

Deuteronomy 26:12-19

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[0 : 00] Amen. Take your Bibles and go with me to the book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy chapter 26 will be where we're at this evening. Deuteronomy chapter 26. We'll be finishing up the 26th chapter of the book of Deuteronomy, which closes out a section within the book, if you will, that opens up to Deuteronomy chapter 12.

It runs through Deuteronomy 12 to Deuteronomy 26. And it's kind of all of these miscellaneous laws and the conducts and behavior really is kind of bookended with worship and tithes and offering. And then we get into Deuteronomy chapter 27 and we get into the blessings and curses and the mountains of representation there and things that we've heard of, but we'll look at them a little bit more detail as we get into those chapters and speaks of the blessing of being God's people and the curses that come from not adhering to the standards and the commandments and the requirements of God.

But if you remember in the 26th chapter, last time we were together and we looked at it, that it is really just this beginning of worship, if you will. We're beyond, at least within this section, the don't do this, do this, behave this way, all the points and the matters of covenant relationship with God that affect every area of our life.

And now we've come to this place of just worship and celebration and thankfulness for God. And Deuteronomy 26 opens with this really a one-time event within the nation's history, something that was very specific, but it has an application throughout its history and even in our own.

[1 : 44] And that is when they came into the promised land, they were to bring that first fruit, the first harvest of the promised land where they really could display the goodness of God.

And they were to bring it and set it before the Lord and proclaim this great truth that I now possess what God has promised. I now live in and abide in the very thing God said he would give me.

And it was just this declaration that God is good and that everything God had said had come about. And the evidence of that is the first fruit because they had had time to plant and harvest.

And now here it is. Here is the evidence that I now have what God told me I would have. And they were to bring that and make this great declaration of where they were at, where they had been. And our faith is always rooted in what we have experienced. I had a question posed to me in a class that I'm in this past week, not this week, but this past week.

[2 : 51] And it really made me think. And it's something that we instinctively want to say no, but then we come back and we think on it. What we experience is, is experience a valid tool to understand theology.

Or our experiences a valid tool to understand theology. Theology being the study of God. So to put it kind of simpler, what we experience is that valid to understand who God is.

And now, being great Bible believers and Scripture believers, we want to say no, no, no, no. We don't know who God is by our experiences.

We know by His revelation. But the question is not, is that the only way we know God, right? But is it a valid way? And to that I think we have to answer yes, because we know God fuller through our experiences.

And we always read Scripture in light of what we've experienced. Because this is our springboard. This is how we decipher theology. This is how we understand what it means.

[4 : 01] And when we've seen Him provide, this is how we understand what it means when the Lord our God is our provider. And that's what we see in Deuteronomy 26, getting down to 10 and 11.

They're rejoicing because of what they've experienced. And then that leads us into verse 12, which is our text this evening, verses 12 through 19. Because now there's this transition.

It's not this one-time experience or one-time event of bringing that first harvest of first fruits. This is something that's going to be repeated every third year.

And we don't see the transition as much when we just read chapter 26 through. But we see it when we stop and consider. Now we're no longer talking about that single event.

We're talking about an every third year event. Because every third year was a triennial tithe. A specified tithe.

[4 : 57] Every year they tithe. Every year they brought 10% of their increase of their harvest and of their increase. And they brought it before the tabernacle. Or not tabernacle, the temple or even the tabernacle, wherever the glory of the Lord had revealed himself.

But every third year there was another tithe. An additional tithe. That was really specified. And it went to a particular group. And we see that here for us.

So we see in Deuteronomy 26 starting in verse 12. When you have finished paying all the tithe of your increase in the third year. The year of tithing.

Then you shall give it to the Levite, to the stranger, to the orphan, and to the widow. That they may eat in your towns and be satisfied. You shall say before the Lord your God. I have removed the sacred portion from my house.

And also have given it to the Levite and the alien, the orphan, and the widow. According to all your commandments which you have commanded me. I have not transgressed or forgotten any of your commandments.

[5 : 57] I have not eaten of it while mourning. Nor have I removed any of it while I was unclean. Nor offered any of it to the dead. I have listened to the voice of the Lord my God.

I have done according to all that you have commanded me. Look down from your holy habitation from heaven. And bless your people Israel and the ground which you have given us. I am flowing with milk and honey as you swore to our fathers.

This day the Lord your God commands you to do these statutes and ordinances. You shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul. You have today declared the Lord to be your God.

