

Deuteronomy

The Law (4:41-26:19)

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The Law (4:41-26:19)

Warning Against Self Righteousness (9:1-29)

Original Context

In order to experience God's blessings, the people of God must submit to Him and turn from being rebellious and "stiff-necked" (9:6).¹ The task was great, but God was greater. Moses did not attempt to "sugar-coat" the task, but he sought to inspire the people to "strengthen faith in Israel's one great ally - Yahweh their God."² God promised to go before them like a "consuming fire" to clear the path for His people to possess the Land (9:3).³ The people had to do their part as well.

Yet, it was not Israel's righteousness that caused God to lead them to such blessings (9:4-6). Only God's grace kept Israel from being destroyed along with the other nations, for they were equally wicked and under God's judgment.⁴ They were a "stiff-necked people" (9:6).

"Stiff-necked" is a description for people who have become stubborn against the will of God and impudent to Him and His will.⁵ The meaning comes from an agricultural theme in which a yoke is placed on oxen, but the oxen do not respond to the master.⁶ Thus, when Israel is described as "stiff-necked," it is a

picture of the people refusing to bend to the will of God or even fighting against Him (9:13).

Moses tells the story of Israel's rebelliousness (9:7-24), beginning with "the most horrendous illustration of their congenital and ingrained stubbornness."⁷ This is the rebellion at Horeb (Ex 32-34). Rather than seeing themselves as deserving the Land because of their righteousness, Moses was calling them to see and remember how unrighteous they had been before God, especially at the rebellion in the giving of the Decalogue.⁸ The smashing of the two tablets (9:17) is the declaration that the covenant between God and this people was null and void.⁹

This event at Horeb creates the impression that the rebellion there is "representative of the road the Exodus generation has chosen."¹⁰ The summary of Israel's rebellion against God in the wilderness reinforces this perspective (9:22). The place names (Taberah, Massah, and Kibroth Hattaavah) serve as code words for the nature of their rebellion. Taberah is a picture of God's response to Israel's "sour disposition," Massah is a picture of Israel's "contentious disposition" toward Moses and God, and Kibroth Hattaavah is a picture of the unfettered yearnings of the people when they complained against God for the provision of the manna.¹¹ By using these names, Moses clearly shows that the entire history of God's people from the Exodus to the entry into the Promised Land was "Horeb-history."¹²

Moses interceded on behalf of Israel because of God's wrath against them. This was not the first time that Moses appealed to God in prayer on behalf of the people, and again God listened to him (9:19).¹³ The intercession of Moses on behalf of Israel demonstrates his desire for God's gracious intervention, as well as rejecting God's offer to destroy all Israel and start the covenant over with Moses (9:25-29).¹⁴

The prayer of Moses makes much of God's ownership and covenant with Israel (9:25-29).¹⁵ When God referred to Israel in 9:12, He assigned possession of the people to Moses; "your (Moses') people whom you (Moses) brought out of Egypt." When Moses responded in petition to God, he returned assignation of Israel to God; "do not destroy Your people and Your inheritance whom You redeemed through Your greatness, whom You have brought out of Egypt with a mighty hand" (9:26).¹⁶

Eternal Truth

1. Our righteousness is filthy rags. With Israel, we can become consumed with a view of our own righteousness, as though God owed us His rescue and

provision because we are so “good.” Yet, such a view is contrary to the whole of Scripture. Isaiah declared:

But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away. (Isaiah 64:6)

As Paul makes clear in Romans 1-3, all of humanity lives under the power of sin, and we are under the mandate to Torah obedience, but the failure to do so “vitiates any claims to righteousness.”¹⁷

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:23–26)

Humanity in sin exists on a downward spiral of depravity in which we are totally hopeless in sin and utterly unable to deliver ourselves from the power of sin.¹⁸ Our entire being, every particle of our person, has been infected with the corruption of sin.¹⁹ This corruption is at the core of our being and, like a cancer, has spread to every part of who we are.²⁰

The Fall (Gen 1-3) made it impossible for us to please God²¹ and to overcome sin of ourselves.²² We are on a spiral downward into the darkest depths of sin and suffering with no power to stop the plunge.²³ Desiring to fulfill the Torah yet failing to do so is a universal dilemma (Rom 3:23).²⁴ Shame is the result of our desperation. Because we desire a relationship with God and cannot gain it, we feel the persistent power of shame pervading our soul. This is true for all humanity.²⁵

Men are prepared to recognize that somewhere there is a deep disharmony in their nature, something setting up a friction: what they are not prepared to recognize is that it is a disharmony with God.²⁶

The deepest longing that we have is righteousness that we do not possess, and this righteousness is found through Jesus Christ. Apart from grace through Him, we remain fixed in the depravity of our condition, corrupted utterly by sin. As Paul writes:

Through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. (Romans 5:18)

We do not have righteousness of our own that deserves God's favor. Only God in His love and grace provides the righteousness we need to be made right in His sight. Just as Israel failed in obedience to the Law, we fail in our obedience to the Law. Just as God did not give Israel the blessings of the covenant because of their righteousness (9:6), God does not give us the blessings of salvation because of our righteousness. Yet, God in His grace provides righteousness on our behalf through Jesus Christ (2 Cor 5:21).

2. Kill sin. When Moses came down from Mount Sinai, he utterly and completely destroyed the object and symbol of Israel's sin (9:21).²⁷

Then I took your sin, the calf which you had made, and burned it with fire and crushed it and ground it very small, until it was as fine as dust; and I threw its dust into the brook that descended from the mountain.
(Deuteronomy 9:21)

In order to fulfill repentance, we must also deal radically with our sin. We live in confusing times. The nature of our world is filled with things that call us to live openly rebellious before God. This is not new. Jesus wants us to have clarity in such times as these. Jesus calls us to deal ruthlessly with sin so that we might pursue a life in faithfulness to God.

"If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell." (Matthew 5:29-30)

Jesus made clear the dangers for us if we do not take drastic action.²⁸ Jesus called His followers to pluck out eyes and cut off hands.²⁹ It was a poignant statement that calls us to remove stumbling blocks.³⁰ He said it would be better to be eye-less and hand-less than to be cast into hell.³¹ We must destroy the sin that entangles us.³²

To kill sin, we must set our focus on Jesus Christ.³³ As Paul noted, in his own personal troubles, he lifted upon his own shoulders the death of Jesus and the life of Jesus.

But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh to fulfill its lusts. (Romans 13:14)

Here is the key for us. We must clothe ourselves in Jesus Christ.³⁴ Each morning and throughout the day, we must consciously and intentionally clothe ourselves with Jesus Christ, allowing His faithfulness, strength, demands, and character shape us.

3. The power of prayer. Moses cried out to God on behalf of Israel. In spite of their rebellion against God, God heard Moses and relented from destroying Israel. There is something very powerful in the prayer of one who lives in intimate fellowship with God, one who lives in right-standing with Him.

Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. (James 5:16)

James coaches his readers to see that the pathway to power-filled living is prayer.³⁵ Prayer and praise are an act of worship in which we confess, “God, I place my life in Your hands.”³⁶ It is surrendering our heart and life to God, seeking strength to endure the difficult days.³⁷ When we surrender ourselves to God’s will and purpose, to His best for our lives, then we move forward on the pathway to power-filled living.³⁸

The prayer of faith makes a difference.³⁹ This is the prayer that is bound up in the absolute confidence and trust in sovereign God. It is a prayer of a heart absolutely dependent and surrendered to Him.⁴⁰ This prayer of faith makes a difference because it gives us the right spirit and divine perspective to our life.⁴¹

The prayer of faith brings health to the sick.⁴² The prayer of faith brings forgiveness for sin.⁴³ The prayer of faith stops the rain and brings it back again. The prayer of faith from the heart of a person surrendered to Christ is powerful in the work it accomplishes.⁴⁴ This is what happened to those who were cheerful and sang songs of praise to the Lord.⁴⁵ They weren’t merely happy because things in their world were good.⁴⁶ They had the “peace of mind” that God alone gives even when circumstances stink.⁴⁷

The power God promises comes through prayer, and this power is amplified when God’s faithful join the journey with us. When we pray for a grandchild in trouble, a friend having surgery, a co-worker who needs Christ, or a neighbor who needs help, we are asking God to direct His power in a specific way.⁴⁸

The power is not in an individual, an incantation, or oil. The power is God’s, and He alone dispenses it.⁴⁹ But God coaches the church to gather together to help one another experience the power that He wants to send their way.⁵⁰ Although

the Bible makes great promises about prayer, we must never believe that God has surrendered control of the universe to us.⁵¹ It is the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous person.

Rewards and Punishments (10:1-11:32)

Original Context

Moses completes the picture of the Exodus generation (10:1-11). Following their rebellion, God made two more tablets of the Law to show His favor upon the people again (10:1-5).⁵² After placing the two tablets in the ark⁵³ and setting aside the tribe of Levi (10:6-9), Moses hears God's call to begin the journey to the Promised Land (10:10-11).⁵⁴

In a beautiful array of poetic and theologically rich language, Moses offers a summary of the contents of the book of Deuteronomy (10:12-22).⁵⁵ Because of all that God has done for Israel, "gratitude, not less than awe, should prompt Israel to yield ready and loving obedience to His holy will."⁵⁶ The power and promise to occupy the Land is realized through full and complete obedience to God as His people walking in His ways as revealed through the Law.⁵⁷

Similar to Micah 6:8, 10:12-13 show them what God requires: 1) to fear Him, 2) to walk in His ways, 3) to love Him, 4) to serve Him, and 5) to keep all His commandments. This statement flows with "fear the Lord" [יראה יהוה; *yirāh Yahweh*] as the dominant force, and the other verbs provide expansion and definition to what it means to fear the Lord.⁵⁸ God calls us to exclusive loyalty, obedience, love, and service to Himself.⁵⁹ This obedience to God is for the good of Israel.⁶⁰

As the glorious Lord God, He has ownership of all the heavens, yet He took delight in loving and choosing Israel (10:14-15). They must therefore circumcise their hearts and let go all stubbornness (10:16). The ritual practice of circumcision is transformed into a metaphor for intense loyalty to God to make the heart more "sensitive and responsive to YHWH" which is the exact opposite of stubbornness.⁶¹ This is, in fact, a picture of repentance; moving from rebellion to obedience.⁶²

Because of who God is (10:17) and because of how He relates to those in need (10:18), God's people are called to express extravagant and generous love to those who are "strangers" (10:19).⁶³ God, who is supreme in power, is also supreme in justice.

Nothing could be more characteristic of Israel's "counter-cultural" faith. The majestic monotheistic superlatives of verses 14 and 17 are harnessed, not to the glory and power of the wealthy and strong, but to the needs of the poor, the weak, and the vulnerable. . . . Yahweh is the God who loves the aliens and feeds and clothes them.⁶⁴

As God loves, so His people must love.⁶⁵ This rounds out the powerful picture of how God expects His people to respond to His gracious acts of love and supreme reign over the universe: repent (10:16) and love the stranger (10:19). He summarizes the actions of the covenant toward unfettered devotion with the call to fear the Lord, serve Him, hold fast to Him, and swear oaths by the name of Lord (10:20). Unfettered devotion belongs to the Lord because He is the object of Israel's praise, and when the nations see all that God has done for Israel, they will praise Him (10:21).⁶⁶

God's great acts of love and discipline pulse through the hearts of the generation who had seen those acts (11:2-7).⁶⁷ Therefore, they must love God supremely and obey Him unreservedly (11:1, 8). The blessings and rewards of obedience is that His people would be strong to seize the opportunity that God had given them⁶⁸ and possess the Land that He had promised.⁶⁹ The promise is that God cares about the Land and keeps His attention on it at all times.⁷⁰ This persistent and continuous care is in direct contrast to the fertility gods of the Ancient Near East whose care for the land was resigned to the seasons of rain and drought. When it rained, these gods cared. When it was a season of drought, these gods were distracted. Such was not the case for the God of Israel. He was never distracted from His care for the land or the people therein. The condition for Israel to experience the rewards of God's care in the Land is obedience to His commands (11:8-12, 18-21).⁷¹ If, however, Israel becomes so "open-minded" that they look to the Canaanite gods as objects of their worship, then God will shut up the heavens and withhold His blessings (11:16-17).⁷²

Absolute and unwavering commitment to God produces His blessings. He will give them the Land (11:22-25). God's obligation to His people is dependent upon their absolute love for God demonstrated by obedience to His commands.⁷³ When God's people obey, then He will bless them. When they disobey, then they will taste the curse rather than the blessing (11:26-32).⁷⁴

Eternal Truth

1. Fear the Lord. The theme of fearing the Lord is constant throughout Scripture. It is a call to God's people to love Him supremely, to walk in all His ways, to serve Him unreservedly. Like Moses in Deuteronomy, the preacher in

Ecclesiastes draws the same conclusion, not merely about the covenant between God and humanity, but also for the whole of life.

Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, For this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, Including every secret thing, Whether good or evil.⁷⁵

Even though life has some pretty awesome qualities, there is the darkness of life that can overshadow all things.⁷⁶ It caused the preacher to describe everything as emptiness.⁷⁷ We can enjoy life, but there is the somber note of dread that the preacher strikes. There is coming judgment.

Accountability is a term that can make us cringe. To be held accountable means that we must answer for the things we've done or not done. We are accountable to God for the life that we live (Eccl 11:9-10). So, a lifestyle that fears God demands that we live according to our accountability to our Creator.

