

There were certain men who felt that believing God was good but *insufficient* for the salvation of the soul. They really believed that God saved the soul but that was not sufficient. They believed that the *law* saved the flesh. They believed this because doing the law satisfied their flesh (Coll. 2:23; Acts 15:1, 5). They applied to Moses for what only God could do—redeem their body as well as their soul. So, they discounted the believers as brothers until they were brought under the law. They were teachers of the law “understanding neither what they say nor whereof they affirmed.” Paul and Barnabas came to Jerusalem to confer with these Judaizers and there was a great deal of disputing between the grace men and the legalists. In verses 6-9 Simon Peter sets things in order.

Now look at what Peter accuses these legalists of doing (v. 10; Gal. 5:1). This is what our text is speaking of as the manner in which the people tempted the Lord. They discounted the grace of God by introducing the Law of Moses. They in fact were saying when they heard that the gentiles were received as brethren by faith, “is the Lord among us or not.” This is the ploy of the legalist. He does not out-rightly express his views but uses the law to cast doubt and suspicion on faith (Is faith enough? Is believing Christ enough?). They assert that since the law is in the Bible, as well as grace, we might just be safer if we incorporated both

into our lives; other wise we really won't know whether the Lord is with us or not.

But Simon's "yea was yea" and his "nay was nay" (vv. 10-11). What is it to *tempt* the Lord? *It is to try to bring a believer under the law.* It is to preach the law for redemption, salvation, sanctification, wisdom and righteous or even as a rule of life. Christ is *all* of these. Christ is all or *nothing* at all. The rock has been smitten, come and slake your thirsty soul. Do not ask Moses to get you the water; all he did or could do was smite the rock. The law had its day with Christ, and having fulfilled it in every jot and tittle, it is dead and buried by God where no one can find it. To believe or practice otherwise is to *tempt* the Lord, and God is quite clear on this matter "Ye shall not tempt the Lord as ye tempted Him at Massah, saying, is the Lord among us or not."

THE SPIRIT OF THE LAW

17, ¶ Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the LORD your God, and his testimonies, and his statutes, which he hath commanded thee.

18, And thou shalt do that which is right and good in the sight of the LORD: that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest go in and possess the good land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers,

19, To cast out all thine enemies from before thee, as the LORD hath spoken.

20, And when thy son asketh thee in4 time to come, saying, What mean the testimonies, and the statutes, and the judgments, which the LORD our God hath commanded you?

21, Then thou shalt say unto thy son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt; and the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand:

22, And the LORD shewed signs and wonders, great and sore, upon Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his household, before our eyes:

23, And he brought us out from thence, that he might bring us in, to give us the land which he sware unto our fathers.

24, And the LORD commanded us to do all these statutes, to fear the LORD our God, for our good always, that he might preserve us alive, as it is at this day.

25, And it shall be our righteousness, if we observe to do all these commandments before the LORD our God, as he hath commanded us.

Deuteronomy 6:17-25

Before we look at this passage some things need to be said about the law.

The first thing is this: the law is spiritual, and it is only about Christ. This is simply the fact. There is no occasion, there is no mitigating circumstance, and there is no time that the law is not about Christ and his successful redemptive work wherein he glorified God in the salvation of the elect by His substitutionary sacrifice (Acts 10:43; 24:14; Luke 24:26-27, 44-46).

Secondly, when the law is referred to in the word of God there are three applicable meanings:

1. The law under which we are all condemned in Adam (in the day ye eat);
2. The law given to Israel from Sinai;
3. The whole of the divine cannon—this book (law written in our hearts and minds) cannot be understood naturally (1 Cor. 2:14).

Thirdly, men have given themselves permission to play fast and loose with the law, especially that which was handed down at Sinai. Men, men of religion, considering themselves to be doctors, have performed a kind of surgical procedure on the law. They have taken up their theological scalpel and have made a bloodless incision that has to their mind dissected the law into two parts.

The two parts have been given names. One is called the *moral law* and the other is called the *ceremonial law*. Though the law is *one* as God is *one* (v.4), men have made it into two and thus the law has been confounded and is confusing. *One* thing is never confusing. *Two* things are always confusing (Chinese proverb).

Why was this done? What prompted men to run this game, perpetrate this hoax. This was done primarily so that men could exercise control over others. By speciously slicing the law they can then divide it into their foul and fiendish notions of positional and practical salvation. This being done they feel free to turn other singular things into dualities. They can take the doctrine of imputed righteousness (positional) and add what they call “imparted” righteousness (practical). Imparted righteousness addresses work on the basis of duty. Imputed righteousness approaches work on the basis of thanksgiving and love for Christ.

The doctors of duality set forth the teaching that Christ is our sanctification (positional) and invent the notion of “progressive” sanctification (practical)—then occupy the pulpit with two arrows in their quiver rather than one. They can happily declare that Christ has finished the work of salvation and has made us accepted before God, even seem to glory in our secure position. Then, with the deftness of a sorcerer, they speak out of the other side of their mouths declaring that the moral law is the way by which men establish a personal holiness and righteousness before God. The problem with this (other than the fact that it is grade-A Oscar Mayer Bologna) is that *the law is about Christ*. All of it is about Christ and therefore there is no place for man. It is not about man concerning its accomplishment or it's keeping on any level. This rips from the washed hands of these forensic surgeons the ability, the right or the warrant to control others by guilt, fear of censure, promise of rewards or threat of punishment.

With the law divided into the ceremonial and moral, the practitioner of the practical can hold sway over his hearers

and thus make a fair show in the flesh and glory in their flesh. Such run into problems in the scripture. First, the word “moral” is not found anywhere between the covers of this book. Secondly, the law being spiritual has nothing to do with and cannot be kept by the flesh (Romans 7:9; 12; 14, 23). In fact, when the law entered that horse had already run (Gal. 3:19; Romans 3:19). Thirdly, the law does not address *behavior*, it addresses the spiritual principle of sin *in us* and the spiritual principle of the righteousness of Christ. (Illustration: how did Christ live? He lived perfectly, kept the law and fulfilled it [exp]. Look at John 6:41-42; John 7:5 then Matt. 12. What was He doing? He was perfectly keeping the law! One other thing: Christ has fulfilled the law in and for every believer.

Having said that:

This passage (Deut. 6) begins with the repetition of one of the specific themes of this book of Deuteronomy. “Ye shall diligently keep the commandments of the Lord your God.” It is important that though these commandments fall under the old covenant; are designed to reveal the sin of men and that no one could attain acceptable righteousness before God by them; they are still to be *diligently* kept. This teaches us some very important precepts.

The word “diligently” asserted that the keeping of these commandments was not an *option*, even though the covenant under which they were established was temporal and conditional. Half-heartedness is an abomination to God. It shall be *perfect* to be accepted. Give *diligence* to make your calling and your election sure.

The divine order to keep these commandments has not been rescinded or mitigated to any degree. They are still

holy, right and good and are to be kept perfectly. There is no problem with the law (Romans 7:12-14). The believer, under grace and not the dominion of the law, must, nevertheless, stand before God with a perfect record concerning the law, or he or she will not be accepted. We, as Paul did, thank God through Jesus Christ that He kept the law for us, delivered us from its bondage, removed its right to rule over us, and by His life and death fixed it so that we have the righteousness that is the law fulfilled in us (Rom. 8-1-4). This great and gracious truth does not cause the believer to hate the law or discount the soundness and beauty of its precepts (“with my mind I serve the law of God”).

The believer's desires concerning the law are greater than that of those under the Old Covenant. He desires to keep the *spirit* of the law because the law is spiritual. He desires to not only adhere to the commandments but loves what they teach, the meaning of them that transcends what the natural man can do or perceive. He desires to meditate upon them and see the glory of his savior in them. Paul, by his own testimony (inspired by the Holy Spirit), kept the letter of the law (Phil. 3:4-6), but after being brought to faith saw that the letter was not the true meaning of the law (v.7). His desire was to keep the spirit of the law (v.8; Romans 10:4). The believer then does not apply to the letter of the law but the spirit of it, the end and purpose of it; which is Christ (all the law and the prophets). The believer “*diligently* keeps the commandments of the Lord his God.” (Sabbath—establishes the law, loves God and neighbor).

Verse 18 gives a sense of what it is to keep the spirit of the commandment. Often when a thing to be covered is expansive, the Spirit of the Lord will set the expanse forth in

generic language. For example, rather than list the vast numbers of our transgressions (all of the volumes in the world could not contain them), the scripture simply, and graciously declares that Christ died for our sins, or that God has separated us from our sins as far as the east is separated from the west. With one fell swoop all our sins of commission, omission, ignorance; all our sins of thought, word and deed are rolled together under a single heading; “our sins.” This relieves us of the unbearable task of trying to list all our vileness and warms our heart to know that no matter what they are they are forgiven by God in Christ. It takes our eyes off ourselves and turns them to Him upon whom all “our sins” were laid and by whom all of our debt was paid. In our text, the vast number of commandments is reduced to a generic, two-fold precept (really one because both words mean *pleasing* or *to please*). Note that the words “that which is” are italicized. Here then is the sum and substance of all the commandments and the manner in which they are diligently kept. Do right and good in the sight of the Lord. What is right and good in the sight of the Lord? Obeying His commandments is what it is to do right and good in His sight. And where is His law? How shall we remember them all? How will we know what is right and what is wrong? The believer knows. The law of God is written in the hearts and mind of the believer (Heb. 10:16). It is the body of spiritual evidence (the word of God) upon which faith rests and that which faith believes. Faith pleases God and is the working principle in the believer that causes Him to do right and good in the sight of the Lord (Heb. 11:1,6; Romans 3:31, Gal. 5:1-6; John 14:15, 23). The believer's diligence is that he keeps the *spirit* of the Law.

Once again, our Lord reiterates another principle of keeping the commandments. In verse 19 the keeping of the commandments is primarily based on the first commandment. "Thou shalt have no other Gods before me." This constant reminder is throughout both the Old and New Testaments (vv. 14-15; 2 Cor. 6:14-18). Any mixture is absolutely forbidden. A man cannot serve two masters; else he will love the one and hate the other. These commandments are to be kept because they proceeded from the only true and living God. No other god and no other commandments were, or are to be, countenanced or given any credence. It is well for those who keep them, they possess and enjoy the land that God has provided.

Look at verse 24. Keeping them is to fear (love, reverence, worship and honor) the Lord. Keeping them is for your good always, and your eternal preservation (Jer. 32:38-42). Read v. 25. The believer, having kept the law in Christ, has the righteousness of the law fulfilled in him spiritually.

This passage (v. 24) is about the spirit and not the letter of the law. If you applied to a legalist for the meaning of this context, he would give you rules and regulations and use guilt to get you to continually examine yourself, to see where you are missing the mark. Such cannot give true peace, so they put before you two imaginary creatures. One is a person who believes grace and lives in austere rigidity, solemnity, sobriety and iridescent piety. The other is a person who believes grace and is a careless, profligate and lives in an embarrassing state of sinfulness.

They then seek to have you despise the bad one and aspire to live like the good one. They assert that this is what it is to keep the commandments, knowing full well that you

will forget the good one and merely reason that you are not like the bad one. You suddenly are a righteous man in your own eyes because you despise the unrighteous apparition in your mind (Luke 18:9). Such know not the spirit of the law, they have fallen from grace and, to a person, are rebels without a clue. Our text makes that clear. Read verse 20. There you have it! There is the question of the day. What do these statutes and judgments and commandments of our Lord mean? This is what they mean, and this is *only* what they mean! This is how you explain the meaning of the commandments.

Read vv. 21-23. We were in the bondage and Egyptian darkness of the slavery of sin. The king of sin was our master. We were slaves four times over; slaves to sin, servants of Satan, reigned over by death and glad servants of self. The LORD (Jehovah Savior) brought us out of that horrible slavery by His mighty hand, by His sovereign power and His sovereign mercy and grace. It is a wonder how He did it. He preserved us to this day by the blood of the Lamb. When He saw the blood, He passed over us. His justice and wrath assuaged by the sight of the blood of the Lamb of God, he wonderfully, fully, freely and forever delivered us. He destroyed our enemies. He being greater in power than the one who held us captive, came into that strong man's house, bound him and ripped us from his grasp, right before our eyes.

He brought us out to bring us in. He brought us out of the kingdom of darkness and brought us in to the kingdom of light. He brought us out of the bondage of sin and brought us into the freedom of perfect righteousness. He brought us out of the kingdom of Satan and brought us into the

kingdom of His dear Son. He brought us out of debtor's prison and set us among princes. He brought us out of abject poverty and brought us into excess wealth; behold all things are ours! He brought us out of our pathetic peonage, our sorry serfdom, our hellish helotry and brought us to the throne room where kings and priests abide. He brought us out of spiritual death and brought us into endless life in His Son. He brought us out to give us the promises and they are all yea and they are all amen, in Christ the Lord.

“That doesn't explain the meaning of the commandments!” Does too! “All you did was rehearse the Gospel!” There you go! The only way to understanding what these commandments, statutes and judgments mean is to declare the Gospel. *The meaning of the law is the Gospel.*

INCENTIVE

1, When the LORD thy God shall bring thee into the land whither thou goest to possess it, and hath cast out many nations before thee, the Hittites, and the Girgashites, and the Amorites, and the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than thou;

2, And when the LORD thy God shall deliver them before thee; thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them; thou shalt make no covenant with them, nor shew mercy unto them:

3, Neither shalt thou make marriages with them; thy daughter thou shalt not give unto his son, nor his daughter shalt thou take unto thy son.

4, For they will turn away thy son from following me, that they may serve other gods: so will the anger of the LORD be kindled against you, and destroy thee suddenly.

5, But thus shall ye deal with them; ye shall destroy their altars, and break down their images, and cut down their groves, and burn their graven images with fire.

6, For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth.

7, The LORD did not set his love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people:

8, But because the LORD loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

9, Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;

10, And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face.

11, Thou shalt therefore keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them.

Deuteronomy 7:1-11

(See vv. 1-5). The recurring theme of every chapter thus far has been that in order to function and enjoy the land that God has given there must be a *total* rejection and destruction of false, pagan religion. Our Lord saw fit to continually repeat this premise, because it is the one thing that is a continual source of trouble to the believer and a constant assault on the truth. The Bible is replete with the same message. Unlike the notion of this day that there must be acceptance of every form of religion, there is a zero-tolerance policy in the scripture concerning everything that is not the Gospel (Gal. 1:8-9).

The *one enemy* of Christ while He walked this earth was *false religion* that He described as doing iniquity in the name of Christ (Matt. 7:21; John 8). It is clear that under the Old

Testament economy this intolerance was to eventuate in the personal destruction of all the trappings of that which was false (text: vv. 1-7). Under the New Testament economy, the intolerance of false religion is utter and complete separation in doctrine, worship and practice (2 Cor. 6). Though the Old Testament policy of search and destroy does not apply today, the premise is still the same. The proclamation of the Gospel in its singularity and preciseness is the discounting, disallowing, disowning and destruction of all that does not line up with it. Since the Gospel is singular, there is nothing else. Straight is the gate and narrow is the way.

The reason for this separation is declared in vv. 6-8. This declaration begins with the word “For” (because), which sets forth what follows as the incentive for the destruction of that which is false. Religion does its share of separating itself from that which it deems evil. This separation is legal in nature, moral in practice and is done with an eye on producing an acceptable righteousness before God. Our text lays waste to that notion, even under the language of the Old covenant. The reason for such separation is that God has been gracious to us of His own will and accord. These are to do what they do, to separate from the false, to allow no mixture; *not* in order to be righteous and holy but because God has made them holy (1 Cor. 1:30; Eph 1:4).

The first reason given as incentive for the commandment of destroying idolatry is that God has made His people holy (1 Corinthians 6:11; Hebrews 10:10; 1 Corinthians 1:2; Jude 1:1; 1 Peter 1:2). How are we holy; by the substitutionary work of Christ. This holiness is a state of being, not a progressive estate. There are no degrees of holiness.

The second reason given for this separation is that God has chosen us (John 15:19). Religion holds election as a reason for pride. God declares it to be a reason for forsaking all others and clinging only to Him. An understanding of election casts human pride into the dust where it belongs. How can one reasonably take pride in something he had nothing to do with (v.7)? (See: 1 Cor. 6:20; 7:23; Romans 3:27; Eph. 2:8-9).

The third reason given is that He chose us to be a special people unto Himself (to be, Eph. 1:4, 12...not to *act* or *try* but to *be*). By the blood and righteousness of Christ God has made His people to be a special people (Coll. 1:12; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9). Jewel (Mal. 3:17; Deut. 32:9). You are “above all people that are upon the face of the earth.” How so? You came from the dunghill to the palace of princes. Christ has made you kings and priests. All things work together for your good. No weapon formed against you shall prosper. Say to the righteous; it shall be well with thee. He hath made you to sit in heavenly places in Christ.

The fourth reason given and the primary reason for all else is that God loved His people (v.8). Love brought justice, judgment and wrath upon our substitute because God loved us (Gal. 2:20; Eph 2:4-6; 1 John 4:10. Revelation 1:5). His people do not separate from all that is false to incline God's heart toward them; they do what they do because He has loved them with an everlasting love.

The fifth reason given for separation is the God has done what He has done for you according to his covenant (His oath). He is a covenant God and His covenant is the eternal covenant of grace (Election, predestination, surety, accomplishment). Note the positive language—He would keep

His oath. That sounds good to me because what follows is the content of that oath—"brought you out by sovereign will and power"—"redeemed you" from the bondage of slavery, sin, Satan and self.

The sixth reason given for disallowing all that is against God is that He has given His people assurance (v.9—know). *Know* that He is faithful (Ps. 89:28-34; 2 Tim. 2:13; 1 Thes. 5:24). He keeps covenant and mercy with them that love Him. Those who love Him are those whom He has caused to love Him (1 John 4:19). His love for us is the cause of our love for him. If we love him then we have assurance because we know He has loved us. "(they) That love him and keep His commandments" (1 John 5:1-3).

The seventh reason given is that those who oppose God will be dealt with in justice without Christ (v. 10) Therefore—(v. 11).

PROMISE

12, Wherefore it shall come to pass, if ye hearken to these judgments, and keep, and do them, that the LORD thy God shall keep unto thee the covenant and the mercy which he sware unto thy fathers:

13, And he will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee: he will also bless the fruit of thy womb, and the fruit of thy land, thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep, in the land which he sware unto thy fathers to give thee.

14, Thou shalt be blessed above all people: there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle.

15, And the LORD will take away from thee all sickness, and will put none of the evil diseases of Egypt, which thou knowest, upon thee; but will lay them upon all them that hate thee.

16, And thou shalt consume all the people which the LORD thy God shall deliver thee; thine eye shall have no pity upon them: neither shalt thou serve their gods; for that will be a snare unto thee.

17, If thou shalt say in thine heart, These nations are more than I; how can I dispossess them?

18, Thou shalt not be afraid of them: but shalt well remember what the LORD thy God did unto Pharaoh, and unto all Egypt;

19, The great temptations which thine eyes saw, and the signs, and the wonders, and the mighty hand, and the stretched out arm, whereby the LORD thy God brought thee out: so shall the LORD thy God do unto all the people of whom thou art afraid.

20, Moreover the LORD thy God will send the hornet among them, until they that are left, and hide themselves from thee, be destroyed.

21, Thou shalt not be affrighted at them: for the LORD thy God is among you, a mighty God and terrible.

22, And the LORD thy God will put out those nations before thee by little and little: thou mayest not consume them at once, lest the beasts of the field increase upon thee.

23, But the LORD thy God shall deliver them unto thee, and shall destroy them with a mighty destruction, until they be destroyed.

24, And he shall deliver their kings into thine hand, and thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven: there shall no man be able to stand before thee, until thou have destroyed them.

25, The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it is an abomination to the LORD thy God.

26, Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house, lest thou be a cursed thing like it: but thou shalt utterly detest it, and thou shalt utterly abhor it; for it is a cursed thing.

Deuteronomy 7:12-26

As we looked at last week, the motivation and governing principle of separation is that God had loved us, chosen us, kept His covenant with us and has delivered us from the bondage of sin, self, and Satan that is represented by the slavery in Egypt. What follows here in vv. 12-26 is a further illumination of that truth with the added fact of the absolute and assured victory of the church in the world (Matt. 16:18). The words of our Lord in this passage are words of promise. There is really no conditional language, so we know that our Lord is speaking of the covenant of grace wherein Christ fulfilled the law for us by His blood, death and righteousness.

The promise that God's people will be separate from that which is false, is sure, as are all the promises of God. They are yea and they are amen in Christ. This does not remove our responsibility to be vigilant in the matters of avoiding and discounting idolatry. In fact, it is upon the fact that we have these promises that we “perfect holiness (separation) in the fear of the Lord” (2 Cor. 7:1). The greatness of the word is that it declares a thing will be accomplished, and upon that assurance, the believer is diligent to make it come to pass. The believer's efforts do not change or cause the outcome, and he knows it, but acting on the sureness of the promise, he seeks to make it so in his life (1 John 3:1-3).

Today we are not confronted with the obvious idolatry that the people of God had to face in the land that the Lord had given them. The stone and wooden gods were everywhere. The pagan worship was so obviously not of God that there was no difficulty in identifying it. Over the years subtle and sometimes almost indiscernible changes have

taken place. This evolved by embracing either all or some of the truth but incorporating or tolerating the false things in order to avoid censure and to gain acceptance with the general religious populace.

There are blatant examples such as the statue of Jupiter in Rome. Until Christianity came to Rome it was the statue of the false God Jupiter. Sometime after Christianity was introduced, rather than destroying or discounting the false god, the religious leaders renamed the statue. They said it was a statue of Simon Peter, whom they called the first Pope. That statue has since been kissed so many times on the foot that its toes have been almost completely worn off by the idolatrous petitioners' lips and all in the name of Christ. Most of what the believer encounters today is more subtle. Keeping the law for morality reasonably equates to righteousness in the religious mind. Prayer, study and church membership reasonably equate to merit in the religious mind.

Doing great religious things reasonably equate to knowing God in the religious mind (Matt. 7). False preachers do not deny Christ, the work of the Holy Spirit or the Gospel. They use these names and terms but are false (2 Cor. 11:3-4, 13-15). The greatest threat of today's idolatry is the ecumenical notion of compromise. The battles we fight are both outward and inward (Phil. 3:17-19; 2 Cor. 10:4-6). There is a continuous battle that rages for every believer, but the victory is sure. This is the teaching of this passage. This is a picture of the Church going into the world with the Gospel, assaulting the domain of Hell with the power of God unto salvation. The idols of religion are cast down by the truth. The victory is sure!

This assurance is based on the fact that in Christ, we keep the law and therefore qualify for its attendant blessings (v. 12). Note the marginal reading. The word “if” is actually “because.” No condition is addressed. Our Lord is speaking to those who keep the law. The list of promises reveals the Glory of Christ's work on behalf of us, and are all ours because in Him we keep the law.

God keeps His covenant of mercy for His people. There will not be a time when we are not under the mercy of our blessed God. His mercy endureth forever.

His love and blessings will be multiplied to us (Eph. 2:17-19).

The corn, kine and wine are sustenance and joy in the Lord (v. 13 [even in rebellion—Gomer]). The fruit of the womb and increase of flocks are relative to the success of the Gospel according to the covenant of promise (2 Cor. 2:14-15; John 10:14-15; 26-30; Acts 2:39; Romans 8:29-30, 2 Thes 2:13-15). No barrenness (v. 14; Gal. 4:26-27). The Gospel knows no miscarriage.

Being blessed above all people refers to our righteous and accepted estate in Christ (Col. 1:20-22; “accepted in the beloved”).

(v. 15) The sicknesses and diseases of Egypt refer to the slavery of sin, the judgments against the unrighteous and the onslaught of Satan. God will put none of these upon us.

(vv. 16-21) assured us that the enemies of the Gospel will not prevail against the church of God. Though their numbers are great, there are more of us than there are of them (2 Kings 6:8-17; Num. 14:9).

(vv. 22-23). This promise is made as an encouragement against impatience in possessing the promise. His is the

power that is equivalent and more to the destruction of all the enemies at once (v.21). However, God destroys the enemies a little here and a little there. He does so in the text so that the beasts of the field that feast on the carcasses will not overwhelm the people of God. The Lord however will destroy them *all* and deliver their leaders into the hands of the people, and their names will be banished from the earth.

There is a very blessed application to the Gospel here. It works in the invisible world. It snatches the elect from the jaws of the enemy one at a time and in *due* time. Here a little and there a little. No credit can be given to anyone but God for it. Even though it is but one here and there, religious carnivores soon knock on the door (baptism in the Yucatan). The ravening wolves are but a few to pounce upon that one who has died to the world. A former enemy (Romans 8:7-8; 5:10) is now a son and ten thousand angels meet the wolves that would devour. One day, all the enemies will be gone and in the *heavenly* Canaan *all* the enemies will be gone (Rev. 18:2; 19:17-21). The means used to accomplish this is the Gospel (sword).

(vv. 25-26) Our responsibility. (2 Cor 6:17-7:1)

TO PROVE

1, All the commandments which I command thee this day shall ye observe to do, that ye may live, and multiply, and go in and possess the land which the LORD sware unto your fathers.

2, And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.

3, And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live.

16, Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end;

Deuteronomy 8:1-3,16

In these words, our Lord sets forth a doctrine of paramount importance. These verses teach that everything that God does has a purpose beyond the obvious. The initial reason for the forty years sojourn in the wilderness was the unbelief of those above 20 years of age when they were delivered from Egypt. The forty years that it took to make the eleven days journey was to “prove” or test these people who remained as to whether they would walk in the

commandments and judgments of the Lord. One might assume from these words, that God was at a loss as to the end result or that He did not know the outcome.

How they would fare was never in question (chap. 4:25-28). The proof obtained was for the benefit of the believer, the sinner saved by grace. There is no possibility that a human can profit or progress under a conditional covenant. Natural Israel is scattered throughout the world to this day and the proof remains. No man, as he is born into this world, is able to keep the commandments, statutes and judgments of God. Here were a people who were fed, clothed, protected and cared for during a space of forty years. They were given a priesthood, atonement, laws and statutes that would only benefit them if followed. They were, of all the people of the earth, the only ones spoken to by God. Never in the realm of natural human history can this be said of any other nation and yet their privilege proved their undoing. They proved themselves rebels all, save for two characters which stood as the sound doctrine of salvation by grace. Only Joshua and Caleb (the savior and the faithful dog), two out of the entire original multitude, stepped foot in the Promised Land.

There was ample proof that God cared for this people. Their clothes and shoes did not wax old for their forty years of use. They were fed manna from heaven, their daily bread. When they asked for flesh to eat, God sent them fowl along with leanness to their soul. When they were thirsty, the rock that followed them gushed forth with thirst slaking refreshment. They were covered by day with a cloud that blocked the heat of the sun and by night were illuminated by a fiery pillar. They had everything necessary to survive and even flourish, but they were murmurers and complainers

and were never satisfied with what God had provided. Natural men were *proved* by the goodness of God. They were *proved* to be rebels against their kind, benevolent creator and provider.

There, however, was a greater truth proved by their rebellion; a truth that would set all things in proper perspective for the ages to come. "By the works of the law shall no man be justified in God's sight." The law brings the verdict of guilty on all charges from which there is no possibility of appeal or hope of reprieve. The poet wrote "I found I could not keep the law, nor hope nor comfort from it draw." The thing proven, which is the underlying purpose of God's dealings with this people, is that man is proved natural and not spiritual by saying in his heart that what God supplies is not enough.

To this multitude, the blessed manna became "loathed *light* bread." The rock that gave water proved to be the end of Moses' journey with this people and he never set foot in the Land of Promise. Rather than being humbled by the absolute care of God, they were offended by their absolute *dependence* upon Him for all things. This finally teaches the overriding principle of grace and the offense of the Gospel. Either a person is satisfied with what God has provided or he is proved a natural man and not a spiritual man.

The intent for all this is clearly stated in the latter part of verse three and is the manner in which the laws and statutes are kept and is the means of complete satisfaction with the singular provision of God. The manna that God gave to humble and prove the people of God, as to whether they would be satisfied, pointed to faith later to be revealed (Gal. 3:22-23), "That He might make thee know that man does not

live by bread only but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live.” The manna was given to *prove* if man would be *satisfied* with the true Manna, the Lord Jesus Christ. The thing about the true Manna is that it is only received by faith and that based on the words that proceed out of the mouth of God—the Gospel of the Sovereign Grace of God.

Thus the proof, the hard and difficult proof, yea the impossible proof of man's standing before God, is whether he is satisfied with what he has never seen, cannot taste, touch or feel, and cannot prove—that Christ died in his room and stead, that he possesses perfect righteousness before God, and none of what he does or does not do counts anything toward the eternal salvation or righteous standing of his never-dying soul. This is both a humbling and *proving* experience. It is to be satisfied with what God has given and nothing else. The justified live by faith, “every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.”

Belief is not hard; it is *impossible* unless God gives faith freely through the words that proceed out of His mouth. This then is true humility. It is not posture, or facial expression or some self-effacing act that really is designed to draw attention to self. Humility is being humbled by God and that by only one thing—Christ is all. It is not Christ plus religious activity. It is not Christ plus personal righteousness. It is not Christ plus assuming responsibility for self-recognition. It is not Christ plus something for me to do. It is not Christ plus anything. It is Christ *minus* everything.

It is to hear the words that proceed from the mouth of God and rejoice to say, “It is enough! It is all! It is everything I do now need or ever shall” (Genesis 33:9, 11)! Will this do

for you? Is this the total satisfaction of your soul, your mind, your heart? Will this and only this do when the world, family, friends and acquaintances desert you for visible greener pastures? It will be more than sufficient if you have it, and never sufficient if you don't. Oh, give me Christ or I die! By Him the righteousness that is in the law is fulfilled in every believer. By Him no record of the believer ever having sinned exists. By Christ, history is worked for the believer's welfare. And here is the rub—nobody can see it.

To the world, especially the religious world, what the believer has, being invisible, is nothing at all. Religion must see to believe. Religion must be busy to give credence to its existence. Religion cannot survive without its visible contraband. It makes absolutely no sense to religion that the manna that God gives, the spiritual Manna, this invisible life, is of any value. How can one keep score? How can one see progress? How can one be recognized? How can one plumb the depths of the deeper life or scale the ethereal atmosphere of the higher life?

Be reminded that our Lord lived in absolute, pristine, perfect, pure and unsullied righteousness for 33 years among sinners, and the stars of religion nor anyone else knew, or even had a clue as to what righteousness was. As a man He lived in faith, believing God doing everything He did for the glory of God and the eternal good of the elect and no one saw it, perceived it or understood it. The result of His immaculate perfection was that He was called a wino, a devil, a fraud, a blasphemer and was given to suffer the ignominious death of the cross. Why? Because He lived by every word that proceeded out of the mouth of God (1 Cor. 1:21-24).

The believer, still residing in the body of this death, is not exempt from the enticements of *sight*. We also long for recognition and validation. There is a part of us that is uncomfortable with the fact that we can prove nothing that we believe and often we long for someone to be aware that we live as we say we believe. Sad to say, we may even get some recognition, and when we do, we will be embarrassed that we enjoy it to the extent that we do. When we are able to think clearly we find ourselves ashamed that our enjoyment of recognition is in fact an admittance that Christ is not enough, that we are not living by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, but also by the words that proceed out of the mouth of men. Thank God that we poor wretched sinners live in hope (Romans 8:24). We live by promise. Look at verse 16, “To do thee good at thy latter end” (Jer. 24:4-7; 29; 11).

Finally, note here a wonderful thing. In verse 5 (Deut. 8:5) our Lord says that the giving of the manna was chastisement. We rarely think of Christ and His Gospel as such, but the fact is that the singularity of Christ, the oneness of the Gospel is precisely what strips from us all hope but Christ. It is painful for a human being to be stripped of all his assumed worth and value, to be exposed for what he is. We hide our shame well, but every one of us would shudder to think that we might be discovered for what we really are inside. But the Gospel discloses that we are nothing, possess nothing and can do nothing acceptable to God—the Gospel, the manna proves us and humbles us because it strips away all the veneer of our presumed merit and its “to do thee good at thy latter end.” What do you have? The Manna! What can you provide as evidence? The

Manna! What will you have in the end? The Manna! It is enough, it is all! It is divine chastening “to do thee good at thy latter end” (Hebrews 12:11). What is the book of Hebrews really about? Christ is all! What is chastening in the book of Hebrews really about? Christ is all! Look at Hebrews 12:1-2; 18-29. “To do thee good at thy latter end’

CAUTION!

7, For the LORD thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills;

8, A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey;

9, A land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness, thou shalt not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills thou mayest dig brass.

10, When thou hast eaten and art full, then thou shalt bless the LORD thy God for the good land which he hath given thee.

11, Beware that thou forget not the LORD thy God, in not keeping his commandments, and his judgments, and his statutes, which I command thee this day:

12, Lest when thou hast eaten and art full, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein;

13, And when thy herds and thy flocks multiply, and thy silver and thy gold is multiplied, and all that thou hast is multiplied;

14, Then thine heart be lifted up, and thou forget the LORD thy God, which brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage;

15, Who led thee through that great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought, where there was no water; who brought thee forth water out of the rock of flint;

16, Who fed thee in the wilderness with manna, which thy fathers knew not, that he might humble thee, and that he might prove thee, to do thee good at thy latter end;

17, And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth.

18, But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.

19, And it shall be, if thou do at all forget the LORD thy God, and walk after other gods, and serve them, and worship them, I testify against you this day that ye shall surely perish.

20, As the nations which the LORD destroyeth before your face, so shall ye perish; because ye would not be obedient unto the voice of the LORD your God.

Deuteronomy 8:7-20

The word of God is declared to be that which discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart. The beauty of this is that since the Word is already established in heaven and has not and will not change, the truth about God and about us is sure and unchangeable.

Just a few weeks ago I preached from John 9 about the blind man who was healed by Christ. Part of that message was about the natural bent of humanity to assign blame to the sinfulness of someone or his or her family when some horrible calamity occurs. Our Lord answered this poor view of things by asserting that this man was blind by decree of

God, for the glory of God, and neither he nor his parents had sinned and thus caused this man's blindness.

Unknown to me, a lady who had just received some distressing news about her daughter's health had been invited by Clora to worship that day. She came, not only distressed by her daughter's diagnosis of apoplexy, but having undergone the brunt of her family's accusations that she has done something wrong to bring about this illness upon her daughter. After the service she marveled that it seemed that the message that day was specifically for her and had set things in a right order in her mind. She wondered if I had been told of her dilemma.

After assuring her that I had not been told I told her that when the Gospel comes home to the heart it is as if someone has been reading your mail. This is one of the aspects of the power of the Gospel It is always exactly what is needed. It is always true about humanity because the course of humanity is a tale that has already, not only been told, but also described in detail. Thus, we are aptly warned and admonished about the effect of the world upon us because, as far as our response to it goes, the verdict is already in.

For me, and I'm sure for many of you, the reading of these words of our text tonight brought about feelings of discomfort. When I first read it, the words went straight to where I live, and I was made to confess that I was reading my biography. These words are not only warnings but are descriptions, sure estimations of what we are and what our response will be to the manifold blessings that we have received and we must thus watch and pray and give diligence to the heart for out of it are the issues of life.

It is important to remember that this is the law. This is Deuteronomy or the *second law*. This being so, several things are true. The first is this. If adhered to it would produce good results, but the law was not given to make men better but to reveal how vile they were in the light of God's holiness. The law was added because of transgression (Gal. 3:19). Secondly, the law is spiritual (Romans 7:14). Simply stated, this means that no son of Adam can either understand it, keep it or do it (1 Cor. 2:14). There are no exceptions to this. So, these folks to whom these words were spoken were unaware of the meaning of these words. Only in the light of spiritual life are these things understood. The understanding of spiritual life is that these things reveal our inability and sin.

We are still unable to keep the precepts and we know that these were never meant to make us better. They drive us to the one who kept them for us. The law and the testimony, the law and the prophets spoke of Christ (John 5:40). These are not moral incentives. The word moral is not even found in the scriptures. Those who seek to define the law as moral and ceremonial are mistaken (been there, done that). Their desire is usually to make the non-ceremonial aspect of the law to be applicable to behavior and an incentive to righteous. The law is not a moral incentive; it is the *revelation* of our gross sin and immorality and is about Christ and His righteousness. The law never operates except in the realm of sin (Romans 6:14).

Since the law was added because of transgression, the things described in our text are revelations of our transgression and must be viewed as such. (Read the text again). The manifold temporal blessings described are all by

the good grace of Our God (v. 18). These are representative of the blessings of the Gospel. Thus it is revealed that sinners saved by grace will in time take for granted what God has done for them. How sad is our estate, that though we have received so much from God (all spiritual blessing in Christ), we will, not might or could, but *will* fail to remember that it is God who has done it all for us. This does not address possibility or even probability but rather it addresses an unequivocal absolute. The law was added because of transgression.

The key word to understanding that which is before us is the word “remember.” What are we called to remember? Do I as a minister rehearse the law before you? Is the preacher to apply to the law to threaten or cajole you into better behavior? Is the preacher to set about to explain the law as if it will make you better, or bring to remembrance that which will help you? No! That which you are to remember is the *goodness* and the *grace* of God, which was rendered to you without consideration of your lawlessness (vv. 14-16; 18). The understanding of the law in its *spirituality* comes only in the declaration of the Gospel (6:20-23).

The law is spiritual and only by the Gospel will we know and remember that we are “carnal sold under sin” and that we are continually shut up to grace. We have not come to this place by *our* wits or *our* ability (v. 17). We are what we are by the grace of God and nothing else.

The preacher's job is to continually call you to remembrance of God's grace and therefore comfort you with the knowledge that you are not under the law but under grace (Isaiah 40:1-2). The Gospel is a call to remember what

God has done for us in Christ (2 Tim. 1:6, 2 Peter 1:12-15; 3:1; Phil. 3:1-3).

Some will say that such teaching destroys responsibility. I would remind such that the words responsible or responsibility are not in the Bible. We are admonished to remember, and remember and never to forget, and the only way that is accomplished is a constant, continual, resplendent, redundant declaration of the Gospel. Only in the Gospel do we see the spirituality of the law and the glory of its total fulfillment in Christ. Listen to the words of a very wise man (Prov. 30:7-9).

GRACE AND HOLINESS

4, Speak not thou in thine heart, after that the LORD thy God hath cast them out from before thee, saying, For my righteousness the LORD hath brought me in to possess this land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD doth drive them out from before thee.

5, Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

6, Understand therefore, that the LORD thy God giveth thee not this good land to possess it for thy righteousness; for thou art a stiffnecked people.

Deuteronomy 9:4-6

This chapter begins with the words “Hear, O Israel.” This phrase is used only five times in all the word of God. It is found four times in Deuteronomy and once quoted in the Gospel according to Mark. The word “hear” is not referring only to listening but is in the imperative mood and therefore carries the full weight of the authority of the one who is speaking. The word itself means to “hear, understand and to obey.” So, Moses is saying something that bears considerable portent. The words that follow may not be debated or counted as matters of indifference. The principle or principles that follow such a declaration are written in the heart and mind of God and can and will never be altered.

The first thing spoken is the glorious promise that though the nations over Jordan are great and mighty nations, so great that they have become the fodder of lore and have even ascended to the status of legend (2b), the people of God are assured absolute and unconditional victory over them (vv. 1-3). This fact, this principle, as it is eternal, still stands today and is what is commonly referred to as the Doctrine of Sovereign Grace. This is revealed in the words of our text, verses 4-6. The victories that await them, that await you as a believer, the struggles, the battles, the final possession of the land that God has given and all the blessings that attend your life in Immanuel's Land are yours solely and consummately by the free grace of Almighty God. Three times in verses 4-6 our Lord declares that all that they possess and shall possess cannot be attributed, in any degree, to their own righteousness. But (v. 5) our Lord asserts that all that they possess and shall possess can only be attributed to His holiness against sin revealed in the destruction of the enemy. He states this truth in this way. You will possess this land because I will destroy all your enemies and for no reason of your own, especially not your righteousness.

God, knowing us infinitely better than we know ourselves, declares this promise wrapped in a warning. Our tendencies, always plagued with the bent to self righteousness and self exaltation, are to look to the battles that we have won and begin to say in our hearts that we must have done something right for things to end so favorably for us. This is part of the mystery of grace, and faith which accompanies the bestowing of grace. Notice in verse 3 two things. First, the battle belongs to *God*. He, as a

consuming fire, will destroy the enemies before our face. Yet, since it is we who will be in the fray, though enabled by the power of God we most often stand timidly in the face of our enemy. He yet says of us that *we* drive out and destroy the enemy. After the battle is won, of the two truths embodied here (*God* did it all, and *we* won the battle), which of the two do you think that sinful man will be most inclined to dwell on. Of course, we would take credit for the win, we cannot help ourselves—we are sinners. So, God warns us to think right in this matter, lest we presume that our righteousness, and this is important, “*our* righteousness” whether it is falsely conjured personal merit or even the imputed righteousness of Christ. Be assured, *neither* is the cause of our victory (v.4). The cause of our victory, the reason for our possession of the blessing of God is that He must and will punish sin. It is not our righteousness but rather it is His *holiness*.

The interesting thing here is that the wickedness of these nations, these enemies, is not defined or listed by God. The remainder of the passage is dealing not with the wickedness of the enemies but with the proof that the chosen of God are not *personally* righteous. Something else that is interesting is that the sins that are rehearsed in the ears of the people, fairly well define the wickedness of the nations that are about to be destroyed.

We see this by remembering the one warning that God gave to this people over and over again in preparation for their entrance into this land (4:23; 5:6-9). The nations, the enemies, were idolaters and were not to be mixed with (2 Cor. 6). Moses reminds this people that they are naturally and religiously the same as the enemies that God is about to

destroy (9:16c; 7:12, 13b, 16, 23-24). So here we have God's idol worshipping enemies that He will *destroy* because He is holy and must punish sin, and God's people who are also guilty of the sins of idolatry and unbelief whom He will *preserve* because He is holy and must punish sin. In effect God is declaring that there is no intrinsic or natural *difference* between the two. So, it stands to reason that His people will not succeed in the life set before them because of their righteousness, because they clearly have none of their own. The people of God are precisely as righteous as their enemies. The people of God and the future denizens of eternal hell possess the very same personal righteousness—none at all (Titus 3:3-7).

This being unequivocally proven, it remains that these people will succeed on the same basis that their enemies will be destroyed, the holiness of God in punishing wickedness or sin. In shadow and type, the necessity of substitution is here declared. In my nature and my wickedness there is no difference me and one who will perish in hell for their sin because God is Holy and must punish sin. If I then stand before God in His favor (and my righteousness is not considered), then God must have punished my sin in a way which ultimately honored His holiness and at the same time preserved my soul. Further, if I stand before God accepted, it cannot be for any other reason than that He has never wavered from His holiness but justifies me *because* He is holy. Thus my success, my salvation, is because God is holy (Romans 3:24-26). He has punished sin. He has punished *my* sin! He has destroyed the enemies (Coll. 2:13-15; 1 Cor. 15:25-26; Heb. 2:14-15; Heb. 9:12-14, 26; Heb 10:17). Christ's substitutionary sacrifice was the complete

destruction of my enemies both within and without. God's *holiness* has saved me (1 John 3:1-9).

God's holiness demands that He keep His word. He is not a man that He should lie. He does not change; therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed. Look at Deut. 9:26-29 then v. 5 of our text. Oh blessed covenant, eternal covenant wherein God chose a people. Christ became surety for that people and in doing so assumed the sin debt of that people. Christ came and died in the room and stead of that people, put away the sins of that people, called, justified and glorified that people, redeemed and possessed that people and though they were sinners, his eyes were ever on the covenant that He made with and for them. In holy recollection He remembered His covenant, thus destroyed their enemies and remembers their sin no more (Psalm 103:8-17). In His holiness He remembers His covenant and that is our salvation (Ex. 2:24-25; Lev. 26:44; Psalm 89:33-34, 105:8, 42; Jer. 14:21). Is this not the plea of the poor sinful saint (Isaiah 64:6-9)? This is the doctrine of God's Sovereign Grace. This is salvation by the Holiness of God.

“Not for thy righteousness, or for the uprightness of thine heart, dost thou go to possess their land: but for the wickedness of these nations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee, and that he may perform the word which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Remember thy servants, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; look not unto the stubbornness of this people, nor to their wickedness, nor to their sin: Yet they are thy people and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest out by thy mighty power and by thy stretched out arm” (Deut. 9:5-6, 29).

Look at one more verse, 1 Cor. 4:7. “For who maketh thee to differ from another? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?”

THE LAW OF LOVE

12, And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul,

13, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?

14, Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens is the LORD'S thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is.

15, Only the LORD had a delight in thy fathers to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day.

16, Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked.

17, For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward:

18, He doth execute the judgment of the fatherless and widow, and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.

19, Love ye therefore the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.

20, Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God; him shalt thou serve, and to him shalt thou cleave, and swear by his name.

21, He is thy praise, and he is thy God, that hath done for thee these great and terrible things, which thine eyes have seen.

22, Thy fathers went down into Egypt with threescore and ten persons; and now the LORD thy God hath made thee as the stars of heaven for multitude.

Deuteronomy 10:12-22

Moses is still bringing to remembrance the works and acts of God in mercy toward His people, as in the first 12 verses. After reminding them of God's goodness and rehearsing in their hearing about the second time that he went to the mount to receive the law, he sets before them the requirements involved for the one who loves God's law.

The believer and only the believer loves the law of God. The believer loves the law of God because he loves God. He loves God because God has been merciful and gracious to him. He loves the law because it is holy, good and speaks of his savior and all that Christ accomplished for him. He loves the law because of all the people that inhabit the earth; the believer is the only one who understands the law and the only one who establishes the law. The believer establishes the law by believing that the law was fulfilled, honored and satisfied by the person and work of Christ for the glory of God and the salvation of the elect. The believer knows that keeping the law is not a matter of moral behavior but spiritual behavior. The law hangs on love for God and love for neighbor. Duty and service are delights and privileges if they are born of love. Otherwise they are burdens and

engender bondage and a life of misery, guilt and sorrow (Psalm 119:165).

In Deuteronomy 10:12-22 is a wonderful treatise on what it is to be loved by and love God. In this passage the requirements that are placed by God on the believer are not without basis nor are they without ample motivation. Every commandment, every admonition has a “because” attached to it. Not only is the believer told what to do, he is also told *why* he is to do it and the motivation *for* doing it. Though these words were spoken to the nation Israel concerning their journey into the Promised Land, they are meant for the sinner saved by Grace in his sojourn as a stranger and pilgrim in this world.

In this lesson, we will first look at the commandments and the motivation for keeping them. What does the Lord thy God require of you? God does not wish this of you, nor does He want this for you; this is *required* of you. The *believer's* initial and understandable response to any such absolute requirement handed down as divine edict is that he *can't do it*. This is reasonable because the believer has been given understanding as to the spirituality of the law and thus knows that no sinful person can keep it. The believer knows that there is nothing that mitigates any part of the law. He knows that when he would do good, evil is present with him. He knows that the law is spiritual and the he is carnal, sold under sin and he cannot deliver himself from the body of this death. The believer's second response to the absolute requirement of the law is to thank God for Jesus Christ who perfectly kept the law for him and fulfilled the righteousness that is in the law in him. The believer's third response to the absolute requirement of the law is that the uppermost desire

of his heart is to keep the commandment and meet the requirement because God has loved him so. With his mind he serves the law of God and with his flesh he serves the law of sin and death. What does the Lord thy God require of thee?

1. He requires that you *fear* Him. This is not speaking of a slavish fear that would cause you to walk in superstition thinking that at any moment the other shoe might drop. This fear is awe in His presence, reverence for His person, character and worship of Him, in Spirit and in Truth, for who He is. He requires that you *walk* in His ways. His ways are spiritual ways. As ye have received Christ so walk ye in Him. He requires that you *love* Him (Matt. 22:36-40: Rom. 13:8-10, I John 4.19). He requires that you *serve* Him. This does not mean that God needs your service of that somehow that something will not get done if He doesn't have your service. He has it, because He has you. This means to worship Him, and take care of the household of faith, ministering to the people of God primarily, but also to the community in which you live.

He requires you to *keep* (guard, adhere to, heed) His commandments. Obedience is better than sacrifice and it is the desire of every believer. And you are to do all this, not in hopes of gaining something but because you love Him. These are to be done from the heart and the soul, because they are spiritual principles that consume the believer. Why should you keep them? It is for your good. These are not given to make your life miserable, or to make you a Pharisee and a cruel religionist. These things are good for you? They are good for you for a plethora of reasons, not the least of which is that they get your mind away from yourself. Though

clinical depression is real and is based on a chemical imbalance in the body, non-clinical depression has its basis in a refusal to get outside yourself. Non-clinical depression is born of a life without purpose. Look away, leave off introspection, let go of “me” and “I.” Lay hold of true, worthwhile and honorable purpose; fear the Lord, walk in His ways, love Him, serve Him, keep His commandments—its good for you.

2. The Lord requires of you to behold and recognize who He is (v. 13). The beginning of a life that ends in reprobation is the refusal to recognize God for who He is (Romans 1:21). He is the sovereign of all things. He owns all things and all people. He dispenses with His belongings as He sees fit (Isaiah 40:9-25). This is He who sets the requirements, and wonder of wonders, He gives you ample reason for keeping them (Read v. 13 with v. 14). He chose you, elected you, selected you, and severed you from the pack of humanity—even you above all people. He owns all people by virtue of the fact that He is their creator. He chose you because He loved you from all eternity, and the reason for that love lies wholly within Himself. He delighted in you though there was nothing delightful about you.

3. The Lord requires, because He has chosen you, to circumcise the foreskin of your heart. Again, we see the spirituality of the law. Circumcision was a token, given by God to Abraham, of the spiritual relationship that God had established with him by covenant. But that physical act had a more profound and wonderful spiritual significance. It had to do with the heart, the inward man. It signified a severing, separation or sanctification from the love of the flesh. It spoke to and of *true* Israel the church of the Living God

(Romans 2:28-29, Phil. 3:3). To be uncircumcised in heart is to be stiffnecked (Acts 7:51). Being stiffnecked is rejection and resistance of the message of the Holy Spirit whose job is to take the things of Christ and reveal them to His people.

Being stiffnecked is believing that what God has done for you is because you are a good person (Deut 9:4-6). Sever these things and this attitude from the seat of your affections and for a good reason (v. 17). The great and mighty God did not do this because of anything in or about you. He does not regard persons. Some think that the doctrine of election proves that God has respect to certain people, that election makes him a respecter of persons. Just the opposite is true. Since election is by sovereign grace, election is proof that God does not regard the chosen concerning reason or warrant for their election.

God also did not choose men based on their bargaining with Him. Many have said that they were saved because they promised to give up something if God would save them. The man who wrote the "soul-winners manual" for Jerry Fallwell gave this account of his salvation. He said that he promised God to serve him with as much fervor as he had served the devil if God would save him. God don't bargain with anyone, nor takes reward. He does what He does because He is who He is. The believer knows and understands this and rejoices in it because he knows that if God had regarded his person on any level, there would have been no salvation for his soul. It is all of grace or not at all.

4. God requires that you love the stranger (v. 19). This includes the fatherless and the widow. This is after all true religion and undefiled before God (James 1:27). Notice in verse 19 the word "therefore." We are therefore to love the

stranger. Why? Because every believer wishes in his heart to emulate his God (v. 18). The widow and the fatherless are not only just that, they are also symbolic of those, who in the economy of the times, are the most helpless, the most needy. The gospel declares that Christ is the husband of his people, so He is the remover of widowhood. He is called the mighty father, so knowing him is the relief of the fatherless. How better to care for the widow and the fatherless than to tell them of the greatest husband and the most blessed father. We are to love the stranger because that was what we were when Christ found us (v. 19). Once again the theme of remembrance is declared. True compassion is born of having been in like circumstance.

5. Finally God requires that we cleave to Him and swear by His name. We know *that* name is above every name, the name of Christ Jesus the Lord. These words “cleave and swear” intimate utter dependence even akin to desperation. Much like Peter who said, “to whom shall we go?” The believer knows that Christ is all that he has. To cleave and swear is to hold on for dear life now and trust in Him for the future.

The reason is obvious. He has done everything for us that He has required of us. He is thy praise. He is the source of it, the object of it and the only reason for it (Hebrews 13:15). We were nothings and nobodies and he has made of a bunch of ruined sinners the great and innumerable nation of saints, the eternal household and family of God. Praise His name!

“And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy

heart and with all thy soul, To keep the commandments of the LORD, and his statutes, which I command thee this day for thy good?”

BEFORE AND AFTER

10, For the land, whither thou goest in to possess it, is not as the land of Egypt, from whence ye came out, where thou sowedst thy seed, and wateredst it with thy foot, as a garden of herbs:

11, But the land, whither ye go to possess it, is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven:

12, A land which the LORD thy God careth for: the eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.

13, And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments which I command you this day, to love the LORD your God, and to serve him with all your heart and with all your soul,

14, That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil.

15, And I will send grass in thy fields for thy cattle, that thou mayest eat and be full.

Deuteronomy 11:10-15

Here Moses describes the estate of the people in Egypt and what their estate will be in the Promised Land (v. 10-15). This blessed language is the language of the Gospel. It is spoken, surrounded by both admonitions and warnings concerning obedience and disobedience to the law. Knowing that our Lord perfectly obeyed God on behalf of the people is

a source of great comfort to the believer and at the same time does not remove from the believer the desire to do right and be right before his Lord. As we saw last week, the believer desires to honor God by obedience because his Lord has been so gracious to him, has loved him and saved him and therefore is motivated by a heart of love and gratitude. In fact, in beginning this chapter with vv. 1-9, this is precisely the motivation that Moses gives.

In our text, using the lands of Egypt and Canaan as contrasting opposites, Moses declares the Gospel of Grace. The two lands speak respectively of the two lives of the believer. His *former* life was a life of bondage and under the rule of sin. This life was a living death but was nonetheless spent in efforts to bring forth fruits by personal labor. The believer's *new* life, typified by the land of Canaan is a life of *freedom, peace* and *supply*. All the needs of the people are supplied from heaven, coming down to the land, the life, the abiding place of the inhabitant. These picture life before grace and after grace. The contrasts are declared in the declaration of the manner of fruits being brought forth for life.

Our Lord begins this contrast with a simple and reasonable statement of fact (v. 10a). The land of Canaan “is not as the Land of Egypt from whence ye came out.” [Margin: See Deut. 6:23; Came out—Going in; Profound statement; If you leave one place—you’re not there anymore. If you go someplace else, that is where you are.] The life and the fruits lived and produced in the land of Egypt are not as the life and the fruits lived and produced in Canaan. Our Lord is not stating that there is any similarity. Our Lord is declaring that these two lands, as far as what they picture and typify

are polar opposites, diametrically opposed on every conceivable level. The life of grace is not as the life of works. There can be no comparison made except that both produce a product.

However, the production of that product and the product itself is as different as heaven is different from the earth, as life is different from death, as light is different from darkness or as different as truth is the opposite of the lie. This is the elemental teaching of scripture (Romans 11:5-6; Eph. 1:3-14; 2:8-9). Our Lord asserts the fact that these are two opposing principles with the employment of the conjunction "But" at the beginning of verse 11. The land, the life, the fruits and the manner of their production found in verse 10 are absolutely opposite of the land, the life, the fruits and the manner of their production found in verses 11-15.

What is the difference? In the latter phrase of verse 10, it is stated that in the land of Egypt from whence you came, in your living death of bondage, *you* were the source of your fruits and produced them with your own abilities using the elements available to you in the land in which you lived (v. 10b). Egyptian agriculture depended on the river of Egypt, the Nile. The seasons of planting depended on one of two things; the annual flooding of the plains, or the toting of water from the many cisterns dug in the land. The people labored in one of two ways. They carried water to their gardens by hand, or they stirred the mud produced by the flood and planted their seed. Often the seed was dropped on the muddy plain and pressed into the ground with the foot as a means of planting. The fruits of their labor were brought about by the burden of carrying the water with their hands (works) or by pressing the seed into the earth with their foot

(their walk). In either case the seed would not be planted, and the harvest would not be realized unless personal labor was exerted. Of course, the praise for the harvest goes to the one who has done the work.

Religion is labor intensive. Religion bears fruit. Religion bears fruit by burden (Jer. 23:33-40). It is important to note that what is carried in Egypt (water) and spoken of as a burden in Jeremiah are typically used in Scripture in reference to *words*. The reference to the seed is also typical of the *word* and religions employment of it is often pressing it down under foot, holding back the truth in unrighteousness or using the word to press down its hearers under the oppression of the law and guilt (Is. 63:18-19; Jer. 12:10). The fruits brought forth by their labors are fruits that can only be of use in the land in which they live for sustaining the life they live. They are fruits of Egypt, born of Egypt seed, Egypt's water (word) and Egypt's work. They are only fit for Egypt. The New Testament refers to these man-accomplished products as fruit unto death (Romans 6:20-21; 7:5; 8:6-8,13). This was your life before grace.

Look at verse 11. "But" the land that the believer abides in is in no way like the land of Egypt. Nothing that supplies sustenance for life in this land comes from the earth or is accomplished or even aided by the walk, word or word of men (Read 11-15). This land, not a flood plain, is a land of hills and valleys, flowing with milk and honey and fertile with corn, wine, oil and grasslands for grazing. This land is not dependent of an earthly river (Ps.65:9-13). Nothing of earth, nothing born of the will or work of man is responsible for the production of fruit on the land. This land "drinketh water of the rain of heaven"—This "rain of your land (sent) in

his due season, the first rain and the latter rain.” This could not be more specific in declaring that which upholds, sustains and makes this land fertile and fruitful. This rain is the *doctrine of God* (Deut. 32:2-3). [Margin: It is a song of memory Deut. 31:16, 21.] This rain is the word of God (Isaiah 55:8-11). This is the former and latter rain; the message of the prophets and the pastors—the message of God (Hebrews 1:1-3). This rain from heaven is the Living Word—the Lord Jesus Christ (Joel 2:23-26). Notice the marginal reading for the phrase “the former rain” in verse 23. This rain is the “teacher of righteousness” (according to righteousness). Look at Psalm 40:7-10. This former rain and latter rain is Christ (Ho. 6:3; Ps.72:1-19).

In this *land*—the *land* of Canaan, the promised *land*, the *salvation* of God, Immanuel’s *Land* (fairer than day)—in this *life*, born of grace, bought by blood, sustained by righteousness—everything is from heaven; everything is in Christ; everything is by the Gospel and all of it is by grace. Read w. 11-14, then Hebrews 9:14 and Hosea 10:12. Read Deut. 11:10-15. Read Proverbs 16:15.