And that you would walk in his ways and keep his statutes, his commandments, and his ordinances. And listen to his voice. The Lord has today declared you to be his people.

A treasured possession. As he promised you. And that you should keep all his commandments. And that he will set you high above all nations which he has made for praise, fame, and honor.

[7 : 02] That you should be a consecrated people to the Lord your God as he has spoken.

Deuteronomy 26 verses 12 through 19. We see here this specified tithe that happens every third year.

As a result of or in cooperation with their worship. And we see the events that are kind of connected to that. So I want you to see this evening the overflow of worship.

The overflow of worship. Because worship was a daily occurrence. It wasn't just an every now and then. It wasn't an annual occurrence. They had a number of annual feasts that declared that they must come into the presence of the Lord throughout the year.

At least three great feasts that every male was to come before the Lord and worship. They had, of course, the Passover. And the in-gathering. Or what we would call the Pentecost.

And then they had the Feast of Booths. Or the Feast of Tabernacles. And they had these three great festivals that took him throughout the year. But every day was to be a day of worship. Every day was to be a day of Thanksgiving.

[8 : 08] Every day was to be a day of celebration. And every third year that life of worship was to just spill out into the community. Literally. The Levites were to be cast upon the people of God for their support.

They had no inheritance in the land. Remember that? Because the Lord says, for I am their inheritance. And they were to be cast upon the people of God on a daily basis. And they were to be in their towns.

The Levites were to be scattered throughout the people. And they had cities that they lived in. But they lived among the people. But every third year the worshiping individual was to just flow over into the community.

And really to affect the destitute and the needy. And kind of the outcast. But the despairing and those that stood in the greatest amount of need.

And really this was not to be something that was legalistically done. It was just something that was to happen naturally as a result of worship. And God declared it would take place every third year.

[9 : 10] And this is with the assumption that God would provide sufficient for year one, two, and subsequently year three.

That when you gave now 20% of your increase away on that third year. Your family would still be well taken care of. And it was really just an overflow of a worshiping life.

An overflow of living in communion. God was providing for his people. Right? God didn't just provide for those who seemed to be highly blessed in society. God, as we've seen this throughout Deuteronomy.

Right? Remember one of the great truths we see in Deuteronomy is God lifts the destitute up in Deuteronomy more than any other place just about. There's always this stranger or alien.

The widow. The orphan. Helpless and the homeless. They're always lifted up. Right? And it's not even just those of Jewish descent.

[10 : 11] Because the stranger or alien implies those who just happen to be passing through. Now this is important because if you remember in one of the declarations when they bring the first fruits in.

And the first part of Deuteronomy 26 is they were to declare my father was a wandering Aramean. Right? And it's really speaking of Jacob that he was a stranger in a land that he did not belong in. So they were identifying themselves with this reality that I too came from someone who didn't have a home. And now I inherit a home or I've been given a home, a promised land. And so they were in their worship were to take care of those who were in the same condition that their father Jacob was in.

And it's just this overflow. And we see it here. We see this overflow spilling out really in three ways. Number one we see as we've already seen or talked about.

Overflow worship really leads first to a concern for others. And it is just this great concern that they bring this tithe.

[11 : 19] And they do it with the intention of not just giving it to the Lord. But as part of their worship when they give it to the Lord they disperse it.

He entrusts them with the responsibility of taking what is presented to him in worship and dispersing it among the Levite, the stranger, the widow, and the orphan.

And he declares that they would do this every third year. That their families would be so well taken care of that sufficient means would be there. And every third year would come.

Now we don't know that just we've seen that the first fruits, that first harvest would have not all taken place in a single year. Because people would have been inhabiting their promised land little by little.

God didn't just move the inhabitants of the nation of Israel or the nation of Canaan, the land of Canaan out at one time. He kind of progressively pushed them out. So different clans and different groups were taking possession of their land at different times.

[12 : 23] But as it came about, then they would bring their first fruits in. And here, we don't know if the third year comes every time. If my third year is the same as your third year. Or if mine is based upon my harvest and yours is based upon your harvest.

But every third year of harvest, you would have this declared overflow that you would disperse. And God says this is to meet a specific need, right? He declares here, he says, so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied.

That they may eat in your towns. So this overflow first has its greatest impact locally. Right? So they may eat in your towns. It ministers literally right outside the door of your house.