We adjust our life to fit God's character. Although the preacher tells young people to follow their heart and eyes, there's something that just doesn't ring true in that counsel.⁷⁸ To live today like there's no tomorrow may be a theme that you recognize,⁷⁹ there is tomorrow.⁸⁰ So, we must adjust our life to be ready for the accountability that we face before God.⁸¹

We get the right focus in mind. Here's what we need to hear, whether the preacher intended it this way or not.⁸² We must pursue life, beginning now, with our hearts and lives set in humility before God. This means that we reject the frustration of living life apart from God. And it means that we dismiss sin from the equation of our life (Eccl 12:1).⁸³

The command we hear from the preacher is to remember our Creator. This is wise counsel, recognizing that we are accountable to Him. To remember God is to keep Him and His dealings with us and others at the forefront of our lives.⁸⁴ This is the key to finding the pathway out of frustration and sin that the world presses upon us.⁸⁵

We have a view of eternity each day. There is a day of reckoning for everyone (Eccl 12:6-7). This will be the day when we stand before our Creator and He evaluates the content of our life and the character of our heart.⁸⁶ The preacher describes the onslaught of old age through the metaphor of a storm rising on the horizon.⁸⁷ Everyone faces the onslaught of the dark clouds coming.⁸⁸ And then we die. And then we face eternity.⁸⁹

When it comes to the day of reckoning and eternity, we need to understand that only one theme will prepare us for that day. The preacher found himself still shrunk in the wrap of emptiness in this life (Eccl 12:8). What about you? The truth that moves us beyond the maze of meaninglessness is here for us to grasp today, as it was for the preacher way back then (Eccl 12:9-10). He sought to find the theme of delight, but he didn't. He sought to write words of truth, but he came up short.⁹⁰

Fear God! This theme must transform our lives. It is not enough to know the textbook's theme.⁹¹ It must become our theme. And to fear God is the theme that consumes every portion of our lives. Every thought and act is transformed into obedience to God because we live in absolute awe and surrender to Him (Eccl 12:13-14).

The whole of life is formed by the fear of the Lord. It is the complete summary of what it means to live in the world of God's creation.⁹² To fear the Lord means that we acknowledge and submit to His rule in our lives. We must acknowledge that God is God and we are not. It is not enough to follow a religious path. We must bow our lives before Him in surrender.

As we seek to fear God, we come face to face with our sin. Although we try to eradicate sin from our lives, God's holiness is just too much for our frailty. So, we are chased by sin to the grace of God. It is only through God's grace that we find a lifestyle of reverential awe and wonder for God. It is only by God's grace that we enter into a right-standing with Him through faith in Christ.

When we are wrapped in God's embrace of grace, we now seek to live in obedience to His command. This is the way of life that seeks God's honor above our own. It is the life that every follower of Christ must pursue. There is in Scripture a clear and sobering truth that we all will stand before Christ to be judged by Him. There is the judgment of Christ upon those who will spend eternity with Him in heaven (2 Cor 5:9-11), and there is the judgment of Christ upon those who will not spend eternity with Him in heaven (Matt 7:21-23). Judgment is coming, are you ready? It is the fear of the Lord that prepares our hearts for that moment in eternity when we stand face to face with holy God.

2. Love the stranger (1 John 3:10-18). John's focus in the preceding passage and in the following verses is a call for followers of Jesus Christ to live obediently to God. This is the essence of practicing righteousness.⁹³ An outworking of this righteous character belonging to followers of Christ, the children of God, is love. The believer has in their character the DNA to love others. This is a key characteristic of those who have been transformed by God's love through Christ.

The amazing love of God (3:1-3) is poured into the heart of His children so that they now practice love for others. This love is a reflection of the character of righteousness. As a follower of Christ, we desire to do what He wants. We do what He wants when we love others. Those who do not know Christ do not practice this extravagant love.

The love that we have for others is a sign that we have passed from death to life (1 John 3:14).⁹⁴ This is an important truth for us to hear. The love that Christ has poured into the life of His children will be shown in demonstrable and visible love. The pattern of this love is Jesus Christ.

Jesus loved without reservation. He laid down His life for us. As Jesus gave Himself without reservation to bless us with life, we must also give ourselves to bless one another. That is how to love the way He has loved us. By this, the world will know that we are His followers. We must love one another without reservation, even as Christ has loved us. He loved us even though we were hostile toward Him.⁹⁵ And by this, the world will know that we are His followers. Jesus declared that the world comes to the understanding that we are His followers by our love for one another.⁹⁶

This is the manner of love that we must display for others. We must love them without reservation or condition. We must serve others the way that Christ has served us. To help one another. To cry with one another. To laugh with one another. To dance with one another. To sit with one another. To mow our neighbor's yard. To clean our friend's house. To wash our friend's feet. By this, the world will know that we are Christ's followers.

Jesus loved with passion, and He was committed to fulfill the mandate of His passionate love.⁹⁷ Christ's passionate love led Him to die upon a cross for God's glory and the salvation of sinners. And it is this love that we must display for the world to see and others to experience.

3. Love God in obedience (John 15:9-13). Deuteronomy makes much of obedience to God and His commands. Although obedience to God is not the prerequisite to obedience, it is a sign of our love and commitment to God as followers of Christ.⁹⁸

Christ has built the church to foster authentic relationships centered around His glorious love. It's still hard, but He shows us how we can experience the soul-satisfying love and joy-producing relationships. Jesus offers joy that is full and running over (John 15:11). It means that we have satisfaction regardless of the circumstances or pain that envelopes our hearts. We find joy on our journey through an intimate connection with Jesus Christ that spills over into our hearts.

We find joy when we embrace and savor the lifestyle of love – receiving love from Christ and giving His love to others.

Jesus used the imagery of the vine to show the powerful nourishment and life that we can have if we are rightly connected to Him.⁹⁹ The theme in John 15 is to “abide.” In the original language, it means simply to make your home in a particular place.¹⁰⁰ It is a call to set down roots and to dwell in that place.¹⁰¹

Jesus told His followers that the key to a nourished life is an abiding relationship with Himself, in which He surrounds us and we immerse ourselves in Him.¹⁰² Our productivity comes through our surrender to Christ, living in the embrace of His love and in concert with His will.¹⁰³ Apart from Him, we can do nothing.¹⁰⁴ For those who do not abide in Jesus, destruction is promised.¹⁰⁵

The love of the Father through the Son is planted into our hearts (John 15:9). Jesus who loves us will also care for us. We live in Christ’s love and find a satisfied life. We find supreme comfort and joy when Jesus grips our hearts with an amazing love.

Jesus said that we find the best when we do what He tells us to do (John 15:10, 14). He told His followers that this brings God pleasure. And we have all been built with the necessity to bring God pleasure. Our obedience to the Father fosters the experience and inspiration of our love for Him. If we say that we love Him, then we will be obedient to Him.¹⁰⁶ The more we love Him, the more we desire to obey Him.¹⁰⁷ And the more we obey Him, the deeper the intimacy we experience with Him.¹⁰⁸

Ceremonial Laws: Worship (12:1-28)

Original Context

Beginning in chapter 12, Moses turns to the specific statutes and ordinances (Deut 12:1-26:19) to which Israel must adhere in obedience to God. Moses declares these statutes and ordinances with an imperative to keep and obey all of it. The purpose of these statutes and judgments is “to bring every aspect of the public life of Israel under the aegis of the God of Sinai.”¹⁰⁹

Worship is the first statute and ordinance on the list (12:1-28). God calls Israel to seek out the place which God chooses for corporate worship (12:5). The first order of business is to clean out all the pagan sites of worship (12:1-3). The command of 12:4 “means that they are not to serve Yahweh the way Canaanites served their gods – multiplying shrines and constructing all kinds of cultic

accoutrements for their worship.”¹¹⁰ God will choose a specific place within the tribes and will make Himself personally available to His people there for worship.¹¹¹

This place will be God’s own place. His name indicates divine ownership. When God places His name on the place, He sets it aside as for Himself as the founder and for His people to find Him in worship (12:5).¹¹² God invites His people to come to Him with regular access for intimate expressions of adoration, blessing, celebration, and commitment (12:6-7).¹¹³

Worship is coming to the presence of God at His invitation. It is a call to bring all their offerings before the Lord, including burnt offerings, sacrifices, tithes, sacred donations, votive offerings, freewill offerings, and firstborn animal offerings. Although this is not an exhaustive list, it does provide a theology for worship among God’s people living in the land. They are further called to worship in celebration for all that God had done for them.¹¹⁴

Worship of God further requires a change that must occur in the hearts of His people (12:8-12). No longer must they do whatever they want, but they must have worship that is morally pure in obedience to God as well as inclusive for the whole community.¹¹⁵

The nature of worship demands that the offerings of any sort that are dedicated to the Lord God must be brought specifically to the place of His worship (12:13-28). Yet, the people of God could enjoy the benefits of God’s good gifts through slaughtering animals for food, as long as they do not eat the blood or the tithe that declared God’s ownership.¹¹⁶ Breuggemann offers this helpful analysis:

1. Right worship is life-affirming, open to one’s “life desires,” but not catering to every “appetite” (v. 8).
2. Right worship is under the discipline of offering and sacrifices, requiring the bringing of serious, costly, intentional gifts that bespeak acknowledgment of YHWH’s sovereignty.
3. Right worship is an enactment of communal joy, a celebration possible because of confidence in YHWH, a joy that is public and available from YHWH in every circumstance. Such worship is an affirmation in every circumstance, but when necessary it can also be circumstance denying.
4. Right worship is profoundly material; it is an act of bodily enjoyment through eating the good gifts of the blessed land.
5. Right worship includes the Levites, and therefore it is consciously permeated by the narrative memories and current demands of Torah.¹¹⁷

This “life-affirming” celebration at home and in the place of worship declares that Israel is not autonomous or self-sufficient, but absolutely dependent and directed by God.

Eternal Truth

Paul calls us to worship God in light of all that He has done for us (Rom 12:1-2). Worship for followers of Christ demands that we give all that we are to Him. We present our bodies to God. Here is the essence of a life that makes a difference for God. We do not merely present our songs as the sounds of worship. We do not merely present our minds as playground of praise. We do not merely present our Sundays as the singular moment of our devotion to Christ. We lay our bodies before God as an offering to Him.¹¹⁸ We give God every aspect of our lives as a sacrifice for His glory.¹¹⁹ We give Him everything that we are. Our work, our play, our relationships! We present everything of us to Him.

The motivation for such a presentation is found in the phrase, by the mercies of God.¹²⁰ By virtue of God’s mercies which were outpoured upon the believers, every believer should desire to present himself to Christ as a sacrifice upon the altar.¹²¹

Sacrifice is only fitting when offered to God. Nothing we do in church or at work is of any value if the object of worship is not the Lord God. Service in the church and good relations with church members is commendable, but it is only of eternal significance if the sacrifice upon the altar is for Christ and His Kingdom.

Three adjectives offer further description of the type of sacrifice that the Roman believers were to present: living, holy, and well-pleasing.¹²² We are a living sacrifice. God desires active service, not dead ritual.¹²³ We are a holy sacrifice. God demands service to be from a pure heart, undefiled by sin and wholly devoted to Him.¹²⁴ We are a pleasing sacrifice. Our service is useless unless our supreme ambition is God’s pleasure.¹²⁵

When we think about God’s mercies overflowing to us, how can we do less than give ourselves wholly to God?¹²⁶ It is our conscious and consecrated devotion to serve God.¹²⁷ It is “reasonable service.” It is our determined, logical, rational, and spiritual service of worship to God.¹²⁸ The reasonable response to God as a follower of Christ is to give all that we are to Him.¹²⁹

Worship means that we reject this world’s pattern for living. The apostle Paul offers two succinct commands which describe two consistent actions of giving all that we are to God.¹³⁰

The world's mold won't fit. Don't be conformed any longer to the mold of this world.¹³¹ We refuse to be shaped by the world in which we live.¹³² It is a mold, a pattern of life, which does not fit a follower of Christ. And if we continue to be pressed into this pattern of life, we will find ourselves fumbling and tumbling headlong into misery.¹³³ But the world wants to squeeze us into its mold.¹³⁴

We can't give our service to God and the world. As long as we allow this age to shape us into its mold, we will fail to live in the fullness of God's pleasure.¹³⁵ Paul, therefore, calls the believers in Rome to stop conforming themselves to the world's pattern for living.¹³⁶

Worship also means that we pursue a transformed lifestyle each day. The way of non-conformity comes through the second command: be transformed.¹³⁷ We are to pursue a change in form continually. This is the pursuit of a surrendered life to the work of the Holy Spirit.¹³⁸ Paul describes the work of the Holy Spirit in the phrase, "renewing the mind."¹³⁹

The mind is where we make our moral judgments and daily decisions.¹⁴⁰ Renewing the mind is focusing mind and life upon the hope that we have in Christ rather than the pleasures and treasures of this world.¹⁴¹ It is the process of the Spirit to transform the inward perception and ways of understanding so that the outward conduct might reflect the transformation.¹⁴²

We see our lives and work from God's point of view. When we yield our emotions, our desires, our whole being to the Spirit's work of transformation, we begin to discover and prove the good, well-pleasing, and perfect will of God.¹⁴³ We do not discover God's will when we employ the world's pattern for living. We discover God's perfect will that is good and pleasurable when the Spirit directs us to a new way of thinking and living according to His Word.¹⁴⁴ Through the work of the Spirit in the lives of His people, the minds are renewed and the lives are transformed so that Christ's glory is revealed through their conduct.¹⁴⁵

In worship, we fix our gaze on God's glory. It is through this focus on the splendor and majesty and perfection of God that we begin to hear His instructions on the details of our lives.¹⁴⁶ When we focus on God in all His glory, the mold of this world is shattered and the Spirit begins to renew our minds so that we see ourselves, our circumstances, and our work from God's point of view.

In worship, we fix our gaze upon God's mercies. We were children of wrath, covered by the guilt and death and stench of our sin, but God's rich mercy moved heaven and earth to bring Jesus Christ as Savior for sinners. We were

rebellious, disobedient, hostile toward God, refusing to taste the joy of His glory, but God's rich mercy moved heaven and earth to bring Jesus Christ as Savior for sinners. We were captured in the maelstrom of misery, each breath a reminder of the death we so vigorously embraced, but God's rich mercy moved heaven and earth to bring Jesus Christ as Savior for sinners like you and me.

Ceremonial Laws: Sources of Temptation (12:29-13:18)

Original Context

Beginning with 12:29, Moses turns to the temptations that would lead God's people away from allegiance and love to Him. There is a danger that they will be ensnared and drawn away to other gods (12:30).¹⁴⁷ Yet, Moses highlights the abomination and deterrent to the enticements. Everything that they do to worship their gods is something God hates, including the sacrifice of sons or daughters in worship (12:31).