THE WAY

1, These are the statutes and judgments, which ye shall observe to do in the land, which the LORD God of thy fathers giveth thee to possess it, all the days that ye live upon the earth.

2, Ye shall utterly destroy all the places, wherein the nations which ye shall possess served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every green tree:

3, And ye shall overthrow their altars, and break their pillars, and burn their groves with fire; and ye shall hew down the graven images of their gods, and destroy the names of them out of that place.

4, Ye shall not do so unto the LORD your God.

5, But unto the place which the LORD your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come:

6, And thither ye shall bring your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks:

7, And there ye shall eat before the LORD your God, and ye shall rejoice in all that ye put your hand unto, ye and your households, wherein the LORD thy God hath blessed thee.

8, Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes.

9, For ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the LORD your God giveth you.

10, But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the LORD your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety;

11, Then there shall be a place which the LORD your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the LORD:

12, And ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God, ye, and your sons, and your daughters, and your menservants, and your maidservants, and the Levite that is within your gates; forasmuch as he hath no part nor inheritance with you.

13, Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt offerings in every place that thou seest:

14, But in the place which the LORD shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee.

15, Notwithstanding thou mayest kill and eat flesh in all thy gates, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee: the unclean and the clean may eat thereof, as of the roebuck, and as of the hart.

16, Only ye shall not eat the blood; ye shall pour it upon the earth as water.

17, Thou mayest not eat within thy gates the tithe of thy corn, or of thy wine, or of thy oil, or the firstlings of thy herds or of thy flock, nor any of thy vows which thou vowest, nor thy freewill offerings, or heave offering of thine hand:

18, But thou must eat them before the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates: and thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God in all that thou puttest thine hands unto.

19, Take heed to thyself that thou forsake not the Levite as long as thou livest upon the earth.

20, When the LORD thy God shall enlarge thy border, as he hath promised thee, and thou shalt say, I will eat flesh, because thy soul longeth to eat flesh; thou mayest eat flesh, whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.

21, If the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to put his name there be too far from thee, then thou shalt kill of thy herd and of thy flock, which the LORD hath given thee, as I have commanded thee, and thou shalt eat in thy gates whatsoever thy soul lusteth after.

22, Even as the roebuck and the hart is eaten, so thou shalt eat them: the unclean and the clean shall eat of them alike.

23, Only be sure that thou eat not the blood: for the blood is the life; and thou mayest not eat the life with the flesh.

24, Thou shalt not eat it; thou shalt pour it upon the earth as water.

25, Thou shalt not eat it; that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD.

26, Only thy holy things which thou hast, and thy vows, thou shalt take, and go unto the place which the LORD shall choose:

27, And thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, the flesh and the blood, upon the altar of the LORD thy God: and the blood of thy sacrifices shall be poured out upon the altar of the LORD thy God, and thou shalt eat the flesh.

28, Observe and hear all these words which I command thee, that it may go well with thee, and with thy children after thee for ever, when thou doest that which is good and right in the sight of the LORD thy God.

29, When the LORD thy God shall cut off the nations from before thee, whither thou goest to possess them, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their land;

30, Take heed to thyself that thou be not snared by following them, after that they be destroyed from before thee; and that thou enquire not after their gods, saying, How did these nations serve their gods? even so will I do likewise.

31, Thou shalt not do so unto the LORD thy God: for every abomination to the LORD, which he hateth, have they done unto their gods; for even their sons and their daughters they have burnt in the fire to their gods.

32, What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.

Deuteronomy 12

In this chapter the Lord begins to teach the people concerning worship in Canaan. The things here described are pictures and types fulfilled in the church in the Gospel age, the age in which we now live. This passage is the beginning of the transition of applying the statutes and judgments and laws that God has commanded His people to obey. Two things are important to take note of. First is to remember that the law is spiritual. The second is that the first thing dealt with in reference to living in Immanuel's land is the principle of proper worship.

The exacting and precise laws of sacrifice and tabernacle worship have been clearly established for this nomadic tribe of God's elect. These do not change in their essence but there is a significant and notable change declared in this chapter. Whereas before this, the cloud had guided their sojourn and had, in effect, established where they would formally and publicly worship God; now our Lord tells them that there will be a place of worship. He does not tell them at this time where it will be but commanded that they will worship Him there and nowhere else, because His name will be there (v. 5, 11). God, in effect, narrows the scope of

worship to a singular place, a place Established by the presence of His name [Margin: Shiloah?].

Immediately the spirituality of the law is seen. This place, a mystery, a thing revealed in time to His people only is a place that is not a place at all. Though physically it refers to the temple to be erected by Solomon in Jerusalem, it spiritually speaks of the manner in which God is to be worshipped; signified by His name (John 4:19-24). The temple is the body of Christ. He is the head and the members of His body are the church (John 2:18-21; Eph. 2:19-22). The church remains a mystery yet, known only to those who its members are.

The world's ideas concerning the church are manifold and all of them are wrong. During the political times in our nation, candidates vying for office court what they think to be the church for political gain. The church of God is apolitical. Men look at big and beautiful edifices as well as little brown buildings in the vale as churches. The church is a living organism, not a business or a building. Its purpose for existence is not social change, political power or a center for counseling. It is not a plant or life-center. It is in the world to worship through the declaration of the name of God—the preaching of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:3; Revelation 19:10; Revelation 22:9). The mystery of the church is this; God is where His people meet to worship Him. Whether in a big and beautiful building, a living room of someone's house, a storefront in the slums or a lean-to in the woods; Christ is in the midst of those who meet to worship in His name (Matthew 18:20).

There are several things in this passage that teach us about the Church and its worship.

1. The worship of God is militantly narrow. Everyone who belongs to the church has encountered the questions of the world, especially concerning the unwillingness of the church to embrace or even countenance anything other than the pure worship of God in Christ. Crow was asked one time why Sequoyah can't get along with other religious groups. I was told that Sequoyah didn't seem to be too friendly toward other churches, not joining in their religious activities and associations. The church will not have anything to do with that which does not seek to worship God as He reveals Himself to be in His word. There is a basic reason for this.

God has commanded us to destroy every false thing and refuse to align ourselves with anything that is clearly not according to His word (vv. 2-3; 29-31). This is seen through the Old Testament as well as the New Testament (2 Cor. 6:14-18; 2 John 9-11; Rev. 18:4). Concerning this there are no exceptions. Is it hard? It *is* hard but it is warranted because this is what God has *commanded* his church to do. Is it narrow? It *is* narrow because "straight is the gate and narrow is the way that leads to eternal life." God made man upright, but he has sought our many inventions. The invitation system, the church and family altar, the circles and committees, the mourner's bench, the five boxes of tissue, the church covenant, by-laws, legislation of morality, counsels to judge whether a person is really saved or not, most of what is called Church discipline, watch care, waving hands and acting the idiot, general acceptance of any belief that attaches the name of Christ to it, crusades and such are just idolatry dressed in clerical garb.

The church's approach to these things is zero tolerance. They are to be destroyed. This does not mean a physical

destruction as in the Old Testament because the law is spiritual and therefore cannot be accomplished in the flesh. The destruction of these things comes about as a result of the preaching of the Gospel. The Gospel puts all things in the light of the only way that God is to be worshipped, and that is by the preaching of the substitutionary, propitiatory, expiatory work of the sovereign savior who by His life, blood and death put all that is false in chains, reserved for judgment and made all for whom He died fully and completed fit to stand without shame or guilt before the thrice holy God by the imputation of the righteousness of God to their account. The destruction of idolatry and all that is false is by the *declaration* that they are useless, empty, vain, frivolous, superfluous, and unnecessary because God has declared that there is *one way, one truth, one life, one faith* and any addition is quite simply idolatry (v. 32).

Some would say “I can worship God in the cathedral of nature.” No, you can't. “Well, I don't have to have the church to worship God.” Yes, you do! “Well, I don't have to gather with any particular group, I can cast my lot with folks who don't preach the Gospel and still worship God.” No, you can't! God has commanded to worship Him where and how He is to be worshipped, and part of the worship is the disowning, disallowing and disavowing anything that is contrary to the glory of God in the salvation of sinners by the blood and righteousness of Christ. As our dear brother Scott Richardson is apt to say, “That's all they are to it”!

2. Worship is not colonial or imperialistic (v.4). The church is not involved in the gaining of property or power in this world. The general practice which is prohibited by God in verse 4 was that of destroying the altars, idols and groves

of false worship and then erecting your own altars upon the sight of where you have annihilated the enemy. Such a thing plays to the baser emotions of humanity and engenders pride and cruelty.

Remember that the preaching of the Gospel is the *declaration* of the Glory of God in the *salvation* of sinners. Though it, by command and of necessity, involves the destruction of all idolatry, the Gospel is good news for the former idolater and is to be preached in love with an eye on the salvation of the hearer. The destruction of all that is false is designed to set the prisoner free, not to keep score on numbers or victories—so that the worship of God might be without any distractions. Idols can be destroyed by force. Conversion can be obtained by duress, or at the end of a sword, nations can be conquered and forced to abide in the religion of the oppressor, but “ye shall not do so unto the Lord your God.” The reason for the destruction of all that opposes God is so that He alone may be seen as God for the good of those who hear the Gospel. God's way is *not* to build his church on the ruins of His enemies but by the Spirit of truth (Isaiah 58:3-12). It's a different *place*.

3. Worship is singular and restrictive, (vv. 5-8; 13-14). There is but *one* place to worship. It is the church of the living God. Men are restricted from coming up with their own ways and their own devices or doing what they think is right and geared to their liking. God says this is how and where it is to be done. The heart of worship is not my opinion but from a thankful heart, joyfully praising God for all His blessings. Your sacrifice of praise is not to be offered just any old place but in the place that God has designated (1 Peter 2:5).

4. Worship is feeding on Christ. (6-7, 16, 20-22). The matter of eating is the matter of life. Worship is fellowship with God at the table of “the feast of fat things, drinking wine of the lees and well refined, dining on the grapes of Eschol, drinking honey from the rock, consuming honey and the honey comb and the hart and the roebuck.” Christ is the sustenance, the bread from heaven, the water of life and He is our worship of the one true God.

5. Worship is free and joyful and encompasses both congregational worship and the worship that is life. You will notice that in the reading of this passage that certain things are to be eaten only at the specific place that God has ordained for worship. Many of these same things may be eaten at home or wherever the believer is. In truth, because the law is spiritual and the believer, no matter where he is, is in the church, the body of Christ. Worship, though primarily public and congregational is *also* private and free. It is, wherever it is, praise and thanksgiving to God for what He has done. Note well the freedom of the language (vv. 15, 20-21).

6 . Worship is caring for the household of faith and supporting the ministry (vv. 12, 18-19). The Levite owned no property. He was to live on part of the offerings made to God. There has a twofold application. The first is the spiritual application of the Levite being the church of the living God in *general*. Christ has made *all* his people priests unto God, a royal priesthood. This declared that the church is to be about the business of caring for each other (Matt. 25:34-40; Galatians 6:10). The second application is the Levites were also made up of those who carried the elements, furniture and the implement of the whole tabernacle. They carried that

which pictured Christ for the people, so that God could be worshipped in His place. These picture the pastor, the ministers whose job it is to carry the Gospel to the people. They too are to be cared for by the church of God (Luke 10:7; 1 Cor. 9:14; 1 Tim. 5:17).

7. Finally, worship is spiritual. Worship is by and through faith. Look at verse 16, 23-25. This is a divine command and is not to be altered (Lev. 17:10-14). Blood is atonement, propitiation and precious to God. It is not to be eaten but to be poured out on the ground [Margin: covered / dust]. The law is spiritual. Look at John 6:53-58. Here we are told to eat the flesh and the blood of Christ, what would seem to be a direct contradiction of the words of Leviticus and Deuteronomy. How can a person both keep the law and not keep the law and still keep the law? This is only accomplished by faith. Christ tells us that He is not physically going to be here for us to eat his flesh and blood (John 6:60-62). If then we eat His flesh and blood, it will be done in a manner that does not break the law. How do we do it? We do it spiritually, by believing.

Look at verse John 6:63. Flesh and blood cannot obey the law. The spirit gives and sustains life. Christ words are spirit and life and are obeyed by believing. Christ's flesh and blood are respectively his life given and his sin payment accomplished. We declare and celebrate these in baptism, the receiving of the Lord's Table and the preaching and hearing of the Gospel. We feed on Him and worship God when we live off his blood poured out to cover our dustitude (See the text: vv. 26-28).

NOTHING BUT THE TRUTH

1, If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder,

2, And the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them;

3, Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the LORD your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul.

4, Ye shall walk after the LORD your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him.

5, And that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams, shall be put to death; because he hath spoken to turn you away from the LORD your God, which brought you out of the land of Egypt, and redeemed you out of the house of bondage, to thrust thee out of the way which the LORD thy God commanded thee to walk in. So shalt thou put the evil away from the midst of thee.

6, If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or thy daughter, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend, which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which thou hast not known, thou, nor thy fathers;

7, Namely, of the gods of the people which are round about you, nigh unto thee, or far off from thee, from the one end of the earth even unto the other end of the earth;

8, Thou shalt not consent unto him, nor hearken unto him; neither shall thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou spare, neither shalt thou conceal him:

9, But thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people.

10, And thou shalt stone him with stones, that he die; because he hath sought to thrust thee away from the LORD thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

11, And all Israel shall hear, and fear, and shall do no more any such wickedness as this is among you.

12, If thou shalt hear say in one of thy cities, which the LORD thy God hath given thee to dwell there, saying,

13, Certain men, the children of Belial, are gone out from among you, and have withdrawn the inhabitants of their city, saying, Let us go and serve other gods, which ye have not known;

14, Then shalt thou enquire, and make search, and ask diligently; and, behold, if it be truth, and the thing certain, that such abomination is wrought among you;

15, Thou shalt surely smite the inhabitants of that city with the edge of the sword, destroying it utterly, and all that is therein, and the cattle thereof, with the edge of the sword.

16, And thou shalt gather all the spoil of it into the midst of the street thereof, and shalt burn with fire the city, and all the spoil thereof every whit, for the LORD thy God: and it shall be an heap for ever; it shall not be built again.

17, And there shall cleave nought of the cursed thing to thine hand: that the LORD may turn from the fierceness of his anger, and shew thee mercy, and have compassion upon thee, and multiply thee, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers;

18, When thou shalt hearken to the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep all his commandments which I command thee this day, to do that which is right in the eyes of the LORD thy God.

Deuteronomy 13

We live in an interesting age. We live in a country that guarantees religious freedom. Because of this we are surrounded by a plethora of denominations, sects and religious beliefs. According to this passage this abundance of religion is nothing new (v.7). The language of the context is *hard* language. On every hand and at every sign of evidence of false religion the practitioner was to be summarily slain. Unfortunately, much of religion as we know it in this land looks at these words and, though punishment by death is not an option, their desires to put away all that oppose them is revealed in their efforts to legislate moral behavior. They pursue their religious ends by making them political issues. On the one hand, there is absolute tolerance of all and every religion and practice, and on the other, there is a concerted

effort to make what is called “Christian” principles to be the law of the land.

These positions have nothing to do with truth, as it is in Christ. They all have to do with behavior and that according to the perception of the particular adherent. The concerted tolerator discounts such language found in our text altogether, labeling it as bigoted and prejudicial. The concerted religionist desires to make such language the law of the land, whereby the government itself would be a religious entity, making the president an ayatollah and the legislative body a counsel of religious leaders. As far as society in general, the church takes the tolerant position. This does not say that the church accepts or condones illicit behavior, but that the church operates in a different realm (1 Cor. 5:9-11 [exp]; 1 Pet. 2:13-20). The fact is that the only influence that a believer or the church can possibly or rightfully have on society in general is singularly that influence produced by the declaration of the Gospel. This does not mean that the believer should not exercise the power of his or her vote to participate in the issues of government. That participation, however, is not to be brought into the realm of Bible or church doctrine.

There can be no understanding of this passage unless it is viewed in the realm in which it exists. This is about Christ and the Gospel (John 5:39; Luke 24; 26-27, 45-46; [Illus. Gal. 4:22-24]). These things can only be grasped by one who has been, by grace, made spiritually alive (1 Cor. 2:14; 2 Tim. 3:16-17). This is first of all revealed in the fact that the Promised Land is a type of the church—Immanuel's land. The things spoken of and spoken against in this passage are

relative to the assembly of the saints and refer to their attitude toward false teaching and those who teach it.

The teaching of this passage is about the refusal of the church to countenance any teacher of doctrine or the doctrine he or she teaches that is contrary to the revealed truth—the Gospel. Under the old covenant the punishment was death. In the New Testament the remedy is not a punishment at all. It is most assuredly not death by the hand of the church. God will take care of that particular business (Acts 5:1-10). The response of the church is to not allow false teaching to be brought in and to disregard and turn from those who preach it (Matt. 15:12-14; Mark 6:11; Rom. 16:17; 2 Tim. 3:5, Titus 3:10; 1 John 4:1-4; 2 John 9-11).

There is no doubt that this passage contains some of the most severe language and prohibitions in all of scripture. The severity is not seen in the punishment. Many such punishments attend disobedience under the Old Covenant. The severity of the prohibitions is seen in the people to whom the harsh punishment is prescribed. The thrust of this is that concerning the allowing of any false thing to enter into the church, there is zero tolerance. Nobody is allowed to do such a thing under any circumstance. In matters of indifference, where the weakness of a brother or sister is at issue, extreme tolerance, born of love and kindness, is to be exercised at all times. But when the issue is the truth and the defense thereof, no quarter is to be given or even countenanced.

If a preacher gives a sign or wonder that comes true; the test is whether or not that the Gospel is preached, and all eyes are drawn to Christ (v. 1-3). If the result of the

preacher's doing causes men to look away from Christ, that man and his doctrine are false. Such are not to be tolerated (v.4).

Even family relationships are not to play a part in this absolute matter (vv. 6-10). Note well that in these cases it is the Gospel that is the standard (vv. 5b; 10b).

Any organized religious effort that endeavors to draw you away from Christ is to be disallowed and disowned in order that your worship be not hindered (vv. 11-18).

Any and all religion, any and all doctrine and any and all preachers that design to draw men from the singularity of Christ are placed by God under the general heading of "wickedness" (v. 11).

Finally, this text teaches that there is a great overriding principle in all of this. The presence of heretical views, of false doctrine and false teachers are not an accident. They are not among us because God did not know of their eventuation. Nothing has ever occurred to God. The God of all glory is a God of absolute predestination. All things fall under the umbrella of His grand providential purpose. Why then are there false prophet everywhere and in all places (v. 7)? The answer to that question is seen in verse 3. These are among us because God, by their presence, proves us, to reveal our love or lack thereof for Him.

It always comes down to this. Is Christ all or not? Is the Gospel the only truth or not? Is the salvation accomplished by Christ enough, does it fill you up or is there room for something else? The presence of the false is necessary in order that the true is clearly seen as absolutely different (Prov. 16:4; Matt. 18:7; 1 Tim. 4:1-4; 2 Pet. 2:1-2; 1 Cor. 11 19; John 14:22-24; 2 Cor. 13:5-8).

In the church, there can be no tolerance of doctrinal error.

RUMINATION

1, Ye are the children of the LORD your God: ye shall not cut yourselves, nor make any baldness between your eyes for the dead.

2, For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth.

3, Thou shalt not eat any abominable thing.

4, These are the beasts which ye shall eat: the ox, the sheep, and the goat,

5, The hart, and the roebuck, and the fallow deer, and the wild goat, and the pygarg, and the wild ox, and the chamois.

6, And every beast that parteth the hoof, and cleaveth the cleft into two claws, and cheweth the cud among the beasts, that ye shall eat.

7, Nevertheless these ye shall not eat of them that chew the cud, or of them that divide the cloven hoof; as the camel, and the hare, and the coney: for they chew the cud, but divide not the hoof; therefore they are unclean unto you.

8, And the swine, because it divideth the hoof, yet cheweth not the cud, it is unclean unto you: ye shall not eat of their flesh, nor touch their dead carcase.

9, These ye shall eat of all that are in the waters: all that have fins and scales shall ye eat:

10, And whatsoever hath not fins and scales ye may not eat; it is unclean unto you.

11, Of all clean birds ye shall eat.

12, But these are they of which ye shall not eat:
the eagle, and the ossifrage, and the ospray,

13, And the glede, and the kite, and the vulture
after his kind,

14, And every raven after his kind,

15, And the owl, and the night hawk, and the
cuckow, and the hawk after his kind,

16, The little owl, and the great owl, and the swan,

17, And the pelican, and the gier eagle, and the
cormorant,

18, And the stork, and the heron after her kind,
and the lapwing, and the bat.

19, And every creeping thing that flieth is unclean
unto you: they shall not be eaten.

20, But of all clean fowls ye may eat.

Deuteronomy 14:1-20

A while back I was surfing through the channels and saw an advertisement for a new diet. It was called the Bible Diet and was taken from this passage as well as Leviticus chapter 11. The promise of course was that eating this diet would not only result in good health and weight loss but could eventuate in a more spiritual life. The intimation was that this was an avenue to a holy and righteous life. Many books have been written of the benefits of the dietary laws here presented, but most of them finally end with what you eat as being a means of accomplishing personal righteousness. The only problem is that such thinking is not true and is void of spiritual instruction.

What you eat naturally has no spiritual value concerning righteousness of defilement (Mark 7:14-23). Also, these

dietary laws were summarily dismissed on the natural level in the Book of Acts (Acts 10:9-16). So, the meaning of this passage has nothing to do with what you naturally eat, nothing to do with producing holiness and nothing to do with causing defilement. As always, the understanding of the law rests on two absolutes. First, the law is *spiritual* and therefore cannot be naturally perceived or applied. Secondly the law was *completely fulfilled* by Christ for all the elect, and the righteousness that is in the law was fulfilled in the elect.

The fact that these laws and restrictions have nothing to do with being holy is settled in this very text in verses 1 and 2. These words are not spoken to people who by obedience become anything. They are spoken to those who are the *children* of God (1a), to those who are holy, chosen and peculiar people (treasured possession) (v.2). *These* are to practice the dietary restrictions because they have a relationship with the one true God, not to establish a relationship.

The first verse is a reiteration of a central theme in Deuteronomy and indeed the basis of all the law. The First commandment is that “Thou shalt have no other God's before me.” It stands to reason then that thou shalt love the Lord thy God and thy neighbor as thyself. The reference to cutting is about the practice of many false religions in which men cut themselves in order to gain their god's attention or to appease their god's anger by their own suffering (1 Kings 18:25-29). It is interesting to note that such falsely believe that their god requires blood and suffering, but theirs is a bastardization, a counterfeit of what pleases God. God is not pleased with self-righteousness, your blood or your suffering. God tells His children—His holy, chosen and treasured

possession—that they are not to inflict pain and suffering upon themselves, or bleed to approach Him. They *are* accepted in the *beloved*.

The rest of the passage deals with what is commonly referred to as dietary laws. Remember that the law is one as God is one and this passage is as much about Christ and His work and His people as that part of the law concerning sacrifices and offerings. The largest portion of this passage deals with what the children are to eat and not eat.

The important thing to consider is that the Lord Himself designates which animals are to be eaten or not to be eaten. All aspects of edible life are covered; beasts of the field, fish of the rivers and the ocean, and birds of the land and the air. Our Lord does not give specifics as to the quality of the meat. He does not say that fish without fins and scales are poison or that pigs carry trichinosis. This is the playground of men who try to explain the law without Christ. Our Lord simply says that one is clean and the other is unclean. The clean are to be eaten and the unclean are not to be eaten. God himself makes the distinction and therefore is not to be questioned as to why and no discussion need follow concerning whether one was good for you or not. The only thing that should follow a clear edict from God is unquestioned obedience. What is the difference in any of these creatures? The difference is the declaration of God. For the child of God that is enough (John 2:1-5).

Whatever we may glean from this passage it is important to understand that this is all about a single thing. This passage is about relationship with God our Father. Since you are a holy and chosen people you are to seek to do what pleases your Father. What pleases God in His people is faith

(Heb. 11:6). The faith that pleases God is toward Christ (Acts 20:20-21). That faith that is toward Christ is born from above by the Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel (John 6:63; 1 Cor. 1:21-24, 1 Pet. 1:23-25; James 1:18).

Though all these admonitions and restrictions carry equal weight, there are more specifics in the words concerning those beasts that chew the cud or don't and have split hooves or not. The rest of the beasts seems more to be a kind of listing and are not described in so particular a manner. Some of the creatures are now extinct and would be difficult to research. Others are rare and not well documented. Though they cannot be researched they are all distinguished by God and *are to be eaten or not*. They are food. The clean beasts are to be eaten because they have to do with the believer's relationship with God.

In this study, we will spend some time with the distinctions made concerning the beasts in verses 6-8. The beasts that *are* to be eaten are those that *chew the cud and have cloven hooves*. The beasts that chew the cud but *do not* have cloven hooves or have cloven hooves but *do not* chew the cud are not to be eaten.

The clean beasts picture two things. First, they are food. They are to be ingested. Being ingested they support life and energy; they sustain the eater for his walk in the world. What is the food of the believer? What are the green pastures and still waters? What is the feast of fat things? What is the wine on the lees and well refined? It is the *word* of God, the *Gospel* of the glory of God (Isaiah 55:10-11; John 6:63). The clean beasts are representative of Christ, the living *Word*. The unclean beasts represent a false or half Gospel. One is

the word without the walk, the other is the walk without the word—neither is to be eaten, they are unclean.

The second thing that the clean beasts represent is the believer himself. The beasts are distinguished by what and how they eat and the mark they leave on the earth, their walk. They ingest the grass of the field, that which God has supplied, and then ruminate or chew the cud. The manner in which this is done is that the beasts eats his fill then lies down and masticates what he has eaten by coughing it up and eating it again. It is not until he has chewed the cud to full nourishment that he gets back on his feet and returns to his food. His strength to walk and eat comes from his eating and rumination. It seems a rather simple life doesn't it? Eat, lie down, and ruminate so you'll have energy to get up and walk to where you eat again.

The believer feeds on Christ, he hears the Gospel. He ingests the truth, He does not eat then go out and do something. He eats and rests and ruminates. He ponders, masticates, and chews the cud. He meditates on the word, gains the full nourishment of it and when he has pondered it, he gets up on his cloven hooves and goes out and eats some more. The Gospel is the sustenance of life, and the energy it produces is hunger for more food. The walk of the child of God is to feast on the word of God. The work that the believer does is ultimately about the food he eats and the manner in which the food is eaten ends in greater hunger for more food. He is a hearer and doer of the word. The word ingested and meditated upon produces the walk and the walk is for more of the word (Zeph. 3:13; Isaiah 32:17; Ps 119:165; John 10:9; Matt. 11:28-29).

The world takes the word and uses it as a motto book for works or gets busy in works without the word. The believer feasts, chews the cud and gets up and walks to where he can feast some more. The word of God—the Gospel—is the food, the meditation and the walk of the holy, chosen and treasured possession; the *children* of God.

THE LORD'S RELEASE

1, At the end of every seven years thou shalt make a release.

2, And this is the manner of the release: Every creditor that lendeth ought unto his neighbour shall release it; he shall not exact it of his neighbour, or of his brother; because it is called the LORD'S release.

3, Of a foreigner thou mayest exact it again: but that which is thine with thy brother thine hand shall release;

4, Save when there shall be no poor among you; for the LORD shall greatly bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it:

5, Only if thou carefully hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe to do all these commandments which I command thee this day.

6, For the LORD thy God blesseth thee, as he promised thee: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee.

7, If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother:

8, But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth.

9, Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee.

10, Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou puttest thine hand unto.

11, For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor, and to thy needy, in thy land.

12, And if thy brother, an Hebrew man, or an Hebrew woman, be sold unto thee, and serve thee six years; then in the seventh year thou shalt let him go free from thee.

13, And when thou sendest him out free from thee, thou shalt not let him go away empty:

14, Thou shalt furnish him liberally out of thy flock, and out of thy floor, and out of thy winepress: of that wherewith the LORD thy God hath blessed thee thou shalt give unto him.

15, And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee: therefore I command thee this thing to day.

16, And it shall be, if he say unto thee, I will not go away from thee; because he loveth thee and thine house, because he is well with thee;

17, Then thou shalt take an aul, and thrust it through his ear unto the door, and he shall be thy servant for ever. And also unto thy maidservant thou shalt do likewise.

18, It shall not seem hard unto thee, when thou sendest him away free from thee; for he hath been worth a double hired servant to thee, in serving thee six years: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all that thou doest.

Deuteronomy 15:1-18

This passage deals with the treatment of poor brethren according to the measure that God declares to be *just* and *fair*. This practice is called the Lord's release and is one of several sacrifices and ordinances given by our Lord for the welfare of His people and the declaration of the work of Christ and its effect *on* His people. There was the morning and evening lamb, the weekly Sabbath, the new moon every month, the Passover every year, the tithing ever three years, and there was the release every seven years and the Jubilee every 50 years. The morning and evening lamb pictured Christ the lamb slain for His people. The Sabbath pictured the rest for the people of God because the work of redemption was finished. The new moon pictured the reflective glory of the church as she received her Light from the Sun of Righteousness. The Passover pictured the deliverance from sin by the blood of the Lamb. The tithing represented the sovereign proprietorship exercised over the people for the care of His ministers and the benevolence toward the poor of the flock. The release pictured the forgiveness of our sin debt by the grace of God through the

work of Christ. Jubilee pictured the return of all that was lost in Adam.

In this passage three things are considered. Verses 1-6 deal with the release from debt of a brother to whom you have loaned money. Verses 7-11 deal with releasing or lending our money to care for a poor brother. Verse 12-18 deals with the release of a brother who has, through poverty, been forced to indenture himself to you in slavery to pay his debt. At the end of the seventh year these are all to be *summarily* released; freely and fully released. The only exception is in the area of bond slavery or willing slavery found in verses 16-17. This first points to the Lord who, as a man, committed himself to the service of God for the salvation of the elect because He loved His father's house and family (Psalm 40:6 [see marg.]; Isaiah 50:5-6). Secondly it refers to every believer who is a willing servant though in reality He is a free son. He serves His Lord out of love, not indebtedness. This passage might be called "Lessons in Grace."

We'll look at these lessons in two ways; first as they picture Christ and His work of grace and secondly as they teach us about our practices of liberality and caring for the household of faith.

Read vv. 1-6. The main application here, in reference to Christ, is that of the free forgiveness of our sin. In the New Testament our sins are often referred to as debts (comp. Matt. 6:12 & 11:4). By sovereign grace our Lord released us from our debts (Luke 7:41-42). This release was only for the family of God (v. 3). This is also a lesson for the church of God and is often repeated throughout the New Testament. In the matter of loaned money, the language of the text makes

it clear that at the end of the seventh year the debt was to be cancelled. The brother who loaned the money could not exact payment again after the seventh year (vv. 2b, 3b). God set these years in order. They did not have to do with the seventh year of payment due but was for money borrowed anytime during the seven-year period.

One may think that this could be used wrongly by the poor person by borrowing money a week before the seventh year was up and thus avoid the payment altogether. This is the amazing thing about this passage. It is about being *gracious* which falls wholly on the one who has the wherewithal to give. The principle is plain. If a poor brother asks, the one who has ability is to give it, and if the poor cannot repay, he is to forgive the debt. There are no mitigating circumstances because this is not about finance, it is about love that is born of gratitude (v. 15). The lender has been blessed of God to have and thus is obligated by love to care for the one who owes but cannot pay [nobless oblige). This is born out in New Testament language (Luke 6:30-31; 1 John 3:16-18; Eph. 4:28). There is a reason for this (text v. 4 [marg.]) “To the end that there be no more poor (brethren) among you.” All brethren are to be equal in the sight of God. More than that, there is a lesson concerning the preaching of the Gospel. The treasure we really have to give is with the poor in spirit (Luke 4:18-19; Acts 3:1-6). To every brother and sister, the message of full forgiveness is declared. Peace is promised to every believer. But of a non-believer there is no relief promised, he must pay the debt himself (v.3a).

Read vv. 7-11. How beautifully this pictures the breadth and depth of Grace. There is no request of a loan, but a loan

is nonetheless to be given. It is the benefactor that sees. We as poor ruined sinners were so spiritually impoverished and stooped down by our weakness that being without strength we were just there, a sad lump of abject destitution. Our Lord who is rich in mercy opened His hand of grace wide and poured inestimable riches of grace upon our weary head. There was no consideration of whether we could pay or not (v. 9). Again, the application to the church is clear. Take care of the household of faith. Do not wait to be asked. Open wide your hand and give sufficient to the need (v.8; Matt. 10:7-8; James 2:15-16; 1;27). Do not be grieved because this is the manner of love, it gives and gives and gives again and expects nothing in return (w. 9-10). There will always be opportunity to do so (v.11).

Read vv. 16, 18. This teaches us of what Christ has done for us. He has set us free and holds nothing against us (Heb. 10:12-17; Romans 8:33-34). God will never require of us what Christ has paid for us. Not only this; Christ has given us all things. We will need for nothing because we have all things (1 Sam. 2:8; 1 Cor. 1:21-23; 2 Peter 3:3-4.) For us the lesson is clear. Caring for the church is a free and one-way enterprise. It does not look back, think about what has been given; it only thinks about what it can give (1 Cor. 13:4-8a). Why? Look again at Deut. 15:15.

One might say this is idealistic. It is if it is idealist for a mother to do whatever is necessary to care for her sick child or a husband or wife for their spouse. It's about love.

CHRIST IS ALL

19, All the firstling males that come of thy herd and of thy flock thou shalt sanctify unto the LORD thy God: thou shalt do no work with the firstling of thy bullock, nor shear the firstling of thy sheep.

20, Thou shalt eat it before the LORD thy God year by year in the place which the LORD shall choose, thou and thy household.

21, And if there be any blemish therein, as if it be lame, or blind, or have any ill blemish, thou shalt not sacrifice it unto the LORD thy God.

22, Thou shalt eat it within thy gates: the unclean and the clean person shall eat it alike, as the roebuck, and as the hart.

23, Only thou shalt not eat the blood thereof; thou shalt pour it upon the ground as water.

Deuteronomy 15:19-23

The first part of chapter is a wonderful rehearsal of the love and grace of God toward us in the full and free forgiveness of sin. This blessed truth served also as the motivation for the church of God in the care and love expressed for each other. We have but to think for a moment to find that we do not measure up to our end in the matter of love for the brethren. These admonitions are, in fact, a continual reproof of our weakness. In truth, the law, always[^] reveals our sin because it is spiritual, and was designed to show us as guilty. The law entered because of transgression. Thanks be unto God that neither our failures nor our successes have anything to do with our acceptance before Him. The beautiful fact

involved in the study of the law is that the believer knows that his mighty Savior has fulfilled every precept of it.

At the conclusion of the chapter our Lord brings us back to the center and the motivating factor for all that we seek to do to honor our Lord. We are graciously returned to the reason for our existence, the fuel of our life and the strength of our estate. We are brought to the place of God's choosing; the place where He has put His name. We are brought there to worship and to feast and have communion with our God. *We are brought to God in Christ.* It is here and only here where we find reason and motivation to love God and love the brethren. We are not brought to look at *our* love, or our deeds but to the *love* and deeds of *Christ*. The manner of our love is to be in the same manner that Christ loved us (John 13:34; Coll. 3:13-14).

To bring us to this place our Lord goes back to the basics. Our gracious God gathers us to Himself in Christ and His gospel. This passage is about what God has sanctified for Himself, that which is for Him, that which belongs to Him alone (v. 19). The firstling of the flock, in fact all firstborn as well as all firstfruits, belong to God (Exodus 13:2; 34:19-20). Specifically, this refers to the uniqueness of Christ as the only begotten and thus the firstborn of God (Romans 8:29). As we are predestined to be conformed to Christ and the process completed by God's purpose (Romans 8:30), this passage also teaches the accomplishment of the work of Christ for us (James 1:18). In the matter of the sacrifice of Christ Godward, the elect were in Christ when He gave His soul an offering for sin.

In this passage our Lord set before us two things necessary for worship and communion with Him. These two

things are a *perfect sacrifice* and *perfect food*. The first mentioned is the food. The same requirements concerning purity are required for both the sacrifice and the feast (v. 21). The blemished beast may be eaten but not in the worship of God. It may be eaten in the home as the hart and the roebuck are eaten. This brings the feasters and worshippers even to a more narrow scope. They are the priesthood, which typifies the church. Only the priests bring the sacrifice and are given the privilege to eat of the sacrifice.

In both the sacrifice and the feast our Lord gives two restrictions or prohibitions. There is no work to be done using the bullock and the lamb is not to be sheared. This is plain teaching. The benefits that you receive from the sacrifice and the feast are not in any way to be yours because of the work of your hands or because of a corporate work between you and God (“with,” v. 19). You do not receive the benefits of Christ because you put Him or what He has done to work for you. You do not benefit from Christ by taking from Him by the work of your hand. Think what this knowledge would do to the religion of this day. Today's religionists live and thrive on the belief that the benefits of Christ are available to those who are willing to apply them by their will and work. This, however, is the Lord's sacrifice, the Lord's feast and they are freely given, or they are not given at all.

The premise is found throughout the word of God. It is the central theme of scripture. It is our salvation and life. What God has provided and only what God has provided is our salvation and our food, and what God has provided is Christ!

He is the food of the believer. He is pure food, without blemish or spot. Though we may eat other food in our homes, when the time comes to worship the only sumptuous feast is Christ. This refers to the truth the Gospel, which is Christ revealed. God calls His people to this place, to gather, to hear, to feed on His Gospel. Preaching and hearing are many things to many people. They are but one thing to God. They are what belongs to Him and what He gives to His people. There is true worship where the pure gospel is preached. There is true worship where the food eaten is a gift of God and not according to the work of men's hands. He is God's provision and there is nothing else.

He is God's provided sacrifice by which He has saved His people from their sin. The worship of God is by the person and work of Christ. God cannot be approached except by the blood of the Savior, by which He accomplished the salvation of the elect. Where Christ is honored, God is worshipped. Christ is the perfect sacrifice, without spot or blemish (1 Peter 1:18-21). There are those who say that there is more than Christ in the Bible, or more than Christ to be preached. That may be the case, but not where God is to be *worshipped*. God has set the standard by which His people worship Him. Christ is *all*. He is *all* our food and *all* our sacrifice. He is *all* to God and *all* to the believer. He is *all* of the Gospel and *all* of worship.

So here at the end of a divine treatise on love and grace, the Lord brings us to the center, the nucleus. He brings us to the basics of food and raiment; Christ our *feast* and Christ our *righteousness*. This is the satisfaction of the believer because it is the satisfaction of God (1 Tim. 6:8).

THREE THINGS

1, Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the LORD thy God: for in the month of Abib the LORD thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night.

2, Thou shalt therefore sacrifice the passover unto the LORD thy God, of the flock and the herd, in the place which the LORD shall choose to place his name there.

3, Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life.

4, And there shall be no leavened bread seen with thee in all thy coast seven days; neither shall there any thing of the flesh, which thou sacrificedst the first day at even, remain all night until the morning.

5, Thou mayest not sacrifice the passover within any of thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee:

6, But at the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name in, there thou shalt sacrifice the passover at even, at the going down of the sun, at the season that thou camest forth out of Egypt.

7, And thou shalt roast and eat it in the place which the LORD thy God shall choose: and thou shalt turn in the morning, and go unto thy tents.

8, Six days thou shalt eat unleavened bread: and on the seventh day shall be a solemn assembly to the LORD thy God: thou shalt do no work therein.

9, Seven weeks shalt thou number unto thee: begin to number the seven weeks from such time as thou beginnest to put the sickle to the corn.

10, And thou shalt keep the feast of weeks unto the LORD thy God with a tribute of a freewill offering of thine hand, which thou shalt give unto the LORD thy God, according as the LORD thy God hath blessed thee:

11, And thou shalt rejoice before the LORD thy God, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite that is within thy gates, and the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are among you, in the place which the LORD thy God hath chosen to place his name there.

12, And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt: and thou shalt observe and do these statutes.

13, Thou shalt observe the feast of tabernacles seven days, after that thou hast gathered in thy corn and thy wine:

14, And thou shalt rejoice in thy feast, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, and thy manservant, and thy maidservant, and the Levite, the stranger, and the fatherless, and the widow, that are within thy gates.

15, Seven days shalt thou keep a solemn feast unto the LORD thy God in the place which the LORD shall choose: because the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thine increase, and in all the works of thine hands, therefore thou shalt surely rejoice.

16, Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose; in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles: and they shall not appear before the LORD empty:

17, Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee.

Deuteronomy 16:1-17

In this chapter our Lord is preparing His people to possess the promise land and worship Him in the place where He has put His name. He sets before them three of the eight Sabbaths that are to be strictly observed year-by-year. These three are Passover (vv.1-8), Pentecost (vv. 9-12) and the Feast of Tabernacles (vv. 13-17).

There are several things to consider as we look at this passage.

First this is about worshiping God in the *place* that He has established, the *person* of Jesus Christ, His *body* (the church), by the *Spirit* and with the *truth*.

Secondly, the year spans are in reference to the “acceptable year of the Lord,” which is commonly called the age of grace, the time between the first and second coming of Christ. It is the time in which we *now* live.

Thirdly, these feasts and what they represent to the church are *not* a means of conveying grace; they are feasts to be observed by the redeemed and are therefore remembrances of and joyous thanksgiving for grace.

They picture the salvation of the people of God by His grace and mercy from beginning to fruition. This is about the manner in which the people of God worship the Lord. By virtue of the fact that only the saved sinner may worship God, all true worship is a *recollection* of God's Grace in Christ. All admonitions to godliness in life, to good works must be declared as a result of and not a cause of grace. Only one who has received grace can *remember* and *rehearse* grace. One cannot rejoice in the possibility of grace any more than someone can come back from where they have never been. Thus, the offerings unto God are called freewill offerings because they are given to God, not by legal constraint but rather from a thankful heart. These feasts are a *rehearsal of grace experienced*. They are pictures of true worship in the place where God gathers His people to commune with Him. Our Lord sets forth this teaching of the Gospel in terms of horticulture.

The first thing our Lord commands is that these feasts begin with the Passover in the month of Abib (Ex. 12:2). This is the beginning of the new life, the life that began with the deliverance by the blood of the Paschal lamb. Abib literally means "the corn in the green ear." It pictures a beginning of great things to come. (The eternal aspect of election and predestination are understood as the planting of God but cannot be received till the green ear appears). This is the remembrance of how our salvation was wrought.

Though in our experience it has not come to fruition at this time, the ear is green and filling out. The green ear is the promise of a harvest. This is a picture of the assured success of the work of Christ (Isaiah 52:13). All that awaits the believer is there in that ear of new corn. This feast of remembrance is the Passover (vv. 1-3). It is recalling how God delivered us from sin. By the blood of the lamb and the power of God's mighty arm our former master was forced to release us. How do we *memorialize* this event in worship? By eating the lamb with unleavened bread. We feast on the lamb, eating it all, leaving no flesh in the house, and we eat it with unleavened bread. No leaven is to be found in the house; not in one nook or cranny nor merely hidden from view—*no* leaven in the house and *no* leaven in the bread. Leaven is symbolic of sin, and especially the sin of self-righteousness (Luke 12:1).

When God is worshipped, he is worshipped by the blood of Christ and his redemptive work. It is a thing that He alone accomplished and by His righteousness we are accepted. The unleavened bread is thus called the “bread of affliction;” the bread by which you afflict your souls. What is this affliction? It is the *disowning* of our righteousness as having any part in the salvation of our souls. It is hard to turn our Ishmael out into the desert, but God will not be worshipped where the child of the flesh abides. It is also called the bread of affliction for it is representative of the knowledge that it is our sin that nailed our savior to the cross. There is no worship of God where we do not remember our sin. The great joy comes with the knowledge that God doesn't remember our sins because He has redeemed us by the precious blood of the Lamb. The fact of redemption is, however, a

recollection of our sin (Revelation 5:9-10). The worship of God is, in a sense, oxymoronic—it is grieving joy. The worship of God is recollection of the corn in the green ear, the remembering of how it all began, of when Christ and His glory was truly revealed.

The next feast is the feast of Pentecost. After the green ear there was to be seven weeks numbered and when seven weeks were finished the harvest was to begin. Again, this is a thing *remembered* (v. 12). We know that at Pentecost the Holy Ghost was given. Here we worship God in remembering *how the Holy Spirit brought us* the knowledge of our salvation. What grace was displayed when God sent a preacher to tell us of what a mighty savior Christ is and how He by Himself had satisfied God for all the sins of His people! What joy was ours to be pierced through the heart by the Gospel! What grace was wrought in our inward man when our utter depravity was revealed and hunger and thirst for righteousness was created in us! Now the ear was full! The harvest of the elect began! *We* were the harvest. The sharp two-edged sickle of the word wielded by the hand of God the Holy Spirit severed us from the earth where we had been rooted and grounded from birth and gathered us into the storehouse of God. At the appointed time God sent His word of salvation to our hearts. And right on time we were awakened to what was ours in Christ (Gal. 1:15).

When we were harvested, we were full in the ear, complete in Christ and having need of nothing (Mark 4:28). We were made holy and righteous. We were forgiven and accepted. We were not started on the road to anything—we had arrived when we were harvested. It was a time of rejoicing, a time of free offering to God—the sacrifice of our

lips—thanksgiving and praise. Worshipping God is recalling (remembering) the Holy Ghost applying the work of Christ to our hearts by the *gospel* and gathering us into the house of God.

The final feast in this trilogy of worship is the feast of tabernacles. This feast was the feast of the *realized* harvest. When the corn and wine were gathered then portions of the harvest were given to God. This was done because God had given the increase (v. 15). What was rendered to the Lord was based on what God had given (v. 17). How beautifully this pictures the worship of God. This is not dealing with tithes, but rather freewill offerings based on what God has done. The subject is still salvation! Since God has done *all* in salvation, has given *all* things in salvation then the only proper offering to God is that He alone gets *all the praise* and *all the glory*. Worship is glorying in God for the full and free salvation wrought by Christ, the blessed teaching of the Holy Spirit and the realization of the blessing of God (Romans 8:32; Eph. 3:14). In Christ no one appears before God empty (all things are yours). This also pictures how the believer worships the Lord in giving (1 Cor 16:2; 2 Cor. 9:7). This is the worship of God for all the days of thy life.

THE RIGHT KING

18, Judges and officers shalt thou make thee in all thy gates, which the LORD thy God giveth thee, throughout thy tribes: and they shall judge the people with just judgment.

19, Thou shalt not wrest judgment; thou shalt not respect persons, neither take a gift: for a gift doth blind the eyes of the wise, and pervert the words of the righteous.

20, That which is altogether just shalt thou follow, that thou mayest live, and inherit the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

21, Thou shalt not plant thee a grove of any trees near unto the altar of the LORD thy God, which thou shalt make thee.

22, Neither shalt thou set thee up any image; which the LORD thy God hateth.

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.

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,

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;

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:

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.

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.

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.

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;

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:

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:

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.

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.

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

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;

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.

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.

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

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:

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:

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.

Deuteronomy 16:18-17:20

When the translators copied the scriptures, they, for the benefit of the reader, set the transcript in sentences or verses and paragraphs. Sometimes this helped and sometimes it didn't. In this passage we find one of those times that it didn't. The last 5 verses of chapter 16 are more properly connected to chapter 17 as they deal with proper and right *judgment* and in whose hand that judgement must ultimately fall.

Verse 18 of chapter 16 sets a precedent that is absolute. In order for judgment to be right, it must be just. In order for it to be just, it must be right or righteous (v.20—the actual rendering of “that which is altogether just” is the repetition of the word justice—Justice justice shalt thou follow). Our Lord told us not to judge according to what we see but rather to judge righteous judgment (John 7:24). Concerning justice, there is only right or wrong and only good on evil. These

standards for right judgment are declared and illuminated in the New Testament (Matthew 18:15-17). As in our text, the matters of judgment are in the realm and the authority of the *church*. The church is forbidden to take matters of the spirit to civil authorities (1 Cor. 6:1-8). So, as we consider this passage we are to look at it in the light of the people and their God and not as a matter of *civil* justice. The just dealings referred to are in the matter of the proper and right *worship* of God (16:21-22). The judgment to be administered is concerning that which is *false* and that which is *true*. Concerning the Gospel, no quarter is to be given, no prisoners are to be accounted among the living (Gal. 1:8-9).

Immediately upon the command to select judges and officers, God declares the intrinsic weakness of such a system (v. 19). Since this justice is to be administered by human beings, it will be fraught with the plague of depravity. Because of our sin several things enter into our notion of justice and call its righteousness into question. We often are willing to *wrest* judgment. This means that we are willing to bend it, stretch it in order to make it apply as we wish and for whom we wish it to apply. We are willing to pervert judgment because of respect for persons. Love, affinity and just plain old idol worship (as in respect of high position) can pervert our judgment. We are willing to pervert judgment because of covetousness (receiving a gift). Whether the gift is real or comes in the form of personal exaltation or removal of the threat of censure or loss of position, it blinds our eyes to right judgment.

The thing that is set forth as worthy of death has to do with the perfections and accomplishment of Jesus Christ. As we have seen thus far and as it is the precise declaration of

scripture, all the law is about Christ. His person and work are referred to in this text by God forbidding an improper sacrifice being offered to Him (Compare Deut. 17:1 with Malachi 1. 6-8). Make no mistake here. A lame, sick or blind sacrifice is one that is unable to perform its task and must be aided in its performance by man. This is an abomination to God. Polluted bread is leavened bread and refers to approaching God with Christ and your own merit for acceptance. This is an abomination to God.

Thus, a hog-tied Christ who cannot do anything unless he is assisted by man is an abomination to God. Likewise coming to God with Christ but invigorated by the works of the law and the human will are an abomination to God. This is the *arena* of judgment. This is where the rubber hits the road. Though character and conduct are important, their true importance is that they reflect the measure of respect given the sacrifice offered to the Lord. Character and conduct are but merely Phariseeism if they are a consequence of anything other than regarding the effectual person and work of Jesus Christ as sacrosanct (vv. 1-5).

In the following verses our Lord sets forth three human institutions that are properly regarded as means of administering judgment.

First a transgression must be established in the face of two eyewitnesses (V. 6; Num. 35; 30; John 8:17).

The second is the proper adjudication by the spiritual leaders—the Levites or priests (vv. 8-13). This is of course the church, which is the proper earthly authority in matters of spirituality. If a person is declared to be presumptuous in doctrine, the church (properly the least member) is to judge in the matter as we read in 1 Cor. 6 and in Matthew 18.

The third is the King (desired by the people) and appointed by God with very exacting requirements. Speaking strictly of the earthly, all of these institutions are flawed by the fact that they involve human beings and are proven so in scripture. Look at 1 Kings 21:7-14 (exp). Look at Acts 6:7-13; 7:57-58. Two eyewitnesses in these cases *proved* to be *false* witnesses. Concerning the church, the visible church, look at Acts 1:20-26 (exp). Concerning the appointed king and the requirement for his fitness to reign, earthly kings are yet human and do not ultimately meet the criteria given (Compare vv. 14-20 with the greatest earthly king appointed by God in 1 Kings 10:27-29-11:1-3).

Remember, however, that these earthly examples are types and pictures of the true and the spiritual. In the face of two witnesses, the Gospel is established (Rev. 11:3-12—pastors and missionaries—exp.). The church, the body will always do that which is righteous and true (John 17:21-23; 1 John 3:1-10).

Finally, and gloriously the God of all Glory has anointed a King in the place where He has placed His name—Zion. That King is King Jesus, the King of Kings. That King is the King who God has set on the Holy Hill Zion (Ps. 2). That King is the very one before whom the world will prostrate itself and will confess that He is Lord to the glory of the Father (Phil. 2). That King shall reign in righteousness and absolute omnipotence (Rev. 11:15). That King is the only Potentate. That King appointed and anointed meets every requirement ascribed by God. Look at vv. 15-20. He is the king that the Lord God shall choose (v. 15, Isaiah 42:1). This king shall be a brother from among thy brethren. He will be the preeminent human being, very God of very God and very

man of very man. This king will not be a stranger but rather He will be a *brother* (Matt. 12:46-50; Romans 8:29; Hebrews 2:11).

This king's kingdom does not apply to the world or use its resources for power to conquer (V. 16; Zech. 4:6; John 8:23; 18:36). *This* king has not multiplied many wives to himself. He has but one bride, the church (v. 17; Eph. 5:25). *This* king has not multiplied gold and silver to himself (v. 17b; Deut. 32:9). *This* king not only *has* the book, He is worthy to *open* it (V. 18; Rev. 5:6-9). *This* king learned to fear, worship, obey and love His God and fulfill all the words of the book to honor Him (Heb. 5:7-9; 10:9). *This* king came on a mission and He accomplished it fully and completely, and He shall reign forever, and of His kingdom there shall be no end. Glory to His name, He is our kindred as well as our King. He is our beloved, friend and benevolent Despot (Isaiah 50:5-7; Luke 12:50; Luke 1:31-32; Isaiah 53:10; Heb 2; 11-13; 11:16). *This* king is the just one, who did and does righteously. *This* king fits the bill and He is the only one who does (1 Tim. 1:17; 6:16-17).

THE MINISTRY

1, The priests the Levites, and all the tribe of Levi, shall have no part nor inheritance with Israel: they shall eat the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and his inheritance.

2, Therefore shall they have no inheritance among their brethren: the LORD is their inheritance, as he hath said unto them.

3, And this shall be the priest's due from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether it be ox or sheep; and they shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks, and the maw.

4, The firstfruit also of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him.

5, For the LORD thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in the name of the LORD, him and his sons for ever.

6, And if a Levite come from any of thy gates out of all Israel, where he sojourned, and come with all the desire of his mind unto the place which the LORD shall choose;

7, Then he shall minister in the name of the LORD his God, as all his brethren the Levites do, which stand there before the LORD.

8, They shall have like portions to eat, beside that which cometh of the sale of his patrimony.

Deuteronomy 18:1-8

There are some things that I, as a pastor, have never been able to comfortably preach about. One is the authority of a pastor, because I have seen that principle of scripture ill-used over the years. The pastor is, to the church, the ruler, overseer, servant and the property of the church. The hat that he wears at any particular time is governed by the situation encountered.

Generally, the subject of authority is a precarious one. It is, as God's word says, "to rebuke, reprove with all authority and let no man despise you." Though these two principles seem to reasonably oppose each other, they are none the less the commandment given to the pastor. The answer, of course, is simple. It is only by declaring the Gospel that the believer is rebuked and reprovved and at the same time appreciative of the man who is doing the rebuking by the Gospel. The tendency of the human character is to look at the rebuke as a separate thing than the declaration of the Gospel and this always leads to the abuse of authority. The pastor who does this well is the pastor whose interest is in the Gospel and not the individual rebuke of some member of the congregation. Those times when my mind was in a rebuking vein, I am pretty sure if I preached the Gospel is was lost in my on ill-use of the office.

The other thing that I am not yet comfortable with speaking about is the matter of the support of the ministry. I have always been reticent to speak about it because I have felt as if I would be discovered to you and to myself as a kind of low-life moneygrubber whose interest is self-preservation rather than the Gospel. I have never gotten any such indication from you, so I know that the problem is mine and not yours. This study, the subject being the support of the

ministry, has helped me in my understanding of the subject. This congregation has been, and continues to be, generous to a fault in the care and feeding of me and mine. There is no area where you all have not met and exceeded every need concerning the support of the Lord's ministry in this place. I thank the Lord that He has put such a heart in you. I have learned in this study that the matter of the support of the ministry is not really about the minister or even the congregation but rather about the worship of God through the preaching of the Gospel.

In our text, the Levite is once again brought to the attention of the people. Beginning with the giving of the law, God separated unto Himself the tribe of Levi to minister to the things of the tabernacle and the Temple. The Levite was not to be given a part of the land to possess as was given to the other tribes. The Levite was chosen to be singularly involved with the proper worship of God. This was his life, not his occupation. He was not a hireling; he was neither waged or salaried. He had neither vocation nor avocation. The Lord Himself was the inheritance of the Levite (v. 2; Numbers 18:20). This is a very important principle. It declares many things.

First it declares that the support that he did receive was not about him but about the Lord. The remainder of the people were to bring tithes and offerings to the Lord. These were to be freewill offerings, compelled only by love for God and were to be the manner by which the Levites were fed and clothed. The Levite was fed by that which was offered to the Lord. He was to receive part of the peace and meat (or meal) offerings and also of the first fruits of the flock and the harvest, the wine and the corn (v. 3-5; Lev. 2:2-3; 6:17-18).

Since these were offerings made to the Lord, these offerings were not offered to the Levite. They were offerings unto the Lord. They were offerings of worship. They all pictured and typified Christ and His work as the peace offering, an offering of thanksgiving. The meat offering, an offering of praise, signified the people's thankfulness for the finished work of Christ. The first fruits picture the person, the first begotten Son of God, the first fruits of the harvest from the grave, the preeminence of Christ.

They were the food and the livelihood of the minister of the Lord. This is very specific. The minister of the Lord lived of that which was his portion, the Lord. The Lord, his inheritance, his portion was his food and his raiment (1 Timothy 6:8). This matter of the Levite's and priest's support is not the main theme of Deuteronomy but is a continual theme. The theme of this book is the worship of God by *the* suitable sacrifice. The support of the ministry is about the people's immediate relationship with Jehovah. The people brought their offerings to God, and God in turn fed and cared for those who served His altar. The support of the ministry is not about the ministry, it is about the *worship* of God (Matt. 6:25-33). The minister of the Gospel is to live of the Gospel. Paul uses this and other portions of the Old Testament to teach this truth (1 Cor. 9:13-14). We will look more at this in a bit.

Another thing declared in our text is that since these offerings are made to the Lord, the minister may not compel them for himself. The minister cannot and the true minister will not say "you must support me." His message is that the people must worship God in Christ. His portion is the Lord. The true minister of the Gospel is interested in the ministry

of the Gospel. I was so filled when I came here twenty six years ago and sat up here and heard the twelve or so members of this congregation say to me, we want you to study, pray and preach the Gospel to us and we will see to it that everything else is taken care of. At that moment I knew that your interest was the Gospel and it further under-girded me for the discharge of my privilege to preach the Gospel. I did not compel you to do this, the Lord put in your hearts.