Or within the gates of your town. It is to meet a local need that is there. And it says so that they don't have to go outside of their region. They don't need to go beyond you.

They don't need to go past you. They're going to be satisfied with what comes from you. And I think that is very important.

[13 : 32] Because it used to be. And when we read the book of Acts, we see it was intended to be. That it was the overflow of the church that met the specific needs of the community.

And the community never needed to go beyond the church to be satisfied. And it is when the church began to neglect its resourcing.

Or to neglect its provisions. That then those needs began to be met beyond the church.

Outside the town. You know, I've said it before. And numerically, it very clearly resonates. That if the church would just do everything that God has commanded the church to do throughout the New

Testament.

If the church would just fulfill the things that God has commanded to do. Then there would really be no need for humanitarian agencies outside the church.

[14:43] There would be no need for many of societies. Ministering.

We don't want to call them parachurch ministries. Because some of them don't come along beside the church. But no need for any other agencies to meet the pressing needs of mankind. Those things began to arise when the church began to neglect.

And the church became content with allowing someone else to meet the need. And I think it's because the church began to worship and allow the overflow to come back to itself.

But here we see that the overflow of the worship of God's people is to meet the pressing needs of their own community. And that those needs would be satisfied by what came out.

And I know you're saying, well, this is a whole community doing that right. But again, still, these are worshipers doing this right. This is not a legal issue. This is a, I don't like the word religious, but it is a spiritual issue.

[15:52] This isn't a legal matter. This isn't something the judges do. This is something that flows through the spiritual side of things. This isn't a law of the land.

This is a call of the Lord. And we see that. Right? One of the great numbers I heard many years ago is that, you know, if just a small majority, I won't say minority, but a small majority of the church really had a great care for the orphans, then there would be no orphans in the world.

I can't remember the numbers. Now, that's hard. This is a very difficult calling. It's a very difficult task. It's not a very easy path, as many, many people can testify to. But it's what we see here.

It's this overflow of worship. And it is there to create a concern for others. Because honestly, when we worship and we set our eyes upon the Lord our God, then we cannot help but be concerned for the things that He is concerned for.

And we cannot help but have a heart moved for the things that His heart is moved for. And that does not mean it's always going to be easy and that it's always going to, you know, be, you know, comfortable to do.

[17:17] But these things are an overflow of a worshiping life. Number two, we see that not only is there a growing concern for others, number two, there is a confession of obedience.

There is a confession of obedience. Because as they were to do this, and they were to worship, and they were to bring their tithes, and they were to meet these needs, and these needs would be satisfied by what proceeded from God's people, then God's people in worship will be able to stand and declare to the Lord their God, I have done everything you've commanded me to do.

I have given my tithe. I have provided for it. I have not kept back that which was holy and sacred. I have not held it to myself. I have not touched it while unclean.

I have not done it in mourning, which means I'm not sad because I did it, right? Because as the scripture said, God loves a cheerful giver, right? I have not done it because I was like, well, I guess God wants me to do it.

No, I've done it in rejoicing. I've done it in celebration because it's worship, and it's all these things. And you declare here, and you begin to confess obedience.

[18:26] And worship leads us to this place of really being seen for what we really are. And true worship allows us to stand up and to confess either our failures, our faults, or our obedience.

Because worship is always a revealer of who we are. Jesus himself says that the light has come into the world, but men love the darkness rather than the light.

And the reason he said that, John chapter 3, is because it says that men do not want to come to the light lest their deeds be exposed or revealed. And worship brings us into the presence of light, and it is the light of his inspection upon our lives.

As the psalmist cried out, search me, O Lord, try me and know my wicked thoughts. See if there be any wicked way in me. And worship brings us to that place where we stand before the holy God, and we ask, am I doing all that he's commanded me to do?

And an overflow of that is when we get to that point where we can confess, Lord, what you have asked and required of me, that I have done. This is not a legalistic matter, right?

[19:37] This is not just a following of rules and regulations. This is just an overflow of everything that God is asking of me, and to the best of my ability, as far as I know, as much has been revealed to me, so much I have done.

And I am crying out to you. I read a little snippet on Martin Luther today. Not Martin Luther King Jr., but Martin Luther, the reformer.

And the great text that changed Martin Luther's life is the just shall live by faith. Habakkuk, right? The just shall live by faith. And that phrase in Habakkuk is repeated three times in the New Testament.