The seduction of 13:1-5 is a prophet or a dreamer of dreams. A prophet [נביא; *nābî'*] is one who is summoned by a deity to proclaim a message they receive from the deity. As Heschel states, "His entire existence is dedicated to his mission."¹⁴⁸ Even Max Weber, who examines the prophet from the sociological perspective, states that the decisive element in the prophet is his divine call to proclaim a command.¹⁴⁹ The dreamer of dreams [חלם חלום; *chōlēm chālôm*] is a "professional who has access to the mind of deity through dreams."¹⁵⁰ The prophet or dreamer gives a sign or wonder to authenticate the message to serve other gods. Rather than listen to the religious leader, the people should remove him from their midst by putting him to death.

The second trap is when a member of the household or the closest of friends entices them to worship other gods (13:6-11). Rather than listening to their enticements to apostasy, they must remove them from their midst by stoning them to death. The result will be fear so that the enticement should not be repeated.

In 13:12-18, the third scenario involves scoundrels¹⁵¹ who seek to persuade the community to serve and worship other gods. After careful examination and inquiry, if the charges are proved true, then all within the community led astray must be killed and the town must be burned completely.¹⁵² The goal of such annihilation is that there be no corruption of God's people and their loyal love to Him in the Land.

Eternal Truth

Temptation remains a problem for God's people today. Temptation comes to followers of Christ with the same kind of allurements as Moses described. When we seek to deal with temptation, we need to understand its nature.

James highlights the internal struggle of temptation (James 1:

temptation to follow a path not designed by God can be overwhelming. Today, we need to know that temptation finds fertile ground in our soul struggling with the trials of life as a follower of Christ.

When we find ourselves consumed by trials and enticed by sin, we can declare that God is to blame! The rationale moves something like this: "God is in charge of everything. The problems in my life are His doing. I sinned because of the problems in my life -- which He controls. God caused me to sin."

Testing trials have temptation as a constant companion.¹⁵³ We have money problems, and we doubt God's presence and power in our lives. So, we choose to abandon God's purpose and pursue a path that looks easier or prettier. Someone we love dies, and we doubt God's love for us. So, we choose to abandon God's best for our lives and pursue a path that has no road-signs written by God's hand.

And when we embrace the temptation and rush into sin, we blame God. If He would have made life easier for us, we would have been true to Him and His purpose. He had the power to make our life happy, didn't He? He chose to give me trouble rather than joy, didn't He?

James responds with a clear, concise statement on the nature of God. God never instigates sin. It is contrary to His character.¹⁵⁴ God wants the best for us, even when trials push us into a tight place. The devil's desire is to disrupt God's purposes and to destroy our lives as Christ's followers. So, he takes the tests that we face and paints a deceptive portrait of a better life outside God's plan. That's temptation. We look at the painting that the devil created and we see the reality of the difficulties we have following God's purpose. But we must always remember that God always wants the best for our lives and the devil always wants to destroy us.

The root problem of our inward trouble is a faulty heart. It is a heart that is not inclined toward Him. Impurity destroys. A believer who bows to the idol of impurity is a depressed, powerless, restless individual. A believer who bows to the idol of impurity is overwhelmed by the darkness of separation from the light

of the world. Jesus declares that we become impure, not by what we eat, but by a heart that is contrary to the will of God.¹⁵⁵

And He was saying, "That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. "All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man." (Mark 7:20-23, NASB)

Christ came to fix our faulty heart and lead us to newness of life in Him. Yet, the struggle with impurity remains. In the end, we must bend our hearts to the Spirit's control so that the new heart that Christ has given us might beat with the holiness of God. The Spirit's work in our daily lives washes the grit of impurity from our heart (Ps 51:10). Through the Spirit we gain a heart that beats to know God more each day (Jer 24:7; Eph 1:17). The Spirit tenderizes our heart for God's purpose and will (Ez 11:19-20). He has already given the new heart, but we must live accordingly. We must abandon our old nature and embrace the heart of Christ. We must surrender ourselves completely to the will and purpose of the Father.

Each day, followers of Christ enter into the battle zone with sin. Each day, we face the choice to live outside God's plan or to remain faithful to His purpose in us. If we're going to pass this daily exam, we need to understand the process and the nature of sin. The more we understand, the better equipped we will be to overcome sin and live victoriously for the honor and fame of Christ.

There is a thought, a picture, a circumstance that promises quick pleasure or escape from the difficulties of our day. Sin throws its enticement our way, and we like its color, are consumed by its dance, and are drawn into the circle of its song. Enticement is not sin yet. It is merely the appetite of our soul longing for something.¹⁵⁶ Magnetically drawn to this lure, we approach the desire which is contrary to God's will.¹⁵⁷ It seeps into our hearts and minds and struggles to lure us into sin. Our desire and yearning¹⁵⁸ create the stage for the drama of sin to unfold.

The devil has a multitude of materials at his disposal to entice us to sin. He brings them to us in different colors, different dances, different sights, and different sounds. Each one will lead us to trouble, but the temptations will come. We need to grow in our understanding of the enticements. Get smart, because if we take hold of the enticement, we'll be captured by sin.

The second stage in the process of sin comes when the desire gestates in our soul and gives birth to sin.¹⁵⁹ We give ourselves, not to God's plan or will, but to the

yearning in our heart so that the desire is no longer desire but the pursuit of fulfillment. The conception of desire – by which we embrace and nurture it – gives birth to sin.¹⁶⁰

Sin has one pathway toward which it becomes fully realized. That finished work is death. We want something to move us out of our painful circumstances. We desire to move out of the external trials through a pathway that God has not condoned or commended. We want to experience something about which God has told us to wait. We seek immediate gratification of a yearning, but God wants us to hold off until His perfect plan is in place. And everything that we think we see on the pathway of the lure of sin leads to one end ... death.¹⁶¹

We need to learn the process of sin and temptation. We need to get smart about the allurements that come our way so that we might shut our minds and our mouths to these enticements and not be captured by sin. For, when we are captured by our choice to sin, the end-game is our destruction.

There are two pathways that promise blessing. One pathway begins with great promise, but it eventually ends in a wilderness where there is no life. It is the pathway that leads our lives to be dust in the wind. The other pathway also promises the best in life, but it delivers. This is the pathway that leads us to the rivers of living water, nourishing our soul and satisfying us completely.

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, Nor stand in the path of sinners, Nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the Lord, And in His law he meditates day and night. (Psalm 1:1-2, NASB)

The first pathway is littered by the wisdom of the ungodly, the loitering of sinners, and the stubborn refusals of the scornful men. The second pathway that promises the blessing of God and delivers moves through every landscape of life directed by God's will and purpose. Regardless the terrain through which we travel, when we are directed by God, we experience the blessing of God.

Suppose you receive an offer for something in the mail. The offer in large, bold print promises great things. Just the things we're hoping for. But then you turn the page and the "smaller than you can see" print at the bottom tell the true story. The "fine print" tells the real price that we have to pay to get those promises that we want.

Sin writes its promises in bold print. Be happy. Have fun. No worries. Whatever the enticement, the "fine print" tells us the real price. The deception of sin can fool us, but we need to read the fine print. Deception can destroy us.

When we see the enticement of sin dangling and dancing before us, we need to remember what's waiting on the other end of the line. It is not nourishment for our soul. It is not satisfaction for our life. It is devastation and destruction.¹⁶² Listen to God's counsel through the pen of James. Don't be deceived! And when we see the enticement for what it is, we are less likely to bite the bait that will bite us back.

Sin can't give us what we long to have. Even if the short-term result leads us to a "happy dance," the frivolity of sin always brings waves of nausea. The "happy dance" becomes a "death march." That's the nature of sin. That's the inevitable destiny of any and all pathways outside of God's plan and purpose. The only source of nourishment for our soul and satisfaction in life comes from the hand of God. Only He can bring us the blessing.

Ceremonial Laws: Clean and Unclean (14:1-21)

Original Context

Moses turns from the destruction of an apostate community to the behavior that is consistent with God's people set apart to Him as His chosen and treasured possession (14:2). Concerning the rituals for burying the dead, the people of God must not embrace Canaanite customs in worship of Baal, such as cutting oneself and removing hair.¹⁶³

The food customs for God's people must also reflect their distinctiveness as His holy people. God established the clean animals from the unclean.¹⁶⁴ He lists the animals according to their habitat: land (14:4-8), water (14:9-10), and air (14:11-20). Each time the people of God sat to eat, they were reminded of their uniqueness and distinctiveness as God's chosen, holy people. The depiction holiness was not in the food itself, but rather in their obedience to a diet prescribed by God and that was distinctive from other nations.

Eternal Truth

Peter was on the roof in Joppa when God began to prepare him for a transformation (Acts 10). There were some ideas that needed to be corrected. There were some traditions that needed to be demolished. As a Jewish man, Peter had certain cultural traditions concerning the Mosaic law that God had to destroy. The fact that Cornelius was a "God-fearer" didn't alleviate the need for this adjustment.¹⁶⁵ He was a Gentile, and even as a "God-fearing" Gentile, there were differences between his cultural identity and that of a Jewish person.¹⁶⁶

And God set out to adjust Peter's perspective so that he might fulfill the mission with Cornelius.

Through the drama of a vision (Acts 10:9-16),¹⁶⁷ Peter recognizes that the culturally specific dietary laws "no longer applied for Gentile or Jew in Christ."¹⁶⁸ It was a cultural distinctive that had to be adjusted in Peter's heart and mind.¹⁶⁹ The church was embarked on a passionate mission to share the gospel with the world, and it was time for the church to move beyond the cultural traditions that inhibited the mission's fulfillment.¹⁷⁰

We are Christ's missionary followers engaging a world of people with the gospel, and we must allow His Spirit to adjust our way of thinking so that we fulfill that mission. He is at work in us today to prepare us for this wonderful intersection with a seeker, but we must submit to His passionate purpose even when it means that we need to change the way we think about others. It may mean that God must adjust our perspectives on wealthy people, or younger people, or individuals with tattoos, or the homeless, or the agnostic. For the church to move forward for God's glory, we need His Spirit to adjust our ideas and traditions in order to communicate the gospel to those whom He has prepared to receive it.

The goal of this passage is not to eradicate the Law, but to understand the necessity of holiness rather than food.¹⁷¹ Peter learned the difference. Just as the dietary laws in Deuteronomy called God's people to be different and set apart to the Lord, Peter adopted that norm of holiness for God's people while dismissing the necessity of dietary conformity.

Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not conforming yourselves to the former lusts, as in your ignorance; but as He who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, because it is written, "Be holy, for I am holy." (1 Peter 1:13-16)

God has chosen us for a special relationship with Himself so that we might live for His honor in the world and for eternity.¹⁷² The goal of God's election is our obedience and the finished work of Christ's atoning sacrifice in our lives and for eternity.¹⁷³ Perhaps the establishment of covenant relationship between God and Israel is in mind here (Exodus 24:3-8).¹⁷⁴ After establishing the terms of the covenant, Israel declared that they would be obedient to all that God had commanded. Moses then sprinkled blood of oxen upon the people, declaring "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words" (Ex 24:8).

Because God has chosen us, we do not belong to this world.¹⁷⁵ This world is not our permanent home. God has called us to Himself for a special purpose. We make this journey as those chosen by Him toward the fullness of joy in His presence. Our heavenly home, which is our only true home, beckons us, instilling in our heart the hope of surpassing peace in the presence of the One who calls.¹⁷⁶ But on this journey, we are also sojourners scattered throughout the world.¹⁷⁷ In God's sovereign purpose, He has scattered His people throughout the world on mission for His glory.¹⁷⁸

Living in hope means that we will live a holy life. God calls us to move forward on the highway of holiness, constantly and persistently conforming our lives to His perfect will. Through this text, God reveals the basic commands of moving along the highway of holiness.

In 1:13 Peter commanded his readers to set their hope firmly and completely upon the grace which is being delivered to them. Hope is the unwavering expectation and joyful anticipation of a future that is completed by the grace of Christ's return. Peter commanded them to live out what God has made possible by his grace; to adopt a new attitude that focused on their future with Christ.¹⁷⁹ In order to adopt a new attitude, Peter called them to gather up all the loose-ends of their thinking that would kill their focus on the future, and to discipline their lives so that they might have a clear vision of their future.

The picture of 1:13 refers to the habit of the Orientals, who quickly gather up their loose robes with a girdle or belt when in a hurry or starting on a journey. This is because the easterners' long flowing robes would impede physical activity unless tucked under the belt.¹⁸⁰ Literally, the word means to bind up or to gather up.¹⁸¹

Peter tells us to gather together the loose-ends of our mind. This figurative expression signifies the gathering up of that which guides and directs the conduct of the individual. It is a call to readiness in the entirety of spiritual and mental attitude. It indicates the putting out of one's life that which impedes the free activity of progress and growth in the Christian experience.

In order to move forward on the highway of holiness, we must have a vision of our future fixed firmly in our minds. We will not give up, because our Owner, our Master, our Lord and Savior is waiting to welcome us with open arms, rejoicing and singing praises with the angelic host as we enter His presence. We must live out daily the hope that we received through God's loving intervention in our lives. The full expression of that grace is coming. Are we focused on it? Is our life oriented to meeting Jesus face to face?

In order to orient our lives toward that future encounter with Christ, we must gather up all the loose-ends of our attitude that moves us away from progress in holiness. We must discipline ourselves so that our eyes are turned upward in expectancy and our feet are planted firmly on the ground in living out the hope that we have already received.

Peter commands his readers to live their lives after the pattern of God's holiness. Peter realized the struggle with holiness his readers were facing. They were obedient children of God, but they struggled with the desires of their lifestyle before they were saved. So they struggled with the choice of being obedient children or going back to the lifestyle of their past. This was a continuing, a daily fight. So Peter called them to turn their lives in a new direction, refusing to succumb to the call of their previous lives of ignorance apart from God.

We live the life of holiness which we initially received at salvation and will completely realize at the consummation by setting God's standard of holiness over every decision, every action, every aspect of your lives.

When making a dress, if you want to do it well, you need a pattern. You can purchase a pattern and then lay that pattern over the material. Every cut made on the material. Every stitch sewn. Every decision made, must conform to the pattern for it to look like it was intended.