When a minister compels the people or assumes that he has a right to what God provides by grace, the whole matter of worship is polluted and compromised. This is what brought judgment upon the house of Eli. His two sons, Phinehas and Hophni were priests. They were to live of the ministry that God had given. They presumed to take it by force rather than to trust God, and the end was utter ruin (1 Sam. 2:12-17). By compelling the people to give them their portion with threat of force, they proved that they hated the offering of the Lord. The Lord was not their portion, their portion was their portion. Mark well the emphasis of a ministry. Is it about worship or is it about support?

There is a practical principle here concerning the ministry. It has to do with the occupation of the minister's mind (v. 6). Since the ministry has to do with the worship of God in the place that God has established His name, and the offerings of the people are typical of the worship of God in thanksgiving and praise, then if the ministers mind is otherwise occupied, worship suffers. This is not a blanket statement, nor is it about those men who for whatever reason must work in the public sector as well as minister the Gospel. This is illustrated in the scripture. Look at 2 Chron. 31:2-10. When the worship was according to the word of the

Lord (v.4) the ministry was fed and plenty was left over. The Levites could devote themselves wholly to the ministry of the temple worship. All of it had to do with worship.

Now look at Nehemiah 13:4-13. While Nehemiah was away, Eliashib had aligned himself with Tobiah, an enemy of the Jews, and against the rebuilding of the temple. Eliashib gave Tobiah a chamber in the temple, the very chamber that was to be used for the offerings of the people which supported the Levites (v.5). This resulted in the offering ceasing and the Levites having to go to work (v.10). The result was that there was no worship of the Lord in the offerings of the people and no worship of the lord in the ministry of the Temple.

It is the worship of the Lord that supports the ministry. Perhaps this is most clearly seen is the prophet Haggai (Hag. 1:2-15). At this time the people of the Lord had begun to disregard the rebuilding of the temple. They had gained in property and the building of the temple that had laid in ruin for 70 years had been put on the back burner. They were well off. They had plenty but what they had did not satisfy them. They were empty because there was no worship of the Lord. The people of the Lord *have* in order to give. Nothing will satisfy the soul but the worship of God where He has established his name. The dew and the fruit are pictures of the doctrine of the Gospel and the fruit of the spirit which are incited and sustained by worship (v.10).

Finally concerning the support of the ministry, the words of Paul to the church at Corinth have been used to put forth the idea that a minister of the Gospel should work in the public sector rather than to live of the Gospel (1 Cor. 9:9-15). The subject of Paul's message clearly teaches otherwise.

Paul's refusal to take from the Corinthians was because certain might accuse him of preaching the Gospel for financial gain. He made it clear that he refused to take from them because he would not have his reason for preaching the Gospel questioned. He did not compel them to give because the Lord was his portion, and the necessity of preaching the Gospel had been laid on him by God. This was a particular church that did not seem to know how to give so Paul did not take anything from them. He gladly received the gifts from those who gave it for the cause of the Gospel, even some among this very church *individually* supported him (1 Cor. 16:14-18; Phil. 4:10-19). Note the allusion to the sacrifice as a sweet smelling savor to God.

Our Lord received the care, love and ministry of His people. Though He did not come to be ministered to but to minister, He graciously accepted help from the hands of those who loved Him (Luke 8:1-3).

This is the teaching of our text. The support of the ministry is born of the worship of God. The support of the ministry is born of the love of the Gospel. The support of the ministry is not about the preacher, it is about the worship of God through the preaching of Christ and Him crucified.

THE PROPHET

9, When thou art come into the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not learn to do after the abominations of those nations.

10, There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch,

11, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer.

12, For all that do these things are an abomination unto the LORD: and because of these abominations the LORD thy God doth drive them out from before thee.

13, Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God.

14, For these nations, which thou shalt possess, hearkened unto observers of times, and unto diviners: but as for thee, the LORD thy God hath not suffered thee so to do.

15, The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken;

16, According to all that thou desiredst of the LORD thy God in Horeb in the day of the assembly, saying, Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, neither let me see this great fire any more, that I die not.

17, And the LORD said unto me, They have well spoken that which they have spoken.

18, I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

19, And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.

20, But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die.

21, And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken?

22, When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him.

Deuteronomy 18:9-22

In this passage is the promise of the Messiah—The Prophet, The messenger of the covenant, the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not however a general mention of the coming of the Prophet but is rather the promise that is book-ended by warnings and admonitions on both ends of the promise. As the Apostle John wrote “there are many false spirits” (or prophets or teachers) gone out into the world. The believer is continually warned against them in the word of God and admonished to take heed to what is heard. The teachers and preachers of this world are to be tried by the word of God as to whether they preach it by the Gospel or use it for some

other purpose. Just as the priests were commanded not to touch the dead thing lest they be made unclean, the believer cannot give ear to that which is false with impunity. The world and its religion have a doctrine. It has a word for the people. It is abundant with preachers and teachers who are empowered by the spirit of darkness.

Our Lord classifies these false prophets into two categories. In verses 9-13 He reveals the false teachers who make no claim of worshiping or hearing from the true God. They are men and women who worship at the altar of nature in one form or another. In verse 20 He reveals the false teacher who makes the claim that he gets his message from and speaks for the true God. In verses 21-22 our Lord tells how to know the difference.

The thing that is to be absolutely understood is that these false prophets are an abomination to God. To this there can be no challenge. Such a prohibition can only be followed by faith because, if you will note, the Lord does not say that these abominations are without power or effectiveness on those who follow them. Unbelief does not operate in a vacuum. Unbelief in scripture is simply *not believing* God, but it is always believing that which is *false*. Unbelief is not *no belief*—it is believing someone or something other than what is declared in the word of God. Since the word of God is about Christ and He is about glorifying God in the salvation of the elect, all unbelief is about salvation.

Such a salvation may go by many names, but at the heart of it all is relief from the present self and becoming or progressing to a better estate, a better self—either in this life or the next. Depravity is universally understood else there

would be no explanation for the world's bent on self-improvement. The few exceptions of this rule are not based on someone arriving at perfection but rather at the perfect delusion of mediocrity *equated* as perfection. Mark well, as we consider these two classes of false teachers that they are in no way to be followed, though they appeal to that part of us all that is against God. These false prophets are an abomination to God and are therefore to be given no ear, no credence and no time. They are not to be heeded or followed. The believer does not deny their existence, or their power. He denies their words and their means as being of no eternal value and what they teach as having nothing to do with the salvation of the soul. They are temporal and will at the appointed time, at the word of God, cease to exist.

Concerning those that worship at the altar of nature our Lord gives quite a list.

First are those who progress to what they believe to be a higher life by the process of initiation. The fires of Molech, and the salvation that attend the rituals of that god, were gained by walking between two very hot and large bonfires. This was done by tradition and was forced upon the children of parents who had also been forced to make the trek. This initiation secured the child's care by the protection of Molech and perpetuated the religion. There is indication that sometimes the parent's would offer the children to Molech by casting them into the fire to assuage the wrath of Molech when things seemed to be falling apart in their lives. In many ways that practice of ritual self-punishment is still practiced today in those that worship at the altar of nature, and such teaching is always begun at an early age.

Second, our Lord prohibits the use of diviners. These are soothsayers who predict the future or tell fortunes. The English word has as its root the word divine. So, they claim revelations from the spirit world. Such claim that their words come from a divine source. (Jasper, Alabama).

Third, our Lord prohibits giving ear or following the “observer of days.” They are originators of holy days or holidays. They set one day above another as, by a means of ritual observance, gaining blessing or a better life. These days are generally dedicated to gods or ancestors or saints.

Fourth, our Lord prohibits of enchanter. These are those who see signs *everywhere*. A bread crumb falling from the mouth, a horse suddenly being spooked, a bird flying in your house or seeing an owl is the meat of the enchanter and these things always portend ominous things.

Fifth, our Lord prohibits the use of a witch. This is a sorceress who claims to be able to change things by good or bad spells that she casts. Whether she appears to be able to do these things or not, the witch is an abomination to God.

Sixth, our Lord prohibits the use of charmers. These are folks who use charms, talismans, crystals, religious symbols and such for curing of diseases or protection from or casting out evil spirits. The enchanter in verse 10 is one who uses divination, witchcraft and charms.

Seventh, The Lord prohibits the use of the consuler of familiar spirits. This person is able to cause his voice to be heard outside his body. Commonly, this would be called ventriloquism. This is not a prohibition against Howdy Doody or Charley McCarthy, It is a prohibition against those who use such abilities to summons voices from objects for the purpose of controlling people *religiously*. The word used

here is *belly* or *bottle* as it was the practice of such to seem to speak from their belly rather than from their lips and sometimes out of an urn or bottle. Of course, it served to make the believers think that the voice they heard was from a spiritual realm.

Eighth, our Lord prohibits the use of a wizard. The root word here is *wise*, or *wisdom*. Such a person is held to have powers to understand the working of the laws of nature and is thus able to manipulate them.

Ninth and last in the list of those who are an abomination to God are necromancers. This is big business today. It is consulting with or speaking to the dead. Those who follow necromancers seek to gain wisdom from the dead and it is big business in this day. Millions are spent by folks trying to get a word from their dead granny.

Is any of this real? Do such folks possess powers? (See: 1 Samuel 28:14; Acts 16:16). If such things are real, how do we deny them? We don't deny their *existence*, we deny their *value* and we disavow their influence as being eternal or good or having anything to do with the salvation of the soul. They are an abomination to God and His people are prohibited from hearing of heeding them—any and all of them. Well preacher, “I saw a sign, I had a vision, I had a dream.” Good for you, it is of no value in things eternal. Trust it and you trust that which is an abomination to God. The issue is faith.

In verse 20 the *false* prophet, teacher or preacher is described. This person is he who uses the language of scripture, which by appearance seems to be authoritative in theology and claims to speak for the God of the Bible. This person will be against all the aforementioned abominations.

He will often make them the subject of his messages. The problem is that such a one was not sent or commanded to speak by God (Jer. 23:21; Romans 10:13-17). Such men often speak in the name of other gods, being tolerant of a pantheon and acceptance of other religions (e.g. The Monarch of Montreat [Allah at 9/11; Article]). False prophets abound, and they are popular with many followers. How can we know who one is truly sent from God or not (vv.21-22; John 14:22-26; Isaiah 8:19-20).

The reason these kinds of prophets are to be disregarded is that God has sent His people a Prophet—*The Prophet* (vv. 15-19). Those others are an abomination because God has sent His Prophet. To listen to those others is to raise up a *rival* to God's Prophet. There is but one true Prophet today and all else are false prophets. Gospel preachers are not prophets. I have been called, by letter and to my face, a false prophet. To that I answer that I am not a prophet and if I claimed to be, I would be false. I am nothing more than a voice, declaring the words of the true Prophet, the Lord Jesus Christ (John 6:14; Acts 3:22; 7:37). He speaks the words of his Father, the God of all glory and grace (John 7:16; 8:28 17:6, 8). The preacher is a *repeater* of the words of *The Prophet*. His calling is to proclaim the Prophet.

The preacher of the Gospel declares, in no uncertain terms, that the Prophet is to be obeyed without question—He alone is to be heard and no other prophet is to be given credence, heeded or followed (John 5:43; 7:16; Luke 19:27, 44; Matt. 15:17).

Should preachers, since they are not prophets, be regarded? If they preach the Gospel, they speak in the stead of Christ and to disregard them is the same as disregarding

The Prophet (Matt. 10:40). Faith lives on the words of the Prophet whom God has sent, even His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. All true prophets gave witness of Christ, and all true preachers have but one message, it is Christ and Him crucified.

A REFUGEE'S REST

1, When the LORD thy God hath cut off the nations, whose land the LORD thy God giveth thee, and thou succeedest them, and dwellest in their cities, and in their houses;

2, Thou shalt separate three cities for thee in the midst of thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it.

3, Thou shalt prepare thee a way, and divide the coasts of thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee to inherit, into three parts, that every slayer may flee thither.

4, And this is the case of the slayer, which shall flee thither, that he may live: Whoso killeth his neighbour ignorantly, whom he hated not in time past;

5, As when a man goeth into the wood with his neighbour to hew wood, and his hand fetcheth a stroke with the axe to cut down the tree, and the head slippeth from the helve, and lighteth upon his neighbour, that he die; he shall flee unto one of those cities, and live:

6, Lest the avenger of the blood pursue the slayer, while his heart is hot, and overtake him, because the way is long, and slay him; whereas he was not worthy of death, inasmuch as he hated him not in time past.

7, Wherefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt separate three cities for thee.

8, And if the LORD thy God enlarge thy coast, as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, and give thee all the land which he promised to give unto thy fathers;

9, If thou shalt keep all these commandments to do them, which I command thee this day, to love the LORD thy God, and to walk ever in his ways; then shalt thou add three cities more for thee, beside these three:

10, That innocent blood be not shed in thy land, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and so blood be upon thee.

Deuteronomy 19:1-10

We have looked at the cities of refuge in our study of Exodus and Numbers and will address them again in Joshua. There is no doubt that these all point to our Lord Jesus Christ. Since it seemed good to the Lord to often reiterate the establishment of the cities and inspired men to refer to Himself as the refuge of His people many times in His word, it is not redundant to consider these things over and over again (Ps. 46:1,7,11).

The cities of refuge were established to protect the person who had accidentally and without malice aforethought caused the death of another person. These cities were established for a narrow scope. The crime addressed was involuntary manslaughter. The scope widens fully to embrace *all* sin as it relates to Christ as our refuge as it is followed to its end in Christ in the New Testament (Heb. 6:17-20).

The emphasis that is declared as the impetus for establishing these cities is ignorance and innocence (vv. 4,

10). It is interesting that our Lord would use these words in the description of the slayer. He inspired others to use this language and even used this kind of language Himself on the cross in reference to the act of killing (Luke 23:34; 1 Tim. 1:13). This simply relates to the fact that this whole scenario refers to the person and work of Christ.

Immediately following this declaration our Lord deals with a distinction as to who is allowed the utilization of the cities of refuge. In verses 11-13 the person who commits premeditated murder cannot avail himself to the refuge. Such a person is not innocent of the blood of His victim nor is he ignorant as to the fact and intent of the murder. A murderer, whose actions are born of hate, cannot legally or morally seek refuge in the cities. This intimates that there are those who seek refuge for other than Biblically warranted reasons. Scripture bears this out (Luke 13:24). Murder is an attack on the character of God. As all sin is born of unbelief, the issue that distinguishes these two characters is true and false faith.

Both seek the refuge but only one is allowed to enter and find safety. Those in unbelief seek to enter the city to hide from their deeds. Those who enter in faith enter the city for relief from their deeds (Heb. 4:1-3). He enters because he is innocent. The city of refuge is for those whom God has declared and made innocent. The proof of this is the fact that he enters in and finds that he is welcome. The one who enters is a believer. He knows that if he gets inside those gates that he is both safe and secure. The murderer's belief is that he might just fool God and get in. If allowed in, he would spend his days waiting for the other shoe to drop. The believer, however, knows that inside the city he is saved from

the wrath of the avenger of blood. I spent many years believing that I had refuge but always fearful that I would be discovered. Now, by grace, I am safe and secure in Christ.

God established these cities for ease of access. In this passage three things are made clear. The cities were to be in the midst of the land (v.2). They were not built in remote places where one who was fleeing had to work to get there or had a long road to travel (v. 6; Romans 4:5).

How sweet is this prospect! The Lord is *nigh*. He is not far from any of us, “For in Him we live and move and have our being.” The way to the cities was to be *prepared*. Jewish history reveals that the magistrates very particularly respected this command. The roads were always kept in good repair and free from obstructions. The path was clearly marked by signs of direction with the word *Miklat* engraved on them. The word means *refuge*. So it is in the age of the Gospel. We must make the pathway clear, removing all stumbling blocks and make the word singular. The way to the refuge, our *Miklat* is Christ and His Gospel (Rom. 10:8-10; John 1:29).

This passage teaches something of the mind of the person who flees to and enters the city of refuge. The first thing is that he has nothing to prove. He does not have to give evidence of anything. Nothing is required of him but to be there. There is no mention of what he might be employed at or if he is to somehow show his right to be there. There is no record of his labor or his work. Why? None of these enter into the fact of his safety. He is safe; he is saved because he is *there*.

In the city of refuge, he is also certain about his safety. He is not plagued with worry for lack of assurance. He

knows that nothing can touch him, no harm can come to him. The walls of that city are the loving arms of Christ. Within the walls of that city he is sure. He does not, as many, consider assurance as presumption. How could he be otherwise? All that could harm him is outside the fortress in which he resides. He is *sure* because the word of God has declared his safety to be so (v. 5, last phrase—“live”). Has not the Lord declared that he that believes on Christ is saved—“He that hath the Son hath life?” If you believe, trust Christ and his merits, you have entered into that city and you shall reside there in safety and assurance. God has spoken, who can turn him back (Colossians 2:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; Hebrews 6:11; Hebrews 10:22).

If then you have fled for refuge to the hope set before you, you are a blessed refugee. You are safe, secure and no harm will come your way. Being there is all of your salvation.

Look at verse 21. You have often heard this quoted in the sense of human justice. Between now and next week, when I preach from the rest of this chapter, I want you to look at verse 21 and consider one word—substitution.

SUBSTITUTION

21, And thine eye shall not pity; but life shall go for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot.

Deuteronomy 19:21

Last week I asked you to consider verse 21 in light of the teaching of substitution. I am sure that some of you have done so and have come to the conclusion that I might be about half a bubble shy of level.

There are some things important to remember as we look at this passage. Verse 21, when read or heard, finds response from our most primal being. Every person, no matter how civilized, kind or compassionate, under certain specific circumstances, would, without a moment's hesitation, put this verse into practice. If someone hurt or murdered one of my loved ones my instant response would be to hurt or murder them. I know that some have claimed to have reached higher plains of civility, but knowing what I know about humanity, I believe that such immediate response of wrath for wrath is as natural to a human being as it is to breathe.

Michael Dukakis, a candidate for president some time back, a strong opponent of capital punishment, was asked to defend his position in a presidential debate. The questioner, knowing Mr. Dukakis position asked him what he would do if he walked in on someone raping or killing his daughter. Knowing in his heart what he would do, but not wanting to publicly flip-flop his position on capital punishment, Mr. Dukakis remained silent, apparently unable to say what he

really believed he would do. At that moment, many say, he lost the election because the public knew that his desire for the job revealed him to be dishonest and inhuman. Everyone knew, including Mr. Dukakis, that he would kill the man who was harming his daughter because in such a moment an eye for an eye is the only plausible human response. This verse strikes a primal human cord. After doing such a thing the person might, when calmed down, speak of justice. But at the time of wrath, indignation and vengeance are the driving forces. More than likely, when clear heads began to prevail, someone will quote at least part of this verse.

This passage is about justice. It is the law of God. It is not however a law without due process. The context in which we find the passage is that of the slayer of a man finding safety of refuge. The whole context of this chapter is about salvation, just as all of scripture is about God being glorified in the salvation of the elect by the substitutionary blood and the imputed righteousness of Christ. Miss that and you miss the meaning of scripture.

The words that follow speak of just dealings according to divine principles of fairness and equity. To remove a man's landmark was to deny him what God had said was his inheritance. This was a matter of encroachment. One would not be likely to move a landmark in order to give his neighbor more land. The landmark of the believer is that he has a rightful place, a plot, a title to Immanuel's land. He possesses it because Christ bought it for him and because of his relationship with Christ (Romans 8:15-17). To remove the landmark, to encroach on this property is to say that a believer does not have what God has freely given; that by hook or crook the believer can lose what God has declared to

be his. Encroachment always has to do with what men believe gives one right to the property. To encroach, to remove the landmark is to add anything other than Christ to the claim, whether it be keeping the law for righteousness or the plethora of regional regulations that when obeyed gives a man title or removes it from him upon disobedience. The landmark is *Christ alone* for title to the land and the *deed* was ratified before the foundation of the world (2 Tim. 1:9).

To accuse someone of a crime without the testimony of two or three witnesses was prohibited. To falsely accuse was to receive the punishment that the false accuser had desired for the one he accused. These all have to do with equity and fair dealings and are most explicitly defined in verse 21 where equal is given or taken for equal. Since we know that the law is about Christ, this passage (and its mate in Exodus 21) is about the person and work of Christ. He is that primary possession that God has given to His people (unspeakable gift). Salvation is the inheritance of the saints (Coll. 1:12). No Charge can be laid against the elect, lest it be a false charge because they all are perfect before God (Romans 8:33-34). Their innocence is established by three witnesses (1 John 5:7:13). In Leviticus 24:17-22 these or words like them are also spoken again in reference to equity and justice. Notice the word *manner*. This distinguishes from the particular and the general. The manner of judgment is just and equitable dealings. We say it this way in our legal system; "Let the punishment fit the crime."

Something else to be considered, yea, bowed to is what our Lord said about this passage. What is often disregarded in our text is that these things are ultimately decided by a judge employing the principle of due process (V. 17). This in

effect removes the use of v. 21 from the realm of individual or vigilante justice. This is done because the sinfulness of humanity would result in people dying like flies at the hand of the avenger responding in a natural manner, as depicted by the avenger of blood. Speaking on a civil level, our Lord has ordained courts and magistrates for this purpose (Romans 13:1-8). What our Lord said about our text is the rule and though it grates against our primal, brain-stem reaction it is nonetheless the commandment of our Lord (Matt. 5:38-39; Romans 12:19).

Concerning the two or three witnesses, our Lord used this very principle to establish who He was (John 5:31-39—witnesses 1.) v. 36 the works, 2.) v.37 the Father, 3.) v. 39...the scriptures).

Having said all that, I want us to consider that verse 21 is about substitution. The primary aspect of substitution is justice. It is essential that our salvation be a just salvation. What is justice? The dictionary defines justice as: 1. The quality of being just; fairness. 2. a. The principle of moral rightness; equity, b. Conformity to moral rightness in action or attitude: righteousness. 3. a. The upholding of what is just, especially fair treatment and due reward in accordance with honor, standards, or law.

The issue addressed in verse 21 is not vengeance but justice. God being Holy, must be just. If God saves us it must be a just salvation (Isaiah 45:20-21). God is just to save sinners because of substitution (Romans 3:24-26).

WARFARE

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.

2, And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people
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.

2, And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people,

3, And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them;

4, For the LORD your God is he that goeth with you, to fight for you against your enemies, to save you.

5, And the officers shall speak unto the people, saying, What man is there that hath built a new house, and hath not dedicated it? let him go and return to his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man dedicate it.

6, And what man is he that hath planted a vineyard, and hath not yet eaten of it? let him also go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man eat of it.

7, And what man is there that hath betrothed a wife, and hath not taken her? let him go and return unto his house, lest he die in the battle, and another man take her.

8, And the officers shall speak further unto the people, and they shall say, What man is there that is fearful and fainthearted? let him go and return unto his house, lest his brethren's heart faint as well as his heart.

9, And it shall be, when the officers have made an end of speaking unto the people, that they shall make captains of the armies to lead the people.

10, When thou comest nigh unto a city to fight against it, then proclaim peace unto it.

11, And it shall be, if it make thee answer of peace, and open unto thee, then it shall be, that all the people that is found therein shall be tributaries unto thee, and they shall serve thee.

12, And if it will make no peace with thee, but will make war against thee, then thou shalt besiege it:

13, And when the LORD thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword:

14, But the women, and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city, even all the spoil thereof, shalt thou take unto thyself; and thou shalt eat the spoil of thine enemies, which the LORD thy God hath given thee.

15, Thus shalt thou do unto all the cities which are very far off from thee, which are not of the cities of these nations.

16, But of the cities of these people, which the LORD thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth:

17, But thou shalt utterly destroy them; namely, the Hittites, and the Amorites, the Canaanites, and the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites; as the LORD thy God hath commanded thee:

18, That they teach you not to do after all their abominations, which they have done unto their gods; so should ye sin against the LORD your God.

19, When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field is man's life) to employ them in the siege:

20, Only the trees which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down; and thou shalt build bulwarks against the city that maketh war with thee, until it be subdued.

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Deuteronomy 20

This passage is about *warfare*, the warfare of the believer as a member of the church. In the New Testament warfare is a very interesting topic. On the one hand the church is not to engage in war—natural war—whether the end is about earthly borders or even in defense of self. This does not mean that a person is not to defend himself or his family, but such self-defense is prohibited if it is about spiritual matters. Our Lord made it clear that if His kingdom was of this world that His people would fight. If men then go to war in defense of a nation or for liberation of a country, that war is not about and could never be about the kingdom of God's Son. I see in the words of our Lord not a justification for national conflicts, but rather that citizens of nations will fight for their nations or kingdoms. In human terms, wars may be just, but there is no national war that can be spiritually justified or called spiritual. The believer does not war about earthly boundaries for the cause of Christ.

Our Lord made it clear that in spiritual matters, if we are attacked by someone for the cause of Christ, we are not to give into evil but turn the other cheek and overcome evil with good. If a person takes our coat, we are to give him our cloak also. We are to love our enemies, those who personally oppose us for the Gospel's sake. In matters of earthly conflict, it is often politically expedient to invoke the name of God to justify war, but there is no scriptural basis for doing so. Religion makes for zealous warfare but there is no spiritual defense for it.

In the American civil war, there were believers on both sides, men of the gray and the blue who even now are side by side in Glory praising their Savior. Both sides claimed that God was on their side, but in fact neither had scriptural grounds for doing so. The final battle that had spiritual significance was when Rome besieged and destroyed Jerusalem. That battle removed even the *possibility* of Jewish (old covenant) worship, which God had already declared to be finished by the coming of Christ. Without the temple and the elements thereof, there was no way to worship God under that covenant. What that temple and its elements represented, *the body of Christ, the church of God*, was *complete* in purpose, and being brought to revelation in time, is a temple that no earthly war can destroy or even touch.

The life of the believer and the life of the church is, however without question, a war. Throughout the New Testament the Word is replete with references to the life of the child of God as warfare (2 Cor. 10:4-5; 1 Tim. 1:18; 1 Cor. 14:8). The war in which the church is engaged is spiritual and its boundaries are invisible (Matthew 16:18;

Luke 14:31-33). The believer is to adorn himself in battle array (Eph. 6:11-17). It has been remarked that none of the armor employed affords protection for the back of the believer. The armor and the weapon of this warfare are for attack, a march forward and for standing one's ground. There is no contingency given for retreat in this war.

The warfare and the manner of it declared in Deuteronomy 20 is about the spiritual warfare of the church. In order for this to be understood we must first see that the preaching of the Gospel, the primary mission of the church, is not a passive endeavor. The church is a forward marching army, an army that will prevail without question. Those who oppose it cannot win. Equipped with the power of God (the Gospel), those who stand in the path of this blessed battalion will fall (Isa. 28:13). They may appear to be a rag-tag mixture, a small group but they are unstoppable and indestructible (Lev. 26:7-8; Ps. 91:7). She will know no defeat, take no prisoners and no weapon formed against shall prosper. Those with whom she engages have but one of two courses to take. They must surrender or be utterly, finally and completely defeated and destroyed. The Gospel will have its day and its battle, its assault will end in victory whether that victory be death our life for those with whom it is engaged (2 Cor. 2:14-17). The outcome has never been in question. Rolf Barnard said that wherever the Gospel goes it leaves a trail of blood.

In this passage we are allowed to see the *preparation* for the siege. Herein is the promise of victory by the power of God. In the first verse we find the two-fold assurance that undergirds the church. Though the armies we face and the cities we are to lay siege upon seem greater in number and

power, we are not to fear them. The reason is the presence of the Lord with us and the experience of the grace that has kept us thus far. The one who is with us is the same as the one who delivered us. Though we do not live in the past, the memory of how our Lord has often delivered us gives us confidence for the task before us (Isa. 33:20-22).

In verse 2-8 we see the pastor's *message* to the church as she prepares for the battle. The pastor's message is delivered in both comfort and admonition as seen in the words of the priest (minister) and officer (overseer) both being functions of the preacher of the Gospel. The Gospel is first a message of comfort to the people of God (vv. 3-4). "If God be for us, who can be against us?" He goes with us to fight for us against our enemies to save us (Nehemiah 4:20). If it is God who goes for us, it is already done (Ecc. 3:14-15; Isa. 40; 1-2). In verses 5-8 the pastor (officer) excuses some from the battle. In doing so he, in effect, sets forth the qualifications for going to battle. In the New Testament no such exemptions exist. In fact, what are declared as exemptions in Deuteronomy are declared to be unworthiness for the spiritual war in the NT (Matt. 10; 34-38). The officers dismissed from battle those whose minds were tied up with unfinished business. One cannot be prepared for war who is entangled with the affairs of the world (2 Tim 2:4). Now some might take this to extremes and enter monasteries or caves and become hermits saying that they are giving up the entanglements of the world. This idea does not hold water because in Deut. 20 the other soldiers also had houses, vineyards and wives but their *minds* were about the business before them. The officers were, by dismissing these whose *minds* were elsewhere, saying that to be part of the war, the

eye must be upon the prize. Entanglement with the affairs of the world chokes out the seed of the word (1 Cor. 9:24-26, Phil. 3:13-14).

What remains is how the battle is to be engaged and various treatments of the enemies. This war is like no other. The first salvo fired against the enemy is a proclamation of peace (v.10). This is a remarkable battle strategy. The message of the Gospel is "Peace by Jesus Christ; He is Lord of all." Old Baxter said, "bow or burn." Those who make an answer of peace, that is to say, who agree with the terms of peace, throwing down their arms and stacking their guns in the corner become servants of this army (v. 11). Who are servants of the army? They are the servants of Christ. In truth, having submitted to the righteousness of God, these recipients of peace are the children of God because in Christ the servants are also the Sons (Gal. 3:26-28; Coll. 3:11). The message of the Gospel is at first "be ye reconciled to God."

If any of these cities refuse the message of-peace, then they are to be besieged. When defeated, the city is to be dealt with justice tempered with mercy (vv. 12-14). The men are symbolic of anyone who has joined the battle against the church, refusing the peace proclaimed. These are to be destroyed, but the women, children and belongings are to be spared and taken as spoils. It is not the intent of the Gospel to be cruel and administer vengeance. This is analogous to "shaking the dust off your feet" as a testimony against those who refuse the Gospel (Matt. 10:11-14; 7:6). At the same time the Gospel asserts that the needy be cared for. Notice that in verse 15 our Lord makes a distinction. These proclamations of peace and justice tempered with mercy are to be exercised only on the cities that are afar off and not the

cities of this nation (Canaan). The distinction that is made is concerning the *particular* enemies and how they are to be dealt with.

Verse 16 begins with the conjunction “but.” Considering the afore mentioned tactics, those do not apply to what follows. These particular cities are not to have peace proclaimed to them, nor is anything or anyone in them to survive. There is no spoil to be taken because nothing about them may be used in the service of the gospel. Utter destruction is their only end. This part of the warfare deals with those who obstinately oppose the *truth* and are intractable enemies of the *Gospel*. They are to be given no quarter, no prisoners taken, and no terms of surrender declared. They are to be destroyed because of what they teach (v. 18).

We know that we are not to kill those who openly and overtly oppose the truth, but we are to count them as dead (Gal.6:14;). We are not to have part with them (2 Cor. 6:14-16). We are to turn from them (2 Tim. 3:5). We are to leave them alone (Matt. 15:14). They are dead to God and to the believer. They are enemies of God, both inward and outward and the believer hates them (Ps. 139:20-22). We are to love our enemies for if the truth be known there is ample reason to be at enmity with us. But those who *oppose God*, who *despise our Lord* do so without a cause and we are to count them as dead.

Finally, our Lord puts all of this into perspective (v. 19-20). The Lord is the distinguisher (Matt. 3:10; 15:13; Isaiah 52:7).

SIN

1, If one be found slain in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee to possess it, lying in the field, and it be not known who hath slain him:

2, Then thy elders and thy judges shall come forth, and they shall measure unto the cities which are round about him that is slain:

3, And it shall be, that the city which is next unto the slain man, even the elders of that city shall take an heifer, which hath not been wrought with, and which hath not drawn in the yoke;

4, And the elders of that city shall bring down the heifer unto a rough valley, which is neither eared nor sown, and shall strike off the heifer's neck there in the valley:

5, And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the LORD thy God hath chosen to minister unto him, and to bless in the name of the LORD; and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried:

6, And all the elders of that city, that are next unto the slain man, shall wash their hands over the heifer that is beheaded in the valley:

7, And they shall answer and say, Our hands have not shed this blood, neither have our eyes seen it.

8, Be merciful, O LORD, unto thy people Israel, whom thou hast redeemed, and lay not innocent blood unto thy people of Israel's charge. And the blood shall be forgiven them.

9, So shalt thou put away the guilt of innocent blood from among you, when thou shalt do that which is right in the sight of the LORD.

Deuteronomy 21:1-9

This passage is a wonderful representation of grace reigning through righteousness. Here our gracious God provides for a sacrifice for sin where no individual guilt can be assigned. There are not two or three eyewitnesses to the crime committed. No one, humanly speaking, knows who is guilty of this murder.

As I read different commentaries on this passage, I found one thing that was not dealt with. Though men cannot know who did this crime the culprit was not unknown. God who knows all and sees all not only knows who did the deed but knows everything about the person from the number of hairs on his or her head, the number of breaths he or she is allotted, the number of days he or she is given to live on the earth and the motive that is behind the murder. Had it been God's purpose to bring the guilty party to earthly justice, He would have but to squeeze the heart of the offender and cause him to confess. There may well be a very simple lesson in this. It is not up to us to deal with sin or assign guilt. That is the business of one who can do it without sin. It is ours to preach the Gospel and wait on the Lord to do the business that belongs to equitable righteousness. The issue then is that God, concerning what is being taught, places no significance in *apprehending* the culprit but rather that *sin be dealt with* in a particular manner, and that manner is free, sovereign, unmerited grace for the elect, the chosen of God.

There are several things that are here for us in this passage.

First is that sin is committed. A murder has taken place and the felon is unknown to us. This is a very important aspect of what the Lord is teaching. Though some might say that the sin here being dealt with is unknown sin, and God is here providing a remedy for sins of ignorance. But that really doesn't wash because such a provision has already been made in the law of the sin offering (Numbers 15:27-28), and beside that, it is not the sin that is unknown, it is the *sinner*.

The sin is murder or at the least manslaughter. It is the *murderer* that is *unknown*. This relates to what we are truly ignorant of. We are by nature ignorant of ourselves. By nature, we are children of wrath even as others. By nature, inside us where only grace will give us a glance is a desperately sick and wicked heart. In our heart, our inward man, we find that we are all murderers. Prior to the Holy Spirit opening us up, we simply have no idea of the corruption and evil that resides and abides in our bosom. By hatred and vengeance, we have murdered our thousands, and though our victims may be discovered, there is no evidence that will lead men to find us. We are serial killers from the heart, and nobody knows but God (Mark 7:21-23; 1 John 3:15). Rather than a *particular* sin, this sin represents the sinful *condition* of every descendent of Adam and particularly the condition of every one of the elect. As elect sinners we have offended the holiness of God, broken His law, missed the mark of glory and proved ourselves crooked in all our ways.

When sin is committed there must be justice executed from the Lord. Being Holy he must act righteously. The sinner must be punished. On what ground must sin be punished. It must be punished because the Holy Law has been broken. Under what law are we condemned? Is it the law of Moses, the edicts handed down at Sinai? It does after all say that thou shalt not commit murder. No, we are not condemned by the law of Moses. According to the epistle to the Galatians, the law was added *because* of transgression. According to the epistle of the Romans the law, that is the Law of Moses, entered that the offence might abound declaring that the transgression—the offence—*preceded* the law of Moses.

The Bible is also clear that sin is not charged or imputed where there is no law. The law assigns guilt. The law under which we are condemned and are guilty of offending is the law that holds all of us guilty and punishable by death. That law was the law of the garden, “in the day ye eat of that fruit ye shall surely die” (Romans 5:12-14). It is evident that sin was imputed because death, the punishment for sin, was being executed before Moses was given the law on Sinai.

Thus, in this passage in Deuteronomy the first to be *assigned* to the crime are the judges (v. 2). *Grace is not shown where the law is not executed.* Grace is not bestowed at the expense of righteousness. What is the assignment of the judges? What is the job of the law? It has to kill something! The letter killeth. Someone must pay for the crime. The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The wages of sin is death. The law is *assigned* to find a sacrifice. The law requires a sacrifice. Nothing can take place, no further aspect may even be considered till the Law and the One who

gave it is propitiated, appeased and satisfied. It is God who designates the sacrifice. Men are not very good at designating sacrifice. Their sacrifices are giving up ice-cream for lent, laying down their Camels on the altar, quittin' that demon rum or not frequenting the movie show. Their sacrifices are putting feet to their prayers, rededication and turning over withered leaves. Nothing but death for sin will suffice to assuage divine anger, to placate perfection.

The sacrifice that God orders the law to obtain is very instructive (vv. 3-4). It is to be a heifer; one that has never born a yoke or taken part in the plowing or the harvesting of a field. She is to be brought from the city that is nearest to the dead man. She is to be brought out of the city to the rough valley, where nothing has been planted and nothing is produced. She is then to be summarily slain. What a picture this is of our lord.

The victim is female. This declares the glorious unity of Christ and His church, His bride. So close, so real and vital is this union that when Christ died, she died. When He suffered, she suffered. When he rose, resurrected and ascended to heavenly place, she was in Him and with Him and remains to this day and for everlasting. He is her *head* and she is His *body*, the fullness of Him that filleth all.

He has not born the yoke of sin nor are the works of this world His works. He was without sin. Yet He was in close proximity to the dead man. He was from the nearest city. "The word is nigh unto thee even in thy mouth; in Him we live and move and have our being." He walked among sinners yet was nigh and separate from them all at the same time.

The sacrifice was taken outside the city, outside the camp to be slain. The heifer was taken to a rough place, a desolate place where nothing is sown, and nothing is harvested. What better picture of the world whose inhabitants “sow to the wind and reap the whirlwind;” where dead men sow dead seed in dead ground and “bring forth fruit unto death.” Nothing of this place can have part in this sacrifice, this death. This victim’s value gains nothing from this world and counts on nothing of this world to make it effectual.

By the same token, no purity, no waiting period to watch for blemishes in this heifer is required. This of course refers to our Lord being made sin for us. In that moment of great darkness Christ, before God as our substitute was sin and the only thing left for the Holy God to do was kill. Holiness has got its due. Sin has been punished by death.

The uniqueness of this sacrifice is yet still more wondrous. This is seen in the fact that when the priests and sons of Levi arrive at the scene, the sacrifice has already been made (v. 5). They come near *after* the fact. They do not, as is their job in the business of the tabernacle, take part in the slaying of the beast. This tells us a couple of things.

This is not a burnt offering offered on the brazen altar where sin is put away. It is not the act of sacrifice that the priests and the sons of Levi are involved in, but the *remembrance*. What killed this sacrifice was God and His law. Those who benefited from this work of God were the priests and the Levites, the church, the ministers of the Gospel. Note the latter portion of verse 5. Could there be a better description of those whom God has chosen to bless His name. By them, that is by the Gospel that they preach,

every controversy and every stroke is tried. The truth, the Gospel settles all things and puts all things in their proper places (2 Cor. 2;14-16; Acts 17:10-11).

What is that message? Tis done, the great transaction is done! The Gospel is not an invitation to *do* something but is rather a declaration that all is *done*. The Gospel brings faith to the elect by the Spirit.

This is seen in the washing of the hands as they stand over the slain heifer. The washing of the hands is not that of the Pharisee who did so believing they purified themselves. When these men wash their hands, they were proclaiming their innocence (Ps. 26:6; Matt. 27:24). This is the response of faith to the Gospel. Because God is propitiated, the believer is innocent of the sin of the heart. This is extreme confidence or full assurance of faith in the person and work of Christ. Before *the* God who is Holy, we have *not done* this sin, we haven't even seen it. I'm reckoning the old man to have died indeed.

Faith, always at the door of mercy, seeks mercy for all things, and it is mercy based on what God has done (v. 8). The blessed Gospel assures the believer that, because God has redeemed him, that no charge will be laid to his account (Romans 8:33-34). Their sins are forgiven. The Gospel is the only means by which the people of God have such assurance (v. 10).

FOR LOVE

10, When thou goest forth to war against thine enemies, and the LORD thy God hath delivered them into thine hands, and thou hast taken them captive,

11, And seest among the captives a beautiful woman, and hast a desire unto her, that thou wouldest have her to thy wife;

12, Then thou shalt bring her home to thine house; and she shall shave her head, and pare her nails;

13, And she shall put the raiment of her captivity from off her, and shall remain in thine house, and bewail her father and her mother a full month: and after that thou shalt go in unto her, and be her husband, and she shall be thy wife.

14, And it shall be, if thou have no delight in her, then thou shalt let her go whither she will; but thou shalt not sell her at all for money, thou shalt not make merchandise of her, because thou hast humbled her.

Deuteronomy 21:10-14

In reading the Old Testament there are always several things to be considered. Since this portion of scripture was all that was available to the Apostles and their message was Christ and Him crucified, the words of this part of scripture refer to Christ. Our Lord as well as His preachers often stated this truth utilizing phrases such as “it is written” and “thus saith the Lord.”

Another thing to remember is that the language employed, since it was designed by God to hide or shroud Christ in a mystery, later to be revealed, was both metaphorical and allegorical. Metaphor and allegory are tools of language designed to have a meaning other than the natural or obvious meaning (Gal. 4).

Still another thing that is necessary to understand is that no type fully addresses the particular aspect of Christ that is being dealt with. Christ then is the meaning of the type and not the other way around.

There is no understanding of the type or picture until Christ is known (Luke 24:45-46). In truth the apostles did not preach Christ from the Old Testament, they preached the Old Testament in light of Christ. This being so, the Old Testament cannot be understood much less preached apart from Christ. This is the area where Christianity (so called) errs “not knowing the scripture of the power of God.” They endeavor to apply to the Old Covenant as a rule of life or a behavior monitor and completely miss the message that it teaches. The message of the Old Testament is Christ, His work, His church and how His doings fixed it so God could be just and still justify sinners. I hope I do not labor this truth too much. I do so because, even though I know Christ is the understanding of the law, there is a part of me that responds to the law in thoughts of personal righteousness, and I must continually remind myself that Christ is the meaning of the Old Testament.

Here in our text the picture set forth immediately draws our minds to Christ. Love and marriage always speak about Christ and His bride, the church. Rather than looking at this picture of Christ as a singular reference, the context better

lends itself to a specific aspect of the person and work of Christ in each individual verse.

In verse 10 we see a *war*. This war ends in Israel being victorious, the enemy being delivered into their hands by God and the taking of captives. In the song of Moses in Exodus 15 our Lord is referred to as a “man of war.” We rarely consider this aspect of our Lord's work in the salvation of our souls. The emphasis of the Gospel, and rightly so, is on the work performed by the Father and the Son for the glory of the Father's holiness in the punishing of sin by the substitutionary offering of the soul of Christ. It was on the cross that our Lord settled the issue of sin forever on behalf of the elect. In the matter of our deliverance—our salvation—our Lord turns to be the man of war. We, by nature, practice a willfully ignorant submission, being held captive by one who has power over us. We are not aware of our captivity. We are not aware that we are slaves. We, by nature, reside in a state of blissful ignorance. Denizens of the dunghill, our nostrils so long filled with the putrefaction of our estate, we are unaware that there is just beyond our wretched home a valley of myrrh, cassia and frankincense, replete with lilies and rockroses nourished by the dew of heaven.

By nature, we are the slaves of sin for it has reigned unto death. And we are held captive by Satan, the prince of the power of the air (Eph. 2:2-3). According to Luke 11:21 and Matthew 12:29 we were in Satan's palace and he was happily controlling our existence. In the language and terms of conflict, our Lord (the absolute sovereign) enters into the realm of the lesser sovereign, binds him and takes the spoils of His victory. We are the spoils, and this is salvation and deliverance *realized*. This same kind of language is employed

throughout scripture in reference to our salvation wrought by our great Savior, the unconquerable man of war (Ps. 68:18; Eph. 4:8-10; John 12:31-33; 16:8-11; Rev. 6:2). When our Lord routed Satan's palace, He took all the spoils. The elect were among all those taken, but our Lord took all of humanity for the purpose of saving his elect (John 17:2-3).

In verse 11 the love of Christ for His betrothed is pictured. Among those whom He has taken captive is one who has captivated His heart—Who has captured His eye and his heart? She is among those who were His enemies. No doubt this refers to the elect among the Gentiles. It is the fact of her enmity that makes this so Gospel potent (Romans 8. 7-8; Romans 5:8, 10; Coll. 1:20-22). Hereby we perceive the love of God because he laid down his life for us.

I suppose I shouldn't be, but I'm always struck by the romance of the Gospel. The Lord desires her to be His wife. She is beautiful to Him. She is not beautiful in her enmity, nor is she beautiful in her sin. She is not beautiful in herself. How is she beautiful? She is beautiful because in His time His grace will make her so (Ecc. 3:11; Ezekiel 16:14; SS. 4:7). He loves His bride, desires her and delights in Her as He has seen her from all eternity. He came to rescue her from her captivity and give her true beauty, the beauty of holiness enwrapped in pristine righteousness and united with him.

Verses 12 and 13 teach that the beauty our Lord seen in His beloved was not in herself. The reason for the shaving of the head and the paring of the nails was symbolic. It spoke to repentance from self-righteousness. It was a common practice among the women of the East to make themselves beautiful and alluring if their nation was about to be

conquered. They braided their hair, painted their nails and made themselves attractive in hope that the conqueror would see their beauty and take them as wives. How well this pictures our notions that personal merit will attract the attention of Christ. Our natural religion causes us to put a pretty bow on the head of a pig. We believe naturally that if we become better, we will catch the eye of the Lord and influence Him to take us to Himself. Our efforts are what the old writers called *splendida pecatta* or “shining sins.” Self-righteous religion in silver slippers, adorned in the rags of human merit will not make Christ attend to us. What will? He will! Of his own volition and his own will and for His own reasons He will desire us and find us beautiful in His eyes.

This is proven by the fact that the first thing He does to us is take away that which we thought recommended us to Him. He shaves our head and pares our nails. These things picture our nature. Though subdued by the Spirit, our hair and nails grow back and must be continually shaved and pared by the Gospel.

Next she is stripped of the raiment of her captivity. That raiment is the beautiful outfit she arrayed herself in to attract Christ. Again, this is the stripping of our righteousness and our glory. They will not and cannot remain for there is but one righteousness that is accepted by God, even the righteousness of God himself—“dressed in His righteousness alone, faultless to stand before the throne.”

Then she is to remain in the house and mourn, bewail or lament her father and her mother. Jewish writers have differences to the meaning of the words “father and mother” Most agree that the bewailing is not mourning for loss but rather a disdain or disowning of something. The difference

put forth by Hebrew scholars, and I believe that it is significant, is that this “disowning” is of the *idols* of her father and mother or the *idolatry* of her former life. This certainly lines up with one who has been brought to the house of Christ. They disallow their previous religion of dead works and idolatry (1 Thes. 1:9; Hebrews 9:14). As she is given 30 days to bewail, and this is the proper time given for mourning the dead, her lamenting is for her former association with the dead works of religion (Rom. 7). The fact that it is her father and mother mentioned relates to the fact of our natural religion received in the fall from our federal head and father Adam.

After these things are done, she is then recognized as His wife.

Verse 14 is about the weakness and fickleness of human love. This declares that if the husband no longer desires his wife, he may put her away by bill of divorcement. She is however not to be treated according to her former life. She is to be free and not sold or merchandized because she was chosen by her husband. This passage does not teach that Christ will ever divorce His wife or that He will cease to delight in her. The latter part of the verse should be viewed in the same sense as a phrase in Hebrews 6:4-6. Such a thing as Christ no longer delighting in his bride is impossible. The language is that of salvation and redemption. She is made free and remains so because of her relationship with her husband. She cannot be made a slave again. This passage is saying that if it were possible for Christ to no longer delight in his bride; that would not change her estate of salvation. She has been redeemed, her sins put away and nothing can change that. Such a thing,

however, is impossible because though men are mutable, Christ is not. He is the same yesterday today and forever. The bride's freedom is contingent upon union with the Christ who accomplished it. It is impossible to separate Christ from His work and therefore from His bride.

THE FIRSTBORN

15, If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the firstborn son be hers that was hated:

16, Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, which is indeed the firstborn:

17, But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his.

Deuteronomy 21:15-17

This passage concerns the rights of the firstborn under the law. There are several things that teach us that this principle is restricted to the law which was temporal and dealt with temporal things. We know that the law is spiritual and speaks to the person and work of Christ. Likewise, we know that the law is holy and must be fulfilled honored and satisfied. This task, impossible for fallen humanity, was accomplished in totality by the Christ of God. This law was designed to point to Christ and was also designed to assure that the inheritance due the firstborn was never to be changed even if the firstborn was the son of a hated wife. Human love and favoritism have no place in the requirements declared in the law.

The first clue we have that tells us that this law in its earthly application is an antitype to Christ is that the

husband here is said to have two wives. Polygamy is prohibited by god. For men to try to assert that it is right simply because it was practiced in the Old Testament by such men as David and Solomon, must then say that the murder that David committed or the idolatry that Solomon practiced are also examples of the right way to live. Polygamy was allowed though it was prohibited. The fact that it always ended in disaster should be revelation enough in itself.

We know that God winked at these things because of the hardness of man's heart (Acts 17:29-31, Mark 10:2-9), but this cannot picture Christ because He is the husband of one wife, the church. That which is born of the union of Christ and his church are all considered as firstborn and thus are accounted the rights and privileges as such (Romans 8:29; 16-17, Gal 4; 6-7; James 1:18; Rev. 14:4).

The next hint that what is being spoken here deals with the temporal is that one son received a double portion. In Christ, because of the free grace of God, every believer, every son of God receives the same portion of spiritual blessings (Eph. 1:3; 1 Cor. 3:21-23; Col. 2:8-9).

Still, another thing that reminds us of the fact that this law deals with temporal things is that it is void of grace and mercy. Grace and mercy are unmerited and unconditional. Men are unable and unwise in these heavenly things and are prone to forget what is right and opt for what personally pleases them.

Once again, we are reminded that the law was added because of transgression. The fact that this law was to be stringently observed reveals that otherwise, man would not adhere to it. It is strongly implied that if this law were not in place that the firstborn here mentioned, because he was not

born of the beloved wife, would not receive the inheritance that was rightfully his. The double portion allotted to the firstborn assured that there could no question of partiality born of human love or as the result of human hate. No law was ever given, whether divine or human, to make men better.

Laws are given to reveal and punish unrighteous behavior and to set up boundaries to keep depravity in check. Laws are not for the righteous they are for the unrighteous. There is an old adage that says that “locks were invented to keep honest people honest.” That is not true. Laws were invented because people, by nature are dishonest. Locks were invented because people are thieves. Laws were invented because people are sinful (Romans 3:19-20; 5:20; 1 Timothy 5:10). This law, written in this manner is a declaration that the husband in this scenario is a sinner about to do the wrong thing.

This law does point to Christ as the firstborn, the only begotten, uniquely born Son of God and is therefore the rightful possessor of the attendant inheritance. He was given the Spirit without measure (John 3:34). God the Father gave *all* things into His hands (John 3:35). He has been given authority over *all* flesh. He has been given *all* authority in heaven and in earth. In him dwells *all* the fullness of the Godhead bodily. *All* fullness is in Him and He has preeminence in *all* things. The heavens, the earth and *all* that dwell therein belong to Christ. The law of God, exacting in nature, precise in requirements, holy, just and good, demands that Christ have the rights of the firstborn. This becomes blessed to the one whom God has given faith to believe and understand the scripture. Christ and his church

are declared to be one (Eph. 5:25-32). The church is a mystical body with Christ—he being the head and the church being His body. Being one, the church is given the same inheritance that Christ has received. You are, as a believer, viewed by God as his firstborn; God's heir and joint heirs with Christ. You are the chosen, the fortunate, and the highly favored firstborn of God by vital union with Christ.

The law, however, cannot fully express the Holy character of God. It is limited to the revelation of what God expresses concerning sin. The law's worth, honor and holiness are not diminished by this limitation but is rather placed as a representative aspect of the revelation of God. The law has no mercy. The law has no grace. The law has no love for sinners, but only wrath and rightful justice. The Bible declares that justice is the *strange* work of God. He delights in mercy (Micah 7:18). When God showed Moses His glory in Exodus it was not about the proclamation of the law but the revelation of His *goodness*, the proclamation of the name of the Lord and showing *grace* and *mercy*. Part of the revelation of the Word made flesh was that “the law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.”

It is interesting to note that when our Lord set forth the glory of His grace in Romans 9, he uses this law to do it. When it comes to the giving of grace and mercy it cannot be that *any* sinner obtains grace by his or her keeping of the law. Grace and mercy flow because the law was honored, satisfied, kept and fulfilled by Christ. However, in the matter of the sinner receiving it, the law is adamantly removed from the equation. Quoting Malachi 3 Paul sets forth the salvation of sinners, the election of sinners, and the mercy given to sinners as a result of the love of God (Romans 9:11-18). In

doings so He distinguishes between natural Israel who operated under temporal law and spiritual Israel (the church v. 6-8) who operates solely under the realm of grace and mercy (Romans 6:14). So, we can surmise that the law given in our text was given first to reveal the firstborn rights of the Lord Jesus Christ and secondly to show that salvation is by grace and mercy, because the realization of it has nothing to do with the recipient being involved with the law in any way. The law was fulfilled by Christ for the believer and thus the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer (Romans 8:1-4), but the believer is never brought to the law for righteousness or merit in any way. The law was fulfilled by the elder, and in that capacity, He served the younger (Mark 10:45; 1 Sam. 25:41). For the recipient however, the law has no part in His standing before God. The believer stands in the purpose of election, born of the love of God wherein he received abundant mercy and grace which resulted in the salvation of His soul.

A CURSE

18, If a man have a stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them:

19, Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place;

20, And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard.

21, And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.

22, And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree:

23, His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

Deuteronomy 21:18-23

As I began, a few weeks ago, looking at Deuteronomy 21 and as I prepared the messages that I have preached thus far, this part of the chapter dealing with the rebellious son was continually on my mind. I read it several times and pondered it a *lot*. I found that commentators dealt with this portion of scripture strictly in the context of the law, and there was no

question that the law is strictly interpreted here. Death for sin is most assuredly set forth in these verses as they deal with parents bringing accusation against a rebellious son and their accusation eventuating in his death by capital punishment. There can be no doubt as to the inflexibility of the law when this passage is considered. There can be no doubt concerning the jealousy of our God for his glory and the absolute necessity that law and justice be honored.

Taken as a whole, verses 10 through 21 paint a pretty good picture of nature and the consequence of sin (James 1:13-15). David took a bride in war and that union brought forth a rebellious son Absalom. Adam loved his wife and then hated her after he fell, and their union brought forth a son who tried to please the Lord by his own merit and who ended up committing the first murder.

We all fall into the category of rebellious sons and daughters and our sin is worthy of death. The fact that only a son is mentioned as rebellious in our text may relate that sin is passed through the father and thus pictures imputation of sin in the fall. It likewise declares the purity of Christ as he was not the son of Adam but of God.

As far as the rebellious son typifying Christ, it cannot be so in nature. Our Lord as the son of man and the Son of God was never rebellious or disobedient to His Father. He was holy, harmless, pure, perfect and undefiled in His nature and his life. If, however, we leave the subject of nature and go to the cross, particularly to that three-hour period of darkness when our Lord, as substitute, was made to be sin for us, we see that He was made *worse* than the rebellious son. He was made essential sin. He was not rebellious for at that moment He was the definition of unqualified obedience.

He was made to be rebellion. He was not corrupt but was made to be corruption itself. He was not wicked but was made to be wickedness. He was not sinful—He was worse. He was made to be sin. What ever the acts might be that flow from sin they are but symptomatic of the greater problem, which is essential sin. Christ was not by nature a sinner. He was made to be the nature of sin. By this he was guilty of all that naturally flows from the essence of sin. He was not made like us; he was made to be what makes us like we are. He was not depraved; He was made to be depravity. At that moment, before the thrice holy God, He was worthy of death. This is incomprehensible glory. Were it not for the clear declaration of scripture we would be at a total loss because though we are able to see our sins, we have no comprehension of our sin. Christ was made to be sin and bore the full punishment due it (Psalm 22:1-6; 38:1-4; 40:12).

As I considered this passage about the rebellious son, I had all these thoughts going through my mind, but I was not satisfied as to what this passage meant until I was able to connect with the last two verses of the chapter. I had, up to that point, viewed them separately knowing that without a doubt the last two verses had to do with the crucifixion of Christ.

Paul used these last verses to set forth the freedom bought for the elect by Christ being made a curse for them. What I did not know was that according to the rules of the Sanhedrin and the Targum, the last two verses were connected with the context of the rebellious son and his ensuing demise under the strict penalty of the law.

First the person who was stoned was to be later hanged. Hanging after stoning was not two separate subjects dealing with two *different* transgressions but sequential events for the *same* transgression. The Targum said, “and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him, on a tree; or is condemned to stoning, and after that they hang him.” This may seem like double kill, but the hanging was designed to display the criminal serving as proof that he was guilty of the crime and the law had been satisfied.

The thing that makes the whole scenario more amazing is the manner in which the felon was to be hanged. According to the rule of the Sanhedrin “they fix a beam in the earth, and a piece of wood goes out of it (near the top of it) and join his two hands together and hang him.” John Gill went on to explain “that is, by his hand, not by his neck, as with us, but rather in the crucifixion; only in that the hands are spread, and one hand is fastened to one part of the cross beam, and the other to the other end.” Is this not the same manner in which Paul spoke in Galatians 3:13 “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:”

If language means anything Paul was not only saying that Christ redeemed us from the law being made a curse for us but the proof that He was made a curse, that he was guilty, is manifested by the fact that He was hanged on a tree. Here we also have one of those great scriptural omissions. There is no mention of a rebellious daughter in this text or in the Targum or the rules of the Sanhedrin. This law is *exclusive* to the son.

So, what we have before us is the story of our salvation by the substitutionary, law satisfying crucifixion of our blessed Savior.

First, we have our nature and condition plainly declared. We are disobedient rebellious children of our Father. We are gluttonous drunks and the many times we have been corrected and chastised only served to make us more rebellious. We are most truly described in Isaiah 1:2-6. Our sins cannot be overlooked; they must be punished with the rightful and righteous punishment that is due them and us. We must die. Look at how we are described in the word of God (Eph. 2:2-3; Coll. 3:6).