The author of the book that I was reading really expounded it so great that the Mosaic law has a number of laws, hundreds and hundreds of laws.

David condensed the law to a little bit under a hundred. And we get to the psalmist, and it's condensed down to, you know, just a few. And then we get to Isaiah, and there's like three laws in Isaiah.

[20 : 54] And then Habakkuk says, one, the just shall live by faith. And how that verse really just captivated Martin Luther. And it just kept resonating within his life and said that the final time that it really came, that the light really shone upon him, is he had went to Rome and he was ascending what they claimed to be Pilate's stairs that were miraculously transported from Jerusalem to Rome.

And the pope had said if anyone ascended Pilate's steps or his stairs on his knees while recounting this prayer, and all the way up on Pilate's staircase and on his knees crawling up this thing and repeating this prayer, that there would be penance given to him, that he would be forgiven for his sins.

And in the process of doing that, about halfway up the stairs, Martin Luther was going up there and repeating this prayer, and this verse from Habakkuk came to his mind, the just shall live by faith. And so Luther stood up, he got off his knees, quit commenting, and he stood up and he says, man, how foolish are my works.

Look at what I'm trying to do. And began really just to look with disgust upon his efforts. And then turn and walk down the steps. Because an overflow of worship, we can say, Lord, I confess. I'm walking in obedience. I'm doing what you've asked me to do. Out of love and faith and trust.

[22 : 22] Not out of obligation. Not out of all this thing. But I'm confessing, Lord, all that you're leading me to do. I'm doing it. Because here's the honest thing.

If we're not walking in obedience, then we will not be able to worship. We will not be able to sincerely and truly worship.

Quite often, the greatest impediment to our worship is our disobedience. Or our lack of faithfulness. So worship is a result of obedience.

Therefore, it overflows to this confession. And how great a confession it is. When I can stand up and proclaim, all that he's asked me to do, I'm doing it.

Am I perfect? No. Will I fail? Yes. That's why I worship. That's why I'm drawn to that. Am I always just happy-go-lucky? No. Lord, I'm walking by faith.

[23 : 22] Number three. We see that worship overflows into a confidence of position. Probably the greatest thing that we see in this text is that true worship leads one to have a greater confidence in their position.

As we understand it, we're walking, and we're giving of our tithes, and we're confessing, Lord, I'm trying my best. And there's always this thing, you know, am I really where I should be?

And true worship leads one to have this confidence. Because he declares to him, starting in verse 16, This day the Lord your God commands you to do these statutes and these ordinances. And you shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart, with all your soul.

We understand that, right? This is what God requires of me. But then he also says, You have today declared. I want you to pay attention to this. There's here what God's people declare, and then there's what God himself declares.

You have today declared the Lord to be your God. Right? So you say, He is my God. This is what happened at Mount Sinai when the thunder and the flashes of lightning and the smoke descended on the earth.

[24 : 28] And then God spoke to them the Ten Commandments, and God's people heard that. Sometimes I think we forget that. I think that we assume Moses is the only one who heard the Ten Commandments. But the scripture very clearly says, They heard the voice of God, and they shook for fear.

And then they declared they would be, because God said, I will be your God if, and they said, Yes, we want you to be our God. So they made that declaration. And here, Moses is reminding them,

Today, he's repeating this, by going through the law and expounding it, You have today declared the Lord to be your God.

That is my God. Remember? Joshua says it again, Choose you this day whom you will serve. But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.

So this is one thing we need to understand. God doesn't force anyone to make this declaration. But he gives them the opportunity.

But making that declaration has with it this commitment. You have declared the Lord to be your God, and that you would walk in his ways and keep his statutes and his commandments.

[25 : 34] We cannot declare him to be our God without declaring that we will obey him. In the New Testament, we say that he is both Lord and Savior.

You don't get the Savior without the Lordship. And the good news is, is you don't get his Lordship without his Saviorship. He is both Lord and Savior. There are a multitude of people who want a Savior.

They want someone to save them from the bad place to come. They want someone to save them from all the bad things they've done. They want someone to save them from all the desperate conditions. They want someone to save them from all this guilt and shame that they feel.

But they don't want him to lord over their lives and direct their lives, and then therefore to tell them how they should live. They don't want that. They don't want to, they want to declare him as Savior, but they don't want to declare him as Lord.