God is the only pattern for our lives. Only when we place the pattern of God's holiness over every particle of our lives can we then make the proper choices so that we become what we were intended to be, obedient children. Holiness means that God's character of holiness shapes everything in our lives.

Ceremonial Laws: The Tithe (14:22-29)

Original Context

Moses calls for the people of God to tithe on all the yield of seed that comes from the field every year. The tithe represents that which is owed to God whose land Israel occupies. The tithe is brought to the place of worship and presented to its true owner, God Himself. Yet, God does not want or need the tithe. He returns it to the people so that they might enjoy the offering and acknowledge God's glorious provision and sovereignty. Through the tithe, god's people declare that God is "the true owner of the land and giver of life, who takes even Israel's grateful tithe and turns it back in yet another wave of generosity."¹⁸²

The third-year tithe is a beautiful picture of God's love and generosity for the community. As God's people set aside the tithe and offer to God in their local community (which is distinct from going to the singular place of worship), God returns the tithe to the community for the benefit of all, rich or poor (14:28-29).¹⁸³

Eternal Truth

God's people tithe as a picture of their celebration of God's provision. Jesus told His followers that the master gives each servant resources to increase the master's kingdom (Matt 25:14-19).¹⁸⁴ These resources are opportunities to honor Christ. The master gave three servants varying degrees of money.¹⁸⁵ The master returns to reward the faithful servants and to condemn the fearful servant. We are faithful when we take responsibility and fulfill our opportunity (Matt 25:14-30).

What did the 1st and 2nd Servants do right?

- They saw their opportunity to make a difference.
- They believed that the master's design was the best for them.
- They used what the master had given to honor the master.

Where did the 3rd Servant go wrong?

- He focused on why he couldn't make a difference.
- He had a bad attitude toward his master.¹⁸⁶
- He was filled with fear.

Like the car that's transmission is stuck in neutral; the motor sounds impressive, the lights, radio, and horn are all in working condition, new tires, but the only problem is that it is not going anywhere. The 3rd servant in the parable is the same way. He looks at the master and says I did not do anything. I hid the one talent and never put it to use, never allowed you to gain any glory. He had the talent, the blessing of the master, the opportunity, and the potential, but he never moved over to productivity for the master.

God owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10). He has given us the responsibility to watch over some of those cattle. Today, we give ourselves to Him so that He might gain greater glory. We give our resources to Him so that we might taste His provision.

Ceremonial Laws: The Sabbatical Year (15:1-18)

Original Context

The radical nature of the following command has led some to consider this passage to be the center and perhaps high-point of commands in Deuteronomy.¹⁸⁷ Those who accrued debt had to become indentured servants to pay off the debt. In the custom of the day, the size of the debt determined the length of the service. In some cases, the debt demanded perpetual status as a bondservant.

God, however, had a different way of economy. He calls His people to limit the debt to seven years. On the seventh year, the debt would be forgiven regardless the amount that is owed.¹⁸⁸ As Breuggemann suggests, “such a provision is radical, for it shatters the conventional practices of loans, credits, interest, mortgages, and debt management by which any conventional market economy functions.”¹⁸⁹

This generosity, however, is not extended to the foreigner (15:3). The focus is upon the economic welfare of God’s people, that there will be no poor among His people (15:4-6). Although this sounds somewhat utopian, Moses suggests that strict and careful obedience to God in these matters will ensure that poverty is obliterated among His people (15:5).¹⁹⁰ He calls the people of God to open their hands to provide financial help to those who are poor among them (15:7-11). In fact, to have a twisted mind and hardened heart toward the poor, then that person commits sin against God (15:9).

The treatment for Hebrew men or women sold in slavery is also built upon the seventh year release (15:12-18). The institution of slavery was an accepted norm in the ancient world. God however proposes that His people must follow specific boundaries in order to provide for eventual freedom. Indeed, the creditors are called to treat the servant as family. If, however, the servant develops genuine love for his creditor and rejects the offer of freedom, then the creditor receives them as perpetual servant, symbolized by piercing the ear (15:17). The promise is God’s blessing when they obey Him (15:18)

Eternal Truth

Forgiveness rarely comes easy for us. We find ourselves pummeled by injustices and wrongs, and we yearn for retaliation. It’s a natural response, but followers of Christ have a new nature given to us through the amazing love of God that demands a different response. When faced with hurtful words and hateful actions, we must respond to others the way God has responded to us.

The issue of forgiveness is so vitally important in our discussion on how to love others. There are several terms in Scripture that help us define forgiveness. The

primary term in the Old Testament for forgiveness is *nāshā'*, which literally means to carry the burden away.¹⁹¹ It is a picture of the guilt of sin being picked up and carried away.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven [נָשָׂא; *nāshā'*], Whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no deceit. When I kept silent, my bones grew old Through my groaning all the day long. For day and night Your hand was heavy upon me; My vitality was turned into the drought of summer. Selah I acknowledged my sin to You, And my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," And You forgave [נָשָׂא; *nāshā'*] the iniquity of my sin. Selah" (Psalm 32:1-5, NKJV)

As it was with David, so it is with us as we confess our sin before God. To find the best in life that Christ died to give us, we need to open our heart to the Father and confess our sin so that His forgiveness might wash over us.¹⁹² When David jumped into the forgiveness through confession,¹⁹³ he found the warmth of the Father's protection. God's forgiveness surrounds us with strength.¹⁹⁴ God lifts up the guilt of our sin and carries it away to the cross.

When Jacob died, his sons were concerned that Joseph would bring retribution on them for selling him into slavery. They asked Joseph to forgive them; to carry away the guilt of their sin. Joseph's response was one of forgiveness. Instead of harboring the crime in his heart against them, he showed the kindness of forgiveness.

Joseph said to them, "Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones." And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them." (Genesis 50:19-21, NKJV)

As God forgives us, we should also forgive others. The challenge before us is to allow God's grace to shower our hearts with His love so that when the load of crimes pile up before us, we can carry them away to the cross of Christ.

When we consider forgiving others, we must begin, not with our emotions, but with the very character of God. God is ready and eager to forgive our sin.

For You, Lord, are good, and ready to forgive, And abundant in mercy to all those who call upon You. (Psalm 86:5, NKJV)

Throughout Scripture, we find God's forgiving love sweep across the barren land of sin-swept souls. God is ready to forgive our sin, and we must be just as ready to forgive the sins that others have committed against us.¹⁹⁵

Forgiveness also means to let go the debt. Peter approached Jesus with the question:

Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" (Matthew 18:21, NKJV)

It is a clear question that many of us have asked as followers of Christ. In response, Jesus told the story of a master who was owed a large debt by an individual. When the debtor begged for mercy, the master forgave him the debt. The response of the forgiven debtor, however, was somewhat surprising. He went to a man who owed him money and demanded payment. The forgiven debtor would not forgive. When the master heard the news, he was incensed.

"So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?' And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses." (Matthew 18:31-35, NKJV)

The picture of forgiveness in this passage is to release someone from the debt that is owed.¹⁹⁶ As those who have been forgiven the debt of our sin, God demands that we forgive the debt that others owe us.¹⁹⁷ God has forgiven the greatest of debts, and we should follow His pattern of forgiveness when others have offended us.¹⁹⁸

Forgiveness means that we pardon the guilty. There are people who have wronged us. They have intentionally sought our harm in some form. The deeper the crime, the more prominent the guilt that they have in relationship with us. Yet, even in these difficult times on the receiving end of painful crimes, we must be a people committed to forgive.

"Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven." (Luke 6:37, NKJV)

The forgiveness portrayed in this passage is the pardon for the guilty.¹⁹⁹ Now this in no way means that we cease to evaluate critically the actions that have

been done. It does not mean that we simply ignore the guilt.²⁰⁰ Rather, it means that we give amnesty to those who have committed the crime against us.²⁰¹

Thankfully, we were not beyond the reach of God's forgiving love. Even though we stand guilty as sinners before Him, He lovingly and sacrificially pardoned our guilt. When we are on the receiving end of offences, we must not have the perspective that such individuals are beyond God's reach.²⁰² And our pardon for their crimes against us is bolstered with the hope that God's love which transformed us may also transform them.

Forgiveness means that we extend grace. When we love the way God loved us through Christ, we imitate both God and Christ.²⁰³

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. (Ephesians 4:32-5:2, NKJV)

The verb here is formed from the noun for "grace." It is the act of extending grace and being gracious with another person.²⁰⁴ Rather than holding onto resentment, we must extend grace. Rather than boiling in a settled wrath, we should extend grace. Rather than clanging complaints and abusive speech, we should have our words covered in grace. The model of our forgiveness is God's forgiveness of us as sinners. This is the forgiveness He brought to us through Jesus Christ.

One final note about forgiveness comes to us from Hebrews 8:12.

"For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." (Hebrews 8:12, NKJV)

God's forgiveness means that He won't hold the memory of our sin against us any longer. There is a forgetting with forgiveness that shows us how that we should forgive others.

Ceremonial Laws: The Celebrations (15:19-16:17)

Original Context

Moses once again returns to specific acts of worship for God's people. The firstborn of herd and flock belongs to God, and He calls the people to consecrate those firstborn creatures to Him. These animals should also be without blemish. These animals consecrated to the Lord were to be sacrificed and then eaten in celebration at the central sanctuary (15:20).

With the theme of celebrations, Moses outlines the pilgrimages of God's people three times every year for the celebrations of Passover (16:1-8), Weeks (16:9-12), and Booths (16:13-15). Every male shall come to these celebrations with gifts according to the blessings that God has given him (16:16-17).

The Festival of the Passover was a national celebration when the people enter the Land. The Passover was the most important festival of the year, signifying the protection that God provided for His people from the envoy of death the night of their departure from Egypt. They are to conjoin the Passover celebration with the Festival of Unleavened Bread to commemorate the affliction of slavery in Egypt and their urgency of fleeing Egypt at night (16:3).

The Festival of Weeks (16:9-12) is the second great celebration. It is a season of great joy for the entire community including the stranger, widow, and orphan. It is a celebration of the blessings of God, highlighted in their memory of once being enslaved in Egypt and now set free and living in the Land flowing with milk and honey.

The Festival of Booths (16:13-15) is the third celebration. For seven days, God's people will celebrate with great, joyful gratitude to God for all that He had provided for them.

Through these celebrations, God's people remember and rejoice over all that God had provided for them. Through the freedom that God has provided and the agricultural increase, His people gather together in a great celebration of God's "singular sovereignty and unparalleled generosity."²⁰⁵

Eternal Truth

Communion is the portrait of God's work to rescue us and our celebration of His rescuing love and daily provision. Paul's teaching on communion helps us find links to the celebrations that God's people enjoyed in Deuteronomy (1 Cor 11:17-34). The believers in Corinth were acting shamefully.²⁰⁶ They were getting together and leaving others out. They get together in their special groups and have a banquet, and others in the church are not invited. In essence, the "have's" were leaving out the "have not's," and the church was further divided.²⁰⁷

The church is supposed to be the gathering of God's people where strong relationships can be found. It should be the gathering that strengthens our relationships, but that is not what Paul saw in Corinth. What was happening in the church of Corinth was bringing damage to relationships, not enhancing intimacy.

It seems that the church at Corinth had forgotten why they came to the Table of the Lord. They were getting together and excluding others within the family of faith. When a church behaves in such a manner, we have lost sight of God's honor and bring shame to His Bride.²⁰⁸ The gathering is to demonstrate unity, but our divisions bring dishonor to God and His church.²⁰⁹

When we come to the Table, we come to celebrate the victory that Christ brings to all who receive His salvation and forgiveness. We celebrate His sacrifice for our salvation. His death for our life.²¹⁰ The Supper finds meaning in the "exposition of Christ's saving deed."²¹¹ Through the common meal, the community celebrates the work of Christ.

As Paul was committed to build community-connection, we must give ourselves completely to connect with people.²¹² Rather than wrangling over issues (apparently that had to do with divisions between Jewish and Gentile believers), we must set our hearts upon Jesus Christ and the community that He has established between us.

Our goal is God's pleasure and glory (15:7). Jesus sought to please others by extending kindness, compassion, and grace to us. It is the kindness of God that has brought us acceptance into the family of God. It is the compassion of Christ that sought to trade our shame, guilt, and pain for belonging and acceptance. It is the grace of God in Christ that forgives us and accepts us completely.

So we gather in the celebration meal of the Lord, rejoicing in His constant care and glorious provision. We celebrate together as the community of His people saved by His grace.

¹Christensen [*Deuteronomy 1-11*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1991), 179] writes concerning Deut 9 that "if they are to continue to experience God's blessing in the land, they must learn to yield and turn from their stubborn ways."

²Christopher J. H. Wright, *Deuteronomy* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1996), 130.

³The use of the verb, יָרַשׁ [yārāš], is used seven times in 9:1-6. It means to conquer other peoples and nations in order to gain the right to rule their territory [N. Lohfink, s. v., “ירַשׁ,” in *TDOT*, 6:371].

⁴Patrick Miller [*Deuteronomy, Interpretation* (Louisville: John Knox, 1990), 121-22] cogently writes that “the issue of innocence and guilt, righteousness and wickedness, in these verses is not an issue of the relation of Israel to ‘these nations’ but of each of them to God. Even the victor who is favored by God can claim no special merit.”

⁵BDB, s. v., “קָשָׁה,” 904; Leonard Coppes, s. v., “קָשָׁה,” in *TWOT*, 818.

⁶G. Abramson, “Colloquialism in the Old Testament,” *Semitics* 2 (1972): 12-13.

⁷Wright 1996: 134

⁸The double imperative of 9:7, זָכַר [zākar; “remember”] and אַל תִּשְׁכַּח [‘āl-tiškāch; “do not forget”], is a call for Israel to see themselves clearly according to how they have behaved before Yahweh.

⁹Block 2012: 250

¹⁰G. J. Venema, *Reading Scripture in the Old Testament: Deuteronomy 9-10; 31; 2 Kings 22-23; Jeremiah 36; Nehemiah 8*, trans. Ch. E. Smit (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 25.

¹¹Block 2012: 251-52

¹²G. J. Venema, *Reading Scripture in the Old Testament: Deuteronomy 9-10; 31; 2 Kings 22-23; Jeremiah 36; Nehemiah 8*, trans. Ch. E. Smit (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 25.