At first look, even with a well-grounded respect for the law, I had some difficulty with the concept of a parent bringing the fruit of their loins before the law to be killed. I suppose my parental chromosomes stirred in my double helix. Then I began to wonder if this law and subsequent penalty was ever executed in the Bible. There was one instance in Leviticus where an Israelitish woman married to an Egyptian man had a son who blasphemed God and was stoned to death, but there was no reference to the son being brought before the judges by the parents. Other than this there are, to my knowledge, no instances of this law being carried out in scripture except one; when God the Father brought His Son before the penalty of the law.

This then is the answer to my dilemma. Because we are sinners who love our sinful children it would be virtually impossible for us to bring our sons to be put to death. This is the reason that the relationship plays such an important role (Isaiah 64; 6-9).

The elect of God are the children of God and always have been. In time they realized this by the new birth and adoption but they were and are the eternal children of the Father (Isaiah 54:13 & John 6:45; Gal. 4:1-6; Hebrews 2:14). Even in our sinful state, full of self and sin, we as parents would, if the law required and allowed, willingly die in the place of our children. It is what parents do! What grace is here manifested! Our Father, in the person of His Son went to the cross. He was made a curse, and to remove any doubt that He was made a curse, counted as guilty, and punished by the law, He was hung on a tree.

He was numbered with the transgressors. Look at the last phrase of verse 20. Then look at Proverbs 23:20-21. Keeping that in mind, look at Matthew 11:19. What love is this, what proof of love is this! What honor, what holiness, what justice is here manifest—what love! I can almost hear heaven ring as God views his poor wretched children, all ruined and sick with sin and rebellion. “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together.” I hear also the song of the thankful redeemed sinner “For we must needs die, and are as water spilt on the ground, which cannot be gathered up again; neither doth God respect any person: yet doth he devise means, that his banished be not expelled from him.”

This passage is the revelation of God's love for His *law* and his love for his *Son* and His love for the *many sons* that Christ will bring to glory. This is the language of redemption (Romans 5:8; Gal. 2:20: 1 John 4:10; Rev. 1:5). Read Text.

CARE AND DEPRAVITY

1, Thou shalt not see thy brother's ox or his sheep go astray, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt in any case bring them again unto thy brother.

2, And if thy brother be not nigh unto thee, or if thou know him not, then thou shalt bring it unto thine own house, and it shall be with thee until thy brother seek after it, and thou shalt restore it to him again.

3, In like manner shalt thou do with his ass; and so shalt thou do with his raiment; and with all lost thing of thy brother's, which he hath lost, and thou hast found, shalt thou do likewise: thou mayest not hide thyself.

4, Thou shalt not see thy brother's ass or his ox fall down by the way, and hide thyself from them: thou shalt surely help him to lift them up again.

5, The woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment: for all that do so are abomination unto the LORD thy God.

6, If a bird's nest chance to be before thee in the way in any tree, or on the ground, whether they be young ones, or eggs, and the dam sitting upon the young, or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take the dam with the young:

7, But thou shalt in any wise let the dam go, and take the young to thee; that it may be well with thee, and that thou mayest prolong thy days.

8, When thou buildest a new house, then thou shalt make a battlement for thy roof, that thou bring not blood upon thine house, if any man fall from thence.

9, Thou shalt not sow thy vineyard with divers seeds: lest the fruit of thy seed which thou hast sown, and the fruit of thy vineyard, be defiled.

10, Thou shalt not plow with an ox and an ass together.

11, Thou shalt not wear a garment of divers sorts, as of woollen and linen together.

12, Thou shalt make thee fringes upon the four quarters of thy vesture, wherewith thou coverest thyself.

Deuteronomy 22:1-12

In Deuteronomy, chapters 22-25, there are various and sundry laws that deal with a number of different topics. These laws deal in the human realm with everything from general civility, to personal injury, personal property, fornication, rape, and the kind treatment of beasts. We will look at a few verses at a time rather than try to deal with these things in a thematic manner. In this study we will look at verses 1-12. As we consider these things there are several things to remember.

First these laws were established under the covenant that was conditional. The obedience or disobedience to these laws was the condition by which punishment or blessing was administered from on high. We know from a general perusal of the life of this nation that they were marked by a disobedient and discontented behavior, and most of the time,

except when God brought them to fear for life; they were a bunch of malcontents. In other words, they were an accurate representation of all of humanity in nature.

The second thing to remember is that that covenant is no longer in force, being satisfied, fulfilled and put away by the Lord Jesus Christ in His life and substitutionary death (Heb. 10:9).

This being so, the third thing to consider is that there can be no natural application of the laws in the life of the believer because they have a spiritual meaning that is beyond natural life. This does not mean that these laws and principles are not good and holy. The inspired words of Paul in Romans 7 declare the law to be holy just and good after which he designates that it is spiritual.

Fourthly, the law was not given to make men holy and good because man was past the point of that capability since the best of men had proved unable to obey the single precept handed to him in the Garden of Eden. Some might take issue here and say that Adam could have obeyed but the weight of the inspired canon makes it clear that laws are put in place not to keep men from breaking them but to *disclose* disobedience and *punish* men for breaking them. The law entered *because* of transgression.

Adam did not become a sinner when he sinned. Sinful acts come from the heart and nature. Adam sinned because he was a sinner. Sinning is what sinners do. The law prohibiting the eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was put in place because of what was in Adam's heart. We say that Adam was mutable. What is mutability but the opposite of holiness? Holiness is marked by constancy, a separateness and undiluted immutability of

purity. The fact is that since a human being is indeed mutable, he cannot in and of himself be holy. Mutability always chooses self over God as was proved in the garden when Adam, having no knowledge of good and evil, immediately chose evil when the opportunity presented itself to him (Psalm 49:12). The law of the garden was given that the sin in the garden would be imputed (Romans 5:13) and appear to be what it was (Romans 5:20). The transgressor had, as of yet, not actively transgressed, but the possibility of him doing otherwise did not exist. Thus, the law was added—entered in—because of transgression. The most positive proof of this and the full understanding of the fact that grace did much more abound is that before any transgressor was put on the earth, before any transgression was made, there was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Grace superabounded *ions* before sin abounded.

The final thing to consider then is this—the law is a about Christ and his work for and in his people.

The first thing I want us to see from these verses is a wonderful fact. *God is in the details!* He who runs the universe, possesses and controls all the inhabitants therein cares for what men would consider the most mundane things. A nesting bird, an ass, an ox, and a battlement on a roof are all objects of the Lord's care (Matt. 10:29-31). There can be no doubt that these principles teach that a person ought to think past their own self, their own meager existence and care for others, even the beasts that the Lord has made because it is evident that the Lord does. This is clearly seen in vv. 1-4; 6-7; 10.

A few things need to be dealt with particularly.

Verse 5 is one of the big things that are often the prattle of preachers who would keep their congregation under the law. This law does not have to do with women wearing pantsuits or men wearing kilts. Generally, only the former is applied in our area because this ain't Scotland. I still hear of preachers in this area who require the women of the church to wear a dress even in the bitter cold of winter. One lady told me she wore jeans under a skirt to church in the winter to avoid being ostracized. If ever a case could be made that all the righteousness that men see is outward, that would surely be the definitive one. Customs in particular areas dictate what is acceptable or unacceptable clothing and should be considered when visiting those areas. That however has nothing to do with the law but rather the consideration of others.

When Paul dealt with such customs in the church at Corinth, he settled it once and for all (1 Cor. 11:16). Paul would later sum it up by saying that modesty is the order of the day. This law, given to Israel as they were about to possess the Promised Land, had to do with the armor of battle. The women were not to array themselves for battle as this was the particular domain of the men. This is a law of function in that place that the Lord has put men and women. This law however is spiritual and is in fact an antitype of the New Testament teaching. The church is spoken of in the female gender. She is the bride of Christ and is in war from day one (Matthew 16:18). The individuals in the church, both men and women are in a common war (1 Cor. 10:3-5) and are to array themselves in the same armor (Eph 6:11-18). Both men and women are robed in the same

righteousness, the garment of salvation and are one in Christ (Is. 61:10). This law ain't about your britches.

In verse 8 the law instructs the builder of a house to erect a battlement, a wall around the edges of the roof of his house so anyone who is visiting him would not fall off because of the builder's negligence. There are two applications that may be seen here.

First this has to do with the Lord and his house (Psalm 127:1). If the Lord has built His house, you can rest assured that nobody will come to harm or fall off the roof. The church is His daughter and is called a "garden enclosed." Satan's complaint to the Lord about Job was that God had fenced him in (Job. 1:10). With the fence of divine election, predestination and providence, God has built a parapet of purpose that ensures that none who are in that house shall be in danger (John 6:37-38; Romans 8:29-30).

The second application is for the preachers of the Gospel who build God's house upon the foundation laid by God—even Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1 Cor. 3:10-16). The only safe battlement is the constant, redundant rehearsal of the Gospel. The truth envelops the believer like an impenetrable cocoon. Add anything to the Gospel, whether it be the building blocks of the law or the mortar of rules and regulations and the parapet becomes weak and full of holes, and those on the roof are not safe.

Verses 9 and 10 have to do with planting, sowing and plowing and the prohibitions of the Lord concerning them. These horticultural and agricultural terms apply to the preaching of the Gospel, as to what is planted and who is to do the plowing. As to the planting, the seed, the doctrine is to be singular. No mixture is to be allowed (2. Cor. 6:14-16;

Romans 11:5-5; Eph. 4:13-15). The ox and the ass in the scripture are pictures of the preacher of the Gospel and the unconverted man respectively (1 Cor. 9:9; 1 Tim. 5:18; Exodus 34:19-20; Job. 11:12). The unconverted man is not to preach the Gospel, and the Gospel preacher is not to be assisted by the unconverted in doing so. The world cannot preach the Gospel and the preacher of the Gospel is not to use the beggarly elements of the world in the exercise of his duty.

Verse 11 speaks to the issue of righteousness. The garment of Christ's righteousness is not to be worn with the garment of the flesh of human righteousness. Law and grace, works and grace, free will and God's will are not to be stitched together to form a patchwork frock of presumptuous piety. Christ is the righteousness of the believer and he detests the idea of sowing to it the garment spotted with the flesh. You will stand before God in the patchwork of a ragamuffin or in the pristine righteousness of Christ—but never both.

Verse twelve speaks of the fringes sown on the garment or the vesture. Doing this gave the children a way to remind themselves to obey His commandments. Look at numbers 15:38. Now, the believer has this reminder in an internal manner (Jer. 31:33; Hebrews 10:16). Under the old covenant, everything had to do with sight. The Lord tells the people to sew a blue ribbon on the fringe of their garments. These fringes were a kind of loop and the ribbon was a plaited cord that went through the loops and served to draw the garment as a draw string. They were there for the specific purpose to show that the commandments of God were from heaven (rep. by color blue); that they were to keep

the word of God. By wearing these blue ribbons, they were to ever see and be reminded that their walk, their work and their raiment was about eternity, about God and where He is. These fringes remind them that they were to be separated unto the God who delivered them out of Egypt (vv. 40-41).

This was a divine kindness, but as all things that men can see, they ultimately become the only thing that men *want* you to see. By the time we reach the days of our Lord on this earth, this kind reminder had become a means of self-righteous display. The Pharisees had adopted this practice as a reminder, not to themselves but to everybody in earshot and eye shot, just how well they did in the law keeping business. Look at Matthew 23:5 “But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries and enlarge the borders of their garments.” These had made their ribbons bigger and wider to show that whereas some kept the law to some degree—they did it better and bigger, and the size of their blue ribbon was proof of their holiness, sanctification and love for the law.

I would not be surprised to find that our present day blue ribbon of competitive glory has its etymology in the self glory of the Pharisee. No principle of the old covenant can stand the test of faith. If it can be seen, it will consummate in self-righteousness. The believer walks by faith and not by sight. The believer wholly disowns, disallows, and disavows anything that the world considers to be evidence of salvation.

Finally, this passage is a reminder of our own depravity. The pall that hangs over all of this is the fact that the law, “was added because of the transgression.” Every good deed and every prohibition spoken here is first a reminder that we have done none of them and second to disclose our

disobedience. These laws simply and sadly reveal our nature. We are transgressors and that is why these laws were added (Jer. 17:9; Mark 7:20-23). This is ever the way we must initially read them, asking the question “What does this say about *my estate*?” “What does this say about *my need*, and the *sufficiency* of Christ” (Matt:9:20)?

CHASTE VIRGINS

13, If any man take a wife, and go in unto her, and hate her,

14, And give occasions of speech against her, and bring up an evil name upon her, and say, I took this woman, and when I came to her, I found her not a maid:

15, Then shall the father of the damsel, and her mother, take and bring forth the tokens of the damsel's virginity unto the elders of the city in the gate:

16, And the damsel's father shall say unto the elders, I gave my daughter unto this man to wife, and he hateth her;

17, And, lo, he hath given occasions of speech against her, saying, I found not thy daughter a maid; and yet these are the tokens of my daughter's virginity. And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city.

18, And the elders of that city shall take that man and chastise him;

19, And they shall amerce him in an hundred shekels of silver, and give them unto the father of the damsel, because he hath brought up an evil name upon a virgin of Israel: and she shall be his wife; he may not put her away all his days.

20, But if this thing be true, and the tokens of virginity be not found for the damsel:

21, Then they shall bring out the damsel to the door of her father's house, and the men of her city shall stone her with stones that she die: because she hath wrought folly in Israel, to play the whore in her father's house: so shalt thou put evil away from among you.

Deuteronomy 22:13-21

In this passage we have the law concerning the tokens of virginity. Two scenarios are presented.

First, if a man marries a woman and decides after a time that he hates her and wants to get rid of her, scheming to defame her by casting doubt on her virtue (her virginity) instead of pursuing a divorce (a thing allowed because of the hardness of men's hearts), the tokens of her virginity are to be brought by her father to the elders, and the husband who has falsely accused the wife is publicly chastised.

The second scenario is that if the husband's accusations are true, then since no tokens of her virginity can be presented as evidence, she is to be stoned to death at the door of her father's house by the men of the city. In either case, the issue is settled by the *tokens* or *proof* of virginity.

The token of virginity was the blood produced and captured on the sheets of the marriage bed when the hymen was ruptured during the first conjugal congress of the bride and groom. When the bride and groom went into the marriage chamber, two women stood watch outside the chamber all night long. As soon as the groom arose and left his wife, these two women went in and gathered the sheets and delivered them to the mother of the bride. The two women who stood watch were called the *friends* of the bride

and bridegroom. Perhaps it is an allusion to John 3:29-30. The tokens of virginity were not for public display at this time because the bride was considered a virgin unless or until she was accused of not being so.

This practice still goes on today in many mid-east countries, in much of Judaism, in Islam, and numerous African nations as well as within some religious communities in the United States. Of course, because of the nature of humanity women have invented fraudulent ways of producing tokens of virginity. Historical works of literature are replete with devices and substances such as little bladders filled with animal blood used to produce these tokens. I'll leave those things to your imagination.

One means that has arisen in the last couple of decades is a boon in plastic surgery. Because of the ease of travel and the influx of foreign students desiring a western education, many young women from countries who still practice this tradition of producing tokens of virginity, and having given up their virginity because of the influence of western society, opt for cosmetic surgery to reattach or re-manufacture a hymen so they can appear as a virgin and produce these tokens when they go back home and are wed.

Of course, in those religions and religious societies where evidence of purity can be seen, tokens of chastity and purity, even if they are fraudulent, suffice to satisfy the law. If such societies ever decide to use DNA, I expect there will be chaos in the streets and many women will lose their lives by "honor killings." As always, the inherent weakness of law is that it never addresses the heart. It only addresses the visible behavior. I think it would be safe to say that at least in western society, virginity is not held as a high premium.

Christianity, so called, has more or less accepted the societal norm and has ceased to talk about the subject—at all—for fear of losing their congregations.

This lack of leadership of the church has resulted in some interesting phenomena. I read an article recently where in Italy women were vexed because Italian men no longer seemed interested in sex. The reason that the men gave was that the women were so sexually aggressive that it turned them off. The pursuit, the romance was no longer part of courtship, so the libido had taken a serious hit.

In another article American men were no longer interested in getting married. The first reason given was that the availability of sexual partners was so prolific that men could maintain their happy bachelor life and still have the benefits of that part of life that was once exclusive to marriage. Another reason given was that the men were not meeting a woman that they felt like they could bring home to meet their mom. As wrong as the old double standard was, the “good girl” was still treasured and held in high esteem.

No matter what men and women's political views are concerning the gains made for equality and human rights, it is painfully evident that an undesired consequence has occurred. The mystery and the unique beauty of the union of a man and woman in holy matrimony have suffered and something magical has been lost (Prov. 30:18-31; Heb 13:4).

There is no doubt that God, in giving this law to Israel and illuminating upon it to true Israel in the New Testament, places a great significance on virginity. There are a number of reasons for this.

First, God would have His people distinguished from other nations. The pagan nations that made up the Promised

Land were steeped in fornication and often practiced the deflowering of virgins in their religious ceremonies. Israel was to be different, holding the virgin in high esteem and placing great value on a virtuous woman to the extent that a false accusation against such was punishable by law.

Secondly, virginity was important because a virgin was to be the vessel of our Lord's nativity.

Thirdly, and most important to the understanding of this text is the issue of the righteous relationship between Christ and His Bride, the church.

The issue in this text, believe it or not, is not virginity. This does not actually deal with the virtue that virginity entails. Two things teach us this.

First the tokens of virginity or lack thereof were not a matter of public record. After the wedding night the sheets were delivered to the mother of the bride and were never seen unless an accusation was made against the wife. Then and only then were the tokens produced!

Secondly, under this scenario, a woman who was not a virgin might marry and be considered a virgin forever if no accusation was every brought against her virginity. In fact, if a man took a virgin and lay with her outside the bonds of marriage, that act was covered by the law (vv. 28-29).

What then is being taught in this passage? There are three things here that teach us the primary precepts of the Gospel. They are the accusation, the law and the tokens or evidence that answer the law. Since the marriage is already consummated the issue is not about the initial union with Christ and His bride. This has to do with the possibility of an *accusation being brought* against the bride of Christ and the answer to the accusation by the law.

The answer to the accusation and the proof of purity is the token of blood. When the blood was presented to the law, the accusation was set aside, and the woman was declared innocent of all charges. If no blood was present, then the woman was put to death. “Without the shedding of blood there is no remission of sin.” If the law is satisfied, then the law declares the accused to be innocent.

Since no type is a perfect picture of the true, and every shadow is but a one-dimensional dark outline of the substance, there are things about this that do not perfectly picture Christ and His bride. Obviously, Christ never either hated or accused His bride. He loved her from everlasting, took the debt she owed as His own and has ever viewed her as spotless and undefiled. Also, the fact that the blood shed is the blood of the bride does not line up with scripture. Yet it *does*. The blood shed by the bride was due to her *union* with her husband. This pictures imputation and substitution. Before God, with Christ as substitute, and His bride in Him and He in her in His death, she was accounted to have shed blood and died for her sins (Romans 6:4-8, 11—Died).

Coming back to the type at hand, it is not possible that any accusation against any member of the body of Christ will stand. Why? The tokens of her virginity answer the accusation with law-satisfying blood (Romans 8:33-34; Hebrews 10:18). If any accusation is made, the Father comes forth with the tokens of virginity declaring the bribe that He gave to His Son is not guilty. Christ presents her without spot or blemish (Eph 5:25, 31-32; Coll. 1:22; Song. 4:7). The result of this wondrous transaction is that the bride of Christ is declared to be both pure and virtuous (2 Cor. 11:2; Rev.

14:4). Whether the accusation comes from self, Satan, or conscience the answer is the same. The Father brings forth the tokens of virginity and virtuous blood proves the bride both innocent of the charges and pure before her husband.

WORTHY OF DEATH

23, If a damsel that is a virgin be betrothed unto an husband, and a man find her in the city, and lie with her;

24, Then ye shall bring them both out unto the gate of that city, and ye shall stone them with stones that they die; the damsel, because she cried not, being in the city; and the man, because he hath humbled his neighbour's wife: so thou shalt put away evil from among you.

25, But if a man find a betrothed damsel in the field, and the man force her, and lie with her: then the man only that lay with her shall die:

26, But unto the damsel thou shalt do nothing; there is in the damsel no sin worthy of death: for as when a man riseth against his neighbour, and slayeth him, even so is this matter:

27, For he found her in the field, and the betrothed damsel cried, and there was none to save her.

28, If a man find a damsel that is a virgin, which is not betrothed, and lay hold on her, and lie with her, and they be found;

29, Then the man that lay with her shall give unto the damsel's father fifty shekels of silver, and she shall be his wife; because he hath humbled her, he may not put her away all his days.

30, A man shall not take his father's wife, nor discover his father's skirt.

This portion of chapter 22 deals with various crimes of a sexual nature. With the exception of the taking of an unbetrothed virgin in verse 28-29, the spectrum is pretty well covered but is isolated to crimes of *men* against women who were betrothed or married. In this passage the subject of adultery (consensual), rape, incest and premarital sex is addressed.

Women throughout the world, in many cultures, are treated as property and have little if any more value than livestock. In China today, because of the government's regulation on the number of children that a couple may have, many female babies are slain upon birth because they cannot carry on the name and ancestry of the father (Ezekiel 16). In Africa many young women are horribly disfigured and maimed to prevent them from enjoying conjugal pleasure in the belief that this will make them less likely to stray from their husbands when they marry. In India and some other eastern countries women are killed or disfigured for mere suspicion of adultery (acid in the face is the preferred method of disfigurement). Some are killed for being raped because it is held that somehow, they *enticed* the rapist to assault her and has thus dishonored her husband or family.

Women who are born in this nation should count themselves blessed to have been so. Though some religious nuts have taken the principle of a wife being in subjection to her husband to criminal extremes, the New Testament holds women in high esteem.

What about a wife being subject to her husband? The matter of subjection or submission is a matter of the heart and mind and only applies to those who know and love Christ. As members of the body of Christ a husband and wife

are to submit themselves one to another. Concerning the marriage relationship, it is designed to reveal the relationship between Christ and His bride—the church. The mind and heart of submission is only worthwhile if the wife sees, understands and appreciates that she is displaying and typifying the subjection of the church to Christ. *It is not a law.* There is no punishment attached to it if she does not submit. She simply misses the opportunity to declare the Gospel in a manner that is uniquely hers. It must be voluntary, born of love for Christ and her husband, and can never be legal.

Submission is not a thing that can ever be demanded by the husband. If it is to exist, it must be won as Christ won the affection and submission of His bride by undying, unchanging and unconditional love. Any other way is just born of the self-deifying need of humanity to exercise control over someone else. In Christ women are truly liberated, and with the exception of certain church functions relating to New Testament typology, are in every way on the same footing with men in the church. Both are equal in standing, righteousness and redemption (Galatians 3:27-28). Even in the Old Testament, God distinguishes Israel from the surrounding nations by the laws concerning esteem for women.

As I have said, most of this passage has to do with those who are betrothed or married. *Betrothal* in the Old Testament would be somewhat like what we call an *engagement* in our culture. The difference is that betrothal was a *binding* agreement usually accomplished by the parents of the future bride and groom, where often dowry gifts were given. Another difference is that once the two were

betrothed, even though the marriage was not consummated, the man and woman were referred to as husband and wife (w.23-24; Matt. 1:18-20). A betrothal could be accomplished in three different ways. First, the most prominent was the bestowal of property in the form of a dowry. Second, a betrothal could also come to pass by the writing and signing of a contract. The third way was that the man and woman involved had already begun a sexual relationship. Though this was frowned upon it was accepted as a legitimate betrothal (v. 28-29).

Having said all that, we know that these things of the law are spiritual and that they all speak of Christ and some aspect of His relationship with His church. We know this particularly has to do with marriage and the prohibition of adultery, which is set before us as a capital crime equated with murder (v. 26). The matter of rape is also punishable by death. The matter of incest in verse 30 involves a son committing adultery with his mother or stepmother. The adultery prohibited is for the protection of the sanctity of marriage. These ultimately equate to *spiritual* adultery. Spiritual adultery has to do with the bride of Christ being *untrue to Him*, or He being untrue to her.

This also applies to those who claim righteousness before God while rejecting the only righteousness that God has accepted. Israel was betrothed to Christ under the law but rejected Him, pursuing her own righteousness. Christ being the righteousness of the believer is referred to in the Word within the parameters of marriage (Jeremiah 23:5-6; 33:15-16). This being so, when the Pharisees and scribes rejected Christ, He equated it to adultery (Matt. 12:39).

Not all of the Pharisees were cheating on their wives. Their adultery was love for *themselves* and what they did rather than Christ and what He did. Any endeavor to establish righteousness before God by personal merit, whether for salvation or sanctification, is equivalent to cheating on Christ and is *spiritual* adultery. Those who believe that their salvation is attained by the choice of *free will* are guilty of spiritual adultery because they hold that in the scheme of salvation, by their choice, they made the right or righteous decision. Not one of them would say that they made an unrighteous choice. Therefore, what they hold as the *attainment* of salvation is *their establishment* of their *righteousness* as the primary catalyst of their acceptance with God. Thus, their salvation began with their personal righteousness. This is spiritual adultery.

That which is before us in this text must be viewed in the sense of “what if.” What if Christ was untrue to His bride? What if He left her for the affections of another? What if He left the affection of those for whom he died and made righteous for those who seek to be accepted without Him? He would be an adulterer and as such would be guilty of a capital crime and worthy of capital punishment.

Conversely, suppose that the bride of Christ, having tasted the grace of God, and received Christ as her righteousness having had her sin put away by His substitutionary sacrifice, sought the affection of another, or gave her affection to another. Say, that she had expensed the grace of God, the true and living God and began to seek to save herself. What if she began to worship a god who required her assistance in order to save her? What if she left the fellowship of those who love the Gospel and took up

communion with the enemies of grace? What if she left the sure mercies of Christ and embraced the insecurity of keeping the law? She would be a spiritual adulteress and her actions would be worthy of capital punishment. Bless God; such things taking place with Christ and His bride *are not possible* (Jeremiah 32:38-42; Psalm 89:30-34; Matt.28; 20; Heb. 13:5).

This truth is established in verses 28-29. This must be viewed in the light of the imperfection of Old Testament typology and in the context of this passage. The context is that of *betrothal* and *marriage*. The type is *redemption*. The weakness or imperfection is that of a sexual relationship prior to marriage. Christ would not be guilty of such a thing, but what is being established is that by this act a betrothal *automatically* exists. The words “lay hold on her” do not suggest force. Rather the words intimate wooing or winning her by enticing words and promises of marriage so as to capture her consent.

This certainly pictures the work of the Holy Spirit who by the preaching of the Gospel sets forth Christ in such wondrous and alluring terms to the sinful elect that she is irresistibly drawn to Him, enamored with Him and hopelessly smitten by Him (SOS 1:2; 5:8-16). However, the subject is not how the betrothal *came to exist* but, within the context, that it *does exist*. This being so, redemption is pictured. The husband pays a price to the father (v. 29). Christ paid the price of redemption to the Father to purchase His bride. Having paid the price, she becomes His wife. By His sacrifice, Christ enabled the Father to be both just and justify the bride of Christ, and His Spirit united her to Him through His word. When the transaction was finished, she

could never be put away as long as the husband lived. The marriage of Christ and his bride could only be annulled if he were to die. He, being life, shall never die so she is eternally secure (John 6:37-39).

Finally, concerning the matter of rape of one betrothed, two things are suggested about Christ and His church. The first is that any who would by force do violence to the church will suffer the penalty of death (Psalm 105:15; Luke 18:7-8). Second, taken with what we have seen in verses 28-29, I think this teaches something about the manner in which Christ takes His bride to Himself. Some who hear of predestination and election and irresistible grace think that such truths teach that God forces men and woman to be saved against their will. I've even heard some men say that God saves a man against his will with his full consent. I understand what they mean, but the fact is that all who come to Christ do so willingly, gladly and in faith believing that He is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. There is no force or violence in salvation on the part of God. He changes the heart and mind by the power of sweet, sovereign grace and the will simply follows the new nature. The only violence depicted in salvation is that of the believer, who will destroy anything or anyone who comes between him and His savior (Matt. 11:12). Those who must have Christ will have Christ and pity the man, the religion or the tradition that gets in the way.

Christ has a bride. The Father chose her for Him and gave her to him in eternity. He paid the price for her. The Holy Spirit, through the preaching of the Gospel, espoused her to Christ as a chaste virgin. Christ loves her with an everlasting love and will never leave her nor forsake her. His

love for her and in her assures her love for him. He holds her and protects and keeps her for himself as long as the both of them shall live. He lavishes upon her new mercies every day; handfuls on purpose, good measure, pressed down and shaken together and running over into her bosom (SOS 2:6; 4:7, 9; 8:6-7). What God has joined together no man shall put asunder.

THY SEED

1, He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD.

2, A bastard shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to his tenth generation shall he not enter into the congregation of the LORD.

3, An Ammonite or Moabite shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD; even to their tenth generation shall they not enter into the congregation of the LORD for ever:

4, Because they met you not with bread and with water in the way, when ye came forth out of Egypt; and because they hired against thee Balaam the son of Beor of Pethor of Mesopotamia, to curse thee.

5, Nevertheless the LORD thy God would not hearken unto Balaam; but the LORD thy God turned the curse into a blessing unto thee, because the LORD thy God loved thee.

6, Thou shalt not seek their peace nor their prosperity all thy days for ever.

Deuteronomy 23:1-6

The passage that we will consider tonight deals with some things that probably would not be the subject of general polite society. These words are, for the most part, pretty graphic in nature and might be considered as strange because the subject is about who God refuses to allow in His congregation. The subject is the same in the Old Testament and the New Testament, though the applications differ from

the natural to the spiritual. In both cases the matter at hand is the *purity* and *maintenance* of the perpetuity of the seed. Throughout the word, the seed is a prominent theme and concerns the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was necessary to maintain this purity in the natural realm so that Christ would be born of the royal house of David and rightful heir to that throne, and so that when the Jews rejected him, they would be naturally rejecting their own anointed king (Romans 1:1-3).

In the spiritual realm, it was necessary to maintain the purity of the seed as the seed of woman. It was necessary so that the Father of Christ could never be called into question, and He would be born as promised into humanity without the taint of Adam's sin. Thus, He was the only perfect sacrifice for the salvation of the elect. The seed has a dual application in the word. Christ, Himself, is the seed (Genesis 3:15; Galatians 3:16). Also encompassed in the concept of the seed are those who are referred to as Christ's seed or those to whom He would give birth by His substitutionary travail (Isaiah 53:10; Genesis 15:4-6; 17:15-19; Romans 9:7; Gal. 4:4-5, 22-28).

The *continuation* and *protection* of the seed was paramount in importance. The Lord instituted laws that would ensure that this seed was carefully maintained (Deut. 25:5-10; Matthew 22:24-28). One of the most remarkable instances in scripture concerning the importance of the maintenance of the seed is found in Genesis 38: 1-26). This passage has been made to be controversial by many men because it seems to be so Machiavellian in principle. This principle is that "the end justifies the means" and is often

difficult for those, especially of the Puritanical ilk, to swallow.

A friend of mine who submitted a commentary on Genesis was asked to leave out his commentary on this portion of the book because it was what they termed controversial. I'm always kinda' flummoxed by men who deem their judgment of what God has written to be greater than what the infallible Author has himself inspired. Judah's declaration that Tamar was more righteous than he, though she had seduced him and got pregnant by him, her own father in law, is hard for some upright folks to get their mind around.

Why was she more righteous than Judah? She was more righteous because she *had regard* and respect for the *seed*. Er, her husband was killed by God for his wickedness. Onan was killed because he showed *disregard* for the seed by spilling it on the ground. Judah had *disregard* for the seed because he did not keep his promise to Tamar to give Shelah, the next brother in line to Tamar to be her husband. Tamar, by hook or crook, by covert incestuous seduction of Judah made sure that the seed would continue in the line of the Messiah. Just as in the case of Abraham, she believed God concerning the seed. Her acts were sinful, of this there can be no doubt, but where sin abounded grace did much more abound.

She had twins and it was a remarkable birth. As the first child began to proceed from her womb his hand came out first, the midwife said this is the first born and tied a scarlet string around his wrist. Then he went back into the womb and the other child came out first. Being astonished she named the child who was the true firstborn Phares which

means breach or breaker. Unknowingly, she was declaring his name to be one of the titles given our Savior in prophecy (Micah 2:13). The whole of this incident comes to this singular point. The seed was maintained.

In the lineage of Christ given in Matthew 1, there are five women mentioned. The first mentioned is Tamar. Along with her are Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba (the wife of Uriah) and Mary the mother of our Lord. Tamar is certainly recorded in a favorable light. The first part of that verse says that “Judah begat Phares.” The historical and spiritual significance of this fact is unsearchable (Hebrews 7:14; Revelation 5:5).

Our text is about the *seed*, even *Christ* and his *people* and those whom God refuses to allow into His congregation. There are three natural examples given.

The first mentioned is the man who has been made a eunuch or completely emasculated. He of course does not have the seed in Him.

The second is the bastard or illegitimate child whose origins cannot be known, who is sired by an unknown father.

The third are those who have thought to curse what God has blessed by a mixing of the seed with the world through the words of a false prophet.

None of these can produce *the* seed, which is the singular purity of Christ and his people.

This is about who God will not allow in His church. Though the people of God in the Old Testament were instructed to weed out these individuals, no such admonition is given to the Church. Now, I know that many pastors and churches have invented ways to throw people out of the local church with the idea of having a pure

church. The fact is that there are tares in the local church, and they will not be known until the final harvest of the world, when God will gather the tares and burn them and gather the wheat (His elect) into His barns. Whether there are known heretics, those who do harm with words to the people of God, those who have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof, those who are offended by the declaration that what defiles a man comes from within and not what he eats or drinks, or even those who have done heinous crimes like the man in Corinth who had sexual relations with his father's wife, I do not find anybody being cast out of the church. We are told to *leave them alone*, give them over to Satan to destroy their fleshly appetites or not to eat or fellowship with them. It is God alone who distinguishes who is not allowed in the congregation or who makes up the true church, the body of Christ, the fullness of Him that filleth all. The local church may have many unsavory elements that will not be discovered until the Day of Judgment. However, the true church is made of stones made ready before they are ever put in the building, and God will not put certain kinds of people in that Holy Temple.

First, there is no one in the body of Christ who has not the Seed in Him. There are no spiritual eunuchs or emasculated members in the body of Christ. They all have Christ in them by divine sovereign grace (John 17:23-24 [note the maintenance of the purity of the seed]; Gal. 3:29; Coll. 1:27; 1 John 3:9).

Secondly, there are no bastards in the body of Christ. Many have sought to bastardize the new birth, seeking to make the will, choice or decision to be the sire of the child of God. Just as I did not birth or conceive myself naturally, did

not counsel with my parents to be born and was totally passive in it, likewise was I spiritually born of power outside myself. Those who are in the family have a *known* and *revealed* father, they know from whence they originated and they are not illegitimate children. There are no such in the body of Christ (John 1:12-13; 14:7, 9; Luke 1:35; Hebrews 12:6-8; Isaiah 53:10-11; Heb. 2:11; 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:19).

Thirdly, there are none in the body of Christ who are there by false teaching that involves mixing with the world. The doctrines taught by the world are not, never have been and never will be, the instrument of salvation of the elect. Those in the body of Christ are those who have heard and believed the truth, and in that order (Eph 1:13; 1 Pet. 1:23; James 1:18). Paul says, in Gal. 1:8-9 that if a person preaches any other Gospel that he is to be accursed.

I am flabbergasted that men hold to a profession born under accursed preachers and preaching as legitimate when the Bible is so obviously clear that it is not. I do not discount religious experience—I could write a book on the religious experiences I had before I knew Christ. They were real, felt and amazing but they were not salvation. I was not aware that I had been saved and redeemed until I heard the Gospel that Paul preached, the word of truth. The Bible teaches that not only will false prophets be destroyed but that those who believe what they say will also be destroyed (Jeremiah 14:13-16). Our text makes it clear that such will not be allowed into God's congregation.

All however, who have the seed in them, know God as Father and have heard and obeyed the Gospel are those who are welcome in the body of Christ. Read Deut. 23:1-6.

One final thought, the Moabites were also rejected from the congregation because they did not help the people of God in the way. Those who do not care for the church of God are not part of the church of God (Matthew 25:31-46; Acts 9:4; James 2:14-17; 1 John 3:15-18).

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THE CHURCH AND THE WORLD

7, Thou shalt not abhor an Edomite; for he is thy brother: thou shalt not abhor an Egyptian; because thou wast a stranger in his land.

8, The children that are begotten of them shall enter into the congregation of the LORD in their third generation.

Deuteronomy 23:7-8

These two verses of scripture deal with former enemies and how they were to be treated. These words follow on the heels of the restrictions our Lord has placed on certain people who, in one way or another, did not picture the relationship of Christ and His people. They had no respect for the seed (Christ), did not have the seed in them or had no knowledge of who their father was. In each of these the seed was the issue that allowed or disallowed them from the public worship of God. Such were never to be allowed in the congregation of the Lord, which was representative of the church, the family.

This spoke specifically to the body politic of Israel and did not deal with personal relationships. Israel was a temple centered society and all laws and admonitions flowed from, had to do with and reflected on temple worship. These restrictions were about the purity or the *family* of God and not about malice or vengeance toward these folks. Some could not belong to the congregation because their attitude or maladies would have done damage to the picture of the purity of the body of Christ. They were not to be ill treated in normal society and were not to be restricted from making a

living or being dealt with either in business or in personal relationships (v.6).

In matters of the temple the laws were clear, plain and absolute but restricted to the temple. In matters of the church, the body of Christ, the laws are likewise restrictive, plain and absolute and restricted to the church. The Gospel and only the Gospel is to be preached, and those who refuse are not to be given the peace and comfort that attends the fellowship of that body.

Outside that body however the members of the church are not anything more than members of society at large. Though all things work for their good, they are not to endeavor, because of the grace they have received, to lord over society the restrictions that God has placed on His church. The church's influence on society is not to be that of a ruling nature, legislating upon society the restrictions that God has placed on the church. The only influence that the church can have on the world, since the world knows not God and is unable to comprehend spiritual matters, is the influence that the world can see and understand; kindness, mercy, generosity, tolerance, steadfastness, integrity and friendliness.

The church is a spiritual nation that operates in an invisible kingdom that is not of this world. It is not a political organization put here to rule the earth, or to foist its beliefs on the world. During the days of the great plague, when people were dying in droves, the concept of the hospital was born because believers attended the sick while the world at large cowered in fear. The believers, by their actions, showed that they did not fear death but looked for a better city whose builder and maker was God. Their kindness to others

was born of the knowledge that they would live eternally in the presence of God. However, what the world *saw* was merely that they were a selfless and caring people. The believer is *in* the world though he is not *of* the world. He is to use the world but not abuse it. On occasion there will be a fight, but before the battle is waged, the believer comes with a message of peace (Deut. 20:10). The restrictions placed on the church are for the purity of the message and life but do not make the believer to despise those who are not in the body, or to become a hermit, or take up a monastic life (1 Cor. 5:9-11).

Thus, our Lord, having stated these restrictions for His *congregation*, declares that these restrictions have nothing to do with malice, or vengeance or hatred for past enemies or holding grudges (vv. 7-8). One of the most damaging things in the life of anyone, and surely in the life of the believer, is living in the past. Believers, of all people, ought to be living in the moment. Our lives are a tale that has already been told and for the most part, except for comic relief, does not bear repeating. We are not promised tomorrow. What we have is now, *today*. This is glorious truth and is the source of great comfort to the believer when God graciously gives him eyes to see (Romans 5:9; 8:1; Gal. 2:20; Heb. 9:24; 1 John 3:2).

Living in the past is of no value. Holding onto grudges is of no value. I know this is so because when folks are facing death, and *now* is all they have, they turn loose of all that baggage and with all speed get to what *is* of value—what waits on the other side of life. Malice is like taking poison into you own body and hoping for and waiting for your enemy to die. Of all people on the earth, the believer should

be the quickest to forgive, the quickest to love and the quickest to show mercy. Something does not ring true of one who claims to be a believer, claims to have been forgiven all sin by the sacrifice of Christ, claims to have been made the righteousness of God and claims to be a partaker of the divine nature, to have malice in their heart or hold on to a grudge (Coll. 3:12).

Our Lord deals with this in two specific categories. The first is family and the second is former ill treatment by someone.

Concerning the family our Lord commands His people not to hate their brother Edom, the descendants of Esau. Now, scripture is clear that God hated Esau and loved Jacob. We do not begin to understand the mind of God and would not venture to explain this fact except to declare it in the same manner as God declared it. According to the scriptures the hatred for Esau was not derived because of the works of Esau. Likewise, the love for Jacob was not derived because of the works of Jacob. Though Esau despised the birthright, it was never truly his anyway. Though Jacob was the rightful heir by commandment of God, he sought to gain it by the flesh in wicked trickery. The context in which the New Testament declares that God hated Esau and loved Jacob was that “the purpose of election might stand.” This declaration was established in eternity, the children not being yet born; having done neither good nor evil.

Though God hated Esau, God’s people are not to hate Esau’s descendants because they are *family*. Scott Richardson was called on the carpet one day for calling someone brother who had never shown any interest in

Christ. Scott replied by saying that he was right to call him brother because he was either a brother in Adam or in Christ. but in either case, he was a brother. Look at Matthew 10:34-38. Some have used these verses to break ties with family members under the guise of holiness and separation. These words must be taken in light of all that our Lord said, especially His words that taught us to “love our enemies and pray for those that spitefully use us.” These words in Matthew are not an admonition to hate or disown our family. They are not a command to cast aside family ties but relate to us what is often the *consequence* of knowing Christ.

It is not something we wish or desire but the consequence of Christ saving us results often in a sword rather than peace. Many of us can attest to this. Often to family members, who have no spiritual knowledge, Christ is seen as an unwelcome interloper in the family relationship. We are not to hate them, no matter what they feel about what we believe because they are our family. Though they may have no respect for the seed (Christ), though they may not have the seed of Christ in them, though they may not have God as their Father, and though they may even desire to bring in a mixture of their religion with the truth, they are not to be hated—they are your brothers. Often it is easier to love those with whom we have no relationship than to love those with whom we have a long history. Perhaps for this reason our Lord gives this command about not hating our brothers.

The second category of people is the Egyptians, from whom they had formerly received ill treatment. There can be no doubt that the history of the people of God is tied up lock, stock and barrel with the deliverance they experienced from

the cruel bondage of Egypt. If there could be reason for holding a grudge against anyone, this would certainly be one. The reason God here gives is just plain sensible. "Don't be mad at them, after all, you were encroachers on their world."

Throughout the Word of God there are ample warnings against the idea of entitlement. Some who claim to be believers hold that since they are the children of God that they have rights that supersede all human rights. Such is not the case. God admonishes us to remember, that though all things are ours, and though we are made kings and priest unto God, in this world *we* are the strangers and the pilgrims. We should be thankful that the Lord is in control of the minds and hearts of men. He has fixed it so that for the most part we are at least tolerated here, though our interest is clearly elsewhere (Romans 8:28; John 17:2). The real consideration is divine providence. If you or I are prone to hold a grudge from some past dealing in which we were ill treated, it is best to look at it in light of *divine* providence.

The people of Israel were in Egypt by divine will for the purpose of their deliverance by divine power. All of it was purposed and planned before this people even existed (Gen. 15:12-14). In glorious providential care, God had the wrath of man praise Him when He gave Joseph those dreams and incited his brethren to hate him and sell him to the caravan that took him to Egypt. There by divine gift Joseph interpreted pharaoh's dreams and became second only to the pharaoh in power. Then God sent a famine to Canaan and made it impossible for Jacob and his sons to live anywhere but Egypt where Joseph had all the corn. They were given the best most fertile land and grew from a few to a nation of

over a million people in 400 years. They knew nothing of God's hand in all this until after the demise of Joseph they were brought into extreme slavery and delivered by power and by blood.

Their slavery was a gift of God, a providential working of divine grace and love that caused them to cry out to God. God told them not to hate the Egyptian because the Egyptians were used to bring them to where they were *that* day and to picture the great salvation wrought by the blood of Christ. "The steps of the righteous man are ordered of the Lord."

The admonition is simple. Before you go any longer in holding a grudge, consider that divine providence has brought you where you are this hour and will bring you to your appointed end (Jer. 29:11). Don't hate the Egyptians of your past; they were used of God to keep you alive till He brought you to Christ. The next time you start getting riled up about what someone did to you long ago, stop and think. They were an instrument in the salvation of your soul. Be like the old predestinarian who stubbed his toe. Just say "I'm sure glad that's over with" or "Thanks, I needed that" (Gen. 50:19-20; 1 Cor. 13; 7).

Finally, in verse 8, such are welcomed into the congregation. These evidently were proselytes. This adds another dimension to the teaching of love for the brethren. In *no* case can a brother or sister in Christ be the butt of a grudge or of hatred. They have been forgiven and no past sin may be brought up again because God "will remember them no more" (Matthew 18:21-35). Read Text.

WASTE

9, When the host goeth forth against thine enemies, then keep thee from every wicked thing.

10, If there be among you any man, that is not clean by reason of uncleanness that chanceth him by night, then shall he go abroad out of the camp, he shall not come within the camp:

11, But it shall be, when evening cometh on, he shall wash himself with water: and when the sun is down, he shall come into the camp again.

12, Thou shalt have a place also without the camp, whither thou shalt go forth abroad:

13, And thou shalt have a paddle upon thy weapon; and it shall be, when thou wilt ease thyself abroad, thou shalt dig therewith, and shalt turn back and cover that which cometh from thee:

14, For the LORD thy God walketh in the midst of thy camp, to deliver thee, and to give up thine enemies before thee; therefore shall thy camp be holy: that he see no unclean thing in thee, and turn away from thee.

Deuteronomy 23:9-14

There can be no doubt that as the Lord gave His people the law, He was very specific in the details. Things that would rarely be considered are often described in a most graphic and precise manner. Having been reared in a home that had its roots in Puritanism and the manners of polite society, I often find that what the Lord requires His preachers to address makes me sometimes a little uncomfortable. This

passage in the natural realm deals with what most would call “bodily functions” both accidental and on purpose. I am comforted by the fact that everything is beautiful and serves its purpose in God's time. Those who have been given faith know that these restrictions are not only for a practical purpose among God's people in Canaan, but they also have spiritual application for the church and are about some specific work of Christ—for, in or about His people.

The reason for these restrictions is plainly set forth in verse 14. Since this verse begins with the word “for” or “because,” the reason is given why these restrictions were made. The reason is, God walks in this camp. Therefore, it must be holy and rid of all that is unclean.

These restrictions differ from those in the first part of the chapter as to situation. The former was about the church and those whom God does not allow in it. Those before us refer to encampment of the people of God as an army and relate particularly to the wicked things referred to in verse 9. The situation was that of *proximity* of persons and availability of *facilities*. In the city people lived more private lives, but soldiers slept and ate shoulder to shoulder. What might be kept private or to one's self in the city would not go unnoticed in the close quarters of the camp. Our Lord here addresses two situations.

The first has to do with ceremonial uncleanness and is equated with wickedness or evil. What is addressed, if I remember 7th grade biology, is called a *nocturnal emission*. Though unconsciously done it was nevertheless considered wicked—even a wicked *act*—because it was known to have proceeded from impure thoughts or dreams (Lev. 15:16). It was, then, an issue of inward corruption outwardly manifest.

This also applied to uncleanness in the matter of communicable disease. The issue may have been a result of disease, and there was a risk of it being communicated to someone else in such close quarters. This would result in certain prohibition until the man had done a ceremonial cleansing (Lev. 15:7; v. 11). Before sunset, he was to wash himself, his bedding and clothing in water. Only then was he allowed back in the camp.

The second thing addressed was the disposal of human waste or excrement. When the soldier was brought into the army, he was issued a weapon. The usual issue was either a sword or a spear and, according to Josephus, a small pickaxe or small spade was attached to the weapon. According to the tradition of the Essenes, when nature called, the soldier was to go outside the camp and dig a hole in the ground with the pickaxe about a foot deep. After he finished his business, he was to cover it with the dirt he had removed. Again, this was for the cleanness and health of the camp, but it was also to distinguish God's people from the beasts. However, the *primary* reason is still that given in verse 14. These things were to be accomplished because God was in the midst of the camp and therefore the camp must remain holy and be rid of any unclean or wicked thing.

In order for us to see the spiritual things taught in this lesson from God, we must first see the manner in which they are described or the category in which these are placed. In verse 9 the Lord describes these things with three words. He lists them among what He calls, "every wicked thing." The word *wicked* (meaning evil, bad, malignant) is an adjective and must be attached to a subject. In the natural realm a thing is made wicked by someone using it for a wicked

purpose. For instance, religion says that alcohol is wicked. It is not, but it can be acted upon for wicked purposes. One would never call grace wicked, yet we are warned not to use grace to cloak our maliciousness. The truth is that a thing is wicked because depraved mankind puts *his* hand to it for the purpose of *abusing* it.

The word “thing” is of course the subject that the adjective “wicked” defines and illuminates. This is an interesting word. It literally means *words* or *speech*. Since words or speech flow from the mind and the heart (out of the abundance—as a man thinketh in his heart, so he is, inside and outside), the wicked thing to keep yourself from is the inward man. This lines up with the things in verses 10-13 that God sets forth because they both proceed from inside of man.

The first thing addressed represents the fact that even in an *unconscious* state we are yet sinners. Our thoughts and dreams are full of sin. Not one of us would wish for anyone to find out what goes on in our dreams. Whether unconscious or not all that proceeds from within us is sin and corruption (Mark 7:21-23). We must be *washed*, we must be *made* clean that we might not pollute the camp, because God is there. The camp must be holy and rid of all that is unclean (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 5. 25-27; 1 John 1:7). There is but one remedy for sin; go outside the camp and be washed by the blood of Christ through the water of the word of God.

The next thing dealt with represents the vile things that naturally proceed from us that we are *aware* of and are told to *dispose* of.

This subject has some powerful scriptural reference. This foulness has to do with our natural habitat before Christ brought us to the light of the Gospel (1 Samuel 2:8). Our place of nativity, our sinful estate from birth is the dung heap. We were born as dunghill denizens. What are we to do with this old man—this heritage (Romans 6:11)? We are to go out of the camp and bury it, cover it up and leave it so it will not pollute the camp. This also refers most poignantly to our works for righteousness, our heritage, our purity before the law. When Paul talked about his former religion, his works of the flesh, he referred to it in a particular manner (Phil. 3:4-8). These works proceed *from* us; they come *out* of us and are nothing but foul waste. We are not to cherish them, we are to take the pickaxe of the gospel, go without the camp and dig a hole and bury them!

Finally, there are two other things to consider.

First, since these are bodily functions, they are *repetitive*. The washing and the burying will be a lifetime occupation. It will not end until our body ceases to function. We will not be rid of the old man while we live. We will never arrive at a place in life where the vileness and corruption that is in us does not exude from us. What is *in* us and proceeds *from* us must be named for what it is. It is dung, it is a malignant evil and it is human waste and is not to be in the camp.

Secondly, the washing and the burying is done outside the camp, not inside it or even in proximity to it. It is not to be broadcasted in the camp. It is to be privately dealt with. Religion often thrives off someone regaling the congregation with stories of their foulness before they “got saved” as if to say that they are different now. They are intimating that the body no longer has its functions. No, our bodily functions

are sin and a great part of our life is spent daily in washing and burying the waste. Testimony meetings abound and for the most part they are little more than seeing who can shovel the most dung. It is like putting flowers of remembrance on the latrine of lasciviousness. Rest assured that if you live today, your humanity will function and what proceeds from within you is nothing but waste. Keep the water of the word and the pickaxe of the Gospel handy; you'll soon make use of them (Rom. 8:17a).

NO RETURN POLICY

15, Thou shalt not deliver unto his master the servant which is escaped from his master unto thee:

16, He shall dwell with thee, even among you, in that place which he shall choose in one of thy gates, where it liketh him best: thou shalt not oppress him.

Deuteronomy 23:15-16

As I read this passage of scripture, my reaction to it was immediate. In my mind the message of it was plain and clear. One word came to my mind; freedom. Having decided to read some commentaries on it, I pulled out Gill, JFB, Matthew Poole and Mathew Henry.

I was immediately struck by the fact that they all agreed with each other, and their explanations were *all* efforts to explain what this passage did *not* mean. They all agreed that it was not about any escaped slave in general, but rather the slave who had run away from a tyrannical and cruel master for the sake of religious freedom. The passage was not speaking of the criminal slave who stole from his master or the lazy slave who just decided to go on the lam. Though I hadn't really thought of these things in my original assessment, I agreed that these men were surely right in their take on the passage.

However, I found that, at least in my own mind, the point they made was a kind of given. Nothing in scripture intimates the hiding of a felon or the receiving of one who has unlawfully left his master. I think that they were rightly protecting the principle of lawfulness, of doing what is right and were guarding against charging God with any

wrongdoing. I believe there is a more exact principle than what this passage does *not* mean. Like old Mose, Matthew Henry's house servant said, "The scriptures shed a whole lot of light on them commentaries."

Then, I look-up old Robert Hawker on this passage and this is what he said, "And is this not spiritual? If you and I have taken shelter from the service of the hard masters we once served, sin and Satan and are come to Jesus and the promised land; we must not be given up to our former captivity. If the Son of God hath made us free, we shall be free indeed." I love that guy!

This passage is about *freedom*. It is about one who has escaped the bondage of a cruel taskmaster, under which the slave found no hope of life or peace. It is about escaping the masters of sin, self and Satan. It is about escaping the bondage of the law. It is about you and me who have fled to Christ from the wrath to come. This passage is about the church and how she is to receive the one who has escaped his former master. It is also about how the escapee is to be treated and the restrictions that are placed on the church and the pastor in their treatment of the escapee. It is, in fact, the story of every believer, every sinner who has been freed by Christ from his former master.

The believer, as he is born into this world is born a slave. Born under the law, he is guilty before God, in bondage and under the law as a schoolmaster (Romans 3:19, Gal. 5:1; Gal. 3:21-24;). Born in sin, he is under the sovereignty of sin (Romans 5:12-14, 21). Born into the world where Satan (by divine appointment) is the prince of the power of the air, he is under the sovereignty of Satan (Luke 11:20-22; Eph 2:2). Born spiritually dead, he is under the rule of self

preservation and self promotion. As a sinner, he is the servant of sin (John 8:34). Man is born into this world a slave, a bound captive, owned and operated by his master. He is not free, cannot change his estate by thought or deed and most certainly not by a decision.

Here is where religion woefully misses the mark. Religion holds that man is free, that his will is free and that he, by decision, decides his destiny. The Bible however, and any modicum of spiritual understanding, convinces men otherwise. Men are bound on every side by masters who rule, govern, own and use them according to their own pleasure. Apart from divine deliverance, freedom is only a pipe dream of fallen humanity. Born shackled and fettered, the human being is doomed to stay in his place unless a miracle of grace breaks his chains and sets him at liberty. This is not about reformation; it is about emancipation.

“Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
Fast bound in sin and nature's night:
Thine eye diffused a quick'ning,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free:
I rose, went forth and followed thee.”

In our text the slave has been given, by gracious providence, a way of escape and by the same providence he has found himself in the refuge of the church. This is a sweet and true definition of the church. It is a *refuge* for the *sinner*, a *hospital* for the *sin sick*, a shining city on a hill.

The first command of the Lord to the church is essential for the well being of the escapee. Do not deliver him back to

his former master. Here, I believe, because of the weight of the teaching of the New Testament, this most surely and clearly applies to the Law. No one would want to return the escapee to his former life of sin, or to release him on his own recognizance, or return him to the cruel tyranny of Satan. For some idiotic reason, however, religion doesn't seem to mind returning the escapee to the former rule of the Law. They think it is necessary to do so, and if they do not want to fully return the escapee to the Law, they yet deem it necessary to apply to the former master for advice in regulating the escapee's life. Since the former master has no designs on the welfare of the escapee, this is utter nonsense, not to mention cruel beyond imagination. The former master only wishes to exact the punishment upon the escapee that is due him. The letter killeth, always killeth, ever killeth and is never interested in life (Gal. 4:21). To return the escapee to his former master is to, in fact, return him to the rule of sin, Satan and self (Romans 6:14; 8:1-2; 1 Cor. 15:55-57). This is a command to the church. Under no circumstances, in no situation is this to be mitigated. The church is never to return the escapee to his former master. It is the edict given to the church that no believer is to be returned to the Law. For the church this is freedom's final flat. No escapee is ever to come under the domain of his former malicious martinet.

The second command by the Lord is that the escapee is to be welcomed into the body, "He shall dwell with thee, even among you." He is to dwell (be caused to sit, abide and remain) with thee. He is even to dwell (as an inward part, integral asset, as entrails or part of the body) among you. The church and the escapee are to become one (1 Cor. 12:13-27; Eph. 4; 15-16; Coll. 2:19). Notice that no other

thing is said, but “he is to dwell with you and among you.” There is no mention of a council to inquire of the escapee's fitness or to adjudicate concerning the manner in which he escaped. Nor is there a probationary period of “watch-care” wherein a state of limbo is assigned to the escapee to prove his worthiness to dwell among the church. If he is free from his former master then he is to be received, period.

Finally, he is to be allowed the freedom to find his own niche. He will in time assume the function for which he was placed in the church. The escapee has not entered into another form of slavery. He is the Lord's “freeman” and thus is to be accorded the privileges of that blessed station. He is to feel free in the church, only constrained by his love for Christ and the brethren. Even if he may seem to be less honorable, or less comely than others, he is to be regarded with greater honor and considered as more comely (1 Cor. 12:23 comp. 6:4). Leave him to choose the place that most pleases him, seek his happiness. Do not oppress him as did his former tyrant. Read the Text.

UNHOLY THINGS

17, There shall be no whore of the daughters of Israel, nor a sodomite of the sons of Israel.

18, Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the LORD thy God.

Deuteronomy 23:17-18

The open declaration of the first verse of this passage is often used as a firebrand in the fight that goes on in society concerning moral versus immoral behavior. Concerning the sins that are here implied by the identification of the sinners, there can be no doubt that they are forbidden by God. Whoredom, prostitution and homosexuality are against God, as are all sins, and are often grouped in with other sins that represent unrighteous deeds of the flesh (1 Cor. 6:9-10). These acts of a sexual nature are particularly grievous for a number of reasons; the main one is rarely, if ever, mentioned. One reason that these sins are particularly set forth in the Scripture is because they are not sins that can be committed alone. They are promiscuous. They must involve a second person. These sins thus involve *community* and in a moral sense are *spreading* the sin. On the level of health, the communication of the sin often results in the spread of communicable disease.