But we find this principle, even in the Old Testament, you have today declared that the Lord is your God. Well, if you're declaring he is your God, then you are also declaring that you will obey him.

[26 : 41] And we need to understand this. God doesn't make them. He doesn't force them. He offers them. And we would say he invites them. And at that declaration, you're saying, okay, this is what I'm going to do.

But here's the great news. Okay. So that's what we say. Well, and then we fall short. Oh man, but I mess up. We understand that. But look at what God declares. Look at verse 18. The Lord has today declared to you.

So this is what we declare to one another. He is my God. I'm going to walk in all his ways, his statutes, and his commandments. This is what he declares about his people. The Lord has today declared to you to be his people.

A treasured possession. Just let that thought just flow over you for just a moment. He is God. He needs nothing.

Right? We add nothing to him. We take nothing away from him. He needs nothing, but he refers to his people as a treasured possession. Treasured possession.

[27 : 48] I have a lot of possessions by the world's standards. Not that I'm, most people would call it junk. Right? That's okay. I have a lot of junk.

I have very, very few treasured possessions. Very few. Some people may still call them junk because they're broken, but they are treasured.

Two in particular, and I'll give them to you not in their importance, but in the times that I got them.

One, in one of my boxes, every man has usually either a drawer or a box of junk, and I have a couple of them.

So in one of my boxes of junk, you would open up, and you would take out a little shelf, and down in the bottom of that box, there is a rolled up handkerchief, and inside that handkerchief is an old pocket knife.

Now in that pocket knife, I think two of the three blades are broken. The only blade that remains has been sharpened so many times, probably on like a grinding wheel, or like a desktop grinding wheel, not in a very good manner.

[28 : 52] The blade is almost gone, and one side of the knife is a different color than the other, and it's really, not really in good shape at all, but to me, it's a very treasured possession.

Because see, that was the pocket knife that was in my grandfather's pocket the day he died right outside my bedroom. Doesn't mean anything to anybody else, but to me, it's a treasured possession.

And in that same box, on the top of it, there's a simple golden band that's broken in half. Not worth much by the world's standards, but it was the ring that my wife put on my finger the day we were married, and I broke it.

You'll laugh, doing, of all things, lifting weights, but I broke it. Yeah, you can tell I lift weights, right? I'm just joking. But I broke it, and I taped it up and wore it for years, broken, because I didn't want to take it off, and it kept pinching my finger, and I just didn't want to take it off, and she finally said, it's okay, so now I wear a stainless steel red ring, you know, so an old George Jones song, golden band, it's not there.

Mine's stainless steel. Stainless steel keeps the perfect circle all the time. But I still have that ring. Why? Because it's a treasured possession. Neither one of those things are perfect.

[30 : 09] They have faults. The ring is oblong and smashed and messed up, and the knife wouldn't be worth anything to anybody else, but to me, they're my treasured possession.

When God declares to his people, you are my people, a treasured possession, he's not saying you're perfect. Right? Some of us have been overworked by sin and overused and overcarried and messed up, but we're his treasured people.

And as I said before, it doesn't matter what the world says about me as long as I know what he says about me. Begin to see how much more confident we are in our position because you are my treasured possession.

And as he promised you that he should keep all his commandments, that you should keep all his commandments, and that he will set you high above all the nations he has made.

Now he's speaking in particular to the Jewish people, but in application to all his people. Now look at this. High above all the nations, not just all the nations, but read the rest of the text, right?

[31 : 25] Read the rest of the verse because it's very specific. All the nations he has made. Every nation is his. All people are his.

He has made all people. Right? Every nation he has made. But those who declare that he is their God and he declares you are my people, even though every nation belongs to him, these people he lifts up above them.

He gives them a greater position. And he goes on. He would set you high above all nations which he has made. Look at this. For a praise, fame, and honor.

He said, oh great, I'm going to be famous. Not for their fame, not for their honor, not for their praise, but for his. If I was to lift up that old broken pocket knife or that broken ring, it doesn't give fame to itself.

Right? It's nothing special to itself that you shall be a consecrated people to the Lord your God as he has spoken. We gain confidence in our position as a result of our worship.

[32 : 39] And in true worship, we understand. He lifts us up, not that we may be seen, but that others may know we are set apart. That's what consecrated means.

That we are set apart for his praise, for his glory, for his honor. And these are the overflows of worship which we find in Deuteronomy 26, verses 12 through 19.

Thank you. Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.