¹³The use of the term, גָּמַל [gām], points to other occasions when Moses made intercession for Israel when they had provoked the Lord to anger with their rebellion.

¹⁴This offer is reminiscent of the flood motif in Gen 6-9.

¹⁵S. R. Driver [*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Deuteronomy*, ICC (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1896), 116] suggests that this section is included by the writer (not Moses in the opinion of Driver) in order to highlight “the indebtedness of Israel to Moses’ intercession.”

¹⁶Venema [2004: 27-29] highlights the interchange between God and Moses in this prayer. He further suggests that Moses “refers YHWH and the people to each other.... he pushes the people back to YHWH as it were: they are *his* own people.”

¹⁷Miller 1990: 121

¹⁸This is the concept of Total Depravity. See John Calvin, *Corpus Reformatorum: Calvin's Works*, vols. 1-59, eds. Baum, Cunitz, and Reuss (Brunswick: n.p., 1863-1900), 14:35. He writes: “The Holy Spirit assures us in Holy Scripture that our understanding is so smitten with blindness, our heart in its motions so evil and corrupt, in fact our whole nature so depraved, that we can do nothing else but sin until He Himself creates in us a new will.”

See also, John Calvin, “The Necessity of the Reforming Church,” in *Calvin: Theological Treatises*, comp. and trans. J. K. S. Reid (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1954), 198. Calvin writes: “they do not

perceive how deep the wound is which was inflicted on our nature by the fall of our first parents. No doubt, they agree with us in holding the doctrine of original sin; but they afterwards modify its effects, maintaining that the powers of man are only weakened, not wholly depraved. Their view then is that man, being tainted with original corruption, is in consequence of the weakening of his powers unable to act aright; but that, being aided by the grace of God, he has something of his own and from himself which he may contribute. Again though we do not deny that man acts spontaneously and of free will when he is guided by the Holy Spirit, we maintain that his whole nature is so imbued with depravity, that of himself he possesses no ability whatever to act aright.”

¹⁹W. T. Conner, *The Gospel of Redemption* (Nashville: Broadman, 1945), 24.

²⁰Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, 1:90.

²¹Bloesch, *Essentials of Evangelical Theology*, 1:90.

²²W. T. Conner, W. T. Conner, *The Gospel of Redemption* (Nashville: Broadman, 1945), 24.

²³W. T. Conner, W. T. Conner, *The Gospel of Redemption* (Nashville: Broadman, 1945), 25. This is the state of all humanity apart from the grace of God.

²⁴James Leo Garrett Jr., *Systematic Theology: Biblical, Historical, and Evangelical, Volume 1* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 478. “The doctrine of the universality of sin means that all human beings, with the exception of Jesus Christ, have been and are sinners.”

²⁵See Garrett, *Systematic Theology 1*, 480-81.

²⁶James S. Stewart, *The Strong Name* (New York: Charles Scribners, 1941), 12-13.

²⁷Block [2012: 250] writes that Moses took the calf that they had made, burned it, crushed it, and washed it downstream, “flushing it away as excrement.”

²⁸As the term, γέεννα [*geenna*; Joachim Jeremias, s. v., “γέεννα,” in *TDNT*, 1:657-58], indicates, the result of lust calls for eternal judgment.

²⁹It must be noted that many commentators consider the eye and the hand to be the primary stumbling blocks in sexual sin. Deming [“Mark 9.42-10.12, Matthew 6.27-32 and *B. Nid.* 13b: A First Century Discussion of Male Sexuality,” *New Testament Studies* 36 (1990): 130-41] believes that Jesus has masturbation and pederasty in mind here. Such a conclusion, however, is too limited and literal.

³⁰Blomberg [*Matthew*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), 109] suggests that Jesus “commands us to take drastic measures to avoid temptations to sexual sin – to remove ourselves from anyone or anything that could lead us into scandal.” It is important, however, to note that Jesus is using hyperbole in this section, for even if the eye is plucked and the hand removed, one could still be guilty of lust. As Guelich [*The Sermon on the Mount: A Foundation for Understanding*, 196-97] rightly notes, “Self-mutilation does not help one to avoid sin any more than outlawing lust as adultery. The issue goes much deeper. It involves our very person which our thoughts and actions represent.”

³¹On the verb, σκανδαλίζω [skandalizō; BAGD, s. v., “σκανδαλίζω,” 752-53], we understand that the meaning of the verb points to that which causes someone to fall into sin.

³²This is the significance of the verb, ἀπόλλυμι [apollumi]. This verb means “to destroy.” Jesus contends that it is better to destroy one member of our body than for the whole to suffer eternal judgment. In light of the hyperbolic nature of this text, we must not miss the reality of this mandate. Sin as a force that leads us to hell must be destroyed.

³³John Owen, “The Practice of Mortification,” in *Sin and Temptation: The Challenge to Personal Godliness*, ed. James M. Houston (Portland: Multnomah, 1983), 189. Owen writes: “Avoid the entanglements of lust by filling your soul with the realization of all the provisions available in Christ Jesus.”

³⁴Galatians 3:27 teaches, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on [ἐνεδύσασθε; *enedusasthe*] Christ.” Yet, Paul here in Rom 13:14 uses the imperative, ἐνδύσασθε [endusasthe]. Schreiner [*Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 701] rightly notes that the imperative is contingent upon the indicative. The imperative calls us to put on Christ “in the concrete circumstances of everyday life. The desires of the flesh (Rom. 13:14) still threaten believers, and thus a conscious effort is needed so that no provision is made for them.”

³⁵J. Wilkinson, “Healing in the Epistle of James,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 24 (1971): 339. He notes that the key verse in this section is 5:16b, in which James calls his readers to “pray for one another.”

³⁶Ralph Martin, *James*, WBC (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1988), 200. Martin writes that “prayer is understood as a disposition of trustful submitting to God’s good will (see 1:2-9), especially in time of trial.”

³⁷Michaelis, s. v., “κακοπαθέω, κτλ.,” in *TDNT*, 5:937. He notes that κακοπαθεῖ [kakopatheî] in verse 13 “suggests, not so much the distressing situation as such, but the spiritual burden which it brings with it, and which drives us to prayer. Hence the prayer is more for the giving of strength than the removal of the situation.”

³⁸Ralph Martin [1988: 201] sees consistently in the background of this epistle the revolutionary passions of the Zealots. He sees James presenting an “anti-zealot or anti-nationalistic polemic” within this letter. In concert with this hypothesis, Martin sees this section on prayer, especially the example of Elijah, as a further condemnation of the revolutionary life. Rather than revolution, the follower of Christ must submit to God. He therefore notes that “this emphasis, we submit, with its stress on contemporary human needs that are met by God’s response, is designed to ward off any false hopes pinned to revolution and strife; and the efficacy of prayer is connected with his readers’ willingness to submit to the divine plan and to await God’s intervention like the wise farmer.”

³⁹P. T. Forsyth, *The Soul of Prayer* (1916), 12; quoted in James B. Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 200. “Prayer is not mere wishing. It is asking – with a will. . . . It is energy. *Orare est laborare*. We turn to an active Giver; therefore we go into action.”

⁴⁰Peter Davids, *The Epistle of James*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1982), 194. He notes that the prayer of faith is “the prayer which expresses trust in God and flows out of commitment to Him, for only such prayers are effective.”

⁴¹Douglas Moo, *The Letter of James*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 235.

⁴²Curtis Vaughan, *James: A Study Guide* (reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972), 118. He notes that σώσει [sōsei] in verse 15 should be taken to mean “restore to health.”

⁴³Sin and sickness are not synonymous, but sin can result in physical sickness. The use of the perfect participle πεποιηκώς [pepoiēkōs] in verse 15 indicates the presence of past sins that produces lasting results into the present and the future [See Ralph Martin 1988: 210]. It is the power of sin’s guilt that can debilitate and corrupt our lives [See Peter Davids 1982: 195].

James B. Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 199. He highlights that the occurrence of this exhortation in verse 16, “confess your trespasses,” falls in line with the Jewish background of the epistle, as well as the practice of the early church reflected in 1 John 1:9.

⁴⁴See Fritz Rienecker, *Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, trans. and ed. Cleon Rogers (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 741. The use of the participle ενεργουμένη [energoumenē] with ισχύει [ischuei] should, in my opinion, be joined together, so that the translation is not “the effectual fervent prayer,” but it is that prayer “is very powerful in its operation.”

Note also the discussion by Adamson 1976: 205-210.

⁴⁵See Ralph Martin, *Worship in the Early Church*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), 43-48. He notes the connection between prayer and praise in the worship of the early church.

⁴⁶Ralph Martin [1988: 206] notes that εὐθυμεῖν [euthumein] is more than being “outwardly happy, an emotion that is dependent on circumstances.”

⁴⁷Douglas Moo 2000: 236.

⁴⁸See David Egner, “Our Prayer and God’s Power,” *Our Daily Bread* (July 26, 2000).

⁴⁹Curtis Vaughan [1972: 118-19] notes that “the Greek word for ‘anointing’ was used of any kind of anointing – a physical refreshment after washing (e. g., Ruth 3:3; II Samuel 12:20, Septuagint), of anointing the sick (e. g., Mark 6:13), or of anointing a dead body (Mark 16:1). In Ezekiel 13:10-15 (Septuagint) it is even used of daubing a wall with mortar.” Curtis Vaughan suggests that “it is possible that the anointing with oil was intended to be an aid for faith” (see Mark 8:22-26). Likewise, C. Leslie Mitton [*The Epistle of James* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1966), 199] indicates that the use of the oil would produce beneficial psychological effects in the prayer for healing, and Thomas D. Lea [*The New Testament: Its Background and Message* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1996), 530] writes that “the oil used in anointing and praying was a symbol that set apart the individual for special care and attention from God.”

J. H. Ropes [*The Epistle of St. James*, ICC (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1916), 305] suggests that ἀλείψαντες [aleipsantes] is “contemporaneous aorist” which signifies the completeness of the act and that the oil is used in order to abate the use of charms or pagan formula. Thomas Manton [*The Complete Works of Thomas Manton*, vol. 4 (London: James Nisbet and Company, 1873), 447] suggests that the oil was a “usual symbol of divine grace” among Jewish adherents, and it was “an extraordinary sign of an extraordinary and miraculous cure” in this passage.

Each of these suggestions moves closer to the view of the Roman Catholic Church. The “extreme unction” doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church declares that the anointing of oil imparts grace to the sick person for salvation. This view is absolutely untenable, in my view of Scripture. See, Joseph Pohle, *The Sacraments: A Dogmatic Treatise*, ed. Arthur Preuss (St. Louis: Herder, 1942), 1:126-31.

⁵⁰Ralph Martin [1988: 216] suggests that through the pen of James, God “encourages us to share this ministry [of spiritual wholeness] with fellow Christians in mutual confession and mutual concern for another’s pardon.”

⁵¹Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 897. Erickson provides a helpful warning to us concerning the process of prayer for the sick. He writes that “it is the prayer of faith, not a human miracle-worker, that is said to save [the afflicted]. Whatever be the gift, it is the edification of the church and the glorification of God that are of ultimate importance.”

⁵²Driver [1896: 117] writes that “the intention of this part of the retrospect is doubtless to show how the people were finally restored completely to Jehovah’s favour.”

⁵³On the nature of the wood for the ark, see George A. Smith, *Deuteronomy* (Cambridge: University Press, 1918), 132-33.

⁵⁴Walter Brueggemann [*Deuteronomy*, Abingdon Old Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2001), 124] writes that 10:10-11 indicate that “all is in readiness.” Because the Lord was unwilling to destroy Israel, they now had a future and hope.

⁵⁵Wright [1996: 144] surmises that this section “purposely tries to ‘boil down’ the whole theological and ethical content of the book into memorable phraseology, packed and pregnant, rich and resonant of all the surrounding preaching. Indeed, there are not many dimensions of ‘OT theology’ that are not directly expressed or indirectly echoed in this mini-symphony of faith and life.”

⁵⁶Driver 1896: 124

⁵⁷Brueggemann [2001: 128-29] cogently writes that “It is clear that the appeal in Deuteronomy to occupy the land is primarily neither geographical nor military, but pertains solely to embrace of Torah. This unit, linked to verses 10-11, is a summons to be fully the Torah people of YHWH, supported by a series of motivations.”

⁵⁸Christensen [1991: 205] writes: “Careful prosodic analysis suggests that the term is in fact defined here, by means of poetic parallelism: *to fear Yahweh is to walk in all his ways*. This phrase is in turn explained by the following rhythmic unit: *to fear God is to love him and to serve Yahweh your God with all your heart and with all your soul-life*, in short, with your whole being.”

⁵⁹As Craigie [*The Book of Deuteronomy*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 204] suggests, “the requirements may be seen as a positive sermon on the negatively stated first commandment.”

⁶⁰The phrase, לטוב לך [letôb lāk; “for good for you”], in 10:13 summarizes the blessings of obedience to God in two Hebrew words. When God’s people obey, they would live in security, longevity, and joy in the Land that God provided.

⁶¹Brueggemann 2001: 130

⁶²Daniel I. Block [“Deuteronomy,” in *Theological Interpretation of the Old Testament*, eds. Kevin Vanhoozer, Craig Bartholomew and Daniel Treier (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2008), 79] writes: “Obedience is the external evidence of the circumcision of one’s heart and the internal disposition of fearing God (10:12-11:1).”

⁶³The term, גֵר [gēr; “stranger”], refers to the outsider who has chosen to leave their family and home to live in the foreign context with the people of God. Because Israel knows what it is like to be “strangers” in the land of Egypt, they should be sensitive, compassionate, and generous to those “strangers” in their midst.

⁶⁴Wright 1996: 149

⁶⁵The Hebrew verb, וְהִחַבְתֶּם [we’āhābtēm; “and you shall love”], occurs only four times in the Old Testament (Deut 6:5, 11:1; Lev 19:18, 34).

⁶⁶This is Block’s [2012: 274] conclusion. He writes that “He is your praise” could mean either “that Yahweh is the object of Israel’s praise or that when other nations look at Israel, they will praise Yahweh.” Von Rad [*Deuteronomy*, OTL (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1966), 84] further suggests that the phrase is somewhat parallel to God being Israel’s glory.