The chief cause of the spread of the Aids virus in Africa, which is decimating the population at an alarming rate, is prostitution. The chief cause of the spread of the Aids virus in America and in much of Europe and Asia is

homosexuality and homosexual prostitution. It is a virus spread primarily by sexual contact with the exception of some victims acquiring the virus by infusion of blood donated by infected people. Aids is a *virus* that attacks the immune system and effectively shuts it down. It is not a living thing. It is a viral protein that must attach itself to living cells in order to spread. Had the medical community followed the instincts of the homosexual community in the early days of the virus, when it was being called “gay cancer” by the medical community, there would be no active virus today.

The homosexual community, understanding that a virus must have a host, began to shut down the bathhouses and press for what they called “monogamous relationships.” If the number of hosts are reduced, the virus will eventually go into dormancy. The medical community dropped the ball in that they did not treat the virus as a virus, which in every other case of unknown communicable contagion is *quarantine*, in order to reduce the number of hosts. Because of “political correctness” the virus ceased to be a virus and became a political football. To speak of quarantine of those infected was demonized as an attack on homosexuals and the pundits who make their living supposedly protecting the rights of others.

Their action effectively caused people to forget that Aids was a virus, and the mere mention of it suddenly risked one being labeled a homophobe. They miraculously changed a protein into a civil protest. They changed a virus into political vitriol! With slight of hand and prestidigitation they turned a communicable disease into a constitutional agenda! Dark magic this! Aids was no longer a virus; it had become a way of restricting civil rights. I am convinced that one day

the medical community will invent a vaccine for AIDS and the disease will go away, but had common medical practice been adhered to in the 80's the disease would be all but contained in this nation. The virus and all such STD's are however the result of promiscuity. The answer is quite simple. Don't be promiscuous. God declares it to be sinful and particularly heinous because it must involve another individual.

The *main* reason that these are particularly restricted is *spiritual*. Harlotry and homosexuality do not fit the picture and life of Christ and His *bride*. The male and female genders were created by God for the glory of Christ and His Church which culminates in a loving, monogamous marital relationship that lasts forever (Genesis 2:21-23; 24; Ephesians 5: 25, 31-32). This is the reason for the existence of the two genders and the underlying principle that is declared in marriage. Neither harlotry nor homosexuality can declare the glory of the Gospel because both eschew the marital relationship of a husband and a wife and therefore can never show forth Christ and the relationship He has with his bride. Consequently, such sinful relationships cannot declare substitution, righteousness or propitiation; the very heart of the Gospel. Pity them; they will never know why they exist. Their presumed purpose will only be a blip on the radar of time and will never involve eternal things. Naturally, many will counter with 50% of the marriages between men and women will end in divorce or that many men and women have successful marriages that last their lifetimes yet without any knowledge of or interest in Christ. These subjects will be dealt with as we come to them in scripture. They cannot be specifically applied to with this text.

Having said all that, the fact is that the subject that this text is addressing is not about marriage or the spreading of disease or the general subject of whoredom or sodomy. I said all that other stuff previously because it is what generally comes to mind when we see these words. They bring about an immediate guttural reaction. Because of the world in which we live and the political times in which we live, these words are inflammatory in nature and we cannot read them without an immediate response. This passage is about sacrificing unto the Lord. It is about worship and what worship is unacceptable. This is about false religion and God's disallowance of it being part or parcel with the true worship that He has ordained.

The reason that this is clear is found in the original words here interpreted as "whore" and "sodomite." The root word for both these words is the word "holy." The use of this word is in the sense of *sanctifying* or *separating* for the use of God. If you have a marginal reading, you will see an interesting word for the word "whore." It is "sodomites." This gives the sense that whatever is being addressed here is performed by males *and* females of which sodomy is generally particular to the male gender. What is being said here is a declaration that something is holy when it is not. The tool of language used is called an "antiphrasis" or antiphrase; a word or phrase used contrary to its normal meaning. We commonly employ it for irony or sarcasm in humor. If I were to say, "I am a mere child of 58 years," I would be employing antiphrasis. It is not used in our text for humor but as a way of showing the people of God that what men call holy is not holy at all and is never to be employed in the worship of God.

One might ask how such thing could ever be sanctified unto the Lord. They couldn't! However, the area of Canaan was replete with false worship. Part of that worship was prostitution of both males and females who would give part of their ill-gotten gains to the temple of their God. Often their concupiscent activities were performed in the temples or in apartments attached to the temples. This was common practice. When Hamlet said to Ophelia "get thee to a nunnery" he was not beseeching her to join the convent. He was telling her to go to the whorehouse. Nunnery, an offshoot of the idea of the Vestal Virgins, supposedly celibate, were in truth merely prostitutes for the cause of religion. Such were not to be allowed in Israel.

Their sacrifices were an abomination unto the Lord (v. 17; Prov. 15:8). Thus, the term "holy" is applied to them in antiphrasis because they used the earnings of their evil to support and appease their god. No such practice was to be a part of the worship of the true and living God.

In speaking of the sacrifices these persons offer in verse 18, our Lord does not use the same word for whore. Here the word actually means harlot and encompasses both the sodomite and sodomitess in verse 17. Both are prostitutes who tithe of their illicit salaries. It is what they call holy that is being addressed and forbidden. Also, in verse 18 another character is introduced. Not only is the hire of a whore forbidden as an offering to the LORD, but so is the price of a dog. The phrase "price of a dog" may be interpreted the "exchange of a dog." The dog is not a clean beast and therefore not to be used as a sacrifice (Rev. 22:15). This practice would be equated with offering an unclean thing to God and was utterly forbidden.

The use of these two things, the hire of a whore and the price of a dog is very important because they speak to false religion and false worship. All false religion is seen in the Revelation as Babylon, the great *whore* (Rev. 14:8; 17:1, 5; 19:2; Prov. 7:6-27). False teachers and prophets and professors are revealed in scripture as *dogs* (Isaiah 56:10-12; 2 Peter 2:15:22). The commonality of these two creatures is that they preach peace when there is no peace. They believe and teach that they appease God with the offering of what they have merited in their works. They believe that they are accepted, and their worship is acceptable because they offer what they have done or sacrificed for Him. Their sacrifices, works, lying lips, plowing and prayers are an abomination unto God. These persons are forbidden to have part with the worship of God, because before God, they are sodomites and sodomitesses. They are dogs and whores whose hire and price are an abomination to God.

Not one of God's sons or daughters can be placed in these categories (V. 17) because they approach God in worship with the only sacrifice that God has or will accept. They come to worship God by, in and through the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ their substitute, their merit, their sacrifice and the propitiation. The whores and dogs of human religion are not the sons and daughters of God.

NOT YOUR OWN

19, Thou shalt not lend upon usury to thy brother; usury of money, usury of victuals, usury of any thing that is lent upon usury:

20, Unto a stranger thou mayest lend upon usury; but unto thy brother thou shalt not lend upon usury: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all that thou settest thine hand to in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

21, When thou shalt vow a vow unto the LORD thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the LORD thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee.

22, But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee.

23, That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; even a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the LORD thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth.

24, When thou comest into thy neighbour's vineyard, then thou mayest eat grapes thy fill at thine own pleasure; but thou shalt not put any in thy vessel.

25, When thou comest into the standing corn of thy neighbour, then thou mayest pluck the ears with thine hand; but thou shalt not move a sickle unto thy neighbour's standing corn.

Deuteronomy 23:19-25

The words of Deuteronomy 23:19-25 are part of the same theme that our Lord established in verses 17-18. Just as the use of ill-gotten gain was forbidden in the worship of God, the *proper* use of what God has given is established in the rest of this chapter. The over-riding theme is quite simple. What you have, all that you possess, is from God. Because it is, there is a proper way to use it. All of humanity belongs to God, and He is the administrator of all that exists (Psalm 24:1-2, Dan. 4:34-35). The elect belong to God in a special way that distinguishes them from the rest of humanity. Whereas all belong to God by creation, the believer belongs to God by purchase, by redemption and by a new and different creation (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

Everything that the believer has, both naturally and spiritually is by the gracious benefaction of God Almighty (1 Cor. 4:7). God owns you. You are His property. He holds your next breath, your next heartbeat. He supplies your needs by His grace. The roof over your head, the clothes on you back, the food on your table all belong to God and are lent to you for a time. All these things will be left behind and be lent to someone else. To the elect, He has given that which cannot be taken away. He has given heavenly treasure that cannot be lost, corrupted or stolen. There is a simple Biblical equation that every believer has and will continue to learn (1 Cor. 3:21-23). If we then give unto the Lord, we are but returning to Him what was His to begin with (1 Chron. 29:14). The Apostle said that "it is more blessed to give than to receive." Since God is the giver of all things, and the less is always blest of the greater, then if we give, we are doing nothing more than emulating our maker. God is the standard of the giver.

In the passage before us, our Lord sets forth the principles of how we are to use what God has given us in reference to our brethren and in reference to those who are not our brethren (vv. 19-20). He declares the matter of voluntary or freewill offerings and the laws that govern the vowing of such to the Lord (vv. 20-23). Finally, he declares the liberality and community of the church in caring for those that are hungry or in need (vv. 24-25).

I want for us to look at this on two levels. First, we'll view this in reference to our giving. Secondly, we'll look at this in the light of the spiritual truth here presented to see that this is what God has done as is revealed in the Gospel.

First, under the covenant of the law, the Israelite was not allowed to charge any interest on a loan to a brother in need. Realizing that all he had and all that he possessed was by the mercy of God, he was not to consider making profit from his brother off of God's goodness. Remember that this was a conditional covenant wherein blessing or cursing was contingent upon obedience of the individual. In the New Testament our Lord, having accomplished all for His people, declares that interest or usury is never to be applied to anyone whether brother or not. Grace owns the heart and thus the purse strings are not to be a consideration among the people of God (Luke 6:27-35; See Mat 6:3). The reason is seen in Luk. 6:35. In doing this, you are doing as God has done for you (Matt. 6:24-34). The fact is that we *have* in order to *give* (Eph. 4:28).

In the matter of the vow, this speaks of a voluntary or freewill offering that is promised to the Lord. It is not a requirement to make a voluntary vow (V.22). That would be an oxymoron. One cannot be required to volunteer. However,

under the law if one volunteered to give something to God, He was bound to do so, and he was required to pay what he had freely vowed. These things are set forth very clearly in the New Testament. Under the covenant of grace, no tax such as the tithe is applied to the believer. All that he gives must be voluntary or he is brought back into the bondage of the law. The believer is to purpose or decide himself what he wishes to give (2 Cor. 9:7). The believer is to give as God has prospered him (1 Cor. 16:2). Our Lord even accepts a willingness of mind as the gift itself when a brother is unable to give (2 Cor. 8:12). The believer gives because he has been given all things. The very fact that he has been given grace means that he has been given a liberal spirit (Matt. 10:8).

All that the believer has, he has in common with every other believer (v. 24-25). The early church was marked by the communal spirit she expressed (Acts 2:44-45; 4:33-35). It is clear that the believer is not to abuse the liberality of his brother and equally clear that the believer is always to provide for the needs of the household of faith. Liberality is a by product of the grace of God (1 John 3:16-18). The measure of the love and grace of God in a person is revealed in the willingness to be gracious and loving.

Just as in 1 John, the catalyst, the motivation for giving, is the love of God in a person, so the true meaning of these verses in Deuteronomy is realized in the person and work of Christ for His people.

In the matter of lending and charging of interest our Lord makes a distinction between His people and the rest of the world. Though He sends the rain and the sunshine on the just and the unjust, the former and latter rain are for his redeemed (Deut. 11; 11-14; Prov. 16:15; James 5:7; Mal.

4:2). Since our Lord requires of His people to lend expecting nothing in return, lending could be well equated with giving, and is, when it is defining what God does for his people. He gives, and gives and gives again, neither expecting nor requiring anything in return. God has given us *all* things in Christ and no interest is accrued and no payment is ever required. Grace is unmerited favor and we have all received grace for grace (John 1:16). Salvation is freely given, in fact is only given to those who have nothing to pay (Romans 3:24; 8:31-32). In truth, to try to pay God back for what He has freely given is contemptible (SOS 8:7).

What God has given His people was freely purchased for them by the Lord, in His blessed sacrifice. What God has given to His people is given freely so that all glory—*all* glory—belongs to God (1 Cor. 1:30-31). Faith is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8-9). If a person has faith, God freely gave it to Him. 2 Thess. 3:2 declares that “all men have not faith.” If a man has faith only because God has freely given it to Him and yet *all* men do not have it, then God evidently does not give it to those who do not have it. This is what is seen in verse 20 of our text.

What God has lent to strangers, those He knew not in loving election and full redemption are yet living by His breath, eating His food and living in His shelters. They are lent these things with usury. They are required to pay, but they *cannot* pay what is required. For the life they live in rebellion to God who has been merciful to them (endured them with much longsuffering), the power to gain wealth, the sunshine and the rain, and even for the power to sin, they will pay with interest. They will pay with their life for they have sinned, and they will pay with interest that has accrued

since Adam. Their payment will be to die and never die. The usury accrued will be of such magnitude that eternity will not suffice as time enough for payment. None, however, should despair of salvation. The testimony of every believer is that he was once a stranger to God (Eph. 2:11-13).

Concerning the vow (vv. 21-23), this wonderfully pictures Christ but also is inclusive of His bride. If you remember, we studied this in Numbers 30 how the vow made by a *man* cannot be forgiven. A vow made by a *woman* cannot be forgiven unless upon hearing the woman, whether she is a daughter, wife, widow of divorcee, the father or the husband forgives the vow, then the woman who made the vow is no longer bound to pay it.

Of course, this pictures the work of Christ for His bride. He voluntarily made a vow of surety to pay her sin debt and was bound by the words of His mouth. He must and did meet his obligation. His bride, His daughter, has and does make many vows, to do better, be more kind, love more, pray more, and read the Bible more. Though she is bound by the words of her mouth, Christ has heard them all and forgives her before she even proves that she will fail in her obligation that she has made for herself.

The payment of the vow is *absolute* for the man and is forgiven in the woman. What a picture of the absolute accomplishment of the substitutionary, sacrificial, propitiatory death of Jesus Christ the Lord.

Concerning the free access to what your brother or sister has, the Lord is teaching that He has given all He has to all His children. They share the gifts of grace in common. They are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. They are all equal in the sight of God. They have nothing that their

brother or sister is not allowed to partake of if they are hungry or in need. The restriction is that they, in using the things that belong to them in common, are to make no provision for the flesh. The believer who has, is never to forbid the believer in need and the believer in need is never to take more than satisfies his need in that moment. The believer is to freely ask of His Father for everything he needs but is never to presume upon the graciousness of God. In this gracious manner God provides for His children and grants great privilege to his children to give to each other, to care and love each other and to meet the needs of one another.

If you would know how to give, look to the Giver

LAW AND GRACE

1, ¶ When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement, and give it in her hand, and send her out of his house.

2, And when she is departed out of his house, she may go and be another man's wife.

3, And if the latter husband hate her, and write her a bill of divorcement, and giveth it in her hand, and sendeth her out of his house; or if the latter husband die, which took her to be his wife;

4, Her former husband, which sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after that she is defiled; for that is abomination before the LORD: and thou shalt not cause the land to sin, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance.

Deuteronomy 24:1 -4

This passage deals with the subject of a man divorcing his wife for reasons other than adultery. Adultery was *punishable by death* and under that indictment *divorce* was not a part of the equation. Divorce is also not an option if the husband is suspicious of the wife yet has no proof that she has been unfaithful. In that case the law of jealousies would apply in which the wife would drink the concoction of water from the laver, scrapings from the parchment which contained the accusation against her and dust from the tabernacle floor. This drink was designed to reveal whether she was guilty or innocent of the charge and pictured the

gospel which when received reveals both the guilt and the innocence of the believer as the water (the word, the Gospel) swallows up the dust (death) and the accusation (the law), thus declaring the bride of Christ to be without sin. The beauty and wonder of the Gospel is that the one who hears it is convicted and comforted by the very same words.

The fact that the wife in our text was set free to marry another is indication that the problem was not with the wife but with how the husband felt about her. Though numerous reasons may be given for the writ of divorce and many of them seem foolish by our standards (uncleanness=uncovered head, bare arms, whirling in the street and even bad breath or body odor), all the things that might be used by the husband to divorce his wife come from the hardness of the husband's heart against his wife. He might even write a bill of divorcement because he sees a woman that is prettier than his wife and decides he's rather have the prettier one than the one he is married to.

This law is not here condoning the husband's attitude but is written for the protection of the wife, so no charge may be later brought against her. This law was not about what brought about the changed feelings of the husband toward his wife but was about assuring that what he did was recorded for future reference. The law said that he had to write her a bill of divorcement. There was a form which had to be filled out before witnesses so that the wife, being now cut off from her husband, would be free to marry again. We know that the law was added because of transgression. This law, the writing of the bill of divorce, was added because of the hardness of men's hearts.

Divorce is not commanded. It is never a good thing or even an acceptable thing but because humanity is fickle, it is allowed. The writ of divorce was commanded so that a man in the heat of an argument could not summarily put away his wife. He is forced to ponder such a decision by taking the time to go through a legal process. In doing so he was confessing that the reason for the divorce was due to his perception, or his change of heart toward his wife. This legally protected her from any restriction concerning remarriage. In the New Testament, a divorce is legal under the indictment of *adultery* and *abandonment* and for no other reason. Under the law a divorce was granted because a husband *changed his mind* about the woman he married. The onus was on the husband and not the wife. Her “uncleanness” was a matter of his view of her, not necessarily of how she was. Once the bill of divorcement was written, the former husband was never permitted to marry the woman again. This too pictured the fact that though he might repent of his actions and begin to think of what he had lost and wish her back with him, he might just as likely, after receiving her, change his mind again. The strictness of this was because of the mutability of humanity. On a natural level man cannot be trusted with the holy things of God.

The true reason for such action was made clear by our Lord in Matthew 19:8. Divorce was suffered—allowed—because of the hardness of men's hearts. It certainly did not picture the reason or intent of what marriage taught. The law concerning marriage was written to reveal two things. The dissolution of marriage by the death of the husband and freedom of the widow to marry another, which pictured the bride of Christ being freed from the law by the death of the

law to be legally and blessedly married to Christ (Romans 7:1-4). The law of divorce was not instituted concerning marriage but rather concerning the sin, hardness of the heart.

Marriage is to last as long as both spouses live. Glory be to God, our husband will never die, having defeated death. And His bride will never die because she is wed to Him who is the resurrection and the life. Christ will never divorce His wife because He will never change toward her. She will always be to Him the eternal love of His heart. For Him, she is the one! He will never see one spot or blemish in her (SOS 4:7). To Him she is eternal beauty personified and nothing about her is or ever will be displeasing to him. His heart will never grow hard against her. The law, here declared, does what all law does. It reveals sin and discloses what is really in men. You should note that there is no *grace* here. This is *law*.

This may also apply to the final dissolution of the marriage between God and natural Israel. Concerning the religion that God gave to the people of Israel, that relationship is over. God has given Israel a writ of divorcement, not because of the hardness of His heart, because His heart is *not* hard. He divorced that nation because she went *whoring* after other Gods and transgressed His every commandment (Jer. 3:8). Some believe that God did not divorce Israel, and the nation is still linked to God in marriage, and He will one day exalt that nation again. Some use Isaiah 50:1 as a proof text for their position. A look at that text reveals that God is merely saying that the divorce that took place was not because He was hard hearted toward Israel but that *she* was at fault. At any rate, because He has

divorced her, He may never marry her again. Such a thing would be an abomination to Himself (Deut. 24:4). So those who aver that God will restore national Israel to her former glory are sorely mistaken.

Look again at Jeremiah 3:8. There is a wonderfully subtle expression of grace here. Notice that He did not say that He divorced Judah. Though Judah proved as much a harlot as Israel, He did not say that he divorced her. Judah is the tribe of whom Christ is the Lion. Judah is the tribe from which Christ the High Priest proceeded. Judah is the definition of Suretyship. Judah is He to whom the people will gather. Here Judah is a picture of the elect, the kind of woman whom Christ took for His wife. She was an idolater and an adulterer and what she did was worthy of death. Christ died her death, was *made to be* her adultery and her idolatry. He put her sins away by the sacrifice of himself. He became her sin and was made to be her righteousness.

In the Old Testament there is such wondrous language concerning this. Read Hosea 2:7-3:3 (EXP). The name Hosea means *savior* and Gomer is a picture of the believer as they are born in this world. She had a glorious relationship with Christ before she fell in Adam and began her life of harlotry. Her name "Gomer" means *complete* but comes from the word that *measures failure*. She is a *complete failure*, but she is beloved to the savior and he will have her. So great is this love that He has for her that even the law of divorcement will not stand in the light of it (Jer. 3:1). In Christ her name will rightly apply. The failure will be removed, and she will be called complete (Col. 2:8-9).

God has joined Christ and His bride together, and what God has joined together no man can put asunder.

HONEYMOON

5, When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go out to war, neither shall he be charged with any business: but he shall be free at home one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken.

Deuteronomy 24:5

The placement of this passage in the context is interesting. Since it is the formula for ensuring a solid marriage, and since there can be no divorce without there being a marriage first, it would seem that this verse ought to precede the verses concerning divorce. However, it could be that this passage is placed here to show what might prevent divorce after having shown it for what it is; a product of the hardness of men's hearts. Whatever the reason for the thematic placement of this passage, one thing is for certain. There is clearly a distinction to be drawn between verses 1-4 and verse 5.

It is apparent that our Lord has a high respect for marriage in that He declared it to be the relationship between Christ and His church. (Heb. 13:4). Our Lord, in discussing divorce and blaming it on the hard heart of men, said that it was not so from the beginning (Matthew 19:8). When our Lord employed the phrase "from the beginning" He was making a clear distinction concerning the purpose of marriage and the apparent lightness that men had applied to it. From the beginning of creation marriage was instituted by God for the glory of Christ and the good of His people (Genesis 2:24; Eph. 5:31-32). All things that were created on earth served the purpose of revealing an already existing

spiritual concept in heaven (Hebrews 9:9, 24; Romans 5:14). Obviously, election is synonymous with the betrothal of the bride to Christ before the world began (John 6:37-38). Whether of darkness or of light, everything created has a spiritual application.

Concerning marriage, the mercy of God is seen in the fact that He puts in place these tender restrictions on marriage. I've often wondered if as many marriages would end in divorce if newlyweds were given this kind treatment upon the event of their nuptials. Clearly this time was given for the married couple to get to know each other, to spend all the first year of their marriage in close communion. The husband was not allowed to go to war so there would be no long periods of separation. He was not to be charged with business so that he would not be away from her for short periods of time. The whole purpose of the commandment was to ensure that the couple would be allowed time to truly know each other being in close proximity to one another to solace themselves with their love for a minimum of a year. Notice that the husband's freedom to remain home was so that he would cheer up his wife. For one year he did not war, he did not work; he lived to make her happy. This commandment, especially that part dealing with business, meant that the husband was also free from payment of taxes.

Herein lies the distinction and what I believe is the reason for the placement of the text. The marriages set forth in vv. 1-4 do not entail any particular period of time or duration. What they have in common is that they end in divorce. The subject of verse 5 deals with what we would call the honeymoon, the time of first love, the days of wine and

roses. By restricting this law of marriage (in v. 5) to a specific period of time, a time which would ideally be the time of joy and love, God sets forth the marriage of Christ and His bride. The set period of time here is to be seen as eternity. This is so because the love that Christ has for His bride is an everlasting love (Jeremiah 31:3). All that Christ has done and does for His bride is born of His eternal love for her. Almost ever instance in scripture where the love of God is declared, it is revealed in the past tense (See Jer. 31:3). This speaks of eternal love (John 13:34; Gal. 2:20; Eph. 2:4; Rev. 1:5). The principle being taught here is that the relationship between Christ and His bride is a perpetual, eternal honeymoon. Christ has fulfilled this law and perfectly kept this commandment. There are several things that teach us this truth in this text.

Pperhaps the most important of all is the purpose of the commandment. The husband is to be free at home to cheer up His wife. She is called His new wife, not in the sense that He had a wife before her but in the sense that she is a new creature, a new creation. She is a wife that is suitable for Him. She, by virtue of what He has done for her is espoused to him as a chaste virgin with tokens of her virginity. Though she was born in this world a wicked woman, she has been made new, in the likeness of Christ, conformed to His image and "old things are passed away and behold all things are become new." She is whole and complete, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing. She possesses the beauty of holiness by virtue of her union with Christ. He says of her "And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee." He is her righteousness before God and

her wedding garment is the garment of salvation (Isaiah 61:10).

She is His new wife and He is home with her to cheer her up. This suggests that she needs cheering up and that He has taken upon Himself the task of doing so. Notice that it is not said that she is to cheer *Him* up. There is no need of that because though she struggles with life in this world, He always sees her in the light of His love for her. Though she sees herself as black and often uncomely, He says of her that she is “all fair and that there is no spot in her.” She needs cheering up because she is still possessed with a principle of sin in her that is always contrary to the principle of righteousness that is also in her. She cannot do what she would. With her mind she loves and serves her husband, but with her flesh she serves the law of sin and death. She is constantly reminded of her unworthiness, her weakness and her inherent depravity. She is often beset by unbelief and is stymied in her sojourn. She needs cheering up and her wonderful husband *lives* to do that.

How does He cheer her up? First, He does so by always being home. He is free at home to cheer her up. He is free to do this because there is nothing else that He has to do. He will never leave her nor forsake her. He is with her and in her. He has taken up residence in her heart. She could go no place where He is not with her (Psalm 139:1-18). He is always home filled with love and adoration for her. In Him she lives and moves and has her being. Marriages are often ruined by separation whether physical or emotional. Neither is the case with Christ and His bride. He is always with her and because He is, wherever they are is home. She will be in constant need of cheering up, and He will be free at home to

do just that. Four things are set forth as the means by which He is free at home to make this a perpetual honeymoon.

He *never* goes to war! Why? He has already fought all the battles and routed the enemy. He has bruised the head of the enemy of his bride and put a chain around his neck so that no weapon formed against her shall prosper. He cheers her up with the words of His victory (Exodus 14:14; Exodus 15:3-13; Deut. 3:22; Isaiah 2:4; 40:1-5). Her husband is the King of all kings, mighty to save, able to deliver, victorious in battle, and He cheers her up by assuring her that in truth her warfare is *accomplished*.

He *never* goes to work! Why? There is no work left to be done. He has finished the work (Romans 9:28; John 19:30; Hebrew 10:12-17). By His blood sacrifice, He has put away her sin, has made her righteous and she is complete in Him. She needs cheering up because there is within her a fear that she must *do* something, or that she has not done enough. She struggles with notions of lack of evidence that she is a proper wife and often seeks to bolster up her self-esteem by producing something that will give her confidence that she is indeed worthy of such a husband. She continually fails, because her efforts are against the truth. He cheers her up by not going to work because there is nothing left to do. Tis done; the great transaction's done (John 17:4; Romans 4:5-8; 2 Tim. 1:9; Heb. 4:9-11)!

He *never* pays taxes because he has settled the debt that was owed to the law. The uttermost farthing has been paid. The law is satisfied, having had all its requirements met. The wife is debt free. The righteousness that is in the law has been fulfilled in her (Romans 8:1-4). She owes nothing to God legally, though her heart will feel an eternal debt of

gratitude to her husband. He cheers her up by reminding her that within her bosom is the earnest of the purchased possession (Eph. 1:13-14; Hebrews 10:18).

Besides all this, He lives to cheer her up (Romans 8:27, 34; Heb. 7:25; 9:24). This is the blessed, sweet command of the never-ending honeymoon. Christ having accomplished the salvation of His bride, lives to cheer her up, regaling her with the accounts of His accomplishment that set her free from war, works and payment of any kind (SOS 2:1-6).

DESTROYING LIFE

6, No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh a man's life to pledge.

7, If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and maketh merchandise of him, or selleth him; then that thief shall die; and thou shalt put evil away from among you.

Deuteronomy 24:6-7

The meaning of these verses is self explanatory. The nether and upper millstones were the concave and convex stones used to grind the meal for the daily bread of the household. To remove either of these stones was, in effect, taking the life of those in that house by starving them of their sustenance. The second verse is a prohibition against man-stealing or kidnapping of children for the purpose of selling them into slavery. The punishment for kidnapping and merchandising of children was death.

Notice that only the second felony of man-stealing has a punishment attached to it. It would seem logical that since to take a millstone from a family would result in their death then the punishment would also be death, yet such punishment is not included with the crime.

What I think is accomplished in addressing these things in this manner is that they, though seemingly different (and are designated by the translators by the new paragraph symbol), are tied together in a natural progressive manner. If the millstone was taken and the family was brought to malnutrition and poverty, the children of that household

would become easy targets for kidnappers who might lure them away for a morsel of bread and then make merchandise of them. However, the true meaning of this is not the natural meaning though it was certainly instituted for the protection of Israel's society. The true meaning of this is spiritual, and the two verses, set in their order by divine inspiration, are found in the spiritual truth expressed in Christ.

Several things are declared in these two verses.

The fact that our Lord omitted punishment from the crime of removing the millstone does not suggest that it was not a punishable offense. Instead, it was a thing that was simply not allowed to take place. Just as God would never put in His church people who were not His by relationship to Christ (Deut. 23:1-6), here He is declaring that He will not allow the millstone to be taken because the millstone is synonymous with life. This then becomes a statement of the security of those who have the life that God gives; it will not be taken away because it is the life of God. Christ is our life and no man can take that from the believer (John 10:28-30). It is simply not allowed by divine edict.

Since the life of the believer will never be allowed to be taken, a closer look must be employed to see the connection of these two verses.

Let's consider the words of the two verses as to their distinctiveness. The words "take" and "taketh" in verse 6 are not the same as the word "stealing" in verse 7. The words "take," "taketh" and the word "pledge" are the same word. The word does not mean to *steal* or even to *take* but rather to *destroy*. The prohibition was this, "If a man destroys a millstone for the purpose of destroying it, he destroys a

man's life for the purpose of destroying it.” This deals with an act of *intent*. Though man may not destroy a believer's life, which is Christ, because God will not allow it, a man may yet seek to destroy the believer's life or by his action intend to destroy the life of the believer. This word “destroy” in the original carries with it the concept of *binding* or *tying up*. The word “stealing” in verse 7 means to steal away in a covert manner. The word “merchandise” also means to bind as a sheath of wheat. For wheat to be bound it must first be harvested and gathered. It must also be manipulated into the shape required in order to bind it. This word “merchandise” also means to *manipulate*, to *deal with tyrannically* and to *treat as a slave*.

The question that needs to be asked concerning these two verses and their connection is this; If a man intends to destroy a believer's life, how shall he go about doing it? He must somehow covertly, steal him away by manipulating him, binding him, tyrannically ruling over him, treating him as a slave and merchandising him.

All of these words are “buzz-words” that describe particular, heinous and death-worthy acts in the New Testament. They are the acts of false prophets who intend to destroy the life of the believer by bringing him back under the rule of the law. They do so with the intent of destroying Christ and what He is to the believer, and if it were possible to deceive the elect, they would be successful in their espionage performed under the cover of darkness which they call light (2 Cor. 11:13-15). I use the word espionage because they are spies who live to discover the liberty of the believer and turn it into something illegal, unholy and despicable (Gal. 2:4). A good illustration of this mind-set is found in

Matthew 9:10-13. The Pharisees who were always standing by and looking around to find something or someone to condemn, saw the very holy and gracious scene of Christ sitting and eating with sinners and instead of rejoicing, viewed it as an unacceptable spectacle. The intent of their question was to bind the disciples and Christ to their interpretation of the law. Our Lord dismissed them out of hand by simply telling them that He wasn't there for them (Barnard-"I'm not talking to you").

The intent to destroy the life of the believer is done through manipulation. Such men do not deny God. They rather incorporate God into their language but deny His power to complete what He has started (Gal. 3:1-3). They do this by effectively denying the intent, nature and accomplishment of Jesus Christ. They are masters of addition, adding the word "but" or "and" to every declaration of Grace. By placing personal merit alongside the merit of Christ, they effectively destroy the work of Christ. To add anything to Christ and His work of salvation is to subtract Christ and His work from salvation altogether. They do this by speech and example, their language and lives being so appealing to the flesh (2 Tim 3:5-9; 2 Peter 2:12-19; Jude:16).

The intent to destroy the life of the believer is manifest in the fact that those who would do such a thing accomplish it by *binding* them. The whole of the thrust of the Gospel is to set men free. The Gospel has created a nation of free men. The shackles of sin, the chains of iniquity and the bondage of the law have been eternally removed from him who has been redeemed by Christ (Gal:3:10-13). The way to destroy that is to bring out the chains, bring out the fetters and bind

them with the law. Once they are back under the law, all that Christ has done for them is null and void. There is no middle ground here. Such are millstone destroyers who would effectively remove the food of the believer and have him starve in a debtor's prison. To be under the law is to be ruled by sin (Romans 6:14). This is not a matter of doctrinal difference; this is murder with malice aforethought. This is murder one. This is the destruction of life (Galatians 5:1-4; 2:20-21).

The intent to destroy the life of the believer is done by bringing him under tyrannical rule. It is to bring the believer under slavish fear and dark superstition. It is to have the believer look constantly at his own life for the purpose of finding something that would recommend him to God. It is to cause the believer to look for specters, for invisible ghosts that inhabit the netherworld of the vacuous mind of the tyrant. These phantasms have names like duty, evidence, and responsibility. They are not to be found for they live only in the mind of the necrophile who resides in the sepulcher of the damned. It is to bring the believer to the tyranny of fear of censure, shunning and even reprobation. The psychology of fear is a power that can only be destroyed by the act of Sovereign grace which establishes the heart with grace and continually causes the believer to look only to Christ (Romans 6:16-18).

The intent to destroy the life of the believer is for the purpose of turning him into merchandise (2 Pet. 2:1-3). The purpose of merchandising anything is to sell it for a profit. The heart of merchandising is to take a thing and by molding it (feigned words) cause it to appear differently and sell it for more than it would be sold for in its original state (Flank

steak-2 in a cow—pinwheel or Conestogas). It is to personally gain from the merchandising. These who destroy men's life do it for their own glory and their own gain. They are not interested in you; you are but a product of their pernicious (destructive) ways. What they turn you into, a merchandised, miserable, destroyed, tyrannically ruled slave brings them glory (Gal. 6:12-13). What they intend is worthy of death, but thanks be unto God, they are not allowed to destroy the life of the believer.

No man shall take the nether or the upper millstone to pledge: for he taketh a man's life to pledge. If a man be found stealing any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and maketh merchandise of him, or selleth him; then that thief shall die; and thou shalt put evil away from among you.

REMEMBER MIRIAM

8, Take heed in the plague of leprosy, that thou observe diligently, and do according to all that the priests the Levites shall teach you: as I commanded them, so ye shall observe to do.

9, Remember what the LORD thy God did unto Miriam by the way, after that ye were come forth out of Egypt.

Deuteronomy 24:8-9

Though this passage begins with a new paragraph symbol it is vitally connected to the two previous verses which are stern commandments concerning Christ and His people being brought under the law and merchandized for the glory of man (Read verses together). Our text is a reminder of the cost of such presumption. The result of such sinful acts could be infliction (or declaration) of the worst possible disease. There are two things that teach us this.

First our Lord says, "Take heed" in the plague of leprosy. This might be considered a general statement since the Lord goes on to point to Leviticus which shows the priesthood is to be approached for dealing with this disease. The words "take heed," however, draw attention to the disease in reference to what has been addressed before. The disease is seen as a *consequence*. The uniqueness of the disease is that it is purely representative. Leprosy is not attended by a physician but rather is addressed by a priest. Leprosy is a spiritual problem. That it is a disease is indicative of how God views the spiritual condition of his people. To see His

people as diseased rather than as sinful rebels indicates that God always views His people in mercy and compassion.

The other thing that teaches that bringing a brother under the law and merchandising him may result in the infliction (or declaration) of leprosy is that a specific incident of this having taking place is brought to their minds. Our Lord says in verse 9, “remember what the LORD thy God did unto Miriam.”

This sets forth a very important truth. Though bringing a brother under the law is a heinous act equated with stealing his life and turning him into a showpiece for personal glory, sadly it is a thing that can be committed by a true brother who succumbs to the influence of legalistic religion. Clearly, Peter, the choice servant and well beloved of Christ, joined in with those who were perpetrating this crime. Barnabas also joined in with those who would have the Gentile believers of Antioch to be circumcised (Gal 2:11-13). It is sad to think there is evidence that the desire to control others is in all of us. To all of us then, this is the warning of chastisement and not punishment. How do we know this? We know it because God gives what He did to Miriam as an example.

To understand this, we need to go back to this episode in Numbers 12:1-15. Since we have already studied this, I will forgo an exposition of this passage. Miriam and Aaron wanted part in something that Moses had done or was doing and believed that they were *entitled* to be part of it (Numbers 12:2).

The reference to the meekness of Moses in Numbers 12:3 is to give us something about the crime that Miriam and Aaron committed in verse 2. First, being a meek man, there was no cause to speak against him; he had done them no

harm. Secondly, being the meekest of men, there was no possibility that Moses was guilty of holding anything over the heads of Miriam and Aaron. Their declaration that they, too, were prophets (as if they had been left out) would only hold water if Moses had somehow made them feel inferior. This could not have been the case because God inspired it to be written that Moses was the meekest of men. I think it is safe to infer, from what they said, that they wanted to have some part in what Moses did. Being also prophets, they felt that God would speak to them just as He spoke to Moses and therefore their place in the economy of the wilderness journey was equal with that of Moses.

God does not address the dispute in His reaction to them, but rather their presumption of equality with Moses. This clearly sets forth the truth of where God has invested Himself and His Glory. Moses here is a type of the Lord Jesus Christ (Numbers 12:7; 1 Timothy 3:15-16; Hebrews 3:5-6). Religion always will have its jealous zealots who speak as if their words were equal with God's. They will claim words from God, and have people, silly, foolish people in advantage, putting themselves even above the Son of God as the final revelation of God. They, like Miriam, rebellious in heart, claim to be prophets too, like Christ, and therefore worthy to share in the honor of salvation, exalting their will, their choice and their decision (2 Thess. 2:3-4). Though God has said, "This is My Son, hear ye Him" they say we have a right to be heard too. God makes it clear, painfully clear, that though He speaks to his prophets in dreams and visions, He speaks to Moses, face to face, revealing to him even His similitude or his hinder parts or what he has done (Numbers 12:6-8; Ex. 33:19-21). The Lord is saying to these

two erring ones, that Moses indeed is He who speaks for God. Likewise, to any who would assume that somehow the glory of what God has done will be shared with anyone but Christ alone, God says—"This is my Son"—I speak to him face to face (1 Cor. 3:3-7).

What was the dispute that Miriam had with Moses? The first verse states it pretty clearly, it is about Moses' choice of a bride. Miriam's problem was that Moses had chosen a bride about whom she was not consulted and was evidently uncomfortable with. The wife of Moses was not a daughter of Abraham. She was a Gentile and therefore a dog, unchosen, unwashed and unclean. By the manner in which Miriam spoke, it is evident that she felt that she should have had some input in this matter and by such a suggestion there is intimation that she might have made a better choice of a bride for Moses. In this she represents the notion that salvation is for good folk, not dogs, not the vile, but rather the meritorious. Christ way-laid such notions everywhere He went (Matthew 9:10-13; 15; 21-28; Luke 15:1-7; 18:9-14). Religion will never approve of Christ choosing who *we* would save, and further, religion will never approve of who He has chosen (1 Cor. 1:26-31). For all practical purposes this is the same sinful principle of bringing a person under the law. It ultimately is to make him appear a better candidate for salvation and acceptance before God.

Miriam learned that such thinking brought about dire consequence. She was made leprous. It is interesting to note that she was not called a leper but rather that she was *afflicted* with leprosy. The reason for this is that Miriam was a child of God. She was a prophetess (Ex. 15:20). Here,

leprosy is not seen in the sense of state of being but in the sense of chastisement.

Note how the leprosy is described. In Numbers 12:10, it is as “white as snow.” She was covered with leprosy, in a full-blown state of the disease. There was no question of her affliction, but likewise there can be no question of God's mercy upon her (Lev. 13:13,17, Isaiah 1:18). She had erred, she was God's child, she had been presumptuous, but she was at the place where she would be pronounced clean. All she needs is for the great high priest to intercede for her and declare her so (w.11-13).

Thus, following the stern commandments of God in that which precedes our text in Deuteronomy, our Lord follows the prohibitions with words of clear warning tempered with sweet mercy. If you or I stumble into the error of legalism, deciding that we must control someone's life, it will be met with chastisement, and even though it will not be pleasurable and we may be declared leprous (a condition that we will willingly own upon discovery), it will be as our Lord said to Isaiah “though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white as snow.”

MERCY FOR THE POOR

10, When thou dost lend thy brother any thing, thou shalt not go into his house to fetch his pledge.

11, Thou shalt stand abroad, and the man to whom thou dost lend shall bring out the pledge abroad unto thee.

12, And if the man be poor, thou shalt not sleep with his pledge:

13, In any case thou shalt deliver him the pledge again when the sun goeth down, that he may sleep in his own raiment, and bless thee: and it shall be righteousness unto thee before the LORD thy God.

14, Thou shalt not oppress an hired servant that is poor and needy, whether he be of thy brethren, or of thy strangers that are in thy land within thy gates:

15, At his day thou shalt give him his hire, neither shall the sun go down upon it; for he is poor, and setteth his heart upon it: lest he cry against thee unto the LORD, and it be sin unto thee.

16, The fathers shall not be put to death for the children, neither shall the children be put to death for the fathers: every man shall be put to death for his own sin.

17, Thou shalt not pervert the judgment of the stranger, nor of the fatherless; nor take a widow's raiment to pledge:

18, But thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in Egypt, and the LORD thy God redeemed thee thence: therefore I command thee to do this thing.

19, When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.

20, When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

21, When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

22, And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing.

Deuteronomy 24:10-22

The last verses of this chapter deal specifically with mercy toward the poor and destitute. We do not have to look far to see that the subject is about the merciful dealings of God toward His people in the exacting of payment for their sin debt. Twice in this collection of laws our Lord ends the commandment with a call to remembrance that the people were all once slaves in Egypt and were delivered by His mighty hand (vv. 18 & 22).

In vv. 10-17 our Lord sets forth the mercy of redemption which has to do with the payment of a price required for the buying back of a person. He uses as an example their deliverance from Egypt by the price of redemption which we know to be the blood of the Lamb.

In vv. 19-21 our Lord shows that His mercy is for those who have nothing and are provided for by those who have.

Again, He used the example of the deliverance of this people and this time for the recollection that they had nothing to pay, that their deliverance was provided by the purposeful handfuls of mercy bestowed by the goodness of their Kinsman redeemer (Ruth 2:16).

In the first part of this passage our Lord gives commandment concerning the taking of a pledge. A pledge was a pawn, or some type of collateral made by the borrower when he was unable to pay the debt at the time designated. Tradition held that neither the creditor nor the debtor could abuse what the pledge was to be because the creditor, being human, might require of the debtor something of such value that it would be as if punishment was being exacted. The debtor, on the other hand being also human, might pledge a thing of little or no value in order to take advantage of the creditor who had been gracious enough to lend to him in the first place.

So, general practice was that something of middling value was to be pledged. The pledge, taking into account that the debtor was too destitute to pay the debt, was an object of raiment. Generally, it was the clothes in which the debtor slept. This is interesting since the middle eastern poor man generally slept in the same clothes at night that he wore in the day. The pledge was not a payment but the promise of payment.

Another interesting thing about the pledge is that it was only for a day. At sunset, the pledge was returned to the debtor so he would not be deprived of his covering. The debtor was never to be in such a state that he would be forced to go to sleep, to *rest* without his raiment. The restrictions concerning the pledge were that the creditor

could not embarrass the debtor by standing outside his dwelling and calling for the pledge to be paid (v. 10-11). The reason for this was that God had freely redeemed him out of bondage. The creditor could not go to sleep with the debtor's pledge, depriving him of his covering.

The creditor could not keep the pledge past sunset (v. 12). The debtor was to sleep in his own raiment at the ending of the day. The knowledge of this did not however free the debtor from bringing his pledge to the creditor. The pledge spoke to the *honor* of the debtor in that he desired to and promised to pay what he owed (v. 11b). The reason again was that the debtor had been redeemed out of his bondage in Egypt. To have been shown mercy and not to reply in kind reveals a heart void of thanksgiving (Matt. 18:32-33).

Concerning the widow and the fatherless, no pledge was ever to be taken for it goes against the pure religion of God (James 1:24). Concerning the hire, or wages of one hired, he was to be paid at the end of the day because he had earned his pay. For the employer to do other wise was iniquity or inequity.

Also declared in the context is the fact that a father is not responsible for the debt of his son or a son responsible for the debt of his father (v. 16). In each of these cases the reason related is the fact that they all had been delivered by grace and mercy.

The spiritual lesson is plain. The believer is to do what he does in relation to what *has been done* for him or to him by his God. Mercy, love, lending, giving, forgiving, for the believer, are all relative principles. He is not paying back God for what God has done for him but rather merely acting in

accordance with what God has done for him. We love because we have been loved (Coll. 3:12-14).

One might ask, “what was the purpose of the pledge?? Several reasons may be applied. First the fact that the pledge had to be returned each day at sunset might make the creditor feel that it was not worth the trouble to take the pledge at all, but simply to wait for the payment. Secondly, the creditor would be showing mercy to accept the pledge since he was foregoing payment with acceptance of something that would be returned the same day. Thirdly, the debtor was showing intent of faithfulness to pay his debt and attributing mercy to his creditor. Fourthly, and most important of all is the spiritual truth declared in this passage.

What is before us here? We have a creditor who is owed a debt. We have a debtor who cannot pay. We have a law that requires that the debtor rests every night in his raiment. We have a debtor pledging his raiment in lieu of the debt. We have the creditor accepting the pledge and returning to the debtor his raiment every day. We have a hireling receiving what he has earned. We have a law requiring that a person must die for his own sin.

We need not ponder long to understand the spiritual principles. God is the great creditor. He has loaned all men everything they have; the breath in their lungs, the life in their bodies, the clothes on their back, the shelter in which they abide, the power to gain wealth and all that attends their existence on this earth. The proof that it is a loan is found in the indisputable fact that they can't take it with them when they die. Naked they came into this world and naked they shall leave it. What you have in your possession

is but for a time. You breathe the same air that Methuselah was loaned in his day and when it leaves your lungs for the last time it will be loaned to another. Men owe God *everything*. But God does not take a pledge from everyone.

This law was exclusive to those whom He had delivered by His power from slavery. Further, this is not a debt that is general. This is a debt of *one* man owed to his creditor. What is being addressed is the believer's understanding that all he has he has by the mercy and grace of God and his desire for his benevolent creditor to know that he pledges to live up to the eternal debt of gratitude that he owes. It is a debt of thanksgiving and praise based of the fact that he has already been freely delivered. We know from the teaching of our Lord in the New Testament concerning loans that no payment is to be sought. With God, in reference to His people, loans are gifts. By the work of Christ, all debts are forgiven. When are they forgiven? They are forgiven when the debtor has nothing to pay even though he would desire to do so (Matt. 18:26-27; Luke 7:41-42). The believer never has, and never has had anything sufficient to pay. He remains, though a son and a king and a priest, a beggar at the door of mercy.

The believer knows that God, in Christ has met every requirement concerning his sin debt. *What then is this pledge?* This indicates the *heart* of every believer. He, in his heart, promises to do all that he can to be worthy of what God has done for him. Granted, none of us do a very good job at that, but it is the desire, the promise, the pledge of our heart (Romans 7:25; Micah 6:6-8; Eph. 4:1; Coll. 1:10; 1 Thes. 2:12; Phil. 3:8-9, 13-14). And what do we offer to God, we who of ourselves have nothing to pay? We pledge our raiment. We offer to Him what he has given us, indeed made

us to be, the righteousness of Christ. On earth this is our possession. We are poor and destitute, but we have a precious garment, one that clothes us by day and in which we rest in the night. Our pledge is the evidence that our debt has been fully paid by God himself (Isaiah 43:21; 1 Chron. 29:14).

What does our merciful God do? He accepts our pledge and returns our raiment so that when we lay down our head to rest here or when we lay down our head to rest finally, we are wrapped in the raiment that he has provided (2 Cor. 8:11-12). We will never be uncovered (Rev. 7:9-13).

Here also the laborer is to be paid for his labor. We, as believers, know that our works are not worthy to be mentioned. Everything we do is so plagued with sin that we are ashamed to speak of our works in any positive connotation. Yet tied in with this manifold representation of God's mercy and our thanksgiving is this matter of payment of the one hired.

This, in the natural realm, deals with just dealings and proper balances. How can this be applied to us?

First it is applied to our Lord who finished the work of salvation and was rewarded accordingly (Romans 14:9; Phil. 2:9-11).

Secondly, it applies to the justice of God in the salvation of our souls. According to our Lord there is coming a day when all men will be judged according to what they have done in this life (John 5:28-29). By the same token, the believer does not dread this judgment (1 John 4:17-18; Rev. 20:11-15). The believer is not said to be judged out of the book whose contents put all who are judged by it into eternal flames but is simply said to have had his name written into

the book of life (Rev. 13:8; Acts 13:48). The believer's works must then be in that book, the book of life, the book of the lamb slain. Since the lamb was slain and by his death put away our sin and become our righteousness, then God sees our sin no more. Consequently, our works are seen by God and are accepted in Christ (Ex. 28:36-38; 1 Peter 2:5).

God, by Christ, has made us suitable (Coll. 1:12). The believer, in God's eyes has done good and will be come forth from the grave to the resurrection of life (Phil 2:12-13; Hebrews 13:20-21). If our works are good and we receive our just reward before God (the crown of life and the crown of righteousness), all glory belongs to God alone (John 3:21; Psalm 115:1; Heb. 2:11; 11:16).

Finally, look at verse 16 of the text. The language seems almost out of place. There is no mention of death for sin prior to this verse and none after in the context. There is no doubt that this is speaking of imputation. A father cannot be charged with his son's debt and a son cannot be charged with his father's debt. This is absolutely applied in the natural realm. A person must die for his own sin. A person who sins must be put to death. But the Lord has already made it clear that the sins of the father can be attributed to his children to the third and fourth generation. God can do what he does not allow men to do because it is part and parcel with His glory (Ex. 33:18-19; 34:6-7).

Clearly His glory is the salvation of the elect by the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. By that sacrifice He in no wise cleared the guilty and at the same time showed mercy to thousands. He considered all His children in Christ, made all their iniquities to meet on Him, declared Him guilty of their sin, indeed made Him to be sin for them. So perfect was

this substitution that His death for sin was accounted as theirs. Before God, every one of the elect died for his own sins (Romans 6:6-11). In truth, God took the whole matter upon Himself (Acts 2:28; Prov. 17:15).

Believer, rest easy tonight robed in the garments of salvation.

MERCY AND JUSTICE

19, When thou cuttest down thine harvest in thy field, and hast forgot a sheaf in the field, thou shalt not go again to fetch it: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow: that the LORD thy God may bless thee in all the work of thine hands.

20, When thou beatest thine olive tree, thou shalt not go over the boughs again: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

21, When thou gatherest the grapes of thy vineyard, thou shalt not glean it afterward: it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless, and for the widow.

22, And thou shalt remember that thou wast a bondman in the land of Egypt: therefore I command thee to do this thing.

Deuteronomy 24:19-22

The latter part of this chapter (vv. 19-22), which deals so extensively with mercy for the poor, speaks to the principle of God's care for His elect before they were even aware of it. The only true authority on eternal things is the eternal One Himself. We, with our sanctified imaginations, may seek to understand such things but ultimately, they simply do not fit the capabilities, or rather incapacities of the finite mind. There is something about eternity and the things that have and do transpire there that seem just beyond our reach or slip from our grasp even at our moments of greatest lucidity. This is according to purpose.

God has fixed it so that men, even the brightest of men, cannot by natural wisdom find Him out. In Ecclesiastes 3:11

our Lord declares that He has put the “world” in men's hearts so they will be unable to see what he is doing. What He is doing is making everything beautiful in His time. The word “world” means “eternity” in the sense that, for the human mind, it is something that is always just outside our understanding. There is something about man, perhaps that he has an eternal soul that drives him to explain things that are outside his mere existence. Perhaps God has placed this inquisitiveness in man that he might always be forced to consider eternity. But God has purposed that men may not look at any *particular* temporal circumstance and explain what God is doing at that time.

Man, by the wisdom and purpose of God has been limited in his wisdom to find God (1 Cor. 1:21). The wisdom of men is innately deficient in understanding the intricacies of God. If man can know anything of eternity and the dealings of God with humanity it can only fail in the realm of the spiritual understanding that God is the first cause of all things, and man's view is limited to the past *fact* and never to the reason for the action (Ex. 33:20-23).

I said all of that to bring us to consider our lives before we knew God, before He in His sweet and marvelous grace introduced us to Him who had settled all things for us with God concerning our sin and the necessary righteousness whereby we were made suitable to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. This I believe is the subject of the last portion of this passage. I say this because of a distinction that God makes here in the call for us to remember.

The first part of this passage that we considered last time dealt with the teaching of redemption from bondage by the

accomplished work of Christ. We know this because of verse 18. If we look at verse 22, we see that we are again called to remembrance, but this time the language is short the doctrine of redemption. Here we are called to *remember* our bondage, our estate of poverty. In light of what this call to remembrance is attached to, we are called to consider our life before we were made aware of our redemption and the care that God yet exercised for all of the elect. The three kinds of folk that God uses to describe our condition, the *stranger*, the *fatherless* and the *widow* are estates that teach that we had no claim on anything, no place in the community of the saints, were as hopeless as an orphan, and without the love of mate or spouse.

These are all symbolic of extreme poverty. Every soul redeemed by grace and by blood remembers what they were before God saved them, and they can relate to the descriptions here given (Is. 51:1; 2 Cor. 8:9). What we are to consider and be thankful for is that while we were in our estate of poverty, God had caused all our needs to be met. In our walk before faith was given, because we were the elect of God, there was left for us by His commanded mercy handfuls of mercy and grace on purpose. We did not earn these things, nor were they there by our wit or skill. They were there by the command of mercy. We, poor poverty-stricken souls, found sufficient sustenance to bring us to the time of our redemption, and though we may have called it luck or good fortune, God had commanded for it to be there for us.

When we needed it, there it was. In a thousand deliverances, in a million circumstances which we probably call coincidences, in manifold starts and innumerable stops our courses were fixed that no harm would come and every

need supplied and every call answered. God was caring for us on purpose. He was destroying nations for us, raising up and putting down kings for us, controlling everything from the sun to the rain to everything that writhes and wriggles on the earth to bring us to an expected end.

Generally, when we look at our past before the touch of saving grace, we see nothing but our sin. Even now when we think of our former life, we are prone to dwell on the aspect of our shameful sin. Introspection will do nothing but drive us to despair for there is nothing in us or in our memory than is of any value. Here in this blessed passage, our Lord gives us a different set of memories. Indeed, we will never be called to forget our poverty. Our eternal memories will be of why the Lord came to earth (Rev. 5:9). But our Lord, in His grace, gives a view from a different perspective of our former life. Rather than to dwell on our sin, God calls on us to remember that everyday that we walked in our rebellion He was making sure that all our steps would lead us to the Savior and assuring that we were immortal until He had accomplished His purpose for us. We walked, as it were, in blissful ignorance of our spiritual bankruptcy not knowing that for us all was well (Romans 5:6-10, 8:28-31; Jer. 29:11).

Finally, look at verse 16 of our text. The language seems almost out of place. There is no mention of death for sin prior to this verse and none after in the context. There is no doubt that this is speaking of imputation. A father cannot be charged with his son's debt and a son cannot be charged with his father's debt. This is an absolutely principle. A person must die for his own sin. A person who sins must be put to death. But the Lord has already made it clear that the sins of the father can be attributed to his children to the

third and fourth generation. God can do what he does not allow men to do because it is part and parcel with His glory (Ex. 33:18-19; 34-6-7). Clearly His glory is the salvation of the elect by the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ. By that sacrifice He in no wise cleared the guilty, and at the same time he showed mercy to thousands.

He considered all His children in Christ, made all their iniquities to meet on Him, declared Him guilty of their sin, indeed made Him to be sin for them (Ps. 38:4; 40:12; 2 Cor. 5:21). So perfect was this substitution that His death for sin was accounted as theirs. Before God, every one of the elect died for his own sins (Romans 6:6-11). In truth, God took the whole matter upon Himself (Acts 2:28; Prov. 17:15; Rom. 3:24-16). Our sins were frankly forgiven because of Christ's substitution, and because of it, all our circumstances before and after faith are precious providential mercies. Believer, rest easy tonight robed in the garments of salvation.

JUSTICE

1, If there be a controversy between men, and they come unto judgment, that the judges may judge them; then they shall justify the righteous, and condemn the wicked.

2, And it shall be, if the wicked man be worthy to be beaten, that the judge shall cause him to lie down, and to be beaten before his face, according to his fault, by a certain number.

3, Forty stripes he may give him, and not exceed: lest, if he should exceed, and beat him above these with many stripes, then thy brother should seem vile unto thee.

13, Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small.

14, Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small.

15, But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

16, For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the LORD thy God.

Deuteronomy 25:1-3; 13-16

These verses deal with what is *right* and *just*. God did not leave such matters to fallen man but instead set these things in order so that no question may arise and that men in their dealings with one another would have a standard to go by.

As with every law and the principle that it teaches, men will do their dead level best to get around it.

When our Lord dealt with the Pharisees, he found them more than willing to subvert the law and *use* the law to do it (See Matt. 15:3-9; 22:3). In the first instance a son refused to obey the command to honor his father and mother by asserting that he had promised the money to God and therefore could not use it for what he was commanded to do. In the latter case the legalists tried to make a distinction in the law as to one command carrying more weight than the other. There can be only one reason for such thinking and that is if one law is of less importance a person might be less culpable for breaking it. The law is one as God is one, and to offend it in one point is to be guilty of the whole law. The law was given to reveal the exceeding sinfulness of men who were already doomed before God. It was also given to reveal the greatness and righteousness of the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ in His perfect execution of the law.

Before us in our text is the declaration of what it is to be just and justifier (v. 1b). We need not to go any further than this singular premise to know that the subject being addressed is the righteous salvation of the elect by the substitutionary sacrifice that Christ offered to God.

