

## Servant by Choice

Deuteronomy 15:12-17

May 3, 2009

### Intro

We are studying through the book of Deuteronomy, the last book of Moses. Here Moses is preparing Israel to enter into the land of God's promises. Before they go in to possess the land God is giving them, Moses reminds them of the significance of the Law; that is important because many of them were not even alive when they received the law forty years earlier. But he also is seeking spiritual revival.

He knows that Israel must have their hearts right before God. In fact, Moses calls on Israel to love God more than 10 times in the book of Deuteronomy alone. That is what revival is, to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.

Here in these verses, he is reminding them about a portion of the Law that had to do with the Sabbath year. We know that God gave them the seventh day of the week as a day of rest and devotion to the Lord. But God also gave them every seventh year as a Sabbath year.

According to verse one, at the end of every seven years they were to grant a remission of debts. Also, as part of the releasing of debts, they were to set free any slaves among them that were Hebrew kinsman.

These verses become spiritually significant to us because they speak prophetically about Jesus Christ as well as speaking prophetically about our relationship to God.

### **I. Bless Because You have been Blessed**

- 1 In verse twelve, Moses told Israel that they were to set free anyone who was a slave to them who was a Hebrew.
- 2 This was an amazingly generous provision of the Law. If anyone had a great burden of debt and was unable to pay, he could sell himself as a slave to pay off his debts.
- 3 But at the end of six years, that slave must be set free. However, not only should he be set free, but he should be generously provided for so that he could make a new start in life.
- 4 The reason God wanted them to be so generous, to bless so much, was because of how much God had blessed them.

#### A. Remember what God has done for you

- 5 The end of verse 14 is the key. It says, “You shall give to him as the Lord your God has blessed you.”
- 6 Verse 15 then follows, “And you shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt and the Lord your God redeemed you.”
- 7 In other words, they were never to forget where they came from, how God redeemed them from oppression and slavery.

**Illus – The story of John Newton who wrote “Amazing Grace” is a testimony of what grace is truly all about.**

Amazing grace, how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me,  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.

- 8 This then, becomes a powerful principle from God’s Word for us today. We must never forget all that God has done for us; and because of all that God has done for us, we should extend that same blessing to those around us.

**2 Peter 1:7-9 and in your godliness (supply) brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins.**

- 9 If we forget all that God has done for us, it becomes a spiritual tragedy of great consequences.
- 10 Jesus told a story that illustrates the point very powerfully. Peter came and asked him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?”

**Matthew 18: 21-35 The importance of forgiveness**

- 11 We should be kind because we have received kindness. We should be generous because we have received generosity. We should love those around us because we have been loved so completely by God through Jesus Christ.

B. And you will be blessed even more

- 1 The principle from scripture is clear that we should bless because we have been blessed.
- 2 But what is amazing is that if we fulfill the scripture and do what God is asking us to do, then there is even a further blessing in it.
- 3 Verse 10 speaks very clearly about the results of generosity; “because for this thing the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings.”
- 4 There are some verses in Luke that speak to this very powerfully...

**Luke 6:36, 38, “Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful... give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure--pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”**

- 5 There is another scripture that speaks to this as well...

**Ecclesiastes 11:1, Cast your bread on the surface of the waters, for you will find it after many days.**

- 6 I have found this to be very true. We give grace because we have received so much grace from God, but then we are blessed even more when that grace comes back to us.
- 7 This is one of the most powerful principles I know in scripture. It’s a powerful way to lead.

**Illus – Many years ago, someone was unhappy about something in the church, and I received a strongly worded letter from one of that person’s relatives living almost 2,500 miles away...**

- 8 And if we will go the extra mile to minister and bless those around us, even when we don’t feel like it, God will give us extra strength and bless us in return.

**Illus – My brother and sisters took my dad deep sea fishing, and I was sick the whole time. But I had to speak that night at a family Christian retreat...**

**App – Therefore, if you help someone overcome discouragement, you also are lifted up. If you help strengthen someone else’s faith, your faith is also strengthened.**

## **II. Become a Servant by Choice**

- 1 In verses 16-17, God made a provision for anyone who was a servant, but loved their master and their master's family so much that they did not want to leave.
- 2 That servant could declare his desire to stay, and then they could take an awl and pierce it through his ear into a door, and he would then become a servant by choice forever.
- 3 To have your ear pierced to such a degree used to be considered a dramatic thing, but many young people today don't see it as dramatic at all.

#### A. Jesus is a bond-servant Himself

- 1 God does not ask us to do what He Himself has not done in Jesus Christ. He asks us to become a bond-servant of God by following the example of Jesus Christ.
- 2 One of the most powerful scriptures that shows us Christ's heart is found in Philippians 2...

#### **Philippians 2:3-11 Jesus came as a bond-servant**

- 3 When Jesus was on the cross, he became the greatest of bond-servants because he was pierced through for our transgressions.
- 4 He did this by His own choice.

#### **John 10:18, No one takes my life from me, but I lay it down of my own accord.**

- 5 He then submits His will to that of the Father when He said...

#### **Luke 22:42, "Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done."**

- 1 Finally, Psalm 40...

#### **Psalm 40:6-8 "My ears you have opened... I delight to do your will, O my God."**

#### B. You get to choose

- 6 It's very important to see that the bond-servant was someone who made the choice of his own free will to become a bond-servant.
  - 7 The reason was because he loved his master and knew that he wanted to be near him and serve him the rest of his life.
- 1 It was interesting that Jesus said to His disciples that he considered them as friends...

**John 15:15, “No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.”**

8 Yet they referred to themselves as bond-servants.

**2 Peter 1:1, Simon Peter, a bond-servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ...**

9 This is the result of loving the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength.

1 We love because we choose to love, otherwise it is not love.

2 But loving God means that we also desire to serve Him as a bond-servant. It means that we desire to please Him in our lives.

**Galatians 1:10, For am I now seeking the favor of men, or of God? Or am I striving to please men? If I were still trying to please men, I would not be a bond-servant of Christ.**

C. Don't be in the miserable middle

10 As was said by that great American philosopher, Bob Dylan, “You're gonna have to serve somebody. Well, it may be the devil or it may be the Lord, but you're gonna have to serve somebody.”

**Romans 6:16, Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?**

11 Some people, however, try to have it both ways. They want to be in God, but they also want to be in the world.

12 This is what is called the “miserable middle.”

13 These people have enough of Jesus to be miserable in the world and enough of the world to not be truly satisfied in Christ.

14 In the book of Ezekiel there is a beautiful picture of the moving of the Holy Spirit in the last days. It describes that there is at first a trickle that flows from the holy mountain; and then it gets deeper, up to the ankles; and then to the knees, etc., and finally it becomes a mighty river bringing life wherever it flows.

15 How deep do you want to be?

16 Joshua challenged Israel at the end of his life, and we still hear that challenge today...

**Joshua 24:15, “If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”**