⁶⁷Brueggemann [2001: 136] writes that “the memory is designed to give gravity to the imperatives of verse 1. Thus the memory concerns *you* in the wonders of the Exodus and in the risks of wilderness, all converging in the interest of present tense adherence to the requirements of YHWH as given by Moses.”

⁶⁸The verb, חָזַק [chāzaq; BDB, s. v., “חֹזֵק,” 304], means to be sufficiently strengthened to seize the opportunity.

⁶⁹In the description of the goodness of the Land, Moses notes that it is not like the land of Egypt (11:10). The main comparison is agricultural. The Land of Promise will be teeming with water, unlike Egypt in which they had to water their crops “by foot.” Merrill [*Deuteronomy*, NAC (Nashville: B & H Publishing, 1994), 208] suggests that description points to using the feet to operate water wheels for irrigation of crops. See especially, L. Eslinger, “Watering Egypt (Deuteronomy XI 10-11,” *Vetus Testamentum* 37 (1987): 85-90.

⁷⁰The verb, דָּרַשׁ [dāraš; “care for”], calls attention to the compassion of Yahweh in continual attention to the Land and the well-being of the people therein. The verb also possesses the meaning of “seek.” Yahweh has chosen the Land.

⁷¹Miller [1990: 49] demonstrates that the “condition for life in the land” is obedience to the commands. He further notes that God’s commands are the “norm for life in the land.” As such, “obedience to the commandments is not simply a necessity for worshiping God or avoiding divine retribution. It is necessary for harmonious and satisfactory life in the land.”

⁷²T. J. Meek ["Old Testament Notes," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 67 (1948): 235-36] argues that the verb in 11:16, פתח [pātāh] means "to be open." It is from this contention that I suggest the translation of 11:16, "Take heed to yourselves lest you become so open-minded..."

⁷³Block [2012: 289] cogently writes that "there is really only one command, to love Yahweh with one's whole heart, but love without obedience is not love at all."

⁷⁴As a reminder and renewal of the covenant, when the children of Israel enter the Land, they are to take the curse and place it on Mount Ebal and the blessing on Mount Gerizim (11:29). In this ceremony of covenant renewal, the children of Israel must make a choice again to embrace the blessing or the curse. See Miller 1990: 128.

⁷⁵Ecclesiastes 12:13-14.

⁷⁶Unlike Ogden ["Qoheleth XI 7-XII 8: Qoheleth's Summons to Enjoyment and Reflection," *Vetus Testamentum* 34 (1984): 30] and others, I do not consider "dark days" of 11:8 to be a reference to death itself. Although the reasoning is that the picture of life is contrasted most naturally with the picture of death, I believe that the "dark days" is more in line with Ecc 5:16 which pictures a life of misery.

⁷⁷Concerning 11:8, Whybray [*Ecclesiastes*, NCBC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1989), 161], in an effort to guard his view that the preacher delivers joyful tidings, suggests that "Qoheleth's intention here is not to introduce a note of gloom to negate or qualify the cheerful note struck in v. 7, but to use the backdrop of inevitable death to highlight the positive opportunities for joy in this life." Whybray's attempt, however, falls short.

⁷⁸This counsel is in direct contradiction to Num 15:39 ["And you shall have the tassel, that you may look upon it and remember all the commandments of the Lord and do them, and that you may not follow the harlotry to which your own heart and your own eyes are inclined"]. The heart and the eyes are "organs of desire" [See Robert Gordis, *Qoheleth: The Man and His World*, 3d ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 335], and God demands that our desire not contend with His. Moses called the children of Israel to follow the commandments of the Lord and not the desires of the heart and eyes. It is noteworthy that this contradiction caused great difficulty in Jewish tradition concerning the doctrine of Ecclesiastes [See Roland Murphy, *Ecclesiastes*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1992), 116-17].

⁷⁹This is the conclusion of Longman [*The Book of Ecclesiastes*, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 261]. Longman further leaves room for the "judgment" of verse 9 to be nothing "more than a theological reflex."

⁸⁰Provan [*Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 212] suggests that the preacher is not advocating such "hedonism." He suggests that "it is not foolish behavior that Qohelet advocates here, but life lived out joyfully in the world God has made and governs." Murphy [*Ecclesiastes*, 117] posits a similar approach, as well.

⁸¹Daniel Fredericks ["Life's Storms and Structural Unity in Qoheleth 11.1-12.8," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 52 (1991): 103] proposes a chiasmic structure to 11:1-12:8. In his chiasm, Fredericks notes that "whereas 11.1-6 speaks of our limited knowledge because of God's inestimable ways, 11.7-10 speaks of our limited pursuits of joy because of God's assured scrutiny."

⁸²Longman [*The Book of Ecclesiastes*, 261] certainly does not agree that the preacher intended 11:10 to be a positive reflection on the pursuit of happiness. Rather, he sees this pursuit as the removal of “frustration / anger” [כעס; *ka`as*]. He translates the noun, רעה [rā`ā], as “pain” rather than “evil.” Garrett [*Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, NAC (Nashville: Broadman, 1993), 340 n. 226] concurs that the terms, כעס [*ka`as*] and רעה [rā`ā], should be taken as an hendiadys, “Cast away grief from yourself [over the human condition].” In his view this verse teaches that “one should not allow consternation over human ills to consume one, not that one should be stupidly oblivious to human troubles.”

⁸³Thus, we have the basic view of Provan [*Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 213; although he also concurs that the noun, רעה [rā`ā], should be taken as “troubles”]. He suggests, contrary to Longman, that the preacher posits a positive pursuit wherein one gives his whole being to live life God’s way, “rather than conforming himself to and defining himself by the world of frustration and evil.”

⁸⁴BDB, s. v., “זכר,” 269-71. See also, Andrew Bowling, s. v., “זכר,” in *TWOT*, 241-42. Bowling notes that there are three groupings for the meaning of this verb: 1) the mental activity of remembering; 2) the remembering that leads to action; and 3) verbal recitation.

⁸⁵See R. T. Herford, *Pirkē Aboth*, 2nd ed. (New York: Bloch, 1930), 63; cited in Murphy [*Ecclesiastes*, 117]. In *Pirkē Aboth* 3:1, we see the antidote to sin’s controlling nature in life when we remember our beginning, remember our ending, and remember our accountability to God. The text reads: “Keep in view three things and thou wilt not come into the power of sin. Know whence you comest and whither thou goes and before whom thou art to give strict account. Whenc thou comest, -- from a fetid drop. Whither thou goest, -- to the place of dust worms and maggots: and before whom thou art, to give strict account, -- Before the king of the kings of kings, the Holy one blessed be He.”

⁸⁶Although there is much debate concerning the nature of the preacher’s poem in 12:1-8, I have followed the thoughts of C. L. Seow [“Qohelet’s Eschatological Poem,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 118 (1999): 209-34] who indicates that these verses describe the demise of human life in eschatological terms.

⁸⁷Seow [“Qohelet’s Eschatological Poem,” 213] sees verse 3 as a picture of “the threat of cosmic destruction.”

⁸⁸This is the summation of Provan’s [*Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs*, 215] conclusion. He notes that the four types of people (keepers of the house, strong men, grinders, and the lookers through windows) epitomize the “totality of community – everyone, whether servant or noble, male or female.”

⁸⁹On the picture of “eternal home” in verse 5, see Ronald Youngblood, “Qoheleth’s ‘Dark House’ (Eccl 12:5),” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 29 (1986): 397-410.

⁹⁰This certainly is contradictory to the interpretation of George Barton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Book of Ecclesiastes*, ICC (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1908), 197. Barton asserts that verse 10 represents the “literary finish” of the preacher (Solomon) to the book of Proverbs. In the analysis of “words of truth,” Barton suggests that the preacher “never sacrificed matter to form.”

I follow Longman's analysis [*The Book of Ecclesiastes*, 277-79]. He notes that the narrator frames the preacher's search with words describing his diligence (12:9). Yet, the narrator "chooses words that cast doubt on Qohelet's success." Namely, the narrator proposes that the preacher "sought to find words of delight" and he sought to write "words of truth." But, according to Longman, the narrator turns the "attention away from Qohelet at the end by directing it toward the foundational truths of his faith (12:13-14)."

⁹¹As Longman [*The Book of Ecclesiastes*, 282] notes, "It is true that Qohelet has stated the same words (3:14; 5:6 [English 5:7]; 7:18; 8:12), but with doubtful conviction."

⁹²Robert Gordis [*Koheleth: The Man and His World*, 3d ed. (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 355] suggests that the phrase, "for this is man's all," is an idiom that demonstrates one's "whole duty" as the special creation of God.

⁹³The use of the phrase in 1 John 3:10, ἐν τούτῳ (*en touto*; "by this"), can be taken to point to that which has already been stated. This would mean that John's calibration of the children of God and the children of the devil is marked by practicing righteousness and rejecting sin (3:1-9). The phrase can also refer to what John is about to write; namely, that the children of God are revealed by their love for one another, and children of the devil are marked by their lack of love (3:10b-18). It is best to see this phrase to highlight both what has been written before and what is about to be written. As D. W. Burdick [*The Letters of John the Apostle* (Chicago: Moody, 1985), 248] suggests, "it makes little difference since both the preceding and the following context speak of the same fact: the family of God is marked by the practice of righteousness."

⁹⁴The ὅτι clause in 3:14 is causal and amplifies adverbially the verb οἶδαμεν (*oidamen*; "we know"). This grammatical construction shows that ἀγαπῶμεν τοὺς ἀδελφούς is the sign of new life in Christ rather than the basis for eternal life.

⁹⁵Mary Coloe, "Welcome into the Household of God: The Foot Washing in John 13," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 66 (2003): 410. She notes that the footwashing is a portrait of Christ's love εἰς τέλος, for "love is given in the knowledge that those who receive it will fail. Such love is utterly gratuitous, given unreservedly - which shows that the dynamism of this love lies solely with the lover."

⁹⁶Francis Schaeffer, *The Church at the End of the 20th Century* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1970), 136-37. Schaeffer writes: "In the midst of the world, in the midst of our present dying culture, Jesus is giving a right to the world. Upon his authority he gives the world the right to judge whether you and I are born-again Christians on the basis of our observable love toward all Christians."

⁹⁷G. B. Caird, "The Glory of God in the Fourth Gospel: An Exercise in Biblical Semantics," *New Testament Studies* 15 (1968-69): 266. Caird notes concerning verse 31 that "all the actors [including Judas who has just departed] in the drama, and Jesus in particular, are committed to their courses of action, which make the crucifixion virtually accomplished." These words in 13:31-33 are a reflection of His commitment to the cross.

⁹⁸Block [2008: 79] writes: "While obedience is not the prerequisite to salvation, it is the evidence of righteousness, which is a precondition to Israel's fulfillment of her mission and blessing."

⁹⁹The picture of this saying connects with the vine imagery of OT literature concerning Israel. Carson [*The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 513], along with C. K. Barrett [*The Gospel According to St. John*, 2d ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978), 472-73], notes the plethora of ancient literature employing the vine imagery. He then suggests: "Two factors decisively decide the issue in favour of an Old Testament background: (a) the frequency of John's appeals to the Old Testament, both in allusions and quotations; (b) the dominance in the Fourth Gospel of the 'replacement' motif (*cf.* notes on 2:19-22), for that motif strongly operates in this passage." This "replacement" motif is the proposition that Jesus replaced the OT type (i.e., temple, vine) and fulfilled its purposes completely.

¹⁰⁰Beasley-Murray [*John*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1987), 272] suggests that the "deeper significance" of μένω [*menō*] moves beyond "simply to continue to believe in him." It describes our "continuing to live in association or union with him."

¹⁰¹Hauck, s. v., "μένω, κτλ," in *TDNT*, 4:574-76. "After the analogy of the personal statement Jn. uses μένειν ἐν for the abiding of the expressions of divine life in believers. . . . Believers, too, abide in divine things. . . . Here again the relationship of salvation is both enduring and present."

¹⁰²Moloney [*Glory not Dishonor: Reading John 13-21* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 57] demonstrates the importance of μένω [*menō*] in this passage, appearing in various forms seven times in 15:1-11. He suggests that "to abide means to bear fruit and to live in the love of Jesus (see vv. 4a, 5, 7, 9, 10); not to abide means to die and to be destroyed (see vv. 4b; 5b; 6)."

¹⁰³Spiritual faithfulness demands "continuous dependence on the vine, constant reliance upon him, persistent imbibing of his life" [Carson 1991: 516].

¹⁰⁴Köstenberger [*John*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2004), 454] notes that "external, apparent growth, that is not fueled by pulsating life within is not indicative of true spiritual life."

¹⁰⁵Segovia ["The Theology and Provenance of John 15:1-17," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 101 (1982): 121-22] considers 15:1-8 to be a controversy surrounding the person of Jesus among His followers. He concludes that "believers must not abandon the original message, the original understanding of the Christ that made them believers. A failure to abide in that message, he warns, will mean not only separation from 'the vine,' but ultimate destruction as well." Thus, Segovia promotes the loss of salvation for believers who are apostate.

Köstenberger [2004: 454-55] concludes the matter differently. He suggests that the judgment falls upon those "who appear to be members in good standing in the Christian community" but in reality were "never truly to have been part of it in the first place" with Judas Iscariot as the "paradigmatic example." Thus, Köstenberger does not consider this verse pointing to the loss of salvation for believers, but rather a judgment befalling those who only appeared to be followers of Christ.

Beasley-Murray [1987: 273] considers the imagery of 15:6 and remarks that it "vividly portrays the useless of such as do not remain in the Vine and their rejection by the Vinedresser." He acknowledges that such a general statement would have brought to mind Judas and the "many Antichrists."

¹⁰⁶C. K. Barrett 1978: 476. "The parallel shows that love and obedience are mutually dependent. Love arises out of obedience, obedience out of love."