On the natural level this passage deals with just and right dealings between men and it is very clear that honest, right and just dealings are never to be set aside (Micah 6:6-8). These things are not optional. They are absolute. Being absolute, two things are true. First humanity will *never* live up to the standards because these truths condemn our every move. Secondly, God will *always* act according to these

standards. Thus, the teaching here is spiritual and we must look to God, in Christ, to see the fulfillment of it.

The first thing this teaches us is that justice is *exact*. It is precise. It is by the numbers. Concerning the meting out of justice, there is no room or allowance of error. There are no mitigating circumstances and no basis for appeal. Though in the human realm we speak of tempering justice with mercy, with God and by definition justice is never tempered with mercy. *True forgiveness* between brethren is based on justice. In dealing with a fallen brother or sister, we must always account that Christ has put away their sin, that justice has been satisfied and therefore we have neither right nor warrant to bring up their sin. In doing so we set ourselves up as judges of the efficacy of the work of Christ. Likewise, God is not subject to human mutability. He will never and has never sacrificed justice to show mercy. He has never and will never deal unfairly or unjustly. The weights and measures in his bag are perfect and just (V. 16). He will never justify the wicked and He will never condemn the righteous. Justice is both exact and exacting and is never tempered with mercy.

This being said, this passage is the declaration of the Gospel of grace, the story of the just and righteous salvation of the elect. The elect are righteous because the law declares them justly so. No one is saved who can be found guilty before the exacting justice of God. The righteous will always be justified, and the wicked will always be condemned (Rev. 22:11). This is the equation of salvation. This is the gospel, the declaration of the righteousness of God. The principle meaning of "righteous" is *equity*.

The first note in this Gospel song is *controversy* (v.1). There is a controversy between men and God. There is a problem that exists that must result in a just punishment of sin. The controversy and the equitable punishment are in the hands of the Judge. God is the judge of the entire universe and He is at odds with men.

From what is spouted from the pulpits of this nation and throughout the world, this truth seems to be an error in the Bible. Men are told that God loves them and has a wonderful plan for their lives. Where is the controversy? Where is the problem between me and God? If God loves me and has wonderful plans for me, where is the controversy? What possible issue of justice might be raised where such love exists? God is presented as waiting with baited breath for His creature to allow him to show him kindness.

The controversy that man has invented is not between him and his God but between man and his own will. Today's pulpits roar, "If man will but exercise his will righteously then he will get all the eternal goodies, meritorious play pretties and earned doo-dads that God is just aching to give him in reward. Men believe that any issue concerning punishment and justice was settled for all men on Calvary, and all that is left is for them to, by the exercise of their omnipotent will, is to appropriate what God's love has in store for them. They see no controversy between them and God, at least not in time. This is where their scenario hits a wall.

They hold that at the end of time the God who loves them and has a wonderful plan for their life will turn on them and put them into an eternal hell where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. They believe that Christ was

punished for their sin and has settled the controversy, yet they also believe that they may be punished for their sin again. They make God to be an abomination to Himself. They declare God to be unjust by His own standards. They declare that He changes and exacts more punishment than is due!

Verses 2-3 make it clear that justice must be applied according to the crime, but when justice is applied, that is the *end* of it. To exact more punishment than is due is to be vile and unjust. So, for God to punish Christ for the sins of all men and then punish some of those men again would make God unjust and vile. The full measure of punishment was forty stripes for the crime. If forty stripes were administered, then justice was satisfied and no more could be administered because it would make the judge vile and unjust. If Christ suffered the full scourge as punishment for the sins of someone, then that someone can never be lawfully punished again (Isaiah 53:5). Justice is exact, and punishment is sure and when it is finished, it is done. Justice cannot twice demand payment at my bleeding surety's hand and then again at mine.

The controversy between God and the elect was settled by Christ being punished in their room and stead. He was made to be sin for them and justly, rightly condemned and punished by God. Justice was exacted upon the head of the savior. Being made sin, the very epitome and essence of wickedness, justice condemned the wicked (the punished must be worthy of it; v.2). Having suffered the *exact* punishment in the stead of the elect, they have no more punishment due them, and the law declares that they are righteous, yea the very righteousness of God. Justice then

justifies the righteous. The law is fulfilled, perfectly honored and the Judge of the entire world has done right (Psalm 9:8).

Notice that it is the *Judge* who administers the punishment and he alone bears the weight of it being just. If He gives less than is due, then He is unjust. If He gives more than is due, then He is unjust. Our God, the judge of all the earth, in three hours of darkness meted out the exact punishment for our sin. He poured out all His wrath on our substitute because He is holy. He consumed our Savior with the blow of His hand, and being just to condemn the wicked, He must likewise be just and justify the righteous (Isaiah 45:21 c; Romans 3:24-25). He cannot punish those for whom Christ suffered the just punishment. Why Not? It is the law! It is *His* law!

In the business of salvation all the weights in God's bag are perfect and just. What he required as payment was righteous. He exercised perfect *equity* in the balanced business of salvation. Death was the price required for sin and Christ paid it. Righteousness was the price for acceptance and Christ met it (Psalm 98:9; 99:4). God, the righteous Lord who loveth righteousness, has perfectly and equitably saved His people (Eph. 5:27; Col. 1:20-22). Look at Job 9:1-2; 14:1-3 then compare Psalm 17:1-3.

Blessed assurance that God has exercised perfect justice and because He has, His people are forever righteous before Him.

Read text vv. 1-3 and 13-16; Prov. 17:15.

THE SEED

4, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox when he treadeth out the corn.

5, If brethren dwell together, and one of them die, and have no child, the wife of the dead shall not marry without unto a stranger: her husband's brother shall go in unto her, and take her to him to wife, and perform the duty of an husband's brother unto her.

6, And it shall be, that the firstborn which she beareth shall succeed in the name of his brother which is dead, that his name be not put out of Israel.

7, And if the man like not to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate unto the elders, and say, My husband's brother refuseth to raise up unto his brother a name in Israel, he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother.

8, Then the elders of his city shall call him, and speak unto him: and if he stand to it, and say, I like not to take her;

9, Then shall his brother's wife come unto him in the presence of the elders, and loose his shoe from off his foot, and spit in his face, and shall answer and say, So shall it be done unto that man that will not build up his brother's house.

10, And his name shall be called in Israel, The house of him that hath his shoe loosed.

11, When men strive together one with another, and the wife of the one draweth near for to deliver her husband out of the hand of him that smiteth him, and putteth forth her hand, and taketh him by the secrets:

12, Then thou shalt cut off her hand, thine eye shall not pity her.

Deuteronomy 25:4-12

The seed in scripture is of paramount importance. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, the *seed* speaks to the person of Christ the Messiah. The preservation of the natural lineage of Christ addresses the spiritual lineage of Christ and all who are born of His travail. The Bible is replete with references to the importance of the seed. From the protoevangelium in Genesis 3:15 where Christ is the “*seed* of woman” who will bruise the serpents head, to Abraham believing God concerning the *seed* and it being counted to him for righteousness in Genesis 15:6; to Tamar playing the harlot to Judah and being counted more righteous than him because she had respect for the *seed*; to the suffering substitute seeing His *seed* in Isaiah 53; to the *seed* of woman being born into the world in Bethlehem, born of a woman, born under the law to redeem them that are under the law; to the Gospel and the preaching of it in I Peter and James 1, the scripture is one long and beautiful treatise on the *seed*. “For all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us” (2 Corinthians 1.20).

In our text, the theme remains. The seed must be preserved and continued. When a woman is married to a

man and he dies before the birth of the firstborn (representative of Christ) then the brother (or next kinsman) of the woman's dead husband is to take the woman as his wife and the firstborn of that union will bear the name of the former husband. Though it is not clearly set forth in this passage, it was commonly understood that this scenario was followed until a firstborn son could bear the first husband's name. So, if the second, third and so-on husband died, the process continued until the seed was honored and the lineage of the firstborn was established.

At the time our Lord walked the earth, the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection, tried to use this law to trip up Christ concerning the resurrection (Matt. 22:23-33). But their interest was not in the seed but in proving that what they believed discounted the resurrection. With God, this matter of preserving the seed is of absolute importance and the refusal to honor the principle declared here can result in dire consequences (Gen. 38:7-10). Needless to say, this is finally and fully realized in the person and work of Christ as is revealed in the preaching of the Gospel (Rom. 8:29; James 1:18).

In our text, there is not only the doctrine of the preservation of the seed but also the punishment and shame that is involved for the next kinsman who refuses to do as the Lord commands (vv. 7-10). If the nearest kinsman refused to marry the widow, then he was brought before the elders of his city and made to confess and own that he refused to do his duty (v. 8). After this confession of refusal occurred, the widow of his brother then publicly removed the shoe of the unwilling kinsman and spit in his face to publicly humiliate him and cause his name and his family's name to

be a name of scorn and embarrassment the remainder of his days (vv. 10). This action of the widow revealed the nature of men in their disobedience to God (Isaiah 1:6).

The understanding of this principle comes to light in the book of Ruth as Boaz (the near kinsman) confronts the nearer kinsman concerning the redemption of the name of Mahlon the son of Elimelech. Mahlon had died and left Ruth a widow, and in order for his name and seed to remain, the near kinsman must marry her. Now Boaz was a near kinsman but not the next in line and this must be remedied before Boaz can marry Ruth (Ruth 3:12-13; 4:4-8).

We know that Boaz is a type and picture of Christ, our kinsman redeemer. As we compare this passage in Ruth with that of our text, several things differ that reveal the difference (the distinction between) law and grace.

In our text in Deuteronomy, the kinsman refuses to marry the widow and continue the name of his brother. The result is shame and disgrace. In the story of Ruth, the nearer kinsman does not refuse to marry Ruth but rather declares his *inability* to redeem because it would mar his inheritance. However, in the reason given, the marring of the inheritance, there is the *element* of refusal. In Deuteronomy the *widow takes* the shoe from the kinsman, in Ruth the *kinsman removes* the shoe *voluntarily*. In Deuteronomy the kinsman's shoe is removed before the widow, in Ruth the shoe is removed before the redeemer. In Deuteronomy the widow must personally deal with the kinsman, in Ruth the transaction is between the nearer kinsman and the kinsman redeemer.

What does this teach us concerning our redemption? First, the nearer kinsman is the law which cannot redeem

us, but also asserts that it is not willing to. The law, by design, was never given to redeem or buy back anyone. Its function is to reveal guilt and because it is holy and just cannot take a sinner to itself. The law was added because of transgression. It must ever stand on the outside, having no possibility of intimacy and simply accuse, with proof, that no one is worthy to stand in its presence. If the law, being holy, were to embrace the sinner, then the law would be marred and its justice diminished.

Though the law is presented as our former husband in Romans 7, that only applies to the matter of dominion and that, in reference to the dominion, being removed when the law dies. In our text the *widow* deals with the law *personally*. For everyone who is under the law this applies absolutely. If you will deal with the law, you are on your own and the results will never be good (Romans 3:19, Gal. 5:1-4). For the redeemed, the kinsman redeemer deals with the law and the results are always good (Romans 8:1-4).

When the redeemer deals with the law, the law voluntarily takes off the shoe and receives no spittle in the face. The law is *honored* and *fulfilled* by the kinsman redeemer and the redeemer himself takes the shame for himself in His substitution.

The significance of the shoe is very interesting. The reason for the shoe being removed, as opposed to something else is not clearly defined. Why the shoe? We know that its significance is somehow related to the seed, to the preservation of the seed. To take off the shoe or to have it removed has to do with the refusal or inability to carry on the seed. The carrying on of the seed in the New Testament refers to the preaching of the Gospel. It is by and through

the preaching of the Gospel that the seed of Christ is born into His kingdom. The preaching of the Gospel is the declaration of Christ as the kinsman redeemer who satisfied the law and, by His blood and righteousness, bought back the elect to God.

The result of that preaching is that the elect are born from above into the kingdom and family of Christ. It is interesting to note that Paul in defending the matter of supporting the preacher of the Gospel uses Deuteronomy 25:4 to do so (1 Cor. 9:9-14). So, before the words concerning the preservation of the seed are declared, what it involves is declared. This is about the preaching of the Gospel in carrying on the name of Christ by the birth of His seed. This is why we preach the Gospel and only the Gospel (1 Peter 1:23-25; James 1:18). To refuse to do so would be taking off the shoe, revealing an unwillingness to preach the truth or an inability to do so. (Eph 6:14-15). The believer is neither unwilling nor unable to preach the Gospel. The believer is set for the defense of the Gospel, and it is all that he is interested in preaching (1 Cor 9:16). The believer will never take off the shoe.

Finally, there is a word here concerning the priority of this matter. In verses 11-12 the interpretation is plain. Even our closest relations are never to be defended at the expense of preserving the seed. May the Lord give us this blessed priority in our entire life; to defend the seed, the Christ of God and the Gospel by which the elect are born into the family of God.

REMEMBER AMALEK

17, Remember what Amalek did unto thee by the way, when ye were come forth out of Egypt;

18, How he met thee by the way, and smote the hindmost of thee, even all that were feeble behind thee, when thou wast faint and weary; and he feared not God.

19, Therefore it shall be, when the LORD thy God hath given thee rest from all thine enemies round about, in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it, that thou shalt blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; thou shalt not forget it.

Deuteronomy 25:17-19

This chapter is marked by the theme of *just* and *right* dealings. At the heart of it is the picture of the manner in which God saves sinners, seeing that justice is satisfied and that there is no possibility of God being honored unless justice *is* satisfied.

Mercy and grace fly on the wings of propitiation. Whether it is the principle of the punishment fitting the crime, or the carrying on of the necessity of just weights and balances, or the law being satisfied before the seed could continue, the issue is the same. Justice must be honored, and this is the heart of the salvation accomplished by our Lord Jesus Christ.

A final word concerning just dealings is contained in the last few verses of this chapter. Our God commands that the

Amalekites be *utterly destroyed* from off the face of the earth. Amalek was the grandson of Esau by Eliphaz's concubine Timnah. His descendants attacked Israel shortly after they were delivered from Egypt (Exodus 17-14-16). This is the time when Moses' arms were upheld by Aaron and Hur and Israel prevailed against Amalek.

It was also the revelation of Jesus Christ in a particular aspect of the salvation He had wrought. Moses built an *altar* at the place of victory and called the name of it Jehovah-Nissi which means the Lord our banner or ensign (Isaiah 11:10-12; Ps. 60:4; SOS 2:4). Christ is the *altar* of the believer (Heb. 13:10). This altar, with this name was not just recognition of *that* particular victory but was the promise of a continual battle with these Amalekites until they were utterly and completely destroyed. Christ then was not the banner raised for that battle and victory *alone* but for a battle and victory that would *continue* from generation to generation until the enemy was destroyed.

The reason that the Amalekites were allowed to attack Israel was because the Israelites were murmuring against Moses and tempting God by complaining that there was no water. It was here that God had Moses smite the rock and from it came forth the water. We know from I Cor. 10 that the Rock smitten was Christ and that it followed them throughout the forty years of their wilderness journey. The people sinned against God in not only forgetting their deliverance from bondage and murmuring against providence but also by desiring to be back in Egypt rather than in the wilderness. The remedy for their thirst was that though *they* deserved to be smitten, *Christ* was typically and symbolically smitten (By Moses, the Law) in their room and

stead, and they received the water of life. In their weakened estate Amalek attacked them.

The manner in which that battle was waged, or rather the specific tactic used by the enemy, is more fully declared in our text. This was not a full-on frontal attack. The tactic used by Amalek was to attack from behind where the weakest and most weary Israelites were. This was generally the place in line where the sick and wounded and the women and children were placed for protection. The accepted rule of warfare was to confront the enemy face to face. The Amalekites chose the cowardly way. Their assault was clandestine using guerilla tactics. They did not attack the strength of Israel but cravenly fought against those who were least able to resist and most likely to be defeated.

This was unjust and imbalanced warfare, and the whole thrust of this chapter is about justice and equity. The manner of the attack is important because of what it teaches us about the enemy of the Cross. The continuation, in perpetuity, of the war against the enemy teaches that the war faced by the delivered [the elect, believers] is an ongoing and never-ending battle. This battle is to be carried on by the believer under the banner of Christ (v. 18; Num. 24:20).

When the believer is brought to the Promised Land, to full possession of Zion, which pictures the child of God being brought to faith in Christ, the remainder of his days on the earth is involved in the battle against this cowardly and subtle enemy who always attacks at the weakest point. It is a battle to be viciously engaged! There are no mitigating circumstances under which any of the enemy is to be left standing. This is about justice and there is no place for mercy to be shown.

When King Saul was told to go against the Amalekites (400 years later) in 1 Samuel 15:1-3 his orders were clear. There was nothing and no one involved with the enemy allowed to survive. Utter destruction was the order of the day. No quarter was to be given, no prisoner of war to be taken. Every man, woman, child and beast that belonged to the Amalekites were to be annihilated. King Saul *did not obey* God and suffered the consequences (v. 10-23; Micah 6:6-8; Hosea 6:6, Matthew 9; 13). The believer is commanded to remember and destroy the enemy.

As in every case in the Old Testament, the physical principles established point to spiritual principles in the New Testament. The enemy of the believer is to be warred against with the goal of utterly routing him for as long as he lives. That enemy will not openly face the believer in this war. The enemy is not other men. We are told to love our enemies and to pray for them that despitefully use us.

Our enemies are invisible, and the warfare we are to engage until the day we die is spiritual warfare. The church assaults the gates of hell and will ultimately prevail. The enemy is sin, Satan and self, and the attack upon us often comes before we even realize it. The enemy is that which creeps in unawares and spies out our liberty. The battlefield is the mind, heart and the imagination. The weapons of the enemy's warfare are smart bombs designed to take our eyes from Christ. They are the foul creatures of human merit, self-righteousness, intemperance, self-will, and covetousness which is idolatry and self-promotion. These things are weaknesses that plague our every thought and connect themselves to our every deed.

Each time we are delivered and bask in the glow of possession of the promise, the enemy begins to insinuate himself into our peace. When Paul bid farewell to the elders at Ephesus, he warned them to be aware that in his absence, the enemies of the cross would hurry in (Acts 20:28-32; 3 John 9-11).

Paul and John did not say to kill these men but to be aware of them and to kill what they preached and taught. This continual and pervasive warfare is the war that goes on in the inward man where the seat of evil resides and exercises advantage over us in that he knows us so very well. He (and the he is me), prevents us from good and entices us to evil (Romans 7:15-25). Though it is the life of the child of God, he is never to lay down his arms and surrender to it. We are to quit ourselves like men, wielding the sword of justice, join the battle with vengeance and not shrink from the slaughter till we are drenched in the blood of our enemy. There is no discharge from this army and if we get a moment of repose it is but to invigorate us for the next wave of assault (2 Cor. 7:11).

Paul illuminates this warfare and describes our spiritual Amalekites in 2 Corinthians 10:3-6. We do not war after the flesh, which is to say that our war is not a visible one (4a). Nor are our weapons carnal our natural weapons. The weapons that we are issued for this ongoing battle are mighty through God. The weapons are spiritual and are effectual in defeating the enemy in the many engagements of this war. With these weapons we pull down strongholds. These strongholds, these fortresses are things that we acquired by birth, a spiritually dark genetic code that is always against God and His truth. They are imaginations

and reasonings, high things, logical things that come against God, that exalt themselves (put them in competition) against the knowledge or acknowledgement of God.

Since these attacks follow on the heels of deliverance, they are always about that subject. Our high and exalted imaginations are against the knowledge of God's deliverance of us. They put our supposed merit in rivalry with the merit of Christ. They lift our works to the status of meritorious. They put our presumed piety in competition with the blood of Christ in the matter of putting away sin. They cause us to follow the dictates of conscience rather than obey the Spirit of God.

These high and lofty things are to be obliterated and we have been given the weapon to do it. The weapon is to bring everything to the obedience of Christ. That simply means that the weapon that destroys these imaginations and reasonings against the knowledge of God is the fact that Christ obeyed God for us. Our standing with God has never been in question and, the battle belongs not to the strong and the race belongs not to the swift, but the battle belongs to the Lord, the man of war. It is His obedience that wins the day and we are to fight this fight by bringing our enemy to the place where he was finally and gloriously defeated.

One day soon we will lay our weapons down and mount up on the white steed of that great army led by the One whose vestures are dipped in blood, who is king of all kings and whose name is the Word of God. We will ride with him and out of His mouth will go a sharp sword and He will consume the Amalekites with the word or His mouth. In that day it will be said of us "And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony; and they

loved not their lives unto the death.” Read Deuteronomy 25:17-19.

ASSURANCE AND WORSHIP

1, And it shall be, when thou art come in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein;

2, That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place his name there.

3, And thou shalt go unto the priest that shall be in those days, and say unto him, I profess this day unto the LORD thy God, that I am come unto the country which the LORD sware unto our fathers for to give us.

4, And the priest shall take the basket out of thine hand, and set it down before the altar of the LORD thy God.

5, And thou shalt speak and say before the LORD thy God, A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt, and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous:

6, And the Egyptians evil entreated us, and afflicted us, and laid upon us hard bondage:

7, And when we cried unto the LORD God of our fathers, the LORD heard our voice, and looked on our affliction, and our labour, and our oppression:

8, And the LORD brought us forth out of Egypt with a mighty hand, and with an outstretched arm, and with great terribleness, and with signs, and with wonders:

9, And he hath brought us into this place, and hath given us this land, even a land that floweth with milk and honey.

10, And now, behold, I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou, O LORD, hast given me. And thou shalt set it before the LORD thy God, and worship before the LORD thy God:

11, And thou shalt rejoice in every good thing which the LORD thy God hath given unto thee, and unto thine house, thou, and the Levite, and the stranger that is among you.

Deuteronomy 26:1-11

This passage concerns the basket of first fruits that are brought to God as an offering of praise and thanksgiving. This offering was to be offered after the believer was brought to possess the land that the Lord had given him. There was also the offering of firstfruits in Leviticus 23:10, 17 and Numbers 15:21, but the offerings spoken of in our text differ in what is offered. The fruits of our text are firstfruits of the *Promised Land* and were not to be offered until the child of God was in full possession of all that God had given him. These fruits were promised as part of the promise land itself (Deut. 8:8). So, the offerer is offering what God has provided in the Land that He has given to His people.

Since these fruits are to be brought to the place where God has chosen to place His name, these fruits offered

signify and picture proper worship of the Lord God. The full and realized possession of the promise land typify that blessed assurance of salvation wrought by God for and in the believer. The fruits offered are only found in and are a product of that salvation. This offering represents worship born of full assurance of salvation and nothing short of it.

The firstfruits were simply the first and best of the harvest. They were the best that God had given to His people who were in full possession of what He had given. In Deut. 8:8 there are seven firstfruits mentioned and they all are a picture of our Savior. The wheat is a picture of Christ as the bread of life; the barley is His humanity; the vines are grape vines representing His blood; the fig trees are His productive, prosperous accomplishments in the hand of the Father as the husbandman; the pomegranates are his seed washed in His blood; the olive tree and its oil picture His Holy Spirit, and the honey is His manifold graces revealed in His word. The offering, the basket of firstfruits that is offered to God in worship, is the person, merit and work of His Son Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 15:20, 23; Romans 8:23; 11:16; Heb. 13:15). The thing to remember is this. This worship can only take place in the fully possessed Promised Land with the firstfruits that are only available in the Promised Land. This passage is chucked full of the language of assurance.

Verse one asserts this assurance in no uncertain terms. The text says, "When thou art come." It does not say, "if you come," or "if you make it," but "when." The promises of God are all in Christ and are "yea" and "amen." The destiny of the elect has never been in doubt. They all will enter into and possess the promise land (John 6:37-38). There is also no doubt as to how the elect come to be there. The Lord God

gave the land to them as an inheritance (1 Cor. 4:7; Col. 1:12, Eph 1:11). Inheritances belong to those who are born to it (1 Peter 1:23-25; James 1; 18; Romans 8:17). The heirs possess it because the testator has died and left it to them (Hebrews 9:15-17). It is their *possession*, bought for them by Christ. They are come to stay. They dwell therein. Salvation is their habitation and the doctrine of Christ is their abiding place.

Verse two makes it clear that it is within these boundaries, that the firstfruits found in *this* land, and only here, are to be what is offered to the Lord God in worship. There is no worship outside this *place*.

Worship of God is not only meditative and contemplative it is verbal. Over and over in the New Testament worship is described in this manner, “he or she worshipped him saying.” These are the words of a person born of God, saved by grace and sure of his relationship with God (v.3). “I profess this day unto the Lord that I am come.” He does *not* say, “I am coming, hoping to come, planning to come, seeking to come or longing to come,” but rather “I am come.” Though the believer never stops seeking, never stops coming to Christ, he does these things as one who has come. The child of God did not offer the firstfruits unto God in order to get into the land but because he was already there. The fruit was in the land, and one had to be in the land to gather and offer it. Worship can only truly flow from an assured place. The priest, the altar and the offering are Christ.

The profession of the believer, the worship of God, is a declaration of what God has done for His people (see vv. 5-8). Here is a solemn proclamation that our earthly father did not save us but was really the source of our bondage in sin. He

was ready to perish and we with him, and he went to Egypt to better his estate—the place of bondage and sin. Sin stripped us, enslaved us and brought us to utter despair. In our despair we cried unto the Lord and He heard us and looked on our affliction and oppression. He delivered us by blood and by righteousness.

The profession of the believer is that God brought us out to bring us in (v. 9; Deut. 6:23). He brought us to Immanuel's Land, to assured salvation, to the land of milk and honey, to the place where the firstfruits are, to the place where we can worship Him in Spirit and in Truth. He brought us to where we can fill the basket with Christ and wave it before God saying:

“Behold I have brought the firstfruits of the land, which thou O Lord has given me” (1 Chron. 29:10-18). This is worship. This is owning that all we have and are is by grace and the only proper worship is thanksgiving and praise (V. 11).

What this passage teaches is of utmost importance. First, it sets things in their proper order. The latter part of the chapter deals with the declaration of the redeemed that he has been obedient in the matter of giving and loving the brethren. These things are very important, but they follow that which must come first, the worship of God. The glory of God is first and foremost in the mind and heart of God's people (Ps. 50:23; Ps. 34:1). Our works, born of grace, are not put in the basket of firstfruits. Though they flow from an assured relationship with God, it is what God has given that glorifies Him and is the only thing that is offered in worship.

The lesson that is most important concerning worship is that it cannot be offered apart from assurance of

accomplished salvation. For years I tried to worship in useless legal and reformed religion. I read the Puritans, read biographies of great men of faith and went to church when the doors were open. I sat and listened to sermons, prayed and read the Bible. I taught Sunday school and tried to bring folks in line with legal persuasion. I remember the distinct empty feeling that I always had when I left the church. I knew I had not worshipped God, and I wondered what else I had to do to get to the place where I felt that I could say that I *had* worshipped. I knew that the Bible spoke of assurance, but looking at my life, I could not find it. I questioned my motives. I wondered if I had done enough. I wondered what more I needed to do. I heard men speak of assurance as if it was presumption and I knew, looking at *my* life, assurance *was* presumption. There was no area of my life that did not need intense improvement. I did not worship God.

Then one day someone pointed me to Christ as the only assurance before God. I saw that there was nothing wrong with assurance unless there was something wrong with trusting God. I saw that worshipping God had nothing to do with me doing anything but had to do with what God had done on my behalf. I saw that worship could not occur when I was in doubt about my place in God's world. Worship only comes from an assured heart born of the knowledge that *God has saved us by the person and merit of Christ*. Worship was not born of process but rather from a state of being.

Those years I spent in trying to get myself fit to worship, or to see something about me or my life that gave me assurance were years spent in doubt and despair. I was looking to the wrong person. Worship is looking to God, not me. Worship is being in the presence of God with a basket

full of Christ as your only offering. And since Christ is only found in the presence of God you cannot find the first fruits anywhere else. "I am come" is the word of the worshipper. I am come with the offering that you have supplied. O Lord.

Look at Hebrews 12:18-24, 28. "Ye are come...receiving the kingdom that cannot be moved" He that comes to God must believe that He is. Worship is no a journey, it is a dwelling place. It is saying, "I am saved and You have saved me." "I am here and You have brought me." "I offer this to You because You have given it to me." From assurance and only from assurance can we worship God! Look at I Peter 2:5 and Heb. 13:15 (fruit). Read Deut. 26:1-11.

THE EFFECT OF WORSHIP

12, When thou hast made an end of tithing all the tithes of thine increase the third year, which is the year of tithing, and hast given it unto the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, that they may eat within thy gates, and be filled;

13, Then thou shalt say before the LORD thy God, I have brought away the hallowed things out of mine house, and also have given them unto the Levite, and unto the stranger, to the fatherless, and to the widow, according to all thy commandments which thou hast commanded me: I have not transgressed thy commandments, neither have I forgotten them:

14, I have not eaten thereof in my mourning, neither have I taken away ought thereof for any unclean use, nor given ought thereof for the dead: but I have hearkened to the voice of the LORD my God, and have done according to all that thou hast commanded me.

15, Look down from thy holy habitation, from heaven, and bless thy people Israel, and the land which thou hast given us, as thou swarest unto our fathers, a land that floweth with milk and honey.

16, This day the LORD thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

17, Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice:

18, And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that thou shouldest keep all his commandments;

19, And to make thee high above all nations which he hath made, in praise, and in name, and in honour; and that thou mayest be an holy people unto the LORD thy God, as he hath spoken.

Deuteronomy 26:12-19

Verses 1-11 has established that proper worship is bringing to God that which He has provided—Christ and His accomplishments—in the spirit of praise and thanksgiving. Moses, in the remainder of this chapter, sets forth the effects of the worship of God and the motivation for doing so. The people of God cannot truly worship God and not have it affect their walk and conversation in this world. As we have seen, worship is praise and thanksgiving to God for His grace as represented by the bringing of the firstfruits of the Promised Land, and the firstfruits are Christ and His work. These things being true, worship involves confession of sin and likewise a confession of righteousness, which is Christ in us as well as declaration that all the believer has is by the grace of God.

Though this passage is part of the covenant of works wherein blessing or punishment is conditioned upon obedience, we know that it is realized and fully embraced in the acknowledgement that Christ rendered that necessary

obedience to God because we could not (Romans 8:1-4). That it refers to the covenant of Grace is seen even in the passage before us in that the language employed in verse 19 speaks to the covenant of grace first revealed in the calling of Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; 13:16 compare Gal. 3:16-17...exp). What follows then is not conditional to any degree but is to be viewed as the real and *natural* out flowing from one who has been made to dwell in the Land of Promise.

It is important to remember that since these things revealed are not conditional, they are also not optional. This then reveals the true response to and effect of worshiping God by praise and thanksgiving for Christ. Over the years I have been accused of not preaching enough responsibility. The reason for this is that I do not make obedience an option whereby men may glory in their response but rather declare obedience as the effect of being the child of God (Coll. 3:12-14). Thus, any good work will not draw attention to the worker or the work but to Christ and His grace.

The natural effect of spiritual worship is cheerful giving. In verse twelve we see the believer after he has worshiped the Lord. At this time, he has made an end of tithing all the tithes of his increase. The third year tithing was for the care and maintenance of the household of faith and displayed the hospitality engendered by true worship. The tithe of the Old Covenant, a *legal* tax, designated for the care of the priesthood, the fatherless, the widow and the stranger, translates to voluntary giving and liberality in the New Testament. Tithing is not a spiritual principle; it is a legal tax that pointed to the spiritual principle of giving. Tithing came from the abundance of increase; giving flows from the heart and the soul (v. 16). The believer purposes in his heart to

give, what to give and gives as the Lord has prospered him. If he purposes to give ten percent, that is fine. But, if he does it to meet the requirement of the law, then he comes under the law and is bound to do all the law perfectly (Lev.21:21; Romans 3:19).

The principle declared here is that worship is always followed by giving. A worshipper is a giver. Note the people to whom the giver gives are those mentioned in our Lord's declaration of the character of true religion (James 1:27). The context of James 1, in reference to giving, is that every good gift is from God (v. 17) and the principle of not only *hearing* but also *doing* the word of God (James 1:22-25...exp). Those mentioned in our text are to be cared for by our gifts so that they "may eat" and "be filled" (12b). (The gospel—silver and gold.) Caring for those in need, the Levite, the stranger, the fatherless and the widows involves more than a pat on the back and the pious "I'll pray for you." Giving is to result in someone being fed till they are full (James 1:14-17; 1 John 3 16-18).

Those who are to be recipients of the giving that is born of true worship are the Levite (the minister of the Gospel who has no earthly portion and must live of the Gospel he preaches), the stranger (he who has no home [the church is their home]), the fatherless (he who has no natural protector [God is their Father]) and the widow (she who has no earthly stay [Christ is her husband]). Worship of God touches the heart of the believer, and realizing that he has nothing but what God has given him, he freely gives because he has freely been given all that he has (v. 13). Notice the last phrase of verse 13, "neither have I forgotten them." This principle is clearly stated in Hebrews 13:15-16. In verse 15 is

the worship, and in verse 16 is the effect of worship communication, which is contribution (1 Tim. 6:17-18).

In verse 14 of our text, the manner of giving is established. The gist of this verse is that giving is to be done in a cheerful, free and joyful manner. Giving that is done grudgingly is not what is *born* of true worship and is not true giving. If it is not freely done, it is not giving (Exodus 25:2; Exodus 35:5; Deuteronomy 15:10; Acts 20:35; 2 Corinthians 9:7).

Verse 15 is the prayer of the worshipper, seeking God to bless what he has blessed.

By worshipping God in the manner he has prescribed and rejoicing in the effect of that worship, the believer asserts that which is motivation for it all (v. 17-18). What God has promised, He is able to perform and will perform (v. 19; Isaiah 46:9-10).

BEFORE THE LAW

1, And Moses with the elders of Israel commanded the people, saying, Keep all the commandments which I command you this day.

2, And it shall be on the day when ye shall pass over Jordan unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, that thou shalt set thee up great stones, and plaister them with plaister:

3, And thou shalt write upon them all the words of this law, when thou art passed over, that thou mayest go in unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, a land that floweth with milk and honey; as the LORD God of thy fathers hath promised thee.

4, Therefore it shall be when ye be gone over Jordan, that ye shall set up these stones, which I command you this day, in mount Ebal, and thou shalt plaister them with plaister.

5, And there shalt thou build an altar unto the LORD thy God, an altar of stones: thou shalt not lift up any iron tool upon them.

6, Thou shalt build the altar of the LORD thy God of whole stones: and thou shalt offer burnt offerings thereon unto the LORD thy God:

7, And thou shalt offer peace offerings, and shalt eat there, and rejoice before the LORD thy God.

8, And thou shalt write upon the stones all the words of this law very plainly.

9, And Moses and the priests the Levites spake unto all Israel, saying, Take heed, and hearken, O Israel; this day thou art become the people of the LORD thy God.

10, Thou shalt therefore obey the voice of the LORD thy God, and do his commandments and his statutes, which I command thee this day.

11, And Moses charged the people the same day, saying,

12, These shall stand upon mount Gerizim to bless the people, when ye are come over Jordan; Simeon, and Levi, and Judah, and Issachar, and Joseph, and Benjamin:

13, And these shall stand upon mount Ebal to curse; Reuben, Gad, and Asher, and Zebulun, Dan, and Naphtali.

14, And the Levites shall speak, and say unto all the men of Israel with a loud voice,

15, Cursed be the man that maketh any graven or molten image, an abomination unto the LORD, the work of the hands of the craftsman, and putteth it in a secret place. And all the people shall answer and say, Amen.

16, Cursed be he that setteth light by his father or his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.

17, Cursed be he that removeth his neighbour's landmark. And all the people shall say, Amen.

18, Cursed be he that maketh the blind to wander out of the way. And all the people shall say, Amen.

19, Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, Amen.

20, Cursed be he that lieth with his father's wife; because he uncovereth his father's skirt. And all the people shall say, Amen.

21, Cursed be he that lieth with any manner of beast. And all the people shall say, Amen.

22, Cursed be he that lieth with his sister, the daughter of his father, or the daughter of his mother. And all the people shall say, Amen.

23, Cursed be he that lieth with his mother in law. And all the people shall say, Amen.

24, Cursed be he that smiteth his neighbour secretly. And all the people shall say, Amen.

25, Cursed be he that taketh reward to slay an innocent person. And all the people shall say, Amen.

26, Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.

Deuteronomy 27:1-26

This chapter is the record of God's command to His people when they arrive in the Land of Promise. They are to take very large stones, plaster them with plaster and write on them "all the words of the law" of God. Theses stones were to be placed on Mount Ebal in clear view of all the people. The laws written on the stones may have been the Ten Commandments but more than likely they were the 12 laws of cursing that take up the last part of this chapter.

They were also to build an altar of whole, unhewn stones upon which were to be offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. This altar was to be raised on Mount Ebal. Then the Lord told them to set this mountain and another, Mount Gerizim (about 1/8 of a mile away), as places where six representatives of the twelve tribes would stand and pronounce cursing and blessing. Mount Gerizim was to be the place of blessing and Mount Ebal was to be the place of cursing.

You will note there are no *blessings* pronounced from *either* of the mountains. Josephus, the Jewish historian, says that the blessings were pronounced in the valley between the mountains, but in this text, there are only cursings pronounced. This was all to be done upon entry into the Promised Land.

What follows this instruction is the twelve curses found in vv. 15-26 and are a reiteration of some of the laws already addressed in the book of Deuteronomy. The Levites were the ones who spoke these laws with a loud voice, and the people were to answer the pronouncement in a resounding "Amen."

Before we look at this chapter and the glorious things here taught, we must first remember some things. This passage is not about the salvation of this people but rather the full and final realization of that salvation. In verse 9, the last phrase says, "this day thou art become the people of the LORD thy God." Some might suggest that they were not the people of God before, or that by keeping the law, they would become the people of God. But that is an utterly foolish notion. They were *already* the people of God as avouched by both God and themselves (26:17-19). They were people of

faith. Their *believing* or *faith* was not their salvation but rather the declaration that God had saved them.

Their will did not bring them to the Promised Land, God did, but the faith that He had given them produced a determination of the will. It always does. The determination of their will was to avouch that God was their God and to countenance no other. Just as Paul, when faced with the manifold trouble and schisms in the Church at Corinth, did not address these problems with multiple solutions but rather “determined” to preach nothing to them but Christ and Him crucified. Likewise, the child of God is affronted daily with many religions, their multiplicity of deities and laws but determinately avouch that they have no other God but Jesus Christ. The words of verse 9 simply state that on the day that they realized the promise, they truly realized the fullness of their estate before God. This then is a picture of the child of God as he lives in the Promised Land. This is a picture of the life of a saved sinner.

Several things in the text teach this fact.

First the names of the two mountains are significant. Ebal means *barren* or *bald*. Gerizim means *cut off*. This, of course, refers to man in nature. However, it points more so to the Christ and His sacrifice for sinners. One of the definitions of the word “Golgotha” is *skull* or *bald*. Not only was the law placed on Ebal but so was the altar. On that mountain, Mount Calvary, the barren mountain, the place of the skull, our Lord was cut off, forsaken by God when He was made sin for His people. On that mountain, Mount Calvary, the burnt offering met with the Holy Law and satisfied it, fulfilling its Holy requirement of blood and death for sin. On that mountain, Mount Calvary, mercy and truth

met together and righteousness and peace kissed each other. Ebal and Gerizim picture the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ.

Secondly the manner of the preparation of the stones for the law and the altar teach the uniqueness of the person of Christ. The stone upon which the law was written were *plastered*. Their faces were smooth and without flaw. The law when written upon them must be plain and clear. There must be no room for error. This represents the deity of Christ who was perfect before God the Father in all His works and all His thoughts, who completely fulfilled the law in ever jot and tittle. The altar however was to be made of unhewn stone upon which no tool was used. These stones were to be unaltered by human means. These unhewn stones represent the humanity of Christ, who was truly human and subject to all the trials that attend humanity. They also teach the fact that His sacrifice accomplished salvation without any help or assistance of man. Christ is our altar and our sacrifice, and He saved us without our input and in a manner that excluded the works of men (Ex. 20:24-26).

Thirdly we will not look at these laws in particular since we have already done so but rather in a general sense relative to what they do. They do what the law always does. The law pronounces a curse upon all who are under it. Since all the people were, at least physically, under the mountain where these laws were placed, they were under the law revealing the condition of any or all who apply to the law for salvation or righteousness (Romans 3:19). One might ask why The Lord had them put these laws on this mountain, written plainly (v. 8), if they only pronounced the curse (Gal

3:10). The reason is that even though these people are brought to the land promised and procured for them by grace, the grace that brought them was not given at the expense of the holiness of God. The grace that brings salvation is holy grace. Remember that the altar was also upon Mount Ebal. So, just as they were under the law by nature, they were under the blood by the Spirit (Gal. 3:13). The fact that the law and the altar were both in view of the people continually reminded them of the necessity of the work of Christ on their behalf. Only those who know they are sinners are able to rejoice in the fulfillment of the law by Christ. The declaration of the redeemed is a declaration of the fact that he is a sinner saved by grace (Rev. 5:9).

Fourthly, we are presented with a divine omission in reference to the sacrifices offered on the altar. The offerings that were to be offered on this altar were burnt offerings and peace offerings. There is no mention of sin offerings. Though some commentators suggest that sin offerings might have been offered on this altar, I think in doing so they miss the point. Where are these people when the laws are plainly written and the altar erected? They are in full possession of the land. They are where the milk and honey flow. They are in possession of gardens which they did not plant and houses which they did not build (Deut. 6:10-12). They are fully and completely saved; they have need of nothing. The issue of sin has been settled and they are of all men most happy.

The sin offering has to do with *confession* of sin, but since that has been settled, they offer the sacrifices that speak to sins put away by the blood of Christ and peace established by that work (Coll. 1:20-22). The burnt offering

declared that they were accepted by God conditioned only on the bloody righteous offering of the body of Christ. The peace offering was the declaration of thanksgiving for what Christ had done. The commandment of the law was before them, but rather than condemning them, they could rejoice that the law was satisfied by the sacrifice of Christ. It is interesting to note, that at the giving of the Ten Commandments the same sacrifices are referred to in reference to the altar (Ex. 20:24). The sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving can only be offered where sin before God is no longer an issue (Heb. 10:17-18). Thank God for His blessed omissions.

Finally, you will note that though one mountain was to be the place of declaring blessings and the other the place of declaring cursings, only cursings are declared in the latter part of this chapter. Some have said that the blessings were given at a different place or time. That may be the case. However, I think this suggests a real and vital fact. It has to do with how the believer looks at the law. He sees it as Holy, just and good, but he does not apply to it for righteousness because it can only condemn. The believer sees that the righteousness of the law has been fulfilled in him by Christ (Romans 8:1-40). Thus, he can view that which once cursed him as a blessing. He is not under the law as to rule and regulation. He is under the reign of grace. He can then, with his mind serve the law, knowing that before God in the person of His savior he is viewed as fully keeping it (v. 10). So, the people could say to the cursings, in a loud and clear voice, "Amen" or so be it. This word "Amen" says much more than just "so be it."

“Amen” is a very interesting word with the Jews. It is the name of a divine Person. In Isaiah 65:16 (Read), “That he who blesseth himself in the earth shall bless himself in *the God of truth*: and he that sweareth in the earth shall swear b y *the God of truth*; because the former troubles are forgotten, and because they are hid from mine eyes,” our Lord describes himself as “The God of Truth” which in the original is “Elohiym Amen.” Compare this with the description of Christ in Proverbs 8:30. “Then I was by him, a s *one brought up* with him: And I was daily his delight, rejoicing always before him.” Again, the same word “Amen” is used, the Jews say that this refers to God by the name of “God the faithful King.” Of course, this designates Christ as the second Person of the Trinity. The Jews say that numerically this word “Amen” answers to the two names “*Jehovah, Adonai*” which refers to Christ as “*God the faithful*.” So, both of these appellations, “The God of Truth” and “God the Faithful King” are names that apply to Christ. He is the God of truth, the truth, the faithful one and the King of Kings. The name by which our Lord calls himself is the “Amen.” “And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God...” (Rev. 3:14).

It is good to be in the Promised Land.

IN CHRIST IT'S ALL GOOD

1, And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to observe and to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that the LORD thy God will set thee on high above all nations of the earth:

2, And all these blessings shall come on thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God.

3, Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field.

4, Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy cattle, the increase of thy kine, and the flocks of thy sheep.

5, Blessed shall be thy basket and thy store.

6, Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.

7, The LORD shall cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thy face: they shall come out against thee one way, and flee before thee seven ways.

8, The LORD shall command the blessing upon thee in thy storehouses, and in all that thou settest thine hand unto; and he shall bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee.

9, The LORD shall establish thee an holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee, if thou shalt keep the commandments of the LORD thy God, and walk in his ways.

10, And all people of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of the LORD; and they shall be afraid of thee.

11, And the LORD shall make thee plenteous in goods, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers to give thee.

12, The LORD shall open unto thee his good treasure, the heaven to give the rain unto thy land in his season, and to bless all the work of thine hand: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, and thou shalt not borrow.

13, And the LORD shall make thee the head, and not the tail; and thou shalt be above only, and thou shalt not be beneath; if that thou hearken unto the commandments of the LORD thy God, which I command thee this day, to observe and to do them:

14, And thou shalt not go aside from any of the words which I command thee this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

Deuteronomy 28:1-14

This chapter is one of the most astounding in the word of God. Our Lord here teaches the benefits of obedience to the covenant in verses 1-14 and the curses that attend disobedience to the covenant in verses 15-68.

I invite you to take some time this week to sit quietly and read this chapter. As I read it, and read it again, I was struck with the severity of the punishment that was the result of disobedience. I read it as it was written, aware that the first

phrase makes this a conditional covenant; “if thou will hearken diligently...and observe to do all His commandments.” Knowing that man in nature cannot keep these words and also knowing that the man who is made spiritual by the grace of God, understands that he cannot keep these words, made this chapter ring as a death knell in my ears.

I was shaken with the thought of being in this world without Christ under a conditional covenant, one upon which blessing or cursing is based upon the obedience or disobedience of man, and knowing that obedience does not merely address the best that man can do but is rather a requirement of perfect, unblemished, unadulterated adherence to every precept of God. This whole chapter is a horror to man as he is born into this world.

This holy law, these holy and righteous commandments are written on the walls of the protracted and elongated halls of inflexible justice that lead from death row to the chamber of eternal woe. These wonderful words of just and right dealings shout with the voice of a banshee and echo with every step, “dead man walking.”

This conditional covenant is the religion of every man by nature, and thus being under it, he is guilty without any possibility of appeal (Romans 3:19). Every breath he takes is a breath of disobedience. The lovely and wonderful blessings found in the first part of this chapter are, to the natural man, things forever lost, a painful reminder of what might have been, the life wasted and the prize missed. As sweet as they are, they taste of wormwood and gall on the palate of the damned. They will rue the day that never brought from

their bosom the cry "O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death."

Standing naked before the obdurate search light of God's pure holiness, they will see that these curses in the latter part of the chapter were but a picture of their ill-spent life played out scene by scene, line by line. Everything that ought to have been good to them was turned to bitter waters. Be sure, be not deceived! If you dare approach the Holy God in the merits of your deeds; if you seek to gain the blessing of God and avoid the curse by the worth of your own obedience; if you apply for the blessing by offering the supposed value of your own righteousness, you will find the blessing to be as intangible as the ether, a vapor that will appear and disappear before your very eyes. The curses will roll upon you as a speeding juggernaut bearing the massive weight of a thousand doomed worlds.

Perhaps you think, in some deluded corner of your sin-diseased mind, that you have done enough or can do enough. Remember, before you ever heard of God, ere you ever engendered the first fleeting thoughts of your own mortality, you were already condemned in Adam and a sinner by choice, pleasure and practice. As the best of men, Adam, innocent of sin, but sadly and all too humanly mutable, could not keep the singular law, though his environment was the paradise the God. You or I, already condemned, full of sin and unable to do anything that is not sin, will never keep one of these commandments (Jer. 13:23).

Read this chapter and read it again. Commit its precepts to your memory. Know that if God has not or does not interfere with you, intervene in your sad career, check you in your digression to perdition, that you will continue on your

road, offering filthy rags for acceptance, believing as Paul that the dung of you deeds will obligate God to bless you. But you will find in the end that every hope is gone and nothing but terror awaits.

This is our story unless God, in sovereign sweet unstoppable grace, plucks us as firebrands from the burning. He will only do this if every facet of this law has been kept perfectly for us, every detail covered, every sin remitted, and every curse and precept of exacting justice met (Gal. 3:8-14).

Thanks be unto God, that the curses that should have befallen us have been swallowed up by Christ when he was made sin for His elect (2 Cor. 5:21). Read again the curses and see what Christ became for His people (vv. 60-61). Know this and rejoice with joy unspeakable, as He has received the curse, we have received the blessing. "God has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ." (Romans 8:1-4).

Because of what our Lord has done for us, we may look with assurance at the blessings of vv. 1-14 and say, "this is our life."

V. 1. He has set us high above all nations. We are a nation born in a day. Every one of us is kings and priests unto God, and we reign with Christ whom God has set as king upon the holy hill of Zion. We are a royal nation of holy priests and privileged to offer spiritual sacrifices unto God by Jesus Christ.

V. 2. We have been blessed to be overtaken by God and made to hear and hearken unto His voice. (Ps. 64:5, Matt. 13:10-11, John 10:26-30).

V. 3. Wherever we are, in the city or in the field, we are blessed. We are blessed in the city of God, the Church and in

the field of God the world. Our blessings are not from the city or the field; they are there when we are in the city or in the world. The city and the field are just places where the blessed of God are.

V. 4, 8, 11. The children of God are fruitful. They will bear fruit unto God (John 15; 4-5, 16; Hosea 14:8-9).

V. 5. The child of God is blessed with all that he needs (Phil. 4:19; 2 Cor. 12:9).

V. 6. We are blessed coming and going (Psalm 37:23-26; Psalm 139:1-18).

V. 7. The Lord shall fight for us, against every enemy (ex. 14:14; Deut. 3:22; 20:4; Isaiah 54:17).

V. 9. The Lord will make you a Holy people (Eph. 1:3-4; Col. 1:21-23; 1 Cor. 1:2, 30).

V. 10. You will be known by your married name (Jer. 23:5-6; 33:15-16), and you will be feared for the truth's sake (Deut. 32:30-31).

V. 12. God will give you His word, his doctrine (Deut. 32:2; Is. 55:11), and He will bless what you do, and you will have in order to give, not to take from this world (Acts 3:6; Eph 4:28).

V. 13. You will be blessed to be the head and not the tail. This illuminates the matter of reigning with Christ. It speaks of dominion over all things or being restored with what we lost in Adam. The head is the honorable place and the tail is the place of dishonor (Isa. 9:14-15; Isa. 43:4). You are above and not beneath (Eph 2:4-6).

You are blessed to never forsake the word of God or to turn to the right or the left from it. How could you? God has written them in you heart and mind. Where can you go that

you are not there? You are kept by the power and the faithfulness of God (Psa. 89:19-37; Jer. 32:38-41).

To God be the Glory: Great things He hath done!

THE COVENANT OF REVELATION

1, These are the words of the covenant, which the LORD commanded Moses to make with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, beside the covenant which he made with them in Horeb.

2, And Moses called unto all Israel, and said unto them, Ye have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt unto Pharaoh, and unto all his servants, and unto all his land;

3, The great temptations which thine eyes have seen, the signs, and those great miracles:

4, Yet the LORD hath not given you an heart to perceive, and eyes to see, and ears to hear, unto this day.

5, And I have led you forty years in the wilderness: your clothes are not waxen old upon you, and thy shoe is not waxen old upon thy foot.

6, Ye have not eaten bread, neither have ye drunk wine or strong drink: that ye might know that I am the LORD your God.

7, And when ye came unto this place, Sihon the king of Heshbon, and Og the king of Bashan, came out against us unto battle, and we smote them:

8, And we took their land, and gave it for an inheritance unto the Reubenites, and to the Gadites, and to the half tribe of Manasseh.

9, Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do.

10, Ye stand this day all of you before the LORD your God; your captains of your tribes, your elders, and your officers, with all the men of Israel,

11, Your little ones, your wives, and thy stranger that is in thy camp, from the hewer of thy wood unto the drawer of thy water:

12, That thou shouldest enter into covenant with the LORD thy God, and into his oath, which the LORD thy God maketh with thee this day:

13, That he may establish thee to day for a people unto himself, and that he may be unto thee a God, as he hath said unto thee, and as he hath sworn unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

14, Neither with you only do I make this covenant and this oath;

15, But with him that standeth here with us this day before the LORD our God, and also with him that is not here with us this day:

16, (For ye know how we have dwelt in the land of Egypt; and how we came through the nations which ye passed by;

17, And ye have seen their abominations, and their idols, wood and stone, silver and gold, which were among them:)

18, Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from the LORD our God, to go and serve the gods of these nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood;

19, And it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst:

20, The LORD will not spare him, but then the anger of the LORD and his jealousy shall smoke against that man, and all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the LORD shall blot out his name from under heaven.

21, And the LORD shall separate him unto evil out of all the tribes of Israel, according to all the curses of the covenant that are written in this book of the law:

22, So that the generation to come of your children that shall rise up after you, and the stranger that shall come from a far land, shall say, when they see the plagues of that land, and the sicknesses which the LORD hath laid upon it;

23, And that the whole land thereof is brimstone, and salt, and burning, that it is not sown, nor beareth, nor any grass groweth therein, like the overthrow of Sodom, and Gomorrah, Admah, and Zeboim, which the LORD overthrew in his anger, and in his wrath:

24, Even all nations shall say, Wherefore hath the LORD done thus unto this land? what meaneth the heat of this great anger?

25, Then men shall say, Because they have forsaken the covenant of the LORD God of their fathers, which he made with them when he brought them forth out of the land of Egypt:

26, For they went and served other gods, and worshipped them, gods whom they knew not, and whom he had not given unto them:

27, And the anger of the LORD was kindled against this land, to bring upon it all the curses that are written in this book:

28, And the LORD rooted them out of their land in anger, and in wrath, and in great indignation, and cast them into another land, as it is this day.

29, 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.

Deuteronomy 29

This chapter is a very revealing passage. It speaks of another covenant other than the one given at Sinai. It was a reiteration of the principle handed down at Sinai, but spoke of the times of the Messiah when true Israel, the church of God, would be revealed and that it would be made up not only of the Jews but also the Gentiles (vv. 10-15). In this covenant that will be realized in the salvation of the elect and their possession of the Promised Land (Immanuel's Land), there are secrets revealed that are made known only in the declaration of the Gospel.

In this passage is the remarkable account of the dissolution of national Israel (vv. 20-28) in the light of the revelation and gathering of true Israel (V. 10-15). The reason for the dissolution of national Israel is uniquely described and is revealed in the fact that no one is saved and no sin remitted under the old covenant. This is seen in the

description of one who does not obey the covenant, yet speaks peace to his own heart (w. 18-19). This is a very telling description and is illuminated by our Lord in the words employed in this chapter.

Though this character is clearly an idolater, he still retains some modicum of worship of the true God, and this gives him a sense of peace. He hears of the curses declared for those who serve other gods yet is not afraid of them. He is at peace and is comfortable in the lie that is his life. What could bring a person to such a place?

Only one thing could make a person take peace in falsehood. In all his idolatry, he still practices keeping some of the restrictions of the Law. He does not bow to Christ but maintains a front of religious activity. Because he doesn't commit murder or covet his neighbor's property and such, he feels safe and secure in his idolatry. He applies to the covenant of Sinai and finds consolation in believing that he has kept that which was designed only to reveal his sin. This is indeed a strong delusion, but it is the one that *prevails* in the religious heart of man. By adjusting behavior to appear holy to men, a man can conclude that he *is* righteous and therefore, be at peace and live a life without fear.

Such a person is described in Isaiah 28:9-14. These words that describe the peaceful infidel are bookended by the Gospel (vv. 9-12, 16). It is clear that the man walking in the imagination of his own heart is trapped by the very words that are a balm in Gilead to the elect. This is a marvel of this word. The same sun that melts the ice hardens the clay. Scripture declares that it is the Glory of God to conceal a matter (Prov. 25:2); that the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit (1 Cor. 2:14); that God has hidden the

things of wisdom from the wise and the prudent (Matt. 11:25); that Satan has blinded men's eyes that they believe not the Gospel (2 Cor. 4:3-4). Scripture declares that some men believe not because Christ told them the truth (John 8:45), and they "received not the love of the truth that they might be saved." God has sent them strong delusion that they would believe the lie (2 Thes. 2:10-12). Whatever men might believe about their estate in the imagination of their hearts before God, the fact is that if any man knows anything at all, that is of spiritual value, revelation belongs to God and Him alone. If He does *not* reveal the Gospel to a person, it is His business to do so (Matt. 11:27; John 5:21; 6:63). All we can do is thank God that He has revealed His Son in us. If He has it is purely the act of His sovereign grace.

That person described as being at peace in the imagination of his heart, having heard the word yet pursuing his comforts in embracing the wood and stone of false deities does so because the truth has been concealed from him. To him, the truth is a secret that he will never know, and while in the false peace that envelopes his heart, he will be destroyed by the deluge of the overflowing scourge that is barreling toward him.

What would bring a man to this horrific estate? What would be in the mind and imagination of his heart that would cause a man to rest in falsehood? We have but to recall our own estate before we heard the truth with ears of God-given faith. Was there not a time when we were at peace in falsehood? In the imagination of our hearts, did we not believe we were not like other men, that we were decent people, and when the dust cleared, we would be finally welcome in God's presence? What brought about that

delusion? We saw the acts of God, heard of his might and his power, were acquainted with the precepts of his law, and since we were not in the penitentiary, we felt at peace with God. In those moments when that peace was threatened, we simply redoubled our efforts at religion until we came back to the place of calm assurance that we were doing more than was required of us. Living in this delusion of adequacy while scaling the height of mediocrity we spoke peace to our own hearts. Why? Because we could see ample evidence that we were children of God. We saw the *acts* of God but not the *way* of God (Psalm 103:7).

This chapter is about the *grace of revelation*. This chapter is about the gift of spiritual perception, sight and hearing. This chapter is about the secret of God kept from some and revealed to others. This chapter is about seeing and yet not seeing. This chapter is the revelation of my salvation and is light from on high.

Now, without any preconceived ideas I want us to consider this chapter in light of three declarations of our Lord. Look at vv. 2-4, then verses 18-19, then verse 29 (read in sequence). In these verses there are those who see and yet do not see; there are those who believe they see and have a false peace; and there are those who have God's secrets by His revelation.