¹⁰⁷Paul Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (reprint, Philadelphia: Westminster, 1977), 42. The power of obedience breeds a powerful love. And this powerful love for Christ demands obedience. The two fit hand in glove with one another. Minear suggests that this image of vine and branches is a minor picture of the church. He further suggests that this image demonstrates the relationship of intimacy through showing the “interdependence of obedience and love (vs. 9-10).”

¹⁰⁸C. K. Barrett [1978: 476] writes that “The joy of Jesus springs out of His obedience to the Father and His unity with Him in love. The seal upon obedience and love is His ascent to the Father, and this should make His disciples rejoice.”

¹⁰⁹Breuggemann 2001: 141

¹¹⁰Block 2012: 305

¹¹¹On “the place that the Lord will choose,” see Gordon Wenham, “Deuteronomy and the Central Sanctuary,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 22 (1971): 103-18.

¹¹²S. L. Richter, “The Place of the Name in Deuteronomy,” *Vetus Testamentum* 57 (2007): 342-66.

¹¹³The use of the verb in 12:5, בא [bô’; “to come”], indicates the invitation to gather to Him.

¹¹⁴On this note of celebration in worship, see Daniel Block, “The Joy of Worship: The Mosaic Invitation to the Presence of God (Deut 12:1-14),” in *How I Love Your Torah, O Lord!: Studies in Book of Deuteronomy* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2011), 98-117.

¹¹⁵Wright [1996: 166-67] suggests that “no worship, then, that claims to love God but excludes those whom God loves can be acceptable to God – a point that the prophets expressed negatively with such damning ferocity and that the early church expressed positively in the social care associated with their worship (Acts 2:44-46; 4:32-37).

¹¹⁶As Breuggemann [2001: 145] writes: “The tithe reserved as an acknowledgment of YHWH’s sovereignty over the land is also given over to Israelite joy. This ‘owner’ is not greedy or parsimonious, and wants nothing for self. Thus Israel may enjoy the 90 percent of produce at home and the 10 percent ‘at the place’; Israel may enjoy 100 percent of the produce of YHWH’s blessing in the YHWH’s land. The public performance of the 10 percent elsewhere, at the place, on YHWH’s specified turf, however, is an unmistakable acknowledgment that Israel’s abundant life is not self-made or self-sufficient.”

¹¹⁷Breuggemann 2001: 147.

¹¹⁸Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, trans. and ed. Cleon Rogers, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976, reprint, 1980), 375. Paul uses the term *παρίστημι* signifying the act of *making available* or *placing beside*. This verb is a 1st Aorist, active, infinitive of purpose signifying a decisive, momentous act of the will. This does not, however, point to a “once in time” act [see, R. Maddox, “The Use of the Aorist Tense in Holiness Exegesis,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 16 (1981): 106-18].

Bo Reicke, s. v., “*παρίστημι*,” in *TDNT*, 5:841. He notes that this verb points to bringing an offering to God, and in this context it denotes the “allegorical service of God.”

¹¹⁹James D. G. Dunn, *Romans*, 2 vols., WBC (Waco: Word, 1988), 2:709, states that σῶμα “denotes not just the person, but the person in his corporeality, in his concrete relationships within this world.”

¹²⁰The use of the prepositional phrase, διὰ τῶν οἰκτιρμῶν τοῦ θεοῦ (*dia tōn oiktirmōn tou theou*), carries a causal force. It is because of God’s mercies that one presents oneself wholly and absolutely to God. For differing opinions, see E. Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. G. W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980), 326 (who suggests that the force of the prepositional phrase is “with appeal to”) and James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 9-16*, WBC (Dallas: Word, 1988), 709 (who indicates that the prepositional phrase carries an instrumental force).

¹²¹D. Edmond Hiebert, “Presentation and Transformation: An Exposition of Romans 12:1-2,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 151 (July 1994): 312-313.

¹²²See C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans (IX-XVI and Essays)*, 600. He notes that all three adjectives modify sacrifice (θυσία; *thusia*).

¹²³F. F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans*, 2d ed., TNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), 213.

¹²⁴Otto Procksch, s. v., “ἅγιος,” in *TDNT*, 1:107-109; J. P. McBeth, *Exegetical and Practical Commentary on Romans* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming H. Revell, 1937), 231. McBeth writes: “With reference to the slain animal, this word would denote clean, perfect, no blemish, no blood clots. . . . So the believer’s body is a ‘holy’ sacrifice, as it is morally presented unto God. The holy fires fall only on the holy. The body must be morally clean. Sin prevents the fires of God from burning richly in the heart and life. The fire consumed the dead sacrifice, but the living sacrifice is purged and refined in the fires of the Holy Spirit.”

On the idea of devotion and dedication from the adjective, ἅγιος (*hagios*), see Thomas Schreiner, *Romans*, 644.

¹²⁵Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, NAC, 27 (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 1995), 231. As Mounce writes, “The possibility of bringing pleasure to God provides a powerful motivation for complete surrender of self.”

¹²⁶David A. Desilva [“Paul and the Stoa: A Comparison,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 38 (1995): 557-558] sees an echo of a Stoic conception in this phrase brought to Paul through Hellenistic Judaism. Epictetus, the Stoic philosopher wrote, “But as it is, I am a rational being [*logikos eimi*], therefore I must be singing hymns of praise to God” (Epictetus, *Dissertations*, 1.16.20-21). Paul notes that this act of presentation on the altar as a sacrifice – living, holy, and well-pleasing – to God is described as τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν ὑμῶν. It is the logical and reasonable expression of worship to God.

¹²⁷John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 2:119. Murray states that this phrase indicates that the conscious, intelligent, consecrated devotion to the service of God.

According to C. E. B. Cranfield [*The Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols., ICC (Edinburgh: T and T Clark, 1975), 2:602] the term, λογικός (*logikos*), was a favorite expression of Greek philosophy indicating that which was rational or spiritual. See also, Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Christian Literature*, 2d ed., trans. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, eds. F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 476; s. v., “λογικός.” Hereafter cited, BAGD.

¹²⁸Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, 375. When λογικός is connected with λατρεία, the phrase indicates the determined, logical, rational, and spiritual service of worship to God.

¹²⁹See David Peterson, "Worship and Ethics in Romans 12," *Tyndale Bulletin* 44 (1993): 275. Peterson translates the phrase, λογικὴν λατρείαν (*logikēn latreian*) as "understanding worship."

¹³⁰Robert H. Mounce, *Romans*, 232. The imperatives are present tense denoting continuous action. These imperatives describe "two ongoing activities that carry out the intention of the living sacrifice."

¹³¹G. Mussies, *The Morphology of Koine Greek as used in the Apocalypse of St. John: A Study in Bilingualism* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1971), 272. The first command is prohibitive (συσχηματίζεσθε).

¹³²Kenneth S. Wuest, "The Practical Use of the Greek New Testament, Part II: The Eloquence of Greek Tenses and Moods," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 117 (April 1960): 139.

¹³³D. E. Hiebert ["Presentation and Transformation," 319-320] writes: "The verb rendered 'conform' (συσχηματίζω), which occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only in 1 Peter 1:14, as a compound verb seems to denote a conformity that is external and does not truly represent the believer's inner life. The noun σχῆμα, from which is derived the Greek verb and also the English word 'scheme,' denotes a pattern of life that does not come from within but is imposed from without. The verb conveys the thought of following a manner of life that is unstable and changing rather than enduring. Paul's prohibition is directed against a manner of life that does not come from nor is representative of what believers are in their inner being as the regenerated children of God. But Paul knew that adopting such a pattern of life inevitably mars the inner life."

¹³⁴J. B. Phillips, *The New Testament in Modern English* (New York: MacMillan, 1962). As Phillips paraphrased the verse, "Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold."

¹³⁵Herman A. Hoyt, "A Genuine Christian Non-Conformity: Romans 12:2" *Grace Journal* 8/1 (Winter 1967): 5.

¹³⁶Bo Reicke, "Positive and Negative Aspects of the World in the NT," *Westminster Theological Journal* 49 (1987): 363. This is a pattern of life which is inferior to "the present and future glory of Christ and His followers."

¹³⁷D. E. Hiebert, "Presentation and Transformation," 321. Concerning the command (μεταμορφοῦσθε), Hiebert writes: "The present passive verb notes that this transformation is not a change produced by one's own efforts it is the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit, as Paul noted in 2 Corinthians 3:18. And the present tense emphasizes that this transformation is progressively realized, not a single crisis experience. Further the second person plural imperative 'be transformed' indicates that believers have the volitional responsibility to maintain the conditions under which God brings about the transformation. Believers are not powerless puppets in their experience of God's work of sanctification; they eagerly desire and aim to promote it in complying with God's directives for Christian living."

¹³⁸Horace E. Stoessel, "Notes on Romans 12:1-2: The Renewal of the Mind and Internalizing the Truth," *Interpretation* 17 (1963): 161-75.

¹³⁹Robert L. Thomas ["Improving Evangelical Ethics: An Analysis of the Problem and a Proposed Solution," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34 (March 1991): 12] sees a connection between νοῦς and λογικός. He states that νοῦς in relation to λογικός "expresses the perceptual means of transforming the moral inward character." See also F. Godet, *The Epistle to the Romans* (reprint, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1956), 283.

¹⁴⁰J. A. Fitzmyer [*Romans*, AB (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 641] notes that the term, νοῦς (*nous*), is the "seat of intellectual and moral judgment." According to J. Behm [s. v., "νοῦς," in *TDNT*, 4:958] it is "the inner direction of their [Christians'] thought and will and the orientation of their moral consciousness."

¹⁴¹See Lehman Strauss, "Our Only Hope," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 120/478 (April 1963): 159-163.

¹⁴²The present infinitive of purpose, δοκιμάζειν (*dokimazein*), reveals that the result of the renewing of the mind is the ability to ascertain the good, well-pleasing, and perfect will of God. M. J. Harris, "Appendix: Prepositions and Theology in the Greek New Testament," in *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, 3 vols., ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975-1978), 3.1187. Hereafter cited, *NIDNTT*.

¹⁴³Thomas Schreiner, *Romans*, 648. He suggests that the good, well-pleasing, and perfect will of God focuses on God's point of view rather than ours.

¹⁴⁴Thomas C. Oden, *Life in the Spirit, Systematic Theology: Volume Three* (Peabody, MA: Prince Press, 1998), 165. Thomas Oden states that "the Spirit's distinct purpose is to begin to transform the will and affections. The Spirit works in and through the heart, affections, will and behavior. Human faculties are not circumvented but given a new spring of action."

¹⁴⁵Andrew Murray [*The Spirit of Christ* (London: Nisbet and Company, n.d.), 165] succinctly wrote that "the work of the indwelling Spirit is to glorify Christ and reveal Him within us."

¹⁴⁶See 2 Cor 3:18, "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord." It is this "gradual transformation" that opens our hearts and minds to see what God desires. See M. Thompson, *Clothed with Christ: The Example and Teaching of Jesus in Romans 12.1-15.13I*, JSNT Supplement Series, 59 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1991), 81-85.

¹⁴⁷The verb for "ensnared" in 12: 30 is נָקַשׁ [*nāqas̄*; BDB, s. v., "נָקַשׁ," 669]. It paints the picture of striking and bringing down. It also provides the imagery of laying a trap or setting a snare with allurements.

¹⁴⁸Abraham Heschel, *The Prophets: Part II* (New York: Harper and Row Publishers, 1962), 206-208.

¹⁴⁹Max Weber, *The Sociology of Religion*, trans. Ephraim Fischhoff (Boston: Beacon Press, 1963), 46.

¹⁵⁰Block 2012: 328

¹⁵¹The term in 13:13 is בֵּן בְּלִיעַל [*benē beliyyāāl*]. The meaning points to a son of worthlessness.

¹⁵²Craigie [1976: 226] suggests that dealing with the town through חָרַם [*chērem*; “to destroy”] shows that through its idolatry, they abandoned their covenant with the Lord and rendered them to be thoroughly Canaanite.

¹⁵³Douglas Moo, *The Letter of James*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 72.

¹⁵⁴S. Laws, *A Commentary on the Epistle of James*, BNTC (Oxford: A & C Black, 1980), 71.

¹⁵⁵Ben Witherington III, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 227. Witherington suggests that the Pharisees were concerned about holiness, yet they were approaching it from the wrong vantage. It is “not physical things but moral attitudes that defile a person” according to Jesus.

¹⁵⁶James Adamson, *The Epistle of James*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976), 70-71.

¹⁵⁷The participles, ἐξεκόμενος [*exelkomenos*; “as he is towed away”] and δელεαζόμενος [*deleazomenos*; “as he is lured”], portray a wonderful angling image. The hook with the worm is in the water to draw the fish. The fish is lured and hooked.

¹⁵⁸The noun, ἐπιθυμία [*epithumia*; BAGD, “ἐπιθυμία,” 293], denotes a desire, longing, or craving. The reflexive adjective, τῆς ἰδίας [*tēs idias*], indicates that it is desire originating in the heart of the individual.

¹⁵⁹The phrase, τίκτει ἁμαρτίαν [1:15; *tiktei hamartian*; “[desire] gives birth to sin”], indicates an internal nurture of the desire until it moves into the realm of action.

¹⁶⁰Adamson 1976: 73

¹⁶¹I have taken θάνατος [*thanatos*] to be something in the present, although it could be an eschatological reference. I believe that both “the here” and the “not yet” can be operative from a biblical view. Sin leads to destruction. Certainly this eschatological destruction is in view for those who do not receive God’s forgiveness through Christ. But just as certainly, this destruction and death come in the present for any of God’s followers who pursue the path of sin.

¹⁶²H. Braun, s. v., “πλανάω, κτλ.,” *TDNT*, 6:242-51. He indicates that the term points to a seduction that leads people into error and toward destruction. It is used in the NT with a view of the ability to withstand the seduction by the work of Jesus Christ. In other words, to be deceived is a choice that we make.

¹⁶³Smith [1918: 185] notes that these customs in view were not practices out of excess grief. It was a ritual to acknowledge allegiance and dependence upon the pagan gods of Canaan.

¹⁶⁴As Wright [1996: 181] notes, “the selection of some as clean for eating did not denigrate the rest. Cleanness and uncleanness were ritual categories, not moral judgments.”