Verse 29 defines verses 2-4 and verses 18-19. Verse 29 has often been called the believer's 5th *amendment*, used to account for the unexplainable aspect of God especially as it relates to His often strange and wonderful doings (Rom. 11:33). I have often employed this verse to account for my own ignorance. It serves well in this capacity but does not do

service to the context. This is not an isolated statement. This is the definition of what has previously been declared.

To see this, we have simply to consider why the people in verses 2-4 and the people in verses 18-19 see but do not see. They do not see because God has *concealed* the truth from them. It is *His* secret. The “secret things that belong to God” (v. 29) is not a generic phrase referring to the unsearchable nature, attributes and providential doings of God, but refers to the fact that these do not truly see because God has *secreted* the truth from them. The “secret things that belong to God” is the *Gospel*. Precisely, the gospel is that which these have not been given, neither have they been given a heart to perceive it, nor eyes to see and ears to hear it (v. 4). The scripture bears this out in spades. (Proverbs 20:12; Matt. 11:25; 1 Cor. 2:7-8, 14; John 8:43-45; John 9:39-41). Why were these men hearing and yet not hearing, seeing and not seeing—because the secret things belong to the Lord our God.

Like one old preacher said, “grab onto your hat, we're getting ready to jump the creek.” Notice the use of italics in verse 29. Italics were added by the translators to help us in understanding, but they do not always serve to do so. I believe that such is the case here. Without the italics the verse reads, “The secret unto the LORD our God: but those revealed unto us and to our children for ever, that may do all the words of this law.” What is revealed to us (the elect) and to future generations of the elect? The *secret* of God is revealed. What God had concealed from some, He has revealed to others. One might think I'm stretching the meaning of this passage were it not precisely the teaching of

the Lord in the New Testament. The New Testament is replete with this theme in resplendent redundancy.

Think of the numerous times when our Lord spoke and said “he that hath ears to hear, let him hear.” He said to his disciples, “blessed are *your* eyes for they *see* and *your* ears for they *hear*” (Matt. 13:9-16 read). Notice when our Lord says such things that they are words of distinction declaring that seeing and hearings is by revelation. “The secret unto the LORD our God: but those revealed unto us and to our children for ever, that may do all the words of this law.” Look at John 8:42-47. . . (“The secret unto the LORD our God: but those revealed unto us and to our children for ever, that may do all the words of this law”). Look at 1Cor. 2:7-16. The word “ordained” in v. 7 is the 4th usage of the Greek word “prooridzo” or “predestinate” and it speaks of the revelation of the mystery, the hidden (wisdom) for our glory. What is that (2 Thess. 2:11- 14).

Also note that though the mystery is hidden from the wisdom of the world (v 8, compare 1:21-24), it was revealed unto us (2:9-13; Matt. 11:25-27). “The secret unto the LORD our God: but those revealed unto us and to our children for ever, that may do all the words of this law.” What is revealed to God's children is His secret (2 Cor 4:4-6). Look at the last verse of 1 Cor. 2:16. Can it be any plainer? Look at John 15:15 and 1 John 2:20. How is it that those who have been revealed the secret of God do all the works of this law? Look at Romans 10:13-17; 3:31; 8:1-4. The *secret* that belongs to God is the *Gospel* that is *revealed* to us.

Ponder, consider, meditate on the glorious grace of this fact—we know the secret! Look at Rev. 5:10; Prov. 25:2;

Psalm 25:14 “The secret of the LORD is *with* them that *fear* him; and he will shew them his covenant.”

“The secret unto the LORD our God: but those revealed unto us and to our children for ever, that may do all the words of this law.”

MORE OF THE SECRET

1, And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon thee, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before thee, and thou shalt call them to mind among all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath driven thee,

2, And shalt return unto the LORD thy God, and shalt obey his voice according to all that I command thee this day, thou and thy children, with all thine heart, and with all thy soul;

3, That then the LORD thy God will turn thy captivity, and have compassion upon thee, and will return and gather thee from all the nations, whither the LORD thy God hath scattered thee.

4, If any of thine be driven out unto the outmost parts of heaven, from thence will the LORD thy God gather thee, and from thence will he fetch thee:

5, And the LORD thy God will bring thee into the land which thy fathers possessed, and thou shalt possess it; and he will do thee good, and multiply thee above thy fathers.

6, And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.

7, And the LORD thy God will put all these curses upon thine enemies, and on them that hate thee, which persecuted thee.

8, And thou shalt return and obey the voice of the LORD, and do all his commandments which I command thee this day.

9, And the LORD thy God will make thee plenteous in every work of thine hand, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy land, for good: for the LORD will again rejoice over thee for good, as he rejoiced over thy fathers:

10, If thou shalt hearken unto the voice of the LORD thy God, to keep his commandments and his statutes which are written in this book of the law, and if thou turn unto the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul.

11, For this commandment which I command thee this day, it is not hidden from thee, neither is it far off.

12, It is not in heaven, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go up for us to heaven, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

13, Neither is it beyond the sea, that thou shouldest say, Who shall go over the sea for us, and bring it unto us, that we may hear it, and do it?

14, But the word is very nigh unto thee, in thy mouth, and in thy heart, that thou mayest do it.

15, See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil;

16, In that I command thee this day to love the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the LORD thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it.

17, But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them;

18, I denounce unto you this day, that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it.

19, I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:

20, That thou mayest love the LORD thy God, and that thou mayest obey his voice, and that thou mayest cleave unto him: for he is thy life, and the length of thy days: that thou mayest dwell in the land which the LORD sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give them.

Deuteronomy 30

This chapter is a further revelation of the secret of God declared in chapter 29 and verse 29. The secret revealed in these words is that the fulfillment of the old covenant was never in question concerning spiritual salvation. The blessing of being God's chosen nation and the curse for a continuous heart and imagination against God is as sure as

God is sure (v.1). The very design and intent of the covenant of Sinai was that, by it, no man would ever be declared righteous. The law is not for the righteous man and has no place in the righteous man's life, because when it came into existence, man was already a transgressor of the singular law of Eden. The law, itself was added because of transgression, and even if one could keep it, the condemnation that brought it about would not and could not change.

The law entered that sin might appear what it was, exceedingly sinful and that it might abound. The covenant of Sinai was like delivering a fuller explanation of the offense to a person who was about to receive a lethal injection. It would not give that man hope but only reveal that his condemnation was just and right. The law, in reality cannot be kept, it can only be fulfilled. The fulfillment of the law is death for sin and that by precise documentation of the offense.

Verse 1 speaks of a time in the future when all the elect scattered throughout the world will be brought to consider (call them to mind), not the covenant of Sinai (29:1), but the covenant of promise, the covenant of grace and mercy, the covenant of blessing for the elect and cursing for the infidel. That time is now and covers the span between the advent of our Lord and His coming again to gather His elect to Himself. It is the age of grace, the Gospel age referred to as the acceptable year of the Lord (Isaiah 61:1-2; 63:4; Luke 4:17-21). What will be brought to their mind (they of the spirit do mind the things of the spirit) will be the covenant in which the secret of God is made known to the elect of God by the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

This is *sure* salvation (v. 2-4). It is salvation accomplished by God's sovereign deliverance, born of compassion and mercy, resulting in the elect hearing and obeying the voice of the Lord (my sheep hear my voice and follow me) and will be accomplished by God in the inner man, the heart and soul (v. 6; Deut. 10:16; Romans 2:28-29). It will be the gathering, the fetching of all the elect into one body—the church of Christ—where all the promises are yea and Amen (Isaiah 43:3-7; Eph. 1:10). It is the secret of God revealed to the people of God for whom alone it is intended (1 Cor. 1:9-10). The result of this inner work of Grace is love for God and life in Christ (v. 6).

All who oppose the elect will bear the curses of this covenant (V. 7). This will be and has been perfectly accomplished by Christ in His life and death, His substitution and satisfaction and His redemption of His people. Because of His substitution and satisfaction, the people will return and obey the voice of the Lord and establish the law by faith in Christ, and the righteousness of the law will be fulfilled in them (v. 8).

Not only is the salvation of the elect secure, their fruitfulness of believers is also secured (v. 9-10; John 15:15-16). Someone will look at verse 10 and say, "Aha, you see that the promise is contingent upon obedience." This verse is the secret that is revealed only to the elect. To everyone else it becomes a trap and a snare. The fact that God's people will obey has already been established and that right well (V.2). Those who have not sovereignly been given ears to hear, eyes to see and a heart to obey will take these words of verse 10 and begin their long, legal journey to utter ruin (vv. 17-18). The fact is that they will look at the promises and

curses in chapters 28 and 29 and never consider Christ and His Gospel (29:4). They have no clue that the words here are about obedience of faith, obedience to the Gospel.

The preaching of the Gospel is to *every* creature. The message of the Gospel is hidden from the wise and the prudent, but the declaration is open and public (v.11). The words of verses 11-14 are words familiar to the regenerated child of God. They are words that speak to the righteousness of God (which is Christ) revealed to and embraced by faith. It is not hidden from the believer and he does not have to do something or go someplace to retrieve it. Look at Romans 10:1-13. This righteousness, this fulfillment of the law is in Christ who is “the end (fulfillment) of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth” Those who would seek righteousness by the law, which already condemns them, are those who say I must go here or there and by hook or crook, by decision or intellectual prowess, by the skill of my hand and diligence of my life retrieve righteousness by my own doing.

To the believer, to the elect the Gospel is preached and the word is found to be nigh unto them, even in their heart, even upon their lips because it is the word of faith which was preached unto them. That word of faith is in place because of the work of God, the circumcision of the heart that is analogous to the giving of faith. That word is in place because it is the means that God has employed for their birth into the family of God (1 Peter 1:23-25; James 1:18). That word is in place because it was written in their hearts and minds by God upon regeneration, so that when faith was given and exercised, it was for believing the Gospel (Hebrews 10:15-16). Those who have not been given ears to

hear respond to the Gospel by saying, "I must believe" or "I must find a way to prove I believe." Those who have been given ears to hear, believe and say, "I believe because the word of God is in my heart and mind and I cannot do otherwise" (Romans 10:8-11). *Obedience* to the command of God is to *believe* the Gospel (Rom. 6:17). Faith is obedience because the Gospel is a command to believe (1 John 3:23; 5:20). Obedience is not doing or going here or there, it is believing God (10:13-17). Scott Richardson said it this way, "Come to Christ but don't move a muscle."

The Gospel is a command (Deut. 30:15-16). Many will look at these words and declare that believing is an option. They see in these words an *offer*. Those who see them as an offer seem to delight in the presumed power of their will and relish the false notion that salvation is dangling on a string before them to accept or reject. Again, the scripture becomes a snare to such. Its design is such that the infidel will always apply his delusion of self deity for its accomplishment. The Gospel always garners this reaction (2 Cor. 2:14-17). These words address the result of faith, or the reaction of faith rather than faith itself. Faith is a gift of God, given by the unmerited favor of God, and all who have been given it believe the Gospel.

Once faith is given, the battle begins. The spirit and the flesh from that time forward till the flesh is finally destroyed will be in constant warfare (Gal. 5:17; Romans 7:18-23). Faith is given to the regenerated, those who have been given eternal life, a new heart and a new nature. Faith operates from that new nature. This being so, believing God is the act of the new nature and thus is a determination of the will or choice of that new nature. We, as believers daily and hourly

make determinate choices in this life. Faced with that which appeals to our old nature we determine to follow Christ, though we often fail, it is our determination, the determination of faith to choose to obey God.

We know the old man was crucified with Christ, yet we know also that he still lingers on in a morbid resistance to the lingering death of crucifixion. What can we do? We are believers, and so we, by an act of the will, *reckon* the old man to be dead and that we are alive unto God (Romans 7; 25). Faith is obedience to the command of God! What is the command of God? It is not to choose between life and death, good and evil. Nowhere in this text or any other is such a thing suggested. God never says, "Serve Me or *other* gods!." A lost man may choose which of the false gods he will serve but he is *never* given the choice between the True God and those that are false (Joshua 24:14-15). The command is not to choose between life and death, good and evil. Look at verse 19. "Choose life" is the command because in doing so you may love God, obey His voice (believe Him), stick to Him like glue and live forever in Immanuel's land. Our life is everyday filled with good and evil, death and life. The believer, having been given faith to obey, obeys the Gospel and in doing so obeys the command to choose life.

You may say, "But pastor, I so often do not believe, and my heart condemns me for my unbelief" (2 Tim. 2:13; 1 John 3:18-24). "But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise. Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven (that is. to bring Christ down from above:)? Or Who shall descend into the deep? (that is. to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word

of faith, which we preach; That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the scripture saith, Whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed” (Rom. 10:6-11).

THE LAST DAY

1, Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.

2, My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:

3, Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.

4, He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.

5, They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation.

6, Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?

7, Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.

8, When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.

Deuteronomy 32:1-8

This chapter and the remaining three of Deuteronomy make up the last day of Moses' life on this earth. In short order our God will take his friend, Moses, up to the mountain, give him a view of the Promised Land, give him his last earthly breath,

bury him out of sight in an unmarked grave and set before us the glorious truth that the law takes no one into the Promised Land.

On this last day of Moses' earthly career our Lord sets all things in their proper order. In this passage Moses finishes the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, the Gospel according to Moses (John 5:46), and gives them to the priests to attach to the Ark of the Covenant. Part of the writings of Moses will be a song that is a witness against the people for their rebellion and a witness for God concerning His faithfulness. Deuteronomy chapter 34, the account of Moses' death, was penned by Joshua or Ezra and later added to the book. Chapter 32 is the song that was to be rehearsed in the ears of the people before they entered the Land and will be brought to their minds in the days of their rebellion.

As this chapter is an overview of what will be the last words of Moses, let us look at it in divisions. There are three divisions in this chapter. First, there is the promise in verses 1-8. Secondly, there is the preaching in verses 9-13, and finally, there is the portent in verses 14-21 and 27-30.

1. The Promise (vv. 1-8). This promise begins with Moses describing his estate. He is 120 years old. His life has been divided into three 40-year periods. His first 40 years was spent as the son of Pharaoh's daughter. There he learned the workings of carnal government and observed the worship of false deities. The second forty years he spent learning the shepherd's trade. The last forty years he spent plying that trade in leading the flock of God in the wilderness. When he said that he can no more go out and come in, he was not speaking as a man who was bent down by his age. He did

not speak as an old man but as a man whose ordered steps had been brought to their appointed end. Moses was as robust now at 120 as he was at 40 (Deut. 34:7). The last phrase of this verse defines what Moses is talking about.

The Lord has brought him to this place and, like the boundaries of the sea, hither shall Moses come and no further. He has fulfilled his purpose in the economy of God, and having fulfilled it, he will now be retired from active duty. He has finished his course with joy, and his ministry to testify the gospel of the grace of God, which he received of the Lord. There is no sadness in his voice, no tear falls from his eye. In a little while, before the end of the day, his Friend, with whom he spoke face to face, his Friend who showed him His glory from the cleft of the rock, his Friend who gave his stammering lips a voice that rings through eternity will take him by the hand and lead him into the presence of angels, and just men made perfect. It is where he, Adam and Eve, Abraham and Sarah, and Jacob and Joseph will see Christ as He is because they will be *like* Him. These words are spoken with anticipation of sweet eternal purpose. Moses proclaims the promise and once again preaches the grace of God.

The promise land is theirs, as sure as God Himself is sure. God will go over before them and clear out the enemy, and all that is in the land will be their possession. They will be led into the land by Joshua, the savior. From what follows, we know that our Lord speaks of another Joshua, even Jesus the Christ, because this people will possess the land for only a *moment*, but those who are led by Christ into the spiritual land of promise will reside there for all *eternity* (John 10:26-30). Moses admonished the people to remember

their former enemies whom God had destroyed, to be brave and not afraid because He will do the same to all who oppose them. Their success is *sure* because Christ cannot fail, and they will never be forsaken by Him. Joshua will cause the people to inherit the land (Psalm 65:4).

2. The Preaching (vv. 9-13). After Moses had finished the law, the first five books of the Bible, he delivered it to the priest with specific instructions. The instructions were that these books were to be opened and declared to the people of God. This was to be done at the end of every seven years in the solemnity of the year of release. This year was the year of rest wherein all the debts of the poor were forgiven (Deut. 15:1-2). There can be no mistaking this picture. It is the time of the Gospel, the acceptable year of the Lord and indicative of the fact that the Gospel is to be continually rehearsed in the ears of the people of God (2 Tim. 4:1-4). The time is the perfect time, when the Lord has finished the transgression, made an end of sins, made reconciliation for iniquity, brought in everlasting righteousness, given beauty for ashes, the oil of gladness for them that mourn, and having finished the work of a justice satisfying, propitiatory sacrifice has entered into His rest and is set down on the right hand of the majesty on high.

This declares in no uncertain terms that the Pentateuch is the Gospel, the declaration of *rest* wherein we find sweet rest (v. 10-11). It also declares that since we are to hear and observe these words during the time of rest that our observation of them has nothing to do with the accomplishment of that rest. The preaching of the Gospel is not a command to accomplish salvation but rather to hear and rehearse and rest in the finished work. The Lord

commands that his people hear His word that they might learn and fear (love, honor, worship, reverence), observe and do the words of this law (believe the Gospel and follow Christ. v. 12).

The Lord also sets forth a very important principle concerning having our children under the sound of the Gospel (v. 13). We live in a day of religious activity, programs and play time and all of it done in the name of Christ. What our children need is to hear the word of God. They have time to play and programs aplenty in school and such. All this will serve their bodies and minds but nothing will serve their soul and inward being but the Gospel. While our children are under our care, avail them to the preaching of the Gospel. There is no guarantee that they will receive it and believe, but there is no possibility of them ever knowing Christ or truly knowing themselves apart from the preaching of the Word. Only the truth can set them free.

3. The Portent (vv. 14-21; 27-30). These words declare the natural end of man under a conditional covenant. Ultimately his utter depravity will win out. Our Lord tells Moses and Joshua that the end of this conditional covenant will finally prove the purpose of it. Righteousness does not and cannot come by the works of the law, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. There can be no situation or circumstance whereby the behavior of the people here described can warrant their possession of this land. Their idolatry, vileness and the continual imagination of their heart against God can in no way afford them right to the land flowing with milk and honey.

This word to Moses and Joshua is a view of the past and the future. For Moses it is a reminder of those whom he has

shepherded for the last 40 years. For Joshua it is a description of those who he will lead into the land of promise. Yet, they will go and possess the land. Why? They will possess the land because of the *promise*. They will enter by *grace* and by no other way (Eph.2:8-9). They will enter because God does not change. Before they go into the land, the Lord gives Moses a song, a psalm for them to commit to memory. This song will come to their minds when they find themselves so taken with idolatry that they think God has forsaken them. This song will remind them that God has not changed, but they have deserted Him (v. 21). That song is Deuteronomy 32 and is part of that which will be read to the people in the year of release, “that their children, which have not known any thing, may hear, and learn to fear the LORD your God, as long as ye live in the land whither ye go over Jordan to possess it” (Deut. 31:13).

MY DOCTRINE

1, Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth.

2, My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:

Deuteronomy 32:1-2

Deuteronomy 32:1-43 is the song that God gave to Moses to be committed to memory by the people. The reason and importance of it was that the people were going to rebel and turn to idolatry, and it would be this song that would come to their minds when they came to the end of themselves. This is an interesting aspect of the grace of God. The message of this song will already be in the hearts and minds of the people when they fall, when they need it most. There is no possibility they will not fall, but our Lord has graciously fixed it that when they do, they will remember that God said they would, and they will be brought to the place where they realize that the hand of the Lord has always been upon them. Men may bicker among themselves as to whether God speaks here in omniscience or that this fall is part of a predestinated program. Such an argument is neither here nor there.

Two things are clearly declared. First, that no man has ever or will ever be righteous by the keeping of the old covenant because no man has never or will ever keep it. The reason is simple. It was added because of transgression and therefore was a revelation of the ruin of man rather than a revelation of the remedy for man's ruin (Gal. 3:21).

Secondly the whole of the matter was to declare the righteousness of God in the salvation of sinners by the substitutionary, justice-satisfying sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ. As I have said many times in this study, often the omission of something bears as great a weight as the declaration of something. Our Lord, in inspiring Moses to write this song and commit it to the memory of the people, wonderfully omitted something. He settled the matter of the law being a remedy for the sure failure of the people.

In reading this song we will find that the law or the command is not mentioned. What will be brought to the remembrance of the people is that the history of the elect from eternity to eternity is in the hands of the sovereign Lord (v.39). Barnard used to say that the first time a thing is mentioned in scripture carries that meaning throughout scripture. He called it the doctrine of first-mention.

Verse 2 is the first time the word “doctrine” appears in the word of God. This is an amazing thing. The people, just literally hours from entering the Promised Land, are taught that which will be in their minds when they most assuredly fail their God. What is brought to their mind is not the law which is fiery and full of vengeance but what is described as the cool rain and the life-giving dew of the morning (v. 2).

Those who fail will not come to an understanding of their condition by a rehearsal of the law but will understand by the doctrine of God. Note well the manner in which the doctrine arrives. It is *born*, as it were, from above, from heaven, from God Himself. Note also the sovereign power of it. Though it does not come as a torrent or a deluge, it is nonetheless beyond the power of man to stop, discourage or prevent it. Who can stop the rain? Who can keep back the

dew of the morning? The doctrine of God comes on time, unstoppable with sovereign power to perform yet does so in the most blessed, tender and refreshing of means. It does not come with thunderous fearful warning but as the shower upon the grass (Isaiah 40:6-7; 55:11; 1 Peter 1:23-25). The doctrine of God is the Gospel. It is the law of the *eternal* covenant that God writes in the hearts and minds of His elect.

We will be spending some time in this chapter for it is truly the song that God puts in the spiritual memory of His people.

In this lesson, I want us to spend some time considering the thing that is first mentioned in this chapter. This thing is *doctrine*, my doctrine, the doctrine of God. The word itself means *that which is taught and received*. It does not mean that which is taught and can be accepted or rejected any more than the rain can be accepted or rejected. It is also aligned with speech, or that which is spoken. Thus, it is a thing that is taught and received through the ear gate. This rain falls for those who have been given an ear to hear, eyes to see and a heart to receive (Isaiah 29:24).

Those who harp about human choice and human will know nothing of the doctrine of God. Part and parcel with this doctrine is that the people for whom it is intended will receive it at the desert place where God has ordained them to arrive. Only upon those whom God has brought to Lodebar, to the place where they are eating the dry dust of their rebellion and failure, will this tender rain fall. Those brought to this place will not even consider whether or not to accept it. It is life to them (vv. 46-47). They are like the flowers in Death Valley which have not been seen for a century or

more. When the recent rains came to that arid wasteland, in a matter of hours the desert was awash with flowers of unimaginable beauty and glory. Show me a man dying of thirst that will reject the rain and I show you a rabid reprobate in the final death throws of spiritual hydrophobia.

The doctrine of God is sweet refreshment, a song of the sound of rain. I know that men have made doctrine to be an intellectual pursuit, a theological position that is gained in seminary or through much diligent study, but it is not. It is a gift from above, the initial primary gift from above. Men have also endeavored to make doctrine an impractical thing having little to do with the so called "Christian" life. This song makes it clear that the life of the child of God is God's doctrine. Religion diminishes doctrine by saying that it is dry and dead. Instead, religion opts for emotions and feelings as indicators of life in Christ. The believer drinks doctrine as the cordial of heaven and confesses the singular thing that invigorates, motivates, comforts and makes him feel good is the declaration of the doctrine of God, the Gospel. The believer loves doctrine!

The word "doctrine" appears 6 times in the Old Testament and 45 times in the New Testament. The words "teach" and "taught" are derived from the root word for doctrine. When our Lord spoke of what he had received of the Father, He declared that it was "doctrine" (John 17:16-17). He dismissed the traditions of the Pharisees by indicting them for making their traditions to be as if they were the doctrine of God (Matt. 15:8-9; 16:12). Our Lord was a doctrinal preacher (Matt. 7:28; Mk. 1:27; 4:2; 11:18; 12:38; John 18:19).

The early church was identified by doctrine (Acts 2:42; 5:28; 13:12; 17:19). When Paul instructed the young preacher, Timothy, he told him that the origin and purpose of the word of God was for *doctrine* (2 Timothy 3:16). Paul's instruction to Timothy and Titus in the execution of their pastoral offices was to stick to preaching *doctrine*. No less than 16 times in these three epistles Paul exhorts the young pastors to preach sound *doctrine* (1 Tim. 1:3; 4:16; Titus 2:7-10).

God inspired the writers of His Word to be unbending on this matter. Doctrine is a life and death issue. It is not a matter of opinion though men may opine all they wish. John, in his epistle to the elder elect lady and her children, set the matter in order once and for all (2 John 1:9-11). To “abide” is to dwell, remain, to set up housekeeping, not in works, not in personal merit but in the doctrine of Christ.

If you know Christ, if you have come to Christ, there is but one reason for it. It is because you have been indoctrinated by God, (John 6; 45). The word “taught” comes from the word which means to *indoctrinate* or to *teach* doctrine. Make no mistake here. Those who come to Christ come as a result of indoctrination. God teaches them. This is how they are drawn (v. 44). They are the elect of God (vv. 36-45). Never be guilty of diminishing the value of doctrine. It is not the religious idea of theology. It is the bread and water of life. God's doctrine is Christ. It is the word of God from heaven implanted in the heart and mind of the elect.

Some will say that doctrinal preaching and belief are hard, cold and dry, but such know nothing. The doctrine of God is the rain upon the tender herb. It is refreshing and blessed. Some may come with dotting questions such as,

“Can you have Christ without doctrine” or “Can you have doctrine without Christ.” These are the playthings of infected minds. The fact is that you and I know nothing of Christ without doctrine and we cannot know true doctrine without Christ. Christ is both the *living* and *written* word of God (Hebrews 4:12-13).

The blessedness of this is that when you fail a thousand times a day, as you will, God has written in your mind and heart the singular thing that will come to you as refreshing rain, as showers upon the grass. In these times, do not turn to yourself, or look for some feeling. God declares that in those times, *the* thing that will hold, comfort and keep you is His doctrine, the reinvigorating Gospel of His dear Son.

God's elect are all doctrinarians!

ESSENTIAL RECOLLECTION

2, My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass:

3, Because I will publish the name of the LORD: ascribe ye greatness unto our God.

4, He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.

Deuteronomy 32:2-4

This passage could stand alone as a magnificent declaration of the person, purpose and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is a proclamation of the doctrine of Christ and therefore the doctrine of salvation. There is no area where His infinite and absolute sovereignty is not precisely established in the passage. This is one of those passages that even when taken out of its context will stand on its own as universal and undeniable Gospel truth.

However, within the context it takes on a sweetness to which there can be no comparison. It is grace established, declared and personified. This is the opening passage of the song given to Moses for rehearsal before the people until they commit it to memory. It is a song with a particular design and purpose. It is a song that will, by sovereign purpose and at the appointed time, be carried to the minds of the people when they fall into rebellion and idolatry (31:19-21).

Think for a moment of the grace God in the giving of this song. He does not design it for those who will walk on the high plains of religious piety. He does not give it for those

who are in seraphic joyous rapture. This song will come to the mind of folks who have fallen into *abject rebellion*. This song will be brought to the mind of those who are doing things that are worthy of the most heinous punishment and death. This song will be brought to the mind of those who, if observed, would be condemned by everything that is good, right and acceptable. This song will, with the same stroke that pricks the heart and convicts the soul, cause the fallen one to confidently trust Christ and find consolation for his innermost being. There is not one aspect of this passage that will cause a believer to doubt God's eternal saving relationship with him. This is a marvel of grace.

At our lowest, when our fiendish hearts betray us and we find ourselves an embarrassment to our profession, God does not bring to mind our wickedness, our lack of loyalty. He does not say to us “doubt whether you are my child at all” or “how can you call yourself a Christian,” but instead brings us back to the basis of our hope. Though the depths to which we have fallen have damaged our relationship with our Maker, it has not changed His relationship with us one iota. His doctrine distils as refreshing, healing, and spiritually medicinal cooling dew on our fevered brows. Truly, in the valley of Achor, he has opened the blessed door of hope (v. 36; Hosea 2; 10-20).

It will not tax our minds to to enter into the beauty of this passage. We may only consider our frail and foolish human frame. We all have parts of our life about which we are glad only God knows. We have all put ourselves in untenable places where shame and disgrace lay upon us as a dark and weighty shroud of unbelief. Our hearts have often failed us and only the knowledge that God is greater than

our hearts has sustained us. Down in that slough of despond, where there is nothing to cling to, when all power is gone, our Blessed God sends this song to your mind. In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, your heart is moved to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

What words will soothe one who is in the dungeon of despair. Will God come with instructions or religious activities for you to perform to bring you to a higher spiritual level? Will He say to you, "Come to the altar and pray through?" Will he demand that you undo your predicament by doing good deeds? Will he tell you that you need to get right with God? No, He will tell you that He is right with you and that all is well (Is. 3:10). He will declare the Gospel and once again prove that He has saved you in spite of yourself and that your salvation was never conditioned on what you did or did not do. It was for His name's sake and His glory.

This is clearly revealed in the first phrase of verse 3. The refreshing doctrine of God will come to your mind "because" God "will publish the name of the LORD" (Ex. 33:19; Isaiah 52:7). The essential recollection that the children of God will experience is the recollection of His glory because God will, himself, speak to your heart. Truly it is the goodness of God that leadeth thee to repentance. His glory is His goodness. What aspect of His glory will come to mind? Will it be His glory in creation or His glory in providence? It will be the glory that honors every aspect of His sovereign grace. That which you and I will be made to recall is the glory of His salvation, what Christ has done for us (Lam. 3:1-23, notice v. 21 "but"). The remembrance of that glory will have a singular effect. It will bring us to do what we are *made* to do (v. 3). "Ascribe ye greatness to our God" (Hebrews 13:15;

Psalm 145:3). Religion likes to say “Praise God anyway” as if to say that praise is not born of thanksgiving but rather something one forces himself to do in spite of his circumstance. The believer, knowing the sovereign hand of God is the first cause of all things, praises the Lord because He is worthy to be praised and because he is where he is for his own good (Romans 8:28; 2 Cor. 12:9-10).

What follows is heavenly medicine for the weary soul. When the very ground you stand on is unstable and soon to pass away, when friends fail you and foes assail you, when you see your rebellion and idolatry, the only thing that will establish and comfort you is Christ (v.4). “He is the Rock” (Isaiah 32:1-4). I am unstable as water, but He is the Rock. When I find myself unable to discern one thing, one work of mine that might give me some evidence that I am His child, when my belief seems to be overshadowed by my unbelief, what will be spoken to my heart that will ease my fears? Christ (v. 4b)! “His work is perfect (Job. 37:7; John 19:28-30; Heb. 10:12-18).

When I, because of the awful estate of my nature, and the horror of the predicament I find myself in, begin to say to my heart “Why am I thus;” “Why do I find myself in the pig sty, desiring the husks that the swine eat;” “What possible purpose could there be in my shame and disgrace;” the Lord speaks to my soul (v. 4c), “all His ways are judgment.” No accident this, though I cannot wrap my mind around it! Sovereign providence does not give itself to momentary answers or to visible reasonings of the plagued mind. The answer that comes to the one who is overwhelmed is “all His ways are judgment.

It is not only given for us to believe on Christ but to suffer for His Name's sake. He is right, He acts according to divine purpose, He rules with absolute sway and everything is on schedule. Often men justify their bad behavior by saying "How can this be wrong if it feels so right." Sometimes the believer in the throes of despair asks, "How can this be right if it feels so wrong?" Comfort comes on the wings of divine righteousness... "all His ways are judgment." This sin of ours, this sin of rebellion has been judged by God in Christ (Isaiah 42:1-4; 54:4-8). Christ is our comfort. He is the "God of truth." He is the way the truth and the life. Grace and truth come by Him.

This phrase "the God of truth" is one of the names by which our Lord refers to Himself and it is a great comfort when perceived (Is. 65:16). This name is "El Amen" or "Elohim Amen" (Rev. 3:14). In the midst of despair when there is none to help and no man able to open the book and reveal the secrets therein, Behold the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David hath prevailed to open the book. His name is Amen. What a consolation to have this come to mind— "so be it," "Amen" (1 Sam. 3:18)!

Christ is "without iniquity." There is no crookedness in His dealings with His people. Whatever His dealings, it is right and straight. Shall not the judge of all the earth do right? But more than being a consolation concerning events, it is the consolation of our standing with God. He is without iniquity (1 John 3:5). Our sins are gone. If He bore our sins away and they are not on Him, then they are not at all (Psalm 103:10-14)! That which our Lord brings to our mind when we find our selves in dire straits because of our rebellion and idolatry is the righteousness of our salvation by

Christ. “Just and right is He” (Isaiah 45:21-25; Romans 3:24-26). This is the song that God will cause you to remember. This is the Gospel that will be brought to your mind. This is the comfort, the singular consolation of your soul.

SPOTS

5, They have corrupted themselves, their spot is not the spot of his children: they are a perverse and crooked generation.

6, Do ye thus requite the LORD, O foolish people and unwise? is not he thy father that hath bought thee? hath he not made thee, and established thee?

7, Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee.

8, When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.

9, For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.

Deuteronomy 32:5-9

Having declared the first thing that will be brought to the remembrance of His people when they fall into sin, namely His refreshing doctrine, the Gospel of His glory in the complete salvation of His people, our Lord now sets forth a distinction between the sins of his people and the sins of the lost or the non-elect. It is important to note that sin, all sin, is against God and is worthy of death. There is no small sin because all sin is against the God to whom greatness is ascribed (v.3). Our Lord makes this distinction by saying that their spot (the sin of a people who have corrupted themselves and are a perverse and crooked generation) is not the spot (sin) of His children.

Several things immediately attract our attention.

First is that this description is not part of a new paragraph or thought. What our Lord says here is part of same thought that declared the glory and success of His work. Those who have corrupted themselves are not given this song to be brought to their mind when they sin, but for the *children* of God when they sin. For God to bring this to the mind of His children is a strong reminder that their salvation is by grace and wholly the work of God. Since all sin is sin, the distinction brought to mind is that God views His children in a different way than He views the rest of mankind (Heb. 10:18).

Secondly, the difference is a familial difference. He calls these sinners His *children*. They are *His* children, and because they are, Christ came into this world in the likeness of sinful flesh to redeem them and free them from the bondage of the fear of death and teach them the Gospel (Galatians 4:1-7; Hebrews 2:14-17; Isaiah 54:13>John 6:45; Psalm 103:10-13).

Thirdly, the difference between these two categories of people is God alone. They are both described as sinners and by nature are exactly the same (Eph .2:3; 1 Cor. 4:7).

Fourthly, the Gospel when brought to the memory not only serves to bring solace to the heart of the child of God, it is also the means of conviction of sin. The Gospel discovers the spot of the children of God (John 16:8-10; Eph 5:13-15; Heb. 4; 12-13).

Fifthly, the declaration of the Gospel, while sealing the lost in their doom, confronts the believer with his sin in a particular light. Not only is the believer's sin revealed by the Gospel as forgiven and put away, it is also revealed as more

despicable than the sin of the lost. Rather than the revelation of the believer's sin to be somehow less because it is put away, his sin is seen as worse because it is sin against light (Matt. 11:21-24). It is sin against knowledge—it is sin in the light of the cross. The infidel is ignorant of sin and its cost. The *believer* is made to know, by the understanding of what sin cost Christ, that his sin is *exceedingly* sinful. If the knowledge of grace has not produced in you an aversion to your sin, your knowledge is not born of the grace of God.

This is clearly seen in the next verse. Verse 6 goes for the heart. This is what comes to the mind of the believer when he or she hears the Gospel and is confronted with their utter failure. This sin, this rebellion; is this how you thank God for all he has done for you. I'm not a fan of sending my brothers and sister on guilt trips because of the gigantic telephone pole in my own eye as compared to the splinter in theirs. However, for this particular kind of guilt trip, the believer's bags are always packed. The spot of the believer is sin against the mercy and grace of God and we all by nature are guilty in this respect (Jer. 7:8-11). Remember that this is not a song given to those who *might* possibly fall but to those who will most *surely* fall (31:16); not to those who might be saved, but to those who have been saved.

First, what is the light that defines the spot of the believer, the child of God? It is sin against the light of the Father's love that brought us redemption (6b). God, our father has redeemed us, bought us back from the bondage of the law, sin, Satan and self. This redemption, in the aspect of our being bought with a price, is set in the New Testament in context with the subject of this text in Deuteronomy (1 Cor. 6:15-20; 7:23). In that our Father has bought us, He

has rights and claims to our undying affection. When we sin, we sin against the light of *redemption*, against the knowledge of the *cost* of our redemption.

Secondly, our sin is against the light of the new creation (6c). He has “made” us. The wealth that is in that statement is immeasurable! See: 2 Cor. 5:21; Galatians 5:1; Ephesians 1:6; Ephesians 2:6; Colossians 1:12; Revelation 1:6; Revelation 5:10.

Thirdly our spot is sin against the light of His having set our feet on solid ground. He “establisheth thee.” See: Romans 16:25; 1 Thessalonians 3:13; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17; 2 Thessalonians 3:3; 1 Peter 5:10; Acts 16:5.

Fourthly, our spot is sin against the light of the testimony of those that have gone before, “Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will show thee: thy elders, and they will tell thee (2 Chron. 20:6; Ps. 44:1; 78:3,5; Luke 1:46-55, 72).

Fifthly, our spot is sin against the light of His electing grace and the ordering of providence for the elect's sake (v.8). “When the most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he set the bounds of the people according to the number of the children of Israel.”

Finally, our spot is sin against the light, that He, the holy God, declares that His people are His portion (v. 9; Ps. 33:12). There is no language that can describe this. We are His peculiar treasure (Mai. 3:17).

The knowledge that will come to the remembrance of the children of God when they fall into sin is that their sin is not like that of the infidel... “They have corrupted themselves;

their spot is not the spot of his children; they are a perverse and crooked generation.”

FOUND

9, For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance.

10, He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.

Deuteronomy 32:9-10

This blessed song, written in the hearts of God's people as a testimony before them when they fall into sin and idolatry, is the song of grace. As we have seen, the first thing brought to the mind is the doctrine of God, the Gospel, coming as refreshing rain, drenching the sinner in the knowledge of the work of redemption. Sanctification and justification is finished! It was a work in that it was finished and answered all the claims of justice. It honored God and enabled Him to be just and justify His chosen people.

Next, God's people were brought to remember His goodness and how that their sin (spot) was worse than that of the infidel in that it was against the knowledge of all that God had done for them. This recognition of and recollection of sin did not, however, damage God's relationship to His elect. They remained and ever shall remain His portion, the numberless multitude that he has allotted to Himself for His inheritance. This is so because God does not change and therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed.

In verse 9 the Lord groups or encompasses His people in one character. His people are Jacob (Jacob have I loved). Jacob is the allotment that He has taken for Himself out of fallen humanity, those who from eternity have been His

sovereignly chosen family. His family consists of every sinner whom He determined to make like His Son, from Adam to the last sheep brought into the fold. Though Jacob's name was changed to Israel, when speaking of His people concerning His grace and His mercy, God referred to Himself most often as the God of Jacob.

This is a distinction of paramount importance. This declares God to be the God of all grace, the just God and Savior who delivers the worst of humanity from their ruined estate, and having removed them from the dunghill, He sets them among princes. This is a blessed reminder of what and who we were when Christ found us. We were and are Jacob, the supplanter, the child of trickery and dishonesty, by nature the child of wrath even as others. We are named and designated thus that we might never forget that our deliverance, or salvation is wholly, completely and only the work of God in His matchless, effectual sovereign grace.

We are made to remember first that He *found* us.

The first implication of this is that He was looking for us. He was seeking us as a shepherd seeks His lost sheep and will not cease to look until He finds it (Luke 15:4).

The second implication here is that we were not looking for Him. He says in one place "I am found of them that sought me not" (Is. 65:1; Romans 10:20; Is. 62:12). Do we not seek the Lord? Yes we do, but we do so not to become the people of God but because we are the people of God. There is no reference in scripture where the phrase "seek the Lord" is not exclusive to the people of God. Those who are admonished to seek the Lord are His people and those who are described as seeking the Lord or having sought the Lord are His people. The wicked never seek the Lord (Ps. 10:4).

God found His people because they were His elect from all eternity, “Nevertheless the foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are his.” He found us—us Jacobs—and was gracious unto us.

The next thing that will be brought to our mind is where He found us (v. 10). This passage is most descriptive of our ruined estate when the gracious Lord intervened and interfered with our shabby career. These words, “desert, waste, howling wilderness” are all synonymous with ruin. They speak of screaming vanity, of uselessness of words and worth. They speak of desolation and ruin beyond human comprehension. They speak of howling rebellion and hatred for all that is God and all that is holy. There is no understanding of this but by the Spirit of God. Men in nature do not and can not know this about themselves. The elect do not know it until God gives them faith upon regeneration. Jacob *remembers*.

And what did our gracious Lord do to Jacob when He sought him and found him in the place of desolation (v. 10). “He led us about.” What kind words these are. We who did not know up from down or right from left, were led by God. This phrase is a wealth of mercy and grace. It means that He turned us in the opposite direction from where we were headed. He granted, by His goodness, repentance to our minds. This phrase also means to encircle or surround. He wrapped us up in His person so that no matter where we turned in the wilderness, He was the first sight of our eyes. He hedged us about with Himself (my daughter is a garden enclosed). He filled our vision with Christ so that every circumstance was seen through the glory of His presence (v. 12; Psalm 139:1-12).

Not only did He lead us by the hand, not only did He envelop us in His mercy and grace and divine protection, He instructs us. This is how we are drawn to Christ. God by His gospel sets forth such a glowing report of the beauty and merits of His Son that we are overwhelmed with the magnitude of His greatness. We find ourselves enamored with Him, lovesick for Him and will have Him or die. God's instruction is plain, pure and singular. He does not point us to the law. He does not hold up some legal principle that would render us under the power of sin and further engender bondage. He leads us and instructs us to that which will surely give us peace (Isaiah 54:13; John 6:45). His instruction is always effectual because His word is truth and the effect of it is wonderful (Isaiah 32:17; Col. 1:19-22).

And as if this were not enough, “He *kept*” us. This word means that He guarded us in order to preserve us. What thing could harm us if God Himself stands post on our behalf (Is. 54:17)? No accuser may bring an indictment if our righteousness is of God. No law can have grounds upon which to accuse if our righteousness is of the Lord. He *kept* us and *keeps* us, and what power can be engaged against Him? None can stay His hand. He kept us (Ps. 30:3; 32:7; 41:2; 1 Pet. 1:1-5; Jude 24-25). He will keep you, has kept you because you are in His Son (Isaiah 42:1-6).

Not only will He keep you, but the next words speak of the protection that He will provide. He kept him as the “apple of His eye.” I think it can safely be said that God will not allow anything or anyone to stick their finger in His eye. His creation will serve Him for the glory of His name and the good of His people. The language here is metaphorical. It is as if God is saying that to touch or harm His people would

be touching and harming Him (Zech. 2:8; Matt. 25:35-40; Acts 9:4-5). One man said that God has invested so much in the redemption of His elect that He cannot afford to lose one of them.

O Jacob, when you fall into your sin, rebellion and idolatry, your gracious God will cause you to remember—*Jacob* is the lot of his inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; he led him about, he instructed him, he kept him as the apple of his eye.

KEPT

11, As an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings:

12, So the LORD alone did lead him, and there was no strange god with him.

13, He made him ride on the high places of the earth, that he might eat the increase of the fields; and he made him to suck honey out of the rock, and oil out of the flinty rock;

14, Butter of kine, and milk of sheep, with fat of lambs, and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the fat of kidneys of wheat; and thou didst drink the pure blood of the grape.

Deuteronomy 32:11-14

In the last lesson we looked at the glory of the grace of God in keeping His chosen as the apple of His eye. This matter of the Lord keeping His people is of great import because they, even though they are saved by grace, are yet unable to keep themselves. The inspired writers of the word of God were continually praising God for keeping them (Ps. 30:3; 32:7; 41:2; 1 Pet. 1:1-5; Jude 24-25). These words *kept* and *keep* are words that give the sense of guarding a post and ensuring that no evil thing enter in to harm the guarded ones. It gives the sense also of containment, fencing and enclosing the ones who are guarded. He did and does all this for His Jacob's who are by nature sinners all.

In the verses we are considering, our Lord illuminates the manner of this keeping. Though we are enclosed and

surrounded by God it is not in the sense of captivity. This enclosure is manifest in the tender care of love and grace. Verses 11 and 12 present an “as and so” scenario. Our Lord is using the eagle and the care she shows for her young as a picture of how our Lord cares for us. How gracious it is of our Lord to use a thing seen to teach a principle of invisible grace. In the old commentaries the eagle is seen as the caring mother who flutters over her young to awake them and to show the tenderness she employs in teaching them to fly. It is said that she takes them on her outstretched wings, bears them and carries them. This is truly a picture of God's care for His people and is no small allusion to the substitutionary work of Christ as well as His providential care of His people.

Scripture declares that He bore the sins of His people in His body on the tree. When John wrote his first general epistle to the Church, he described the act of Christ taking away our sin by employing the word “aero” which means “to come under the yoke as a beast of burden and carry the load” (1 John 3:5; Exodus 19:4; Isaiah 63:9; John 1:29). This same word is used in John 15:2. The branch that is not productive our Lord bears up “taketh away” until He brings it to fruition (John 15:5, 16; Hosea 14:8; Isaiah 54:17).

Just as the eagle cares for her young, so our Lord bears up His nestlings. Note the manner here that describes how our Lord bears up His young—“So the Lord alone did lead him.” How precious is the language!

Note well that the care of the young is accomplished by Christ alone. He does not leave it to others to lead His sheep. He does not employ a hireling. They are His and He will lead them (John 10:11-16). He leads them by indwelling them.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of Christ and He is the leader and guider of His people. (John 14:16-18). How will He lead His people? He will lead them by testifying of Christ (John 15:26; 1 Cor. 1:30-2:2). The Lord shall lead them to Himself (Romans 8:14). The end of that leading is simply stated as the fact that the Holy Spirit will never lead Jacob to a false God. When idolatry occurs, the blame cannot be placed on God because His leading will assure that no strange gods will be with His people.

The work of the Lord for His people speaks of lofty things. It is clear, not only that Christ alone will lead them but that He will also lift them up. He makes him ride on the high places of the earth. He sets His people on Mt. Zion. He makes them to walk there. Though the church may be considered as a thing of little value and of lowly estate by the world, it is the loftiest of abiding places, the high and holy hill. Only from the ethereal peaks of Zion can the world be viewed for what it is. Mt. Sinai is not the place where the nestlings of God find their aerie. They are made to walk in heavenly atmosphere. They have the mind of Christ and are privy to thoughts and precepts that no man can know by nature. The reference here is not so much to the walk of the child of God but rather to the mode of transport. Of Jacob it is said that God “made him to ride.” This aligns with the original principle of the eagle and her nestlings. The word ride speaks of mounting up or being carried. When all is said and done, what will be brought to our memory is that we were carried through it all. All praise will be to Him who has accomplished the work from beginning to end.

What we will also be made to recall is that this was all for a singular purpose. The first thing God revealed to Moses of

His glory was to make all His goodness pass before Him. Our Lord gives as the reason that He found him, led him, instructed him, kept him as the apple of his eye, carried him, and made him to ride on high places was so that he might eat, be filled and be satisfied. Likewise, Our memories will be kindled with the knowledge that the Lord brought us to Himself that he might preserve and keep us by His grace. Though these things mentioned are true and real of the things that were given to the people in the land, they speak of a singular thing wherein all these things are found. They speak of Christ as he is revealed to His people in the Gospel. Honey (Ps. 19:9-10; 119:103)—Oil (Spirit: Ps. 45:7; John 3:34)—Milk (Joel 3; 18; 1 Peter 2:2)—Wheat: bread of heaven—pure blood of the grape (John 6:53, 63)—(Isa. 25:6).

This is what it means to be kept by the power of God. This is what the Lord has written in the hearts and mind of His people that when they fall they will remember His goodness and will be brought to repentance.

WARNING AGAINST PRESUMPTION

15, But Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked: thou art waxen fat, thou art grown thick, thou art covered with fatness; then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

16, They provoked him to jealousy with strange gods, with abominations provoked they him to anger.

17, They sacrificed unto devils, not to God; to gods whom they knew not, to new gods that came newly up, whom your fathers feared not.

18, Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.

Deuteronomy 32:15-18

In the first 14 verses of this chapter, the beginning of the song that Moses rehearsed in the ears of the people, the song that would come to their minds when they fall into utter idolatry, the people are reminded of the great mercy that God has shown and the great grace that He has bestowed upon them. What follows is a single thought, a warning that covers the rest of this song that will be remembered. This portion of the song constitutes a warning against presumption and taking for granted what God had done for His people.

There is a temptation to apply these words to the setting aside of Israel and the bringing in of the Gentiles—and to leave it there. Paul certainly makes application of this fact in the 11th chapter of Romans. He quotes verse 21 of this chapter in Romans 11:11 (see also 10:19). But we should remember that part of the context of Romans 11 is a warning against presumption to believers (vv. 20-23). Paul warns

against being high minded because God has at the present time set aside Israel and the old covenant to reveal that salvation is by grace alone through the merits of Christ alone. Part and parcel with Paul's warning is that we should not presume to apply this passage in Deuteronomy to the nation of Israel altogether. God has not forsaken His people which he foreknew. Their salvation will not occur through the old covenant but rather by the election of grace (vv. 1-7). Rather than applying this warning in our text to the subject of the setting aside of the old covenant and the old covenant people, it is a warning to make our own calling and election sure.

We also know from the testimony of our Lord that the word of God is about Him and His accomplished salvation of His people. The Gospel, however, is not only a comfort to the believer it is also the means of conviction. It is not only the record of what Christ has done but is also the two-edged sword that discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart and, as light, manifests all things that are discovered by it (Heb. 4:12-13; Eph. 5:13-14). The fact is that the word of God, the Gospel covers all the bases of the life of the child of God (2 Tim. 3:16-17 "the man of God"). We, as believers, do not like to think of our presumption. Such thoughts make us uncomfortable. But the ample warnings in the New Testament are there because a need exists. Peter would not have had to warn believers against "using your liberty as a cloke of maliciousness" if such a problem did not exist (Amos 6:1-6).

The passage we consider here is not to be put off on someone else or some other people. Our Lord has not changed horses in the middle of the stream. The subject

remains the same. This is the word of God put in the hearts of His people that they will recall when they fall into idolatry.

In truth, the final verses of chapter 32 are an illumination of what our Lord called “the spot of his children” (Deu. 32:5). This is our spot, our blemish, our sin. This is what we will be brought to recall. Thank God that the matter of our full salvation is established in the first part of this song. If it were not so, the remainder of our remembrances would drive us to utter and final despair of our soul. As it is, these words will most assuredly discomfit us. Their design is not to make us despair of our salvation but to drive us to Christ in confession of our sin.

How sad it is that there is a “but” following such a grand report of all that God has done for us. However, this little opposing conjunction is not about any deficiency in His work of salvation. This “but” is about our bent to self-righteousness, the idol we cherish and worship the most. This “but” is about our damnable response to the knowledge that God alone has accomplished our salvation. One would think that such knowledge would always keep the saved sinner humble and meek, but such is not the case. The tendency of every believing sinner is to take for granted what God has done and forget the pit from which he was digged. May God give us honest hearts this hour, to hear the warning of God against our presumption (Ps. 19:13).

The character here described in our text is named Jeshurun. That name means “the upright one” or “the just one.” This is a symbolic description of the man who has been elected and saved by grace, justified by blood and made to be a recipient of the perfect work of Christ. The true and living

God is Jeshurun's God (Deut. 33:26-29). Jeshurun is elect of God (Isaiah 44:1-2).

The description that follows is sad, embarrassing, shameful and true of every one who has been saved by grace. This passage, by the use of the imperfect and perfect tenses suggests a process, a digression, a degradation that culminates in a state of near ruin. The beginnings are described as *waxing* (becoming) and *kicking* (rebellious) that results in a state of having become *fat*, and *thick* and *covered* with fatness. The final state of this decline is described as "covered." This comes from the same word as the pitch that was used to cover the ark before the flood. It is translated elsewhere in the Old Testament as "atone." The thrust of this state of decline is that the believer (the elect, the chosen, the upright one, made so by grace alone) has digressed to a state of self-satisfaction, or a state of being full of self or sated by self. There could be no more apt description of self righteousness (Luke 18:9-12). That despicable process has a result.

Note the little definitive word "then" in v. 15. Here is the result of our being satisfied with self. Once this process is finished, then we forsook God and lightly esteemed the Rock of our salvation. What other result could there be? It is God who has made us his people. It is God who satisfies our mouth with good things. It is God who has made Christ to be to us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption. It is God who has made us to ride on the high places of the earth, to suck honey from the rock, and oil from the flinty rock and to drink the pure blood of the grape. If we then have become sated with our own self, the only possible end to that is that we forsake God. If we look to ourselves, we

forsake God. Likewise, if we have come to the degraded estate of self righteousness, and are satisfied by ourselves, the only possible result is that we lightly esteem the only righteousness that God has accepted. Christ is our righteousness and to be satisfied with our own can only result in the diminishing of the worth of the Rock of our salvation (Galatians 5:1-4). Christ, our righteousness, will countenance no rival. Our presumed righteousness can do nothing but deprecate His.

Self-righteousness is nothing more than provoking God to jealousy (vv. 16-17). God is jealous for His glory and self-righteousness is ascribing glory to us. It is nothing less than embracing the strange god of self-deity. It is an abomination and stench to God (Isaiah 65:5). Self-righteousness is nothing short of the worship of devils, worship of gods who are self revealed.

The last phrase of verse 17, “to new gods that came newly up,” is as apt a description of the degrading process of self-righteousness as there is in all of scripture. This is the mind set of the self-righteousness. Something new, something fresh, something found, something discovered, newly learned that makes the learner seem more in tune to the intricacies of God than the rest of us poor unlearned, intellectually challenged saps. To paraphrase, “Your fathers didn't know these new things though they were themselves taught of God by revelation.” Some new thing, some new god is nothing more than a means of self aggrandizement. What will be brought to the mind of the believer first will be the *old* things, the doctrine of Christ, the old, old story. New things, newly risen up, are the playthings of the self-righteous because they bring attention to the discoverer rather than

making one fear (reverence, respect, love and worship) the true God, as the old things of the fathers did. The subtleties of self-righteousness are manifold. Beware of any and all things newly risen up that draw your attention, or anyone else's attention, away from Christ. If they do so, who is then getting the attention?

The sum of it all is stated in verse 18. If you are mindful of self, satisfied by self, then you are not mindful of the Rock that birthed you and forgotten the God who has formed you for himself.

May God have mercy on us (v. 29).

MERCY AND GRACE

36, For the LORD shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left.

Deuteronomy 32:36

As we read the remainder of Chapter 32, three things are clearly set before us.

The first thing is that God hates sin and must deal with it in wrath (vv. 18-26).

Secondly, the people of God are, by nature, sinners all (vv. 20, 28, 32-34).

Thirdly, and the chief subject of this lesson, God is always gracious, merciful and full of pity toward his people (v. 36).

As we consider these things, we must remember that these natural calamities, various captivities, scattering, fears and woes fell upon natural Israel after that they had entered the Promised Land. Being under the Old Covenant, a conditional covenant, the promise of blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience, Israel's disobedience brought these things upon their own heads eventuating the eclipse of the Old Covenant with the introduction of the New, the age of grace or the millennial reign of Christ (Acts 2:16-36, 1 Cor. 15:25-28). As we saw last week, natural Israel and God's dealing with her (in the natural realm) are a shadow of true Israel, the church, and God's dealing with her (in the spiritual realm). The threatenings that were accomplished

against Israel in the natural realm do not even compare when they enter into the spiritual.

Our spot, our sin is against light and therefore more heinous than their spot (v.32; comp. Matt. 11:20-24). We Jeshurun have waxed and do wax fat and forget the God that formed us and are unmindful of the Rock that begat us. There is a difference in the dealings within these two realms (natural and spiritual). In the natural, judgment is born of *wrath*. In the spiritual judgment or chastisement is born of *love*.

The difference is also seen in the response of the people who abide in the two different realms. Rarely, if ever, do you see natural Israel owning up to their sin. They viewed their election as entitlement and balked and murmured at every unpleasantness that came their way. How many times did they wish to return to the bondage of Egypt? Their repentances came only after God opened the earth and swallowed a number of them, or sent snakes to bite them, or sent fire to consume them. They did not feel that they deserved the judgment of God. The believer *owns* his sin and believes that if God hides His face for a time, strips him of all he has, plagues him with sickness, sorrows or innumerable calamities, he deserves it and much more. The believer knows by experience that he never lives up to his calling, and even when he would do good, evil is present with him. The believer knows that if he would attempt to justify himself, he could not contend with God one for a thousand. So, the spiritual word here is that if God carries through with any of these threats, they are better than what the presumptuous believer deserves.

In the matter of chastisement, we must all exercise extreme care. Chastisement is not the fodder of the judgmental eye. Chastisement is personal and private. We may not look on the trials of our brethren and say they are being chastised. We can only know this for ourselves. For the believer, riches and poverty, sickness and health, happiness and sorrow all may be the means by which God's lovingly corrects His children. Chastisement may be preventive, as the thorn in Paul's flesh prevented him from glorying in what God had revealed to him. It may be compensatory as in the case of Ananias and Saphira, or when Israel desired meat and the Lord gave it to them with leanness to their soul. There is no indication that God makes a display of His children for all to see that He is chastising them. This is understood in the results that chastisement brings; "the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Christ...Isaiah 32:17) unto them that are exercised thereby." This declares that chastisement is individual. God chastising me will not bring the fruit of righteousness to you because you can't know anything about it. So as in all cases, we must read the scripture for ourselves and not in order to judge our brethren (Gal. 6:1-5).

What I want us to consider tonight is that in the midst of these horrible threats against Jeshurun, the upright, the elect, the presumptuous believer, there is the hope of grace. Remember, these threatenings are part of what will be brought to the mind of the believer when he falls into the idolatry of self righteousness. They serve as a reminder of what the erring one deserves and if implemented are a sure course to drive the believer to Christ. In this discourse of

well-deserved wrath and displeasure there are four things that reveal the grace and mercy of God toward his children.