¹⁶⁵Neil [*The Acts of the Apostles*, NCB (reprint, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 137] properly notes that “God-fearer” indicates that Cornelius was an “adherent to the synagogue but not a proselyte to the Jewish faith.” It is incorrect to view the term, as Jervell [“The Church of Jews and Godfearers,” in *Luke-Acts and the Jewish People*, ed. J. B. Tyson (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1988), 11-

20] does, as a requirement for all Gentile converts. Sheeley [*Narrative Asides in Luke-Acts*, JSNT Supplement 72 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1992), 126] mistakenly proposes that “God-fearer” qualifies a Gentile for salvation.

¹⁶⁶It is my contention, along with J. T. Sanders [*The Jews in Luke-Acts* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1987), 256], that the term highlights the distinctiveness of Cornelius as a Gentile in comparison to a Jewish person.

¹⁶⁷Bolt [“Mission and Witness,” in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, eds. I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 203] contends that the three-fold repetition of the event marks the significance of the content.

¹⁶⁸Craig Blomberg, “The Christian and the Law of Moses,” in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, eds. I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 404.

¹⁶⁹Blomberg [“The Christian and the Law of Moses,” 404] writes that “God’s threefold command to eat the unclean animals of the heavenly vision (10:9-16) leads to stunning conclusions: Peter deduces that no person is unclean (v. 28), that God accepts people of every nation who fear [H]im and do right (vv. 34-35), and that therefore the gospel should be preached to Cornelius (vv. 36-43). God dramatically confirms Peter’s deductions by sending [H]is Spirit on the centurion and his companions before he finishes preaching (v. 44).”

¹⁷⁰Bruce [*The Book of Acts*, rev. ed., NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 201] notes that the gospel’s reach “has been steadily broadened,” but this story illustrates that the time had come for the barrier between Jews and Gentiles “to be crossed authoritatively by an apostle.”

¹⁷¹Wright [1996: 182] notes that “The removal of the barrier between Jew and Gentile in Christ meant that, for Christians, the distinctive badge of Jewish separateness had no further theological significance in the new, multi-racial, people of God.”

¹⁷²Curtis Vaughan and Thomas Lea [*1, 2 Peter, Jude*, Bible Study Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 11] write that ἐκλεκτός [*eklektos*] “is generally used in the Bible of those chosen out by God for a special relation to Him and with a view to special service in His behalf.”

¹⁷³The language of this phrase is challenging to say the least. I have taken the preposition, εἰς [*eis*] to describe the goal of election. Interestingly, Francis Agnew [“1 Peter 1:2 – An Alternative Translation,” *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 45 (1983): 68-73] proposes that it should be taken in a causal sense, but this is an unusual sense at best.

¹⁷⁴This is the position of Vaughan and Lea, *1, 2 Peter, Jude*, 13.

¹⁷⁵Michaels [*1 Peter*, 6] writes that “the addressees are ‘strangers’ because of (not despite) being chosen. Their divine election is a sociological as well as theological fact, for it has sundered them from their social world and made them like strangers or temporary residents in their respective cities and provinces.”

¹⁷⁶Bigg [*A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Jude*, 91] writes: “The Christian is chosen and called by God (the choosing precedes the calling) to leave his earthly father’s home. The call makes him a pilgrim; henceforth he journeys by slow stages, through the

many dangers, towards the far-off promised rest. The pilgrim is sustained by faith in the unseen, by hope, godly fear, and the love of Christ.”

¹⁷⁷The significance of Peter’s use of διασπορά [*diaspora*] certainly finds roots in the OT. Michaels [1 *Peter*, 6-8] highlights this significance and concludes that Peter “sees them not in relation to the Jews (not even as displacing the Jews in the plan of God) but (like Jewish diaspora itself) always in relation to ‘the Gentiles.’”

¹⁷⁸Goppelt [*A Commentary on 1 Peter* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 66] proposes that this diaspora is central to the readers’ identity as “a people living in small communal organizations scattered among the peoples and waiting expectantly for its ingathering at the eschaton.”

¹⁷⁹Vaughan and Lea, 1, 2 *Peter*, *Jude*, 31.

¹⁸⁰Fritz Rienecker, *A Linguistic Key to the Greek New Testament*, trans. and ed. Cleon Rogers, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980), 747; Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the NT and Other Early Christian Literature*, trans. and ed. W. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich (Chicago: University, 1979), 53; s. v., “ἀναζώννυμι.”

¹⁸¹The aorist tense indicates a punctiliar activity. It has no reference to beginning point, progress, end, or result. See, James Brooks and Carlton Winberry, *Syntax of New Testament Greek* (Lanham, MD: University Press, 1979), 99.

¹⁸²Breuggemann 2001: 161

¹⁸³Frank Crüseman [*The Torah: Theology and Social History of Old Testament Law* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 218] writes: “We might call this the beginning of real social legislation; it represents the first known tax for a social program. With it, those who were landless and socially weak received a sure support which was guaranteed by law and public oath to bring agricultural produce.”

¹⁸⁴Craig Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 601. He suggests that even though “most people lacked capital . . . those who had it could multiply their investment fivefold or even tenfold (Lk 19:16-18); doubling one’s investment (Mt 25:20, 22) might be regarded as a reasonable minimum return to expect in the ancient economy.”

¹⁸⁵W. F. Arndt and F. W. Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 811; John Walvoord, “Christ’s Olivet Discourse on the End of the Age – Part IV, The Parable of the Talents,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 129 (July 1972): 207. He writes: “A talent is a sum of money, which varied in its value in different periods of history. A talent was actually a weight of money varying from 58 to 80 pounds. A silver talent varied from \$1000 to \$2000 in value. A gold talent could be worth more than \$30,000. It is probable that these talents were silver talents, and that they were worth about \$2,000 apiece, but if they were gold talents, they were worth about \$30,000 apiece. The purchasing power of this money should be viewed in a context of a person who would work all day for 15¢. The value of a talent was much greater in proportion than it is in our modern world. So the five-talent man, if they were gold talents, received \$150,000, or if silver, \$10,000. In purchasing power today, this would be equivalent to a fortune. The two-talent man, accordingly may have received as much as \$60,000, and the one-talent man \$30,000, if they were gold talents.”

¹⁸⁶Daniel Harrington, "Polemical Parables in Matthew 24-25," *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 44 (1991): 287-98. He suggests that Jesus uses this story to warn those who are doing nothing in the church.

¹⁸⁷See Moshe Weinfeld, *Social Justice in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), 152-74.

¹⁸⁸Robin Wakely, ["נשא," *NIDOTTE*, 3: 176], suggests that the picture of the "debt" comes from the idea that a creditor would receive a loan-pledge of property for the debt to be given. At the seventh year, "every creditor who holds a loan-pledge shall release what has been pledged to him by his neighbor who is indebted to him."

¹⁸⁹Breuggemann 2001: 164

¹⁹⁰Block [2012: 366] demonstrates Moses' logic: "If you obey Yahweh scrupulously, he will bless you richly. If he blesses you richly, there will be no poor among you."

¹⁹¹BDB, s. v., "נשא," 669-72.

¹⁹²Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1984), 96-97. When we acknowledge our guilt to God, He provides "incredible release." Forgiveness follows immediately on the heels of confession. The Heb reads, אָדָּוָה עָוֹן חָטְאֵי / אֲדַוְּךָ (I confessed to You / You forgave the iniquity of my sin). As Brueggemann notes, "There is nothing between the two moves. The act of forgiveness follows the act of confession directly, without condition or mediator. The whole difference between the diminishment of verses 3-4 and the forgiveness of verse 5 is acknowledgment to Yahweh."

¹⁹³For an examination of the Heb meaning of confession in verse 5, see M. J. Boda, "Words and Meanings: יָדָה in Hebrew Research," *Westminster Theological Journal* 57 (Fall 1995): 277-97; G. Bornkamm, "Lobpreis, Bekenntnis und Opfer," in *Apophoreta: Festschrift für Ernst Haenchen*, BZNW, 30 (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1964), 46-53.

¹⁹⁴The portrait of the trouble that crashes upon David is found in the phrase, לְשֹׁטֵף מַיִם רַבִּים. This "flood of mighty waters" portrays the cosmic forces that threaten the authority and plan of God by an attack on His people.

For an examination of this phrase, see Herbert G. May, "Some Cosmic Connotations of *Mayim Rabbim*, 'Many Waters,'" *Journal of Biblical Literature* 74 (1955): 9-21.

¹⁹⁵Walter Kaiser, "נָקָה," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, 626. He writes: "So exciting was the openness of this offer of forgiveness that Isaiah (55:7) featured it as the heart of his invitation to salvation. So ready was their Lord to forgive, that Isaiah's listeners must forget all notions based on the reluctance of men to forgive each other."

¹⁹⁶The verb here is ἀφιῆμι [*aphiēmi*]. According to Bultmann [s. v., "ἀφιῆμι," in *TDNT*, 1:509-512], this verb, as well as the noun form, ἀφεσις [*aphesis*], carries the meaning of forgiveness in the sense of leaving or letting go a debt that is owed.

¹⁹⁷As Hill [*The Gospel of Matthew*, NCB (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972), 278] notes, this forgiveness is not "dependent on ordinary human feelings, but is linked directly to the attitude

shown to him.” When we receive God’s forgiveness, we “must show the same forgiving attitude to others.”

¹⁹⁸Hagner [*Matthew 14-28*, WBC (Nashville: Nelson, 1995), 538-39] speaks to the enormity of the debt owed to the master which is brought out in the story. The phrase, μυρίων ταλάντων [*muriōn talantōn*], is hyperbolic language depicting “beyond number” so that it was “practically incalculable.” In comparison, the forgiven debtor harangued a man who owed him a relatively small sum of money. The forgiven debtor “had himself been forgiven a debt 600,000 times greater,” and yet he would not forgive.

¹⁹⁹BAGD, s. v., “ἀπολύω,” 96. This verb, similar to ἀφιῆμι [*aphiēmi*], carries the idea of releasing or letting go. Yet, it points to the amnesty given to a prisoner rightly judged guilty.

²⁰⁰Marshall [*The Gospel of Luke*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1978; reprint, 1998), 266] indicates that the command to forgive is not to declare the guilty innocent (acquittal), but to offer pardon in place of judgment. “The reference is to personal insults and injuries, and expresses the same principle of not standing on one’s own rights but rather of showing love to other people even at the cost of one’s own pride and position.”

²⁰¹Bock [*Luke*, vol. 1, 1:1-9:50, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994), 605] rightly notes: “The idea is rather a judgmental and censorious perspective toward others that holds them down in guilt and never seeks to encourage them toward God. What is commanded is an attitude that is hesitant to condemn and quick to forgive.”

²⁰²*Ibid.*, 607.

²⁰³Peter T. O’Brien [*The Letter to the Ephesians*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 355] writes that “Christ’s handing himself over to death for his people was the supreme demonstration of his love for them. Because he is both the ground and model for their love, costly, sacrificial love is to be the distinguishing mark of their lives.”

²⁰⁴On the use of the verb, χαρίζομαι (*charizomai*), See Harold Hoehner, *Ephesians: An Exegetical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 639-40. He notes that “graciousness is the antithesis of bitterness, anger; wrath, shouting and abusive speech. In other words, bitterness is counteracted by a gracious attitude, anger and wrath are counteracted by a gracious disposition, the shouting and abusive speech are counteracted by gracious speaking.”

²⁰⁵Breuggemann 2001: 177

²⁰⁶See Paul’s condemnation in verse 22. They “despised the church of God” and they “shamed those who have nothing.” Paul exclaims: “In this I will not praise you.”

²⁰⁷See Bruce Winter, “The Lord’s Supper at Corinth: An Alternative Reconstruction,” *Reformed Theological Review* 37 (1978): 73-82. Winter cautions against a simple “rich v. poor” division here.

²⁰⁸Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 533. Whenever we group together in the exclusion of others, we have abused the church and Christ Himself.

²⁰⁹Gordon Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1987), 532. "Some are despising the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing."

²¹⁰Brad Blue, "The Influence of Jewish Worship on Luke's Presentation of the Early Church," in *Witness to the Gospel: The Theology of Acts*, eds. I. Howard Marshall and David Peterson (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 488-89. The $\kappa\lambda\upsilon\sigma\iota\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \lambda\alpha\rho\tau\omicron\upsilon$ is an idiom for Jewish ceremony opening a meal in which the host offers a prayer of blessing and then distributes the provisions from God.

F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, 73; H. Conzelmann, *Commentary on the Acts*, 23. Bruce indicates that this "regular observance" is the precursor to the Eucharist, in which the $\kappa\lambda\upsilon\sigma\iota\ \tau\omicron\upsilon\ \lambda\alpha\rho\tau\omicron\upsilon$ is a ceremonial celebration of Christ's "brokenness in death" for humanity.

²¹¹Hans Conzelmann, *The History of Primitive Christianity*, trans. John E. Steely (Nashville: Abingdon, 1973), 53.

When we come to the Table, we come to Celebrate Christ's Body, the Family of Faith, our fellowship as the First Family. We come together to celebrate our togetherness brought about through Jesus Christ and His death on the Cross for our sin. See, R. Michiels, "The 'Model of Church' in the First Christian Community of Jerusalem: Ideal and Reality," *Louvain Studies* 10 (1985): 309-310.

Walter Schmithals, *The Theology of the First Christians*, trans. O. C. Dean Jr. (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1997), 188. The celebration of the common meal actualizes the "fellowship of the individual church members in the unity of the body of Christ" for the church.

Jerome H. Neyrey, "Ceremonies in Luke-Acts: The Case of Meals and Table Fellowship," in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed. Jerome H. Neyrey (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1991), 363. The Supper serves as a process to "bolster the boundaries defining a group or institution, even as they confirm established roles and statuses within the group." Neyrey ["Ceremonies in Luke-Acts," 375] also suggests that the meal strengthens the identity of the community as well as the participant's role in the community.

²¹²W. Wrede, *Paul* (London: Green, 1907), 56. He writes: "A transient proclamation of the gospel was not enough for Paul; for him everything depended on well-founded communities. The care which he expends in making them such belongs to his missionary work just as much as does his restless journeying to new fields, and the preaching by which he lays a first foundation."