The first instance of the revelation of grace is seen in the fact that the salvation of the elect is primarily about the Glory of God, the glory of His grace. In verses 26-29 our Lord speaks in a most tender and human manner. In verse 28 the people are described as a people that are void of counsel and without understanding. In verse 20 they are said to be a people without faith. In themselves and revealed by their apparent idolatry, not one of them could be described as having a godly purpose or an iota of understanding. The rock that they cling to (self righteousness) is not the Rock of the people of God (v. 31).

Verse 29, some would say, reveals God to have unrequited desires, that He wishes that these folks were wise and would consider their end. The wording seems to imply this. However, the translation is weak here. This is actually a declaration of their estate in their idolatry. The literal rendering of this phrase is, "If they were wise they would understand this, they would consider their latter end." This denotes that, while in the throes of self righteousness, the people do not understand the consequence of their doings, that their doings have a sad end. No good will come of this.

Our Lord is not referring to hell or eternal punishment, but rather of the enjoyment of the fruit of their salvation (v.47). He speaks of the end of sin (James 1:14-15). The promise of the Gospel is that sin will not have dominion over the people of God. Sin hath reigned unto death but grace hath reigned through righteousness unto eternal life. Though the children will fall, they will not utterly be cast down. The enemies of the child of God, the accusers of the

brethren are defeated foes, and they will not win in their efforts to destroy. They will not win because God's glory is at stake. This is clearly declared when God's speaks two distinctive little words in verse 26.

The Lord declares "I said." "I said that I would scatter them"...! This indicates that what He said was other than He intended. This declares that when He said what He said, He was speaking of what the idolaters deserved, not what He was going to do to them. This is seen in the conjunctive phrase in verse 27, "were it not that." This phrase declares that though His people deserve the execution of the threats, they were not going to receive them because His purpose in grace has preceded their sinful actions. The words that follow seem difficult to apply to God. God is afraid of nothing and no one! He is declaring that if He put away His people that the adversaries, the enemies of the cross, could say "we have won out over God." "We have proved that He cannot save His people." This would be a fearful thing, so God employs that kind of language to disprove it. What a declaration! Because God's glory is tied up in the salvation of His people, the enemies of God will never utterly cast His people down!

Christ's travail will never know a miscarriage. These enemies may be used to sift Simon Peter as wheat or inflict Paul with a thorn in the flesh, but the glory of God assures they will not win and in truth will only serve to cause God's people to remember His goodness (Exo. 32:11-12; Josh. 7:8-9; Psa. 105:25).

The second revelation of His grace is seen in verse 36. This is the method of Grace. It comes when all human power is gone, when none on earth can help. It is then and only

then that favor can truly be unmerited. In the slough of despond when we have fallen so far that we cannot recover ourselves, being without strength, without hope and without help, grace comes flying on the wings of the glory of satisfied justice, and swings open the bars of our self imposed jail cell and sets us free.

The third revelation of God's grace is tied to the second and is seen in verse 39-40. Though we are perplexed, vexed and ashamed of our utter vileness and our wicked presumption, grace is revealed in the fact that all things are of God. He cannot be blamed for our sinfulness, but our sinfulness will ultimately serve His purpose in grace. I cannot explain this so I will not try. Somehow in our weakness, his strength is manifest. Here we bow and worship the sovereign, immutable and singularly glorious God of all grace (Read vv. 39-40; 1 Sam. 2:2-10).

Finally, the fourth revelation of His grace is seen in verse 43. This is spoken to the same people whom He threatened in vv. 19-25. Rejoice! Those who seek to destroy you will be destroyed and God will be merciful to His people. This is the song that God will bring to the mind of His people when they fall into the idolatry of presumptuous self righteousness. Oh Lord, hasten to our recovery!

Read Habakkuk 3:2, 16-19. '

THE BLESSING

1, And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death.

2, And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them.

3, Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words.

4, Moses commanded us a law, even the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob.

5, And he was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together.

Deuteronomy 33:1-5

This chapter is a record of the last words of Moses. In effect they are the words of a man who knows that his earthly life is about to end. As a general rule, the utterances of one who is dying are held in high esteem. How much more the words of the man with whom God spoke to face to face, a man who not only saw the acts of God but was shown the ways of God. These are the words of a man who had shepherded the flock of God for forty years and found, more often than not, they were like wild ass's colts rather than the sheep of the Lords pasture. These are the words of the man who was put in the cleft of the rock and privileged to see the hinder parts of God's glory. These are the words of a man who knows that

he has run the race and finished the course, knowing the Lord Himself will place the crown of righteousness on his head.

This is the final sermon Moses will preach, the last time he will speak to the people of God. As we look at these words, this distilled and refreshing doctrine, we have but to remember one thing; the words of our Lord, “For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me.” This is the closing argument of that blessed *second law*, that *Deuteronomy*, that law of life in Christ Jesus that has freed us from the law of sin and death, that second revealed covenant, the eternal covenant of grace. This is the setting aside of the old covenant, soon to be buried out of sight and outside the land of Promise, and the institution of the new whose end result will be that God will remember the sins of His people no more (True blessedness, Psa. 32). This fact can be seen very clearly by contrasting the words of Jacob in Genesis 49 with the words of Moses here in Deuteronomy 33. I will address that contrast in the next lesson. Before you read that study, it would be beneficial if you read the accounts of the two men speaking about the same people and both recorded under inspiration by the same man—Moses.

In this lesson, I want us to look at Moses the preacher of Christ. It has been said that the test of a man's life is not how he begins but how he ends. What we see here is how I want to end, and I pray God will make it so, that my last utterances from the pulpit will be Christ and Him crucified.

This passage begins with the declaration that Moses is blessing the people; “And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before

his death.” Notice the definite article “the” concerning the blessing and its results. This is *the* blessing, which blessed. Whatever is to follow, results in the people being blessed. It is the desire of every believer to be a blessing and of every Gospel preacher to bless the people. We know that all blessing comes from God, yet here the preacher is said to bless the people and the result is that they *are* blessed. He does not *offer* a blessing, *invite* men to participate in the blessing, *cajole* men to exercise their wills and their faith to obtain this blessing. Whatever he said was a blessing that blessed. I love the absoluteness of this because it declares the majesty, power, and the effectual result of preaching the Gospel (2 Cor. 2:14-17; 1 Cor 1:23-24). There is but one way for a man to bless the people of God. It is by declaring the blessing that leaves the people with the understating that they *are* blessed (Isaiah 40: 1-2).

As I was reading this first verse my mind went to Paul's letter to the Ephesians. His words are a clear representation of how it is that Moses blessed the people (Eph 1:3). The people are blessed when God is glorified in Christ. The word “blessed” in verse three is the word “eulogize.” A eulogy is saying something good about someone. The good thing that Paul says about God is that He has accomplished salvation from eternity to eternity by Himself and all to the praise, honor and glory of His grace. The only way a preacher can bless the people of God is to bless (eulogize) the God who has saved them by His grace through the substitutionary work of His Son as revealed to God-given faith by His Holy Spirit. This is the only blessing that will bless, always bless and ever bless the people of God.

So, Moses, millenniums before Paul, blesses the people with the Gospel of Christ, wherewith the people are blessed. Notice in verse 2 that this blessing comes by words, “he *said*.” I know that preaching has a bad name in this day and reasonably so because there is so much bad preaching going on. Preaching, to most people, means accusation or judgment; “Don't preach to me.” Preaching to many is nothing more than a man trying to get you to do something that you really don't want to do. Many preachers think preaching should be designed to provoke a visible result. Preaching is *none* of those things. Preaching is the means of declaring the blessing wherewith the people are blessed (Jim Poe: “I don't have to get or even look for a result”). Preaching the Gospel is not about chances, possibilities, probabilities or any such thing. It is about God who has blessed a people and a declaration of the means by which He blessed them. Preaching does not declare that someone *can* be blessed but that someone *has been* and *is* blessed—“He *said*.”

The first words of blessing that bless are “The LORD.” For those who are blessed, this name is blessing in itself. Note that the name is all in caps—Jehovah—the savior of the people. A man may spend his life contemplating this name and never begin to plumb the depths or ascend the heights of its fullness. Jehovah-Hoseenu, the LORD our maker; Jehovah- Jireh, the LORD will provide, Jehovah-Rapha; the LORD that healeth thee; Jehovah-Nissi, the LORD our Banner; Jehovah-M'Kaddesh, the LORD that doth sanctify you; Jehovah-Shalom, the LORD our peace; Jehovah-Raah, the LORD is my shepherd; Jehovah-Tsidkenu, the LORD our righteousness; Jehovah-Shammah, The LORD is there; Jehovah-Jesus, the LORD

will save. Preaching the Gospel begins and ends with the LORD. He is the blessing that has blessed.

What follows is but a description of Christ and His accomplished salvation. He “came from Sinai, rose up from Seir and He shined from Paran” (v. 2). The reference to these three places is more than geography. Seir and Paran were mountains on opposite sides of Sinai. Each speaks metaphorically of the person and work of Christ.

Seir was chronologically prior to Sinai. It was in Seir, the place of the Edomites that the Serpent was *raised* up on the pole. Paran alludes to the *rising* of the sun in its brightness. In these two places there is ascension (lifting or rising). On Sinai there was a coming *down*. The Lord came *down* to Sinai. Before the law was given Christ was already the substitute for His people. Being their substitute, He came *down* to fulfill the laws demand. Afterward, He arose and *ascended* to the right hand of the Father, dwelling in a light whereunto no man can approach. He shines in Mt. Seir, as law giver and fulfiller on Sinai. He shines in Mt. Paran, as the Sun arising with healing in His wings. He shines in Mt. Zion as the light of the world (Hab. 3:3; Matt. 17:2; Hebrews 1:3a; 2 Cor. 4:6; 2 Pet. 1; 16-19; Psalm 50:2).

“He came with ten thousands of saints.” This word *saints* refers to the Holy Angels and is often made reference to concerning Christ. Those who came with Him are those whom he has appointed ministers to the heirs of salvation.

“From His right hand went a fiery law.” The *right hand* of God refers to three things in scripture, God's power, God's salvation and God's Son. The Right hand of God is Christ and Him crucified. From this hand went a fiery law for them. This word fiery speaks to two elements. First it speaks to the

nature of those who are blessed. The law is a fiery reminder and fiery revelation of their guilt and sinner-hood, being added because of transgression. The Gospel is a declaration of what we were when God blessed us with Christ. We were quickened when we were *dead* in sin. This word “fiery” also refers to the fire from heaven that consumed the sacrifice. It refers to the brazen altar where God was satisfied for the sin of His people. Christ gave the law *and* fulfilled the law for his people. The Gospel is this fiery law (Romans 8:2; Hebrew 10:16-17).

Proof of this is plainly seen in verse 3. There we find what this fiery law revealed.

1. He loved the people (Jeremiah 31:3; Romans 5:8; Gal. 2:20; Eph 2:4-5; 5:25; Rev. 1:5-6).

2. All His saints are in His hands (Isaiah 49:16; John 10:27-29).

3. They sat down at His feet (SOS 2:3; Mark 5:15; Luke 10:39).

4. Everyone shall receive thy words (Is. 54:13; John 6:45; 6:63).

5. This law is the inheritance of the congregation of Jacob (Is. 54:17; Eph. 1:11; Coll. 1:12; 1 Pet. 1.4).

“And he was king in Jeshurun, when the heads of the people and the tribes of Israel were gathered together” (v. 5). There may be two applications to this. Moses may be referring to himself as chief magistrate of the government of God, and this would also fit with the description of the believer (1 Pet. 2:5-9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10). However, since Moses wrote of Christ, I think the best application and most fitting is that it refers to the King of Kings, the Lord Jesus Christ

(Numbers 23:21; Is. 32:1-2; John 18:37; 1 Tim. 6:15-16; Rev. 17:14; 19:11-16).

“And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death” (v. 1).

NATURE AND GRACE

6, Let Reuben live, and not die; and let not his men be few.

7, And this is the blessing of Judah: and he said, Hear, LORD, the voice of Judah, and bring him unto his people: let his hands be sufficient for him; and be thou an help to him from his enemies.

8, And of Levi he said, Let thy Thummim and thy Urim be with thy holy one, whom thou didst prove at Massah, and with whom thou didst strive at the waters of Meribah;

9, Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen him; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children: for they have observed thy word, and kept thy covenant.

10, They shall teach Jacob thy judgments, and Israel thy law: they shall put incense before thee, and whole burnt sacrifice upon thine altar.

11, Bless, LORD, his substance, and accept the work of his hands: smite through the loins of them that rise against him, and of them that hate him, that they rise not again.

Deuteronomy 33:6-11

Read also Genesis 49:3-12.

3, Reuben, thou art my firstborn, my might, and the beginning of my strength, the excellency of dignity, and the excellency of power:

4, Unstable as water, thou shalt not excel; because thou wentest up to thy father's bed; then defiledst thou it: he went up to my couch.

5, Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations.

6, O my soul, come not thou into their secret; unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united: for in their anger they slew a man, and in their selfwill they digged down a wall.

7, Cursed be their anger, for it was fierce; and their wrath, for it was cruel: I will divide them in Jacob, and scatter them in Israel.

8, Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee.

9, Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up?

10, The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.

11, Binding his foal unto the vine, and his ass's colt unto the choice vine; he washed his garments in wine, and his clothes in the blood of grapes:

12, His eyes shall be red with wine, and his teeth white with milk.

Of the first four sons of Jacob mentioned in this passage from Genesis, three are considered in our text in Deuteronomy 33. The only one omitted in our text is Simeon. Simeon was Levi's brother, and there are many opinions as to why he was omitted in the blessing of the tribes in Deuteronomy. Some have said that he was omitted because he refused to join the tribe of Levi at the base of Sinai when Moses drew the line in the sand, when the sons of Levi set their banner on the Lord's side. This may be the case, but since Levi was the only one who came over the line and the rest of the tribes are mentioned in Deuteronomy 33, I don't think that opinion is of great a value. I think Simeon's omission from the number in our text is probably because later the tribe was incorporated with Judah. This, I feel, falls more in line with what is being taught in the text.

As we know, Judah is a beautiful picture of Christ in his surety for Benjamin (Gen. 43:9; 44:32). Christ is surety of a better covenant; Christ in His high priesthood came from Judah (Hebrews 7:13-14); Christ is The Lion of the tribe of Judah who opened the book in the Revelation (Rev 5). In Genesis we see Simeon mentioned along with Levi in their rebellion and sin. In Deuteronomy both Ruben and Levi are spoken of as blessed and Simeon becomes one with Judah. In Genesis we see Reuben, Levi and Simeon in *nature*; in Deuteronomy we see them in the *covenant of Grace*. In Genesis we see Reuben, Levi and Simeon mentioned first and Judah afterward. In Deuteronomy we see Judah between Reuben and Levi as if in the midst of them. Is this not a picture of Christ and His church and a picture of the kind of people whom Christ came to save?

Verses 6-11 of Deut. 33 set the tone for the remainder of the chapter by showing the contrast of *nature* and *grace*. Reuben, Simeon and Levi, by nature, are the children of wrath, even as others. Even Judah, by nature, was nothing to write home to mom about. But they, especially they, represent the power and glory of sovereign grace. Ruben and Levi, in our text, reveal how God views His people in the covenant of grace, how He sees his people in Christ. Nothing is more amazing and astonishing than how God sees His people (1 John 3:1-10).

These words are not a list of goals for the people of God, nor are they a theological gift for the legalist. These words, to the astonishment of John, are God's description of His people, as they are in His sight and in opposition to those who are of the world. So, it is in our text. For the people of God, the unstable Reubens, the cruel and mean Levis, and Simeons of God's elect, there is nothing but blessings, handfuls on purpose, meted out, pressed down and running over; blessings exceeding excess. In their midst is Judah, blessed surety, high priest and revelator of God's purpose in Grace.

This passage is the record of the Blessed Savior and His blessed people, His church, His bride, His elect and the Mighty God who "blessed them with all spiritual blessings in Christ according as he had chosen them in Christ before the foundation of the world." We are reminded in the passage, once again, that Christ came into this world to save sinners, that not many wise, not many mighty and not many noble are chosen of God. He has instead chosen the weak, the base, the despised, the nothings in order that no flesh should glory in His presence.

v. 6: Ruben, the firstborn of the union of Jacob and Leah who lost his birth right because he lay with the handmaid (Bilhah) who Rachel gave to Jacob before she died; Ruben, who was unstable as water, and like water fits any container into which it is introduced, always follows the path of least resistance, and always flows downward to the lowest point and shall not excel, is the first mentioned in our text. What shall come upon such a one, one deserving death for his crimes? What shall become of one who is born in trespasses and sins? What can be the just end of one who has nothing in or about him that might recommend him to God?

“Let Reuben live and not die” (Rev. 20:6; John 10:27-30). This is the sovereign edict declared by God concerning all His elect Reubens (Ezekiel 16:1-14). Yet more comes from the God of all grace. He who would not excel does most surely excel; “Let not his men be few.” This phrase actually reads “though his men be few.” That would seem to be contradictory were it not for the fact that our Lord's flock is described as both a little flock and yet exceeding any number that man can number. We believers are Reuben, cursed in *nature* and blessed in *grace*.

vv. 8-11: Levi with his brother committed unspeakable cruelty (Gen 49:5-7). Surely there can be no hope for men of this character. In nature they are displayed as examples to be avoided. What will be the end of such cruel and wicked men? They will be the priests of God, the bearers of the Gospel (1 Pet. 2:9). They will be made priest and kings unto their God (Rev. 1:6; 5:9-10). Their Urim and Thummim will be with the Holy One.

The Urim and Thummim speak of perfections and light, both attributes of the Holy One, Jesus Christ. However, the

Urim and Thummim, many believe were two stones of different colors (black and white) which resided in the breastplate of the High Priest and were used to answer spiritual questions either in the negative or the positive. One stone meant *yes* and the other meant *no*, and when asked a question, the High Priest would reach into his breastplate and pull out one stone which would answer the question. Some might think that is a chancy way of doing things, but the lot is cast into the lap and the disposal thereof belongs to the Lord.

I think this is in reference to the minister of the Gospel who from his heart sets things in their proper order by not flipping back and forth between every strange wind of doctrine. With the Gospel preacher, in spiritual matters, it is *yes* or *no* (Matt. 5:37, 2 Cor. 1:17, 20). Levi will be as one who is in the world but not of it (v. 9a). Levi shall observe the words of God and keep his covenant (Hebrews 10:16). Levi will teach the effectual intercessory work of Christ, the Gospel of Grace (v. 10). Levi will be accepted in the beloved and the work of his hands will be accepted in Christ (v 11; Exodus 28:36-38; Eph. 1:6; 1 Peter 2:5). The enemies of Levi will fall (Isaiah 54:17).

This shall come to pass because of Judah (Genesis 49:8-12; text: v. 7). The Lord will hear his voice (John 11:41-42. Hebrews 5:7; John 19:30; Matt. 27:50-53). Judah will be brought to His people (John 6:45); the people will gather to Him because He was sent for His people (Luke 2:10-11; John 6:37-39); His hands will be sufficient for Him (Heb. 1:3; 9:12, 26; 1 pet; 2:24); His work of salvation will be sufficient for His people (Romans 8:28-32; 1 Cor. 3:21-23; Coll. 2:8-9; 2 Pet 1:3—my grace is sufficient for thee). God the Father

helped Him in his greatest hour (Ps. 22:19; 89:19; Is. 50:5-9).
Reuben and Levi are blessed because Judah is in their midst
(Zeph. 3; 14-20).

BENJAMIN

12, And of Benjamin he said, The beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him; and the LORD shall cover him all the day long, and he shall dwell between his shoulders.

Deuteronomy 33:12

Here, the blessing of Benjamin is composed in one sentence and the wealth of this passage would easily fill innumerable volumes. Benjamin's history is rich with both victories and defeats. Everything about Benjamin spiritually refers to Christ and His people.

The geography of the land given to this tribe is of great importance (Joshua 18:28). Within the tribal land given to Benjamin was the city of Jerusalem and Mt. Moriah, which was the site of the temple. Mt. Zion, where the City of David was built and is said to be in the tribal lands allotted to Judah, may represent the shoulders between which Benjamin resided. The Temple, Zion and Jerusalem are all types and pictures of the church and thus Benjamin is a picture of the elect of God (Eph. 2:19-21; Hebrews 12:22-24; Rev. 21:9-10; Gal. 4:26).

There can be no doubt that the believer can take great comfort and peace from the description of the blessing of Benjamin. He is first called the "beloved of the Lord." This term, "beloved of the Lord" in one form or another is set forth as the catalyst for the work of Christ on the believer's behalf (Jeremiah 31:3; Romans 5:8, Galatians 2:20, I John 4:10; Revelation 1:5). This title of blessing is how Paul refers to the

elect in 2 Thess. 2:13. If you are a believer, this is your blessing. You are “the beloved of the LORD.”

As such you shall dwell in safety by Him (the Lord). This is the only place of safety in a seemingly unsafe world (Is. 54:13-14; 17; Ps. 27:4-5; 125:2). The place of safety is “by Him” (Exodus 33:21-23 [my dad]; Isaiah 56:5; Eph. 2:4-6).

“Nearer to God,
Nearer I cannot be;
For in the person of His Son,
I am as near as He.”

The believer is safe because he is covered by the LORD, “and the LORD shall cover him all the day long” (Isa. 4:6; 32:1-2; 51:16; Psalm 91:1, 4) [all the day long]. And the place of that safe covering is between the shoulders of God. Is not the heart between the shoulders? Does this not intimate being wrapped in the arms of the Almighty? Is this not being in the hand of Christ enveloped in the hand of God, never to be plucked out? Is this not the bosom of Abraham? This may also be an allusion to the breastplate of the High Priest. It was hung on chains from the shoulder thatches upon which was born the names of the people of God. This may also refer to the fact the government is upon the shoulders of Christ for the good of His people.

This passage also, I believe, pictures the blessedness of the Son of God, Jesus Christ the Lord. The name “Benjamin” means “the son of thy right hand.” This is the description that belongs exclusively to Christ (Ps. 110:1; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3, 13; 10:12; 12:2; 1 Peter 3:22). This is the place of exaltation because of the completion of the work of the

salvation of the elect (Romans 14:9; Phil. 2:5-11). Christ is the “Son of the right hand of God.”

Christ is the beloved of the LORD (Is. 42:1; Matt. 3:17; 17:5; 2 Pet 1:17). Christ is said in the word to be *by* God (Proverbs 8:22-31; John 1:1-2). Of Christ it is said that He is in the bosom of the Father (John 1:18; 14:8-11; Coll. 2:8) and He “shall dwell between His shoulders.” The blessing of Benjamin is the blessing of Christ. This passage fits both the *believer* and the *Savior* and that it how it should be for the elect are blessed in the elect and all spiritual blessings are in Christ Jesus (John 3:35).

With this in mind I want us to consider one other thing, the initial prophecy concerning Benjamin spoken by his father Jacob in Genesis 49:27. “Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.” This most surely, in the natural realm, applies to the fierceness of this tribe in battle as was manifest in their warring with Israel in Judges 22. Some of the ancient writers attributed this passage to the Apostle Paul who was of the tribe of Benjamin; was as a ravening wolf against the church in the morning of his life; “breathing out threatenings, wreaking havoc and persecuting the church;” at the evening of his life dividing the spoil of Satan among the gentiles, distributing food for the souls of believers by the Gospel, “the feast of fat things and wine on the lees well refined.” Paul was a warrior, a soldier of Christ, who had warfare to accomplish, fought the good fight, was more than a conqueror though Christ and has received the crown of righteousness placed on his head by none other than Christ the Lord.

But more, this is a description of Christ Himself. Our Lord is a man of war (Exodus 15:3; Deut. 3:22; 20:4). He is conquering now and still to conquer. He has done battle with the strong man, bound him up, cast him down from his throne and spoiled his house. “Now is the prince of this world cast out” (Rev. 19:11, 15). The description of Benjamin here as “devouring the prey” is the same language used in the description of Judah in Gen. 49:9. Our Lord is often described as a predator (Hosea 13:7-8; Revelation 5:5). He, by His substitutionary suffering and sovereign cross has destroyed the enemy (Coll. 2:14-15). Because He has accomplished the work of salvation he will “divide the spoil (Isaiah 53:1-2). Christ is the beloved at the right hand of God and will destroy the enemy and recover the elect (Psalm 80:1, 8, 13, 14-19; Jer. 32:41).

“Benjamin shall ravin as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil.” “And of Benjamin he said, the beloved of the LORD shall dwell in safety by him: and the LORD shall cover him all the day long and he shall dwell between his shoulders.”

THE BLESSING OF JOSEPH

13, And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the LORD be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath,

14, And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon,

15, And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills,

16, And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren.

17, His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.

Deuteronomy 33:13-17

Read Genesis 49:22-26.

22, Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well; whose branches run over the wall:

23, The archers have sorely grieved him, and shot at him, and hated him:

24, But his bow abode in strength, and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob; (from thence is the shepherd, the stone of Israel:)

25, Even by the God of thy father, who shall help thee; and by the Almighty, who shall bless thee with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lieth under, blessings of the breasts, and of the womb:

26, The blessings of thy father have prevailed above the blessings of my progenitors unto the utmost bound of the everlasting hills: they shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him that was separate from his brethren.

The account of the blessing of Joseph in our text and in Genesis is, in type and picture, the blessing and glory heaped upon the head of our Lord Jesus Christ. Joseph is probably the most prolific type and antitype of Christ as I have found anywhere in the word of God. The blessings poured upon His head are blessings that flow downward to His body, the church; "it is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garment." The blessings that are said to be upon the head of Joseph are the blessings of Christ and are all spiritual blessings by which the church is blessed in Christ (Eph. 1:3; Proverbs 10:6). "Blessings are

upon the head of the just.” The church, the body of Christ, the children of God, have nothing but blessing from God— “If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.” Here we can pause in a world of woe and count our blessings, name them one by one, count our many blessings and see what God has done.

Joseph, that fruitful bough, Christ that prolific branch of God whose boughs have gone over the wall to embrace the elect of the pagan Gentiles, has brought His people to a land abundant with milk and honey. Though we are in the world we are not of the world. We dwell in Immanuel's Land, the Land of promise, and it is a blessed place. The church is the haven for sinners, the hospital for sin-sick souls. Therein is the Balm in Gilead and there the King of all Kings rules. There the stone that the builder's refused is become the head of the corner, and the shepherd of the flock of God gathers His lost sheep into His fold. The archers grieved Him, hated him without a cause, but He came forth from the battle victorious because His bow abode in strength and the arms of his hands were made strong by the hands of the mighty God of Jacob. “Behold, I have laid help on one that is mighty.” He is the exalted one, separate from His brethren; “holy harmless, undefiled and separate from sinners and made higher than the heavens” (16c).

These blessings are all of grace and all in Christ. He, himself, is crowned with these blessings because of who He is and what He has done (16d). This teaches us two things.

First it teaches us that there is nothing but blessings in Him. So much of useless religion relies on making so-called Christians believe that they are living under a constant threat of losing what they have. Such have not Christ

because those who know Him are showered with nothing but blessings. There is no curse for the believer on any level or to any degree because their blessed Joseph, their beloved Christ has redeemed them from the curse, being made a cure for them.

Secondly, this teaches us that there is no blessing outside of Christ. For those who are not part of the body on whose head the blessings are poured, even what they deem blessing will prove a curse for them. These blessings are on purpose and arrive at our door because of the grace of God, “for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush” (v. 16; Exodus 33:19; Luke 12:32).

In v. 13 these blessings are called “precious things from heaven” (v. 13). How else could it be? “All good and perfect gifts come from above, from the Father of lights in whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning.” The “unspeakable gift” came from heaven to dwell among men and give His life a ransom for many. Did the Father give us His Son, then “how shall He not, with Him, freely give us all things.”—“all things that pertain to godliness and life.” They are precious things because He is precious (1 Pet. 2:4, 6). His blood is precious blood, His promises are exceeding great and precious, His thoughts toward us are precious, the faith that He gives to us is precious faith, and to everyone who believes He is precious. That word precious not only reveals glory and value, but the New Testament word found in 1 Peter comes from a word that has to do with a fixed price paid and that which was purchased being possessed. The preciousness of Christ to His people is far more than a general adoration and affection; it is joy founded upon the knowledge of what our Lord accomplished in his

substitutionary sacrifice. He is precious to the believer and to the Father because of His redeeming blood, the price paid to God by which he obtained eternal redemption for His people.

The things, precious things from heaven are the manifold blessings that are ours by Him. What are the blessings?

The blessings of Christ is the dew from heaven (v. 13). This is the blessed doctrine of God (Deut. 32:2; Isaiah 55:11). This is the word of God, the Gospel written in the minds and in the hearts of the perfected ones by which they understand and respond to the preaching of Christ and Him crucified. This dew is the blessed indoctrination of God by which He brainwashes His people, inundates their mind and hearts, and fills their vision with the glories of Christ that results in all that are taught of Him coming to Christ (John 6:45). Not only is blessing from above but it also geysers up from the “deep that couches beneath.” This is that “*fountain opened* to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness.” “Truth shall spring out of the earth.” “Drop down, ye heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down *righteousness*: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation, and let *righteousness* spring up together; I the LORD have created it.”

The blessings of Christ are precious fruits brought forth by the sun (v. 14a). Look at Psalm 84:11. Here God is said to be a sun who withholds no good thing from His people. “But unto you that fear my name shall the *Sun* of righteousness arise with healing in his wings.” So great is that healing, so manifold is that precious fruit that those whom he healed are said to shine with His light “Then shall the righteous shine forth *as the sun* in the kingdom of their Father.”

The blessings are said to be “precious things” put forth by the moon. Notice that the words in “brought forth” in the previous phrase are in italics, added by the translators for our better understanding. I think they did this to distinguish between what Christ has done and what His church does. All fruits are brought forth “by Him.” He is the sun and the source of all light. By distinction, the moon, (the church) brings forth nothing of itself, even its light is merely a reflection of the light of the sun. However, though the moon does not produce anything it does “put forth” precious things. “Doth not wisdom cry? and understanding *put forth* her voice?” The church, because of the light of the Son, puts forth the Gospel. It bears fruit by virtue of its abiding connection to the vine, so that she “should bring forth fruit unto God—and her fruit shall remain.” That fruit is the blessed privilege of preaching the Gospel, the power of God unto salvation, the power and wisdom of God putting forth precious things (1 John 1:1-3).

These blessings are “for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills.” (v.15). Our minds are immediately drawn to Mt. Sinai, Mt. Calvary and Mt. Zion; Mt. Sinai, where God came down; Mt. Calvary, where God went up and Mt. Zion, where God resides and where the people of God come to the King who reigns upon it. (Mt. Sinai, where God came down and gave the law; Mt. Calvary, where Christ was lifted up and fulfilled the law, and Mt. Zion, wherein reside those in whom the righteousness that is in the law is fulfilled). (Mt. Sinai, where the law was added because of the transgression; Mt. Calvary, where the Messiah finished the transgression, and Mt. Zion, where grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life!

The chief things (of whom Christ is the chiefest among ten thousand) are of old and are everlasting. (Micah 5:2).

“And for the precious things of the earth and the fullness thereof” (v. 16). “The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof: the world, and they that dwell therein;” this amazing globe that orbits the Sun, whereupon the God of all grace chose to display all His attributes; the precious stage upon which the Omnipotent God revealed the glory of His Son in the salvation of sinners by substitution, satisfaction and imputation; this theater where the actors are acted upon, where every word upon every tongue is predetermined, where kingdoms rise and fall, where the hearts of kings are in the hand of God to turn as the rivers of water whithersoever He will, where the grace and the glory of the writer of the script directs the steps of the righteous and moves the feet of the wicked so that even the wrath of man shall praise Him as they do what has been before ordained to be done. All these precious blessings are upon the head of Him who was separate from His brethren.

And the glory is His (v. 17). Not only is His glory about the salvation of an innumerable company (v. 17b), but the horns mentioned here are in relation to pushing or goring. We know that the elect are not pushed into the fold. They are brought, drawn, lead and guided by the good shepherd. For those who are the enemies of the cross, they will be pushed and gored as a bull comes upon its prey or as a rhinoceros (unicorn) overruns its victim. Once again, we see that the salvation wrought by Christ is both the saving of His people and the destruction of His enemies (Is. 25. 9-12). This too is our precious blessing (Deut. 9:3...he...thou).

Read Deut. 33:13-17.

13, And of Joseph he said, Blessed of the LORD be his land, for the precious things of heaven, for the dew, and for the deep that coucheth beneath,

14, And for the precious fruits brought forth by the sun, and for the precious things put forth by the moon,

15, And for the chief things of the ancient mountains, and for the precious things of the lasting hills,

16, And for the precious things of the earth and fulness thereof, and for the good will of him that dwelt in the bush: let the blessing come upon the head of Joseph, and upon the top of the head of him that was separated from his brethren.

17, His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of unicorns: with them he shall push the people together to the ends of the earth: and they are the ten thousands of Ephraim, and they are the thousands of Manasseh.

THE CHURCH AND THE GOSPEL

18, And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, in thy tents.

19, They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand.

Deuteronomy 33:18-19

The blessing of Zebulun and Issachar refers to the church going out into the world with the Gospel. The very first thing that is declared as the blessing of the church is that they are a people blessed to rejoice. Their rejoicing is singular and glorious (Phil. 3:3; 4:4: “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory”). The only people on the top side of God's earth who have warrant to rejoice is the church of the living God. They have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb and are fully accepted in the Beloved. Everything that has occurred or ever will occur is for their good and for the glory of their God.

Zebulun and Issachar are described very differently. Zebulun is described as a sea faring people, as travelers. Issachar is described as a people who stay at home in their tents. This reveals several things about the make-up of the church. Everyone has a function.

The church is not made up of assembly-line production clones. One of the many ridiculous things of false religion is that they want everybody to act and look the same. Today it seems that those who are stamped out-cast and dyed as

“Christians” are as sweet as syrup, totally inoffensive, standing only on the principle of never taking a stand and borderline effeminate. But the church is made up of folk out of every nation, tribe, tongue and people who cannot be typecast in the mold of religion (John 3:8; 14:17; 1 Cor. 2:15; 1 John 3:1). “If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?” Some of the church are people of labor, action, commerce and acquire great wealth: 1 Chronicles 12:33—“Of Zebulun, such as went forth to battle, expert in war, with all instruments of war, fifty thousand, which could keep rank: they were not of double heart.” Others are bent more toward the intellect, prefer to stay at home and study and meditate: 1 Chronicles 12:32—“And of the children of Issachar, which were men that had understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment.”

Everyone in the church functions according to where God has gifted and placed him (Romans 12:4-8). The thing to understand is that one function is not more important than another, but each rejoices in the Lord; “I have learned that whatsoever state I am in, therewith to be content.” “Every man also to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God” (Ecclesiastes 5:19).

The primary teaching of this passage as is relative to “staying at home” and “going abroad” is the preaching of the Gospel in the assembly and the sending out of missionaries to preach the Gospel throughout the world. The church here is seen as a people who call others. They *call* in a singular

manner. Though they may be different in many respects, they have but one commission, to preach the Gospel. Our Lord commissioned the church to preach the Gospel in the whole world and to do so backed up by His authority as the God of all glory.

The only way the elect of God are brought into the fold is by the call of the Gospel (Acts 1:8; 2 Thess. 2:13-14). According to prophecy and the fulfillment thereof, Christ began the ministry of the Gospel in Zebulun. Isaiah 9:1-2 says, "Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined. (Compare Matt. 4:13-17).

The church calls the people unto the mountain. What mountain is this but Mt. Zion. Isaiah 2:2-3—"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the LORD'S house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem" (Compare Micah 4:1-2; Jer. 50:4-5). The reference to Zebulun being one who goes out to sea is also a reference to the make-up of the Church of God. The sea is sometimes in scripture a reference to the Gentiles (Isa. 60:5).

In this mountain and from this mountain, the glorious Gospel of grace is proclaimed, and the word of the Lord is the food of His people. Isaiah 25:6-8—“And in this mountain shall the LORD of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the vail that is spread over all nations [See 2 Cor:3:15-16]. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the LORD hath spoken it.”

There, in Zion, in God's Holy hill, the church, the people of God will offer “sacrifices of righteousness.” The primary application of this is the manner by which the people of God approach or come into His presence. The believer comes to God with the righteousness that God has given him by the Gospel. The believer comes to God by the blood and righteousness of Christ. It is by that precious blood that the believer enjoys access into the very presence of God (Heb. 10:12-22). The believer does not approach God with the works of his hands as did Cain but as Abel with the blood of the Lamb.

Secondly this offering of “sacrifices of righteousness” speaks to the priesthood of the believer and the acceptable sacrifices he or she offers to the Lord (Hebrews 13:15-16; 1 Peter 2:5). Isaiah 23:18— “And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the LORD: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the LORD, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing” (Ps. 4; 5:51:17).

The success of the Gospel is sure “for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand” (v. 19). The number of those who Christ redeemed is as the sand of the sea and the stars of the sky, a number that cannot be numbered, ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands. Micah 4:13—“Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron, and I will make thy hoofs brass: and thou shalt beat in pieces many people: and I will consecrate their gain unto the LORD, and their substance unto the Lord of the whole earth.” (See: Deut 32:13; Isa. 66:12).

Read our text.

“And of Zebulun he said, Rejoice, Zebulun, in thy going out; and, Issachar, in thy tents. They shall call the people unto the mountain; there they shall offer sacrifices of righteousness: for they shall suck of the abundance of the seas, and of treasures hid in the sand” (Deuteronomy 33:18-19).

CHRIST AND HIS CHURCH

20, And of Gad he said, Blessed be he that enlargeth Gad: he dwelleth as a lion, and teareth the arm with the crown of the head.

21, And he provided the first part for himself, because there, in a portion of the lawgiver, was he seated; and he came with the heads of the people, he executed the justice of the LORD, and his judgments with Israel.

22, And of Dan he said, Dan is a lion's whelp: he shall leap from Bashan.

23, And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the LORD: possess thou the west and the south.

24, And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil.

25, Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be.

Deuteronomy 33:20-25

These last four tribes to be blessed are a final picture of the glory of Christ and His church.

The first mentioned is Gad whose name is a combination of two words that translates "a troop that overcomes." The prophecy of Jacob concerning Gad in Genesis 49:19 is "Gad, a troop shall overcome him: but he shall overcome at the last." There can be no doubt that Gad refers to the church of the living God who is said oft to be overcome by trials, tribulations and manifold temptations, but in the end

overcomes the world and that in a particular manner (1 John 2; 14; 4:4; 5; 4; Rev. 12:9-11). However, the blessing that comes upon Gad comes as thing derived rather than personally accomplished. The one blessed here is "*He that enlargeth Gad*" (vv. 20). This accomplishment belongs to the Lord alone.

Though Gad is enlarged, the glory for it belongs to the enlarger, not the enlarged (Acts 2:47). It is the Lord who planted the church, and it is the Lord who causes it to grow and to flourish. The remainder of the description of Gad may be applied historically to Gad as a tribe of warriors who take the spoil from the strong and distribute those graciously to the brethren (Joshua 22:8). But the language applied to Gad most beautifully speaks of the Lord Himself. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah; He is the victor in the battle. He is the man of war who utterly destroys the enemies of His people and receives the glory for it (v. 21)—"provideth the first part for Himself." It is He who has a lawgiver between His feet till Shiloh Comes. He executes the justice of the LORD and judgment for His people (Psalm 9:7-8, 16; Isaiah 9:6-7) and having done so, divides the spoil with his people. He is the overcomer. (Rev. 17:14; Isaiah 53:12-14). Blessed be *He that enlargeth Gad*

Of Dan (the Judge) it is said that he is a lion's whelp and that he shall leap from Bashan (v. 22). In Genesis 49:16-18, Jacob says of Dan, "Dan shall judge his people, as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path that biteth the horse heels, so that his rider shall fall backward. I have waited for thy salvation, O LORD."

Again, the language consists of words and phrases that apply to the Lord Jesus Christ. Surely, He is God's salvation.

Were these words not like the words of Simeon as he held the Infant of Days... "Let thy servant depart in peace for mine eyes have seen thy salvation"? Was not our Lord the serpent raised up on the pole who, when looked upon, was the deliverance of His people? Here our Lord is seen in the sense of leaping upon and destroying Bashan.

The bulls of Bashan represent the religious leaders of the time of our Lord, who cried out to crucify Him (compare Psalm 22:12 with 68:15-16). On the cross He took away the ordinances that were against His people, nailed them to His cross and openly defeated them. With the words "it is finished," He bit the heel of the horse they rode and the rider fell backward. He took away the first and established the second. He was the lion's whelp from the prey.

"And of Naphtali he said. O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the LORD: possess thou the west and the south" (v. 23). You could not find a sweeter description of the happy estate of the sinner saved by grace than what is said of Naphtali. Though his name means "wrestling" and is descriptive of the inward battles of the child of God to bring all his thought and imaginations to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:3-5), he is yet the most blessed and satisfied of the human race. Jacob's words concerning Naphtali are short, sweet and very instructive.

"Naphtali is a hind let loose: he giveth goodly words." The hind let loose refers to the full freedom of the child of God. Without fear and without the constraints of bondage she goes out into the world. She goes out into the world with goodly words. Those goodly words are the good news, the glad tidings that exalt the One who has loosed and set her free. She is satisfied with favor. The grace of God is sufficient

for her. She is full of blessing, having been given all spiritual blessings in Christ, and she has been given all things that pertain to godliness and life. This is the estate of the child of God. This is the happy place of the church. She is not sad, austere and full of pronouncements of woe and doom, but she, as the Lord's freed one, preaches glad tidings of great joy.

Finally, the blessing of Asher is particularly sweet (v. 24). This blessing speaks to the blessing of the Gospel being in and by the church. Jacob said of Asher, "Out of Asher his bread shall be fat, and he shall yield royal dainties." Moses said of Asher, "And of Asher he said, Let Asher be blessed with children; let him be acceptable to his brethren, and let him dip his foot in oil. Thy shoes shall be iron and brass; and as thy days, so shall thy strength be." Asher's fat bread is the Bread of Heaven. Asher's yield of royal dainties is the feast found at the King's table. Asher is blessed with children because of the "increase of His kingdom there shall be no end." Asher is acceptable to the brethren because he is "made accepted in the Beloved."

Asher dips "His foot in oil." This refers to the anointing of the Holy Spirit. It is not merely upon the head, as was normal, but speaks to being filled with the Spirit of God (Eph. 5:18-20). In a very true sense, all of this prophecy is fulfilled in one woman. In Luke 2:25-35 and then 36-38. Her name means "grace" and she was the daughter of a man whose name meant the "face of God" (Jacob—Jabbok—Phanuel). She heard the words of old Simeon (v. 38a) and from the moment that she heard the Gospel, her bread was fat and her yield was royal dainties because everyone who was looking for redemption in Israel was told to look to

Christ. From the day she heard the proclamation that Christ was God's salvation, she spake of Him to everyone who sought redemption. Royal dainties indeed, fat bread indeed—the Gospel indeed. Old Anna heard the Gospel and never got over it.

OUR GOD AND HIS ELECT

26, There is none like unto the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky.

27, The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms: and he shall thrust out the enemy from before thee; and shall say, Destroy them.

28, Israel then shall dwell in safety alone: the fountain of Jacob shall be upon a land of corn and wine; also his heavens shall drop down dew.

29, Happy art thou, O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD, the shield of thy help, and who is the sword of thy excellency! and thine enemies shall be found liars unto thee; and thou shalt tread upon their high places.

Deuteronomy 33:26- 29

The final four verses of Deuteronomy 33 are the source and reason for what has preceded in the blessing of God's people. Quite simply stated, there is none like the God of Jeshurun. Jeshurun is a picture of the elect of God. The very name means the upright or righteous. Yet that name being revealed is in no way intended to describe their *personal* merit. Jeshuruns are a people who are sinners all, who are guilty of lightly esteeming the Rock of their salvation, and worthy of every ounce of Gods wrath. They are righteous because God had made them so and will not allow His glory to be defamed by the loss of even one of them (Deut. 32:26-27; Exodus 32:12; Numbers 14:15 -16). There is none like

Him as is clearly revealed in the kind of people whom He has saved.

He is the God of Jeshurun, the God who made sinners into saints. “Forasmuch as there is none *like unto thee*. O LORD; thou art great, and thy name is great in might” (Jeremiah 10:6). “Who is a God *like unto thee*, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy” (Micah 7:18). *He* is the giver. *He* is the blesser. *He* is the sovereign ruler of the entire universe. *He* blesses freely because He has the power and right to do so. *He* “rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky.” *He* that is the help of His elect is the same who rides upon the heaven, on the sky.

This is poetry, this is high verse! “Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind” (Psalms 104:3). “Sing unto God, sing praises to his name: extol him that rideth upon the heavens by his name JAH, and rejoice before him” (Psalms 68:4). “To him that rideth upon the heavens of heavens, which were of old: lo, he doth send out his voice, and that a mighty voice” (Psalms 68:33).) “Ascribe ye strength unto God; his excellency is over Israel, and his strength is in the clouds” (Psalms 68:34). The God of Jeshurun, the God of true Israel rides upon the ether to help His people with thoughts and ways that are higher than the heavens.

This eternal God is the habitation His people. His refugees reside in Him (v. 27a). “A Prayer of Moses the man of God. Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. His people are even now in heavenly places with

Christ” (Psalms 90:1). His people dwell in Him as their refuge because that have always dwelt with Him “underneath the everlasting arms.” They were his in the eternal election of grace, chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. They were His children by predestinated adoption. They were the eternal bride of His Son. They were always His and eternally destined to be united with His Son in time. Let men bicker about salvation being eternal or of time. *Salvation occurred in time because it is eternal.* If salvation was only of time, then if time ends as it surely will, what of the salvation that is restricted to it? What God has joined together let no man put asunder.

The latter part of verse 27 declares the bookends of the word of God. Throughout the scripture, two things are always proclaimed. There are two things that God *will* do. He will *save* His people and *destroy* the enemy. Where there is one there is always the other. The salvation of the elect is the destruction of their enemies (The flood, Sodom and Gomorrah; Egypt and Israel, the Cross, the second coming). Look at Isaiah 3:1-11. Again, there is the wonder of the Lord's dealings with His people. He shall thrust out the enemy. It is *He* who will fight for His people, yet He shall say to the elect destroy them” (Deut. 9:3).

v. 28. “Israel then shall dwell in safety alone.” You dwell in safety because you dwell in God (John 10:29-30). “The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid” (Zeph. 3; 13). “Israel shall dwell in safety alone.” The word “alone” does not intimate loneliness but assures them of their safety. The elect are the only people on the earth who

are eternally safe. All others are on their own, without God; without hope in this world. The elect are safe.

They are also alone in that they are the *only* people of God (Deut. 4:7-8; 2 Samuel 7:23). They have been severed from the other nations by a distinctive love (Exodus 8:22-23; 9:4; 11:7). “For from the top of the rocks I see him, and from the hills I behold him: lo, the people shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations” (Numbers 23:9). They alone will have the fountain of Jacob, the streams of living waters, the water of life, even Christ Himself, so that they, having drunk of this fountain, shall never thirst again. This fountain is in the land of corn and wine of sustenance and joy. That refreshment will be the Gospel, the Christ, the dew from heaven (Gen 27:28; Deut. 32:2-3; Hosea 14:5-7).

What else can attend such blessing but happiness? (See: Numbers 23:20-24; 24:5.) “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance (Psalms 33:12). “Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD” (Psalms 144:15). This happiness is reasonable because it has a true source “O Israel: who is like unto thee, O people saved by the LORD.” There is nobody like the elect because there is no God like their God! They are saved by the LORD, not by their will, or their choice, or their merit; but by the LORD!

The LORD is the shield of their help (Genesis 15:1; Psalm 91:4). The fiery darts of Satan shall never penetrate them. The LORD is the sword of their excellency. This word “excellency” means “triumph.” He is the manner and means of the defeat of the enemy, “Not by might or by power but by my spirit. The great swelling words of man's wisdom spewed

forth by our enemies will be found to be lies and themselves be declared liars (Is. 54:17). Their haughtiness will be treaded upon by the children of the Gospel. You are the blessed people of the Great and Mighty God.

Christ fully satisfied the law, otherwise we would see Moses in the promised land. But the law is not in the promised land. It is dead and buried by God in a secret place.

One last thing. In Number's 7:12, Our lord said, "ye believed me not to sanctify me." In Galatians 3:12, we read, "the law is not of faith." Read Romans 3:31, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law. The only people fulfilling and honoring the law are those who trust in the person and work of Christ alone. They all live in the promise land, and the law is not there.

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe...."

MOSES AND HIS GOD

1, And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto the mountain of Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the LORD shewed him all the land of Gilead, unto Dan,

2, And all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim, and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah, unto the utmost sea,

3, And the south, and the plain of the valley of Jericho, the city of palm trees, unto Zoar.

4, And the LORD said unto him, This is the land which I swear unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying, I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.

5, So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD.

6, And he buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Bethpeor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.

7, And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated.

8, And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended.

9, And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened unto him, and did as the LORD commanded Moses.

10, And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,

11, In all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt to Pharaoh, and to all his servants, and to all his land,

12, And in all that mighty hand, and in all the great terror which Moses shewed in the sight of all Israel.

Deuteronomy 34:1-12

Moses was a special vessel of the Lord. God revealed to Moses His essential being in the burning bush saying, “I Am That I Am.” (Shortest complete sentence.) The ONE whom Plato called ENS—the Being. One called God the eternal “isness.” This same God chose Moses for a specific task—to be the person who would speak for God in the deliverance of Israel from the bondage of Egypt. God spoke to Moses face to face—as a friend. Scripture declares that “He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.”

God loved Moses and graciously accepted Him based upon the merits of Christ. Moses was a man, a sinner, a person of like passions as we. He was a lump of Adamic clay which The Great Potter molded into a vessel of honor and a vessel of mercy. God spoke well of Moses because he saw Moses with the eyes of Grace—full of love and compassion. God saw Moses as He sees all who are in Christ—Justified, sanctified and righteous—one whose sins and iniquities were remembered no more. And in v. 10 as well as v. 1 of Joshua 1, Moses is referred to as the “servant” of the Lord. (‘ebed. eh'-bed: a servant — X bondage, bondman, {man-} servant [important]).

Moses lived 120 years. His life was divided into three time periods. The first was his 40 years in Egypt. The second period was his 40 years employed of his father-in-law where he learned the shepherd's trade. The last period was his 40 years spent in the wilderness where he plied his shepherd's trade, as the leader of a murmuring and gainsaying people. Moses can only be rightly viewed in reference to his God. God loved Moses with an everlasting love and in our text we see God putting an end to Moses' earthly career and burying him in a secret place.

Before God does Moses in, He allows Moses to see the promised land with an un-dimmed eye (v. 7). Then Our Lord takes Moses' body and buries him, as a friend would, yet in an unmarked grave—in a place called Beth-Peor. Beth-Peor means the “house of the gap.” This is Moses' mountain top experience. Some folks might not consider this much of higher ground happening, but Pisgah means the “top of the hill.” For Moses on earth, this as good as it gets. This is the end of the line, the goal, the aim, the acme, the pinnacle, the completed purpose, the sweet success of a righteous man whose steps are ordered by the Lord.

Some say that this is punishment! *Was this punishment?* How *sad* Moses must be then to be in the presence of God, to be relieved of all burdens, to weep no more, to hear no sound of discord or mummering. Can you hear him saying, “Boy, I sure do miss that bunch of rancorous malcontents. What a pain to hear and see the six winged beasts singing holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts. How sad to find out one's exact purpose in the scheme of grace. How sad to see not through a glass darkly but face to face. How sad to be like Christ because you see Him as He is.” Perhaps Paul was

wrong when he said, "it is far better to depart and to be with the Lord," or when he said, "For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

No, my dear brethren this is nothing less than our Sovereign Majesty bringing a thing to its appointed end. This is purpose; this is not punishment. This is not the gallows; this is the Gospel. This is not Penalty; this is predestination. This is not annihilation; this is exaltation. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing" (Prov. 25:2). "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jer. 29:11).

Moses was given the law and thereafter referred to in the New Testament as the one by whom the law came. John 1:17, "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," (note the "but." It is important. The law is not grace. Illus: The ambassador and the interpreter.) However, before Moses was given the law, the Passover lamb was slain for him. This is the order. The law entered 430 years after the covenant with Abraham, but Christ was slain before the foundation of the world. Before God finished Moses on Pisgah, He showed him His Glory from the cleft of the Rock.

Moses life, death, and even his eternal existence is about Christ and Him crucified.

Listen to John 1:43-45, “The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” (Dry doctrine? see Deut. 32.)

John 3:14, “And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:”

John 5:45-47, “Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?”

Luke 9:29-31, “And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake Of (what? abortion, homosexuality, the decline of and moral decay of a nation, or maybe Moses said, “I wonder why God killed me back there on Pisgah?”) [No!], his his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem.”

Acts 13:39, “And by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.”

This final page of the earthly life of Moses’ on planet earth, and the continuing of his eternal life with his God, is the theology of Christ and his elect. Just prior to his removal, there were two other people who came out of Egypt with Moses, who were above 20 years of age when they came out. The rest of the original cast died in the wilderness

because of unbelief. The two who came out were Joshua and Caleb. There is Moses, there is Joshua, and there is Caleb. The three-point syllabus of theology 101; the Law, the Saviour and the faithful dog—the sinner. Moses is buried and only the saviour and the sinner enter into the promise land.

Several things:

1. The law ends in death; it cannot take you to the promised land! The law was never intended to save, to deliver, or to redeem. It can only serve its purpose to condemn, to accuse, and to curse. It contains neither mercy, nor grace. Even in its ceremony there is but a forestallment of punishment and that but for a year at a time.

Romans 3:19, “Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound.”

Galatians 3:19- “Wherefore then *serveth* the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. Now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one. Is the law then against the promises of God? God forbid: for if there had been a law given which *could have given life*, verily righteousness should have been by the law. But the scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe. But before faith came, we were kept under the law, shut up unto the faith which should afterwards be

revealed. Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.

“1 Corinthians 15:56, “The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law.”

The Law ends in a burial, it cannot sanctify you. There are some poor deluded souls who believe that they are under the law as a rule of life—to *progress* in sanctification after they have been redeemed by Christ. (*progressive*=keeping score, imperative suffix *ier, est.*) It ain't so. In fact such a notion would make void the salvation wrought by Christ. This is not some insignificant minor point. “If ye be circumcised Christ shall profit you nothing” does not sound to me a reasonable area of debate!

God buried Moses Himself!!! How Come? So there would be no question concerning its demise. The law is dead to the believer and the believer is dead to the law!

Read Romans 6:14, “For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

Romans 7:1-7, “Know ye not, brethren, (for I speak to them that know the law,) how that the law hath dominion over a man as long as he liveth? For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband so long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So then if, while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man. Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead,

that we should bring forth fruit unto God. For when we were in the flesh, the motions of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death. But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve in newness of spirit, and not in the oldness of the letter. What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet.” (First husband right, but no love, demands perfection, can't touch. New husband bears responsibility for you, is right and full of love and compassion.)

To try to go back to the grave of the former is a sick kind of spiritual necrophilia, and it can only produce a dead offspring. It will declare that the death of Christ is nothing and those for whom He died as still in sin. 1 Timothy 1:5-10 says, “From which some having swerved have turned aside unto vain jangling; Desiring to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm. But we know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully; Knowing this, that the law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, For whoremongers, for them that defile themselves with mankind, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.”

See? Notice, I said these folks *try* to go back to the law. They *can't* go back; they can only try. The Law is *buried in a secret place*, only God knows where it is. Those who

endeavor to either be saved by the law or go to it for sanctification can never find it. They think they find the law, but all they find is their own self righteousness, their own merit. Their language betrays them. They speak of what they do, what they don't do, and what they are not—never what they are. They build a straw and have never met the guy!

Luke 18:9-13, “And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that *I am not as other men are*, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. *I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.* And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified *rather than the other*: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.”

Something else: What would Joshua, Caleb and the Israelites have to do to go to find Moses' grave? They would have to leave the promised land! I'm not going grave hunting. Are you?

Another thing: Who is the only one in scripture said to be looking for and disputing over Moses' grave? Satan! (Jude 9) Those who seek to be righteous by keeping the law, find themselves in league with the Devil. “For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great

thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness: whose end shall be according to their works.”

3. In v. 9 of our text, we see Christ. Read it in conjunction with Joshua 1:1-2. Joshua was full of the spirit of wisdom. “For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him. The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.” (John 3:34-35).

“Joshua, the son of NUN. That word Nun come from a word meaning “perpetuity, eternity, everlasting.” Consider “son” and “perpetuity.” Scripture says, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.” Joshua— Jehovah saves—Saviour—Jesus... “And thou shall call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins”

What about the law? Look at verse 10. There is nothing but accolades from God. Romans 7:12, “Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.” How sweet a thing is it that the law perfectly serves its purpose.

Finally, the death of Moses and the immediate reason given for it, teaches us the glory of Christ's substitution. It has to do with that Rock (Ex. 17:3, 5-6; Numbers 20:7-12, 1 Corinthians 10:4; Text v. 4). Look back at Numbers 20:12. “Because ye believed me not to sanctify me.” The Law cannot fully honor God for it speaks not to mercy and grace. God is honored fully in the Salvation of His elect by the blood sacrifice of Christ and His righteous life. The smiting of the Rock in Exodus 17 pictured the smiting of the Son of God on

Calvary. It was a one-time act performed on Christ by God Himself—*once!* (Hebrew 9:11-12, 26-28; 10:10-18). *Once*, because once was *enough* (Deut. 25:1-4)! *Once* accomplished salvation. Since it was accomplished, and at the time there were already folks in hell, it was particular. To smite again is to say that Christ did not redeem his people. It makes the work of Christ universal and therefore valueless. This was an issue with the writer of Hebrews (Heb. 10:26-31).

The law can only smite except where justice has been satisfied. It would be illegal, and an unlawful use of the law to smite that which had been fully smitten. God's disposal of Moses and subsequent burial teaches that Christ fully satisfied the law, otherwise we would see Moses in the promised land. But the law is not in the promised land, it is dead and buried by God in a secret place.

One last thing. In Numbers 7:12 our Lord said, "Ye believed me not to sanctify me." In Galatians 3:12, we read "The law is not of faith." In Romans 3:31 we read, "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid; yea, we establish the law." The only people fulfilling the law and honoring the law are those who trust in the person and work of Christ alone. The all live in the promise land. The law is not there.

"But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe."