

Reflecting God the Abundant Giver: 4. Real Worship

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Date: 22 October 2017

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[0 : 00] But we're going to return now to our Bible reading this morning, to the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 26, which you'll find on page 167, if you have one of the Blue Vista's Bibles.

And we're going to read together the whole of this chapter, which really rounds off, I suppose it's the positive side, if you like, of the 10th commandment, not to covet.

Here's a chapter all about the very opposite of that. It's all about giving. It's all about generosity. It's all about hearts going up to God and out to others. But it really rounds off the whole of this second central section in the book of Deuteronomy, where Moses from chapter 12 has been fleshing out the practical implications of the 10 commandments.

And this rounds off that whole section of the book with a chapter which is really all about real hearts being filled with worship. going out to God.

So let's read together chapter 26. When you come into the land that the Lord your God is giving you for an inheritance and have taken possession of it and live in it, you shall take some of the first of all the fruit of the ground which you harvest from your land that the Lord your God is giving you, and you shall put it in a basket, and you shall go to the place the Lord your God will choose to make his name dwell there.

[1 : 24] Remember, that's a phrase we've seen so many times. And you shall go to the priest who's in office at that time and say to him, I declare today to the Lord your God that I have come into the land that the Lord swore to our fathers to give us.

And the priest shall take the basket from your hand and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God. And you shall make a response before the Lord your God. A wandering Aramean was my father.

And he went down to Egypt and sojourned there, few in number. And there he became a great nation, great, mighty, and populous. And the Egyptians treated us harshly and humiliated us and laid on us hard labor.

And we cried to the Lord, the God of our fathers. And the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression. And the Lord brought us up out of Egypt with a mighty hand and outstretched arm, with great deeds of terror, with signs and wonders.

And he brought us into this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey. And behold, now I bring the first of the fruit of the ground, which you, O Lord, have given me.

[2 : 37] And you shall set it down before the Lord your God and worship before the Lord your God. And you shall rejoice in all the good that the Lord your God has given you and to your house, you and the Levite and the sojourner who is among you.

When you finish paying all the tithe of your produce in the third year, which is the year of tithing, giving to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widows, so that they may eat within your towns and be filled, then you shall say before the Lord your God, I have removed the sacred portion out of my house.

And moreover, I have given to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow, according to all your commandment that you have commanded me. I have not transgressed any of your commandments, nor have I forgotten them.

I've not eaten of the tithe while I was mourning, or removed any of it while I was unclean, or offered any of it to the dead. I have obeyed the voice of the Lord my God. I have done according to all that you have commanded me.

Now look down from your holy habitation, from heaven, and bless your people Israel and the ground that you have given us, as you swore to our fathers a land flowing with milk and honey.

[3 : 48] This day the Lord your God commands you to do these statutes and rules. You shall therefore be careful to do them with all your heart and with all your soul.

You have declared today that the Lord is your God, and that you will walk in his ways, and keep his statutes and his commandments and his rules, and will obey his voice.

And the Lord has declared today that you are a people for his treasured possession, as he has promised you. Literally, so that you keep all his commandments, and that he will set you in praise and in fame and in honor, high above all nations that he has made, that you shall be a people holy to the Lord your God, as he promised.

Amen. May God bless to us this, his word. Well, that is a chapter that rings with thankfulness to the Lord our God. Well, do turn with me to Deuteronomy chapter 26, page 167, if you have a blue visitor's Bible.

We saw last time that the Tenth Commandment is the inevitable climax of the Decalogue, reminding us, as it so clearly does, that all sin is at heart a matter of the heart.

[5 : 13] And so covetousness is idolatry, as the Apostle Paul says. It's the heart attitude that is turned in upon itself. It is self-worship.

And therefore, it is anti-true worship, which is to have a heart lifted up to God, and lifted out towards others in love. And so it's a heart that is resisting God's grace, and not responding to God's grace.

And that's the heart of what the Bible calls sin. Hence, our world is a world of anti-worship. The world you read about in today's papers is a world of anti-worship.

As Paul says in Romans chapter 1, it's full of people who don't glorify God and give thanks to him, but rather they become futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts darkened.

It's the very antithesis of the true worship he describes later on in Romans chapter 12, which is presenting your whole bodily life as a living sacrifice, not conformed to this world's darkness, but transformed by the renewing of your mind, your heart, the very center of your being, so that you know what is the good and well-pleasing and perfect will of God.

[6 : 34] And that is, according to Jesus himself, who of course was echoing Moses here in Deuteronomy, that is, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and strength, and your neighbor as yourself.

The Old Testament and the New Testament are absolutely at one on what true worship of God is about. And that is what true worship is. Hence, as someone has said, it's not possible for natural man to worship God in any true meaning of the term.

Until someone is converted, which means their proud ego is broken, and they take their proper place in relation to God, they remain the center of their world.

Even God himself is kept on the circumference. For God to have his rightful place means that we also must take our rightful place.

And only then is worship, in its true sense, a possibility. But you see, that is the true call of God's grace upon the lives of sinful human beings through the power of his eternal gospel.

[7 : 38] To restore a people for true worship. And for true and real God-like humanity. For by grace you have been saved, says Paul, through faith to be his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them to the praise of his glory.

That's how Paul put it to the Ephesians. Or, as Moses puts it long before here in chapter 26, verse 18 of Deuteronomy, God has declared his people to be his treasured possession.

So that they will keep all his commandments. And be set in praise and fame and honor above all. And verse 19, so that they will be a people holy to the Lord their God, as he has promised.

That is no vain wish or hope on the part of God. No, that is the eternal purpose of the sovereign God, who predestined everything according to the purpose of him, who works everything according to the purpose of his will, as Paul says.

So here in Deuteronomy 26, at the end of Moses' great exposition of the way of right relationship with God, which is the way of true bodily worship, what it looks like for his people, here he crystallizes what it means for them to be true worshipers.

[9 : 07] Not resisting his way of grace, but responding to his call with true heart love, which is a very antithesis of coveting. Indeed, the antithesis of all the selfish, turn in upon yourself sinfulness, which the Decalogue leads us away from, completely into true light and into true life.

So how much more is this message relevant for us as Christian believers today, living as we do on this side of the coming of Jesus, so much nearer to the final unveiling of his glorious kingdom in the new creation when Jesus comes.

As Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7, this present world is passing away. And so neither circumcision or uncircumcision matters at all for anything anymore.

For what counts, he says, is keeping the commandments of God. That's what real worship is. That's the fragrant sacrifice that God desires for himself and for this world to see in these last days.

And this chapter really is just giving us a picture of what that response to God, the real and great giver, looks like. And it's a heart response, isn't it? Which is complete, which is comprehensive.

[10 : 27] It's upward in overwhelming gratitude to God. It's outward in overflowing generosity to others. And it's inward in an overpowering allegiance of our hearts to the God who is truly our Lord.

The chapter is structured around three great declarations. Verse 3 and verse 13 and again in verse 17 and 18.

And that helps us just to see how all-embracing this response of real worship must be. So let's look first of all at verses 1 to 11, which focus on this great celebration of true grace.

These verses express the overwhelming gratitude in the heart that is the mark always of hearts that have been touched by the true grace of God. Real worship means rejoicing in God, our Redeemer.

We rejoice in the riches of the restored and renewed life that He's given us. Verse 3, I have come into the land that the Lord swore our fathers to give to us.

[11 : 34] But we never forget, having come in, that God is the great Redeemer and that we have everything that we have only by His sheer grace. And so the first response of all true worship is love and gratitude to God for God Himself and what He's done.

That's why the emphasis here in verses 1 to 11 is upwards in a substantial confessing, that is, a real giving of substance back to God Himself.

That's what the first fruits offering was all about. But they were to make it not just on the very first time they entered the land, but in fact every year at harvest at the beginning, in the spring. Leviticus chapter 27 speaks about the rituals of it.

Waving the first fruits sheaf on the day after the first Sabbath of the Passover feast. And it's giving to God in a celebration of His sheer grace for all that He's given His people.

Verse 1, He gave the land. Verse 2, He gave the harvest of the land. And verse 3, He's promised it and now you say, I have come into it, what He has given.

[12 : 47] Six times in these verses we read about what God has given. Climax is in verse 11, All the good that the Lord your God has given you. Everything that God's people have is His personal gift.

That's why it's right that the first fruits are offered as an offering of love from the heart back to God Himself. And real worship is, first of all, a response of love to God Himself.

So verse 4, You'll bring it before the altar of the Lord your God. In verse 5, You make response, Before the Lord your God. In verse 10, You set it down, Before the Lord your God.

You worship, Before the Lord your God. Don't miss that emphasis of direct, personal love offering to God Himself. Some evangelical Christians today who understandably and indeed rightly want to distance themselves from so much of the shallow sentimentalism and emotionalism, which so often goes by the name of worship in the church today, they go to the opposite extreme, far too far.

And they would talk as though we're never actually engaging with God Himself at all, at all in worship. That worship is all just horizontal. It's all just about edifying one another.

[14 : 13] Well, of course it is about edifying others. We'll see that in a moment. But remember what Peter says in his first letter. We come to Him, to God, in spiritual worship.

We're living stones being built into a temple where God Himself is dwelling in the midst of His people and receiving their love. We're offering spiritual sacrifices, he says, together to God Himself.

We are living stones in a living temple of God where God is really present. Not just bricks in the wall of a lecture hall about God where God is absent.

That's important to remember. And yes, of course, true Christian worship is our whole bodily life of living sacrifice. As Paul says, it's not just singing.

It's not just sermons. It's not just sacraments. But everything that we have and are we offer to God Himself in order to be well-pleasing to Him, first of all, before it means anything else.

[15 : 16] And we do that, don't we, because our hearts are so full of gratitude. Because we've been blessed. We've been redeemed by His grace alone.

And so we want to please our Lord, our Redeemer. That's why there's nothing legalistic about believers giving of their substance to God is here. It's a glad response from people who know that everything they have has come from God's hand.

And above all, the great, great gift of the redemption, which is what's spoken about here in verses 5 to 10. Notice this great redemption and notice it is no bare salvation.

It's not just rescue from something. Well, that's a wonderful thing in itself, isn't it? Verse 5 says, Israel, like Jacob, were wandering Arameans. They were lost sheep.

Ended up in Egypt under great oppression, humiliation, hard labor, verse 6. But they cried out to God and God saw their affliction and their toil and their impression and He brought them out.

[16 : 21] He rescued them. He redeemed them with great deeds, with signs and wonders. But He didn't just rescue them out of Egypt into the desert. Verse 9, He brought them into a land flowing with milk and honey.

A land with abundant blessings. And that's what God's people are saved for. Not just the absence of death, but for life. Indeed, for life in all its full abundance.

And how much more should we understand that as Christians today who have such extraordinary gratitude to God? We've seen, haven't we, in the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, the future that He has promised.

Of life. Where the deaf hear. Where the blind see. Where the lame leap for joy. Where the dead are raised to life. And where we will be raised to life. Not only to live with Him forever, but to reign with Him forever.

And real worship. A real response to God Himself shows our love to Him for what He's done.

[17 : 26] It flows out, doesn't it, of remembering. Individually and together. Notice, by the way, all the way through this section here, it's we at times and it's I at times. He brought us out.

He gave us this land. But I bring the first fruit of what you've given me. But it comes out of remembering what we once were. Wandering like lost sheep, slaves, oppressed.

And what we now have and what we still shall be. By God's grace alone. And friends, if we're not, at least sometimes, overwhelmed with gratitude for what God has done for us and what He has still promised us.

I can only think it must mean we haven't yet really understood the depth of the wonder of God's grace to us. And that must also mean that we haven't yet understood anything about the depth of our own sin.

And our need for God's grace. Because where God's grace has truly touched your heart, overwhelming gratitude surely must follow.

[18 : 34] But of course, as you read Israel's story, it wasn't often like that, was it? Often their hearts weren't overwhelmed by gratitude, but rather by grumbling. They were harking back to Egypt.

They seemed to have forgotten all about verse 6, which was the reality. And you remember, they talked about the garlic and the melons and the cucumber that we used to feast on in Egypt. Blaming God instead for all the privations that they now thought that He was actually inflicting on them.

How utterly warped. And we read those stories, don't we? And we're shocked by them. But isn't that sometimes, indeed, isn't that often how actually we ourselves behave?

We have received far more blessings than Israel under Moses. Isn't your heart sometimes filled with resentment to God more than it is with rejoicing in God?

That the Lord has made my life hard? All these things I've had to give up to follow Jesus? Being a Christian, you know, I've had to forego so many pleasures that I could have had otherwise.

[19 : 43] You sometimes think like that? I've often heard people in ministry or the spouses of people in ministry expressing more resentment about the privations that they think they're suffering for the gospel's sake than rejoicing in the sheer privilege that they've been given by God to share in such a glorious work of His kingdom.

But we can all be like that, can't we? We can think like that. But friends, here's the truth. You cannot rejoice in God if your heart is full of grumbling.

Only if your heart is full of gratitude. Real worship that is well-pleasing before the Lord and delights in Him is when you live the truth of verse 11.

Rejoicing in all the good that God has given you as your great Redeemer. And notice that when that gratitude is real, it always does lead to giving that is real.

This is a substantial confession. It's not just sound. It's real substance. It's not just the best of our lips, but this is actually the first fruits of our lives. The first fruits, verse 2.

[21 : 00] And again, verse 10, it's emphasized. In verses 12 to 15, talk about tithing. We've seen that principle already in Deuteronomy and in many other places. The point there is clear. The first tithe belongs to the Lord, not to you.

So it must be given to Him. But here the emphasis is different. It's on the first fruits and therefore the best of the crop. That's what you give to honor God. And crucially, that's what you give to show that you trust God.

Because you only give God the first of your harvest if you believe and trust that God is going to bring in the rest of your harvest for you to live on. It doesn't show any trust in God, does it? If you get your whole harvest and your barn full and you say, oh good, there's something left over to give to the Lord.

Or you spend all your money on the things that you want this month and oh good, there's maybe something at the end for me to give to the Lord. That's not trusting God, is it? And we have to ask ourselves, are we really giving to God in faith and trust?

The first fruits of real faith? Or is it just the fag ends that actually show that we don't trust God to provide for us? You see, it matters because as this passage in the years, the whole Bible reminds us, all our giving is first that is something brought to the Lord Himself.

[22 : 16] It's not just to pay the bills of the church, although those have to be paid. It's expressing love to our Lord and our Redeemer.

It's showing that we truly do celebrate His grace and all the good that He has given to us. And a people who understand giving like that to God are a people who do understand truly the grace of God and what He has given to them.

They're always looking back in real gratitude for where they've come from and all the good that God has given them and all the good that God has yet promised and will give and trusting that He will be good to His promise.

And that's what the first fruits offering helped Israel to do as God's people then. It lifted their eyes above just the material provisions of God and to the great eternal matters of His great redemption and His promise to fix their hearts there and the future that God had given them.

And so it's surely no accident that the Apostle Paul picks up this whole imagery of the first fruits writing to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 15 when he speaks of Christ's resurrection body as the first fruits.

[23 : 32] And Jesus Himself was raised as a matter of fact on the day of the first fruits offering, on the day after the Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, of the Passover.

And Paul says that His resurrection at His coming promises the resurrection of all those who truly belong to Him. And so every Sunday, not just every Easter Sunday, but every Sunday as we gather on the day of resurrection as Sunday is, we remember His death for our redemption and we remember His resurrection and we're reminded to rejoice in all the riches of the good that God has given us already in our great Redeemer.

And we're pointed to look forward in faith and trust to all that is still to come. Because real worship means always rejoicing in God our Redeemer.

And as we fix our hearts there, you see, on the Lord Jesus Christ, on all that He has given to us and promised us still, that is when our hearts will be filled with gratitude.

That's when they will overflow with love to Him and, of course, to all who likewise belong to Him and our brothers and sisters in Christ. And it's that overflow, you see, that verses 12 to 15 focus on because the celebration of true grace can never be separated from the compassion of true grace.

[25 : 00] And these verses express the overflowing generosity, from the heart, that again is always the mark of hearts that have been touched by God's grace. Real worship means rejoicing in God our great rewarder.

And that means we rejoice in the responsibility that He gives us to be generous in His name. Verse 13, I have given, you say gladly, to the Levite, the sojourner, the fatherless, the widow, all those who don't have any means to support themselves because we know that God is the generous rewarder who abounds in blessing to those who bless others in His name.

That's why the prayer is there in verse 15. Look down, Lord, and bless your people and all you've given us. And so, you see, following this upward giving to God Himself, first of all, is this response to others that comes out of thanksgiving to God and outward extravagant compassion.

We've met this so-called triennial tithe, this third-year tithe already in chapter 14. It seems it was an extra one that was added on every third year specifically to care for the needs of the most needy.

I suppose like churches have special Christmas or Easter offerings or that sort of thing in addition. And clearly it is a duty, verse 12. It must be paid. It's a command of God.

[26 : 31] Three times we're told that in verse 13. It's a duty, but it is also a delight. This isn't just like some other burdensome tax put on you by the government who thinks they can spend your money better than you can.

No, no, no. This is a sacred duty to God. Note the solemn declaration in verse 13. It's before the Lord your God that you do this. And again, it's offered to God but as Jesus himself always reminds us, love to God and love to our neighbor can never be separated.

So this is something that is paid to God but for your neighbor, verse 12, for the Levite, for the sojourner, the fatherless, the widow, all of those but no crops or land of their own.

And notice the inclusion of the sojourner. Three times that's repeated there, isn't it, in verse 12 and 13. The sojourner, the sojourner. You were a sojourner, remember verse 5.

Your father was a wandering sojourner in the land in Egypt before the Lord brought you home to this place. So never forget that. Never be tempted to close your hearts towards those resident aliens, those sojourners who see the joy of the people of God and want themselves to come and belong to that.

[27 : 50] It's an important thing for us to be reminded of, especially today when we're seeing in our city, indeed in our fellowship, many resident aliens, sojourners, people who are being attracted to what they see among the people of God.

It'd be easy, wouldn't it, for us to be tempted to close our hearts towards them? Just spongers. Well, when we think that, we need to get out our Bibles and read verses 12 to 15, don't we, of this chapter.

And you see, the point here and the point all through the Bible is that all God's people are to share in all God's blessings, both spiritual ones and material ones.

We are all one in Christ Jesus, says Paul. Jew and Gentile, male and female, slave and free. And yes, of course, he doesn't mean Jews turn into Gentiles or slaves turn into free men or men turn into women.

But what he's saying is that real Christian fellowships means a real sharing of life in real ways that are tangible ways. Not communism, that's forcibly taking from others what isn't yours, but generosity, which is willingly and gladly giving what is yours for the sake of others.

[29 : 08] Quite different. And that is a big part of real worship in the Bible. According to Moses and according to Jesus and all his apostles. Read Paul in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 where he tells the Corinthian church which was relatively wealthy materially that they must share with the Judean brothers who were very poor but who had blessed them spiritually in Christ.

Or read James. It was equally clear that within the fellowship there mustn't be snobbery, there mustn't be classism, there mustn't be exploitation. Real worship involves real sharing at every level.

That's what the word fellowship means. It's not a cup of tea and a biscuit after the service. Sharing is translated communion, partnership.

It's a real tangible thing. That's why in 1 Corinthians 11 Paul tells the Corinthians why their communion services were so blighted by God even so that some of the believers were being struck down by God with death.

Deadly serious. Why? Because it wasn't real communion. They weren't sharing. Some were exploiting others. It wasn't communion. It was callousness. Just as James rebukes the church for their life which wasn't truly shared.

[30 : 26] It was exploitative. You're not sharing. He says you're being shameful. And God won't bless that kind of behavior. That's what he's saying. So notice verse 12.

It's when you've finished paying all the tithe. As God commands then verse 13 you shall say we have obeyed. And then alone verse 15 can you pray Lord look down from heaven and bless us.

The acting of faith comes before the asking of faith. The paying that blesses others comes before the praying to bless ourselves. Now you might ask well isn't isn't that some kind of works religion?

Aren't we asking God then to reward us for our merit? Of course not. It's not merit. It's just real obedient faith. Faith working through love.

Faith demonstrating that it is in fact real faith in the real God. Not just some lip service to some false God of our own imagining that we think we might be worshiping. To trust and obey God's command is faith for the Bible.

[31 : 35] you bow to the commands of his lordship in obedient faith because you know that he is the great rewarder in grace of those who do truly trust his grace and obey him.

And so you gladly obey him because you know that that is the way of blessing in life. Proverbs 3 verse 9 Honor the Lord with your wealth and the first fruits of all your produce then your barns will be filled with plenty.

Test me and see if it's not so says the Lord through the prophet Malachi don't be robbing me but be trusting me and obeying me. That's the way of blessing. Test me. You think that's just the Old Testament?

Listen to Jesus. Give and it will be given to you for with the measure you use it will be measured back to you. And Paul says to the Philipians you have given generosity to me in my gospel work in a partnership in a sharing and in doing so you have sent a fragrant offering that is pleasing to God.

And he says in doing so my God will supply every need of yours. See when you rejoice in knowing the God who is the great rewarder of all those who seek him who trust and obey him who know he is the super abundant giver then you can trust him for everything that you need in life.

[33 : 06] And that means that your own heart and your own substance can overflow generously to others because you trust God to look after you. And so a truly worshipping people if they are truly worshipping will be a truly generous people.

People in real fellowship will inevitably be a people whose corporate life as the church and whose individual life expresses that generosity. If our generosity isn't real then it's not real fellowship.

It's just empty words. And then I'm afraid when God does look down from his holy habitation and hears our calls to bless him and to bless us then he can't bless us because his blessing isn't some sort of arbitrary thing that God dishes out and pours out to us like money or gold or something like that.

God's blessing is God's pronouncement upon hearts that have already blessed themselves by reflecting outwardly the grace that he's poured into them. And the grace that drives true generosity is itself perpetuated and strengthened within us as the fruit of that generosity.

That's the extraordinary thing that Paul explains to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. He says that God loves a cheerful giver. Do you remember? And he said that being generous and giving like that will make God's grace abound or rather rebound onto you so that you'll be enabled for even more generosity.

[34 : 46] And that produces says Paul real thanksgiving to God. Because he says the ministry of this service, this worship is not only supplying the needs of the saints which it is but it's also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God himself.

See generously giving to our Christian brothers and sisters in God's name is genuinely glorifying to God.

And to be glorifying to God is the greatest blessing that we can ever know in our life because that is what God has created us for.

That's the chief goal of our creation and our redemption to glorify God. That's how we will enjoy him forever. You see that brings us to these final words in verses 16 to 19 which speak about this commitment of true grace.

This overpowering allegiance of the heart which again always marks hearts that are touched by grace. Real worship means that we will rejoice in the God who is our ruler our commander and we will rejoice in his commands because we know that he has chosen his people to be the revealers of his glory and the showcase of his manifold wisdom to this whole world.

[36 : 12] And so there must always be a response to God's grace that is deep within us and personal and obedient submission that is for the sake of his great glory being seen in our world.

This ratification of the covenant here rounds off the whole section of what Moses has been teaching about what it means to live as God's worshipping people. And it's solemn.

We should never imagine that being God's people is a light thing a trivial thing not at all. The solemn declaration verse 18 the Lord is your God and verse 17 that Israel is his people.

And notice again it's this day that the Lord commands you this. It's always today. We can never rely on yesterday's obedience or last year's obedience. Today we are not to harden our hearts and we need that challenge today too.

We can't just rely on past obedience to God. We're commanded with heart and soul again today to obey him. Notice the sequence of these verses very important.

[37 : 22] God's command in verse 16 to obey him is because verse 17 you have confessed him as your covenant Lord. You've declared today that the Lord is your God.

So it's got to be his voice. It's got to be his command that you heed. because real faith is always expressed in obedience to him. Whoever has my commandments and keeps them says Jesus he is the one who loves me.

But this command notice rests upon the promise of God verse 18. He has declared you to be his people his treasured possession a people notice who are destined for obedience.

He declared you his people literally it says so that you keep all his commandments. That's the whole Bible's testimony. God's election of his people is unto obedience.

We are chosen in Christ says Paul before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him. We are his workmanship created for good works which he has purposed in advance that we should walk in them.

[38 : 32] And God's promise you see has a purpose verse 19. Look at that. And that promise is that his people should be for God a praise and an honor and a glory.

That we should be the people who bear his name gloriously before the whole world. The New English Bible translates verse 19 that he will set you to bring him to bring the Lord praise and fame and honor.

And that's certainly the way those phrases are translated in many other places. verse 11 of Jeremiah 13 says that God has chosen Israel that they should be for me a people, a name, a praise and glory.

Israel's purpose was always to bring praise and glory from the nations to the Lord their God. And Paul is absolutely clear, isn't he, in Ephesians.

That is the purpose, the ultimate purpose of God's church that we, God's people, should show forth for all eternity to all the powers in heaven and earth, the manifold wisdom and glory of God through Jesus Christ.

[39 : 40] And that's why the apostle Peter in his letter says that even now our purpose as the church is to be that holy nation, a people proclaiming to the world by our holiness the excellencies of him who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.

We're to live that light so that light is seen. You see how even way back then, right at the beginning, it's clear that the ultimate purpose of God's law, of God's commands, was that his glory should be seen on earth in his chosen people.

That the whole universe will see one day in all its blinding beauty and wonder the glory of his might in his people. That's what Paul says in 2 Thessalonians 1, when he comes on that day to be glorified in his saints, in you and me.

And at last we will shine fully the glory of God to the praise of his glorious grace. We will be God imaging people as he created us to be. But you see, that is what this whole world is to see and to experience today in the church of Jesus Christ in our life together.

We are to show forth that true commitment of grace, living in obedience to his commands, which show the way of life, the way of health, the way of human flourishing.

[41 : 16] And our lives are to exude that compassion of God's true grace, overflowing from hearts that truly celebrate God's marvelous saving grace.

grace. Because we're overwhelmed with gratitude for the God who has given us all things in Christ. That's our calling as Christians today. Now friends, when you see that, doesn't that change the way you think about God's commands?

The way you think about why we obey God? God's commands are not burdensome rules to restrict us, to impoverish our lives.

They're beautiful ones to release us, to empower our lives, to truly be what our destiny calls us to be, true human beings, God-like human beings.

So that we can glorify him and so that through us, people of every tribe and language and nation will be brought to bow down in worship and to find in him the grace that we have found.

[42 : 22] And so we obey God not just so that we're not punished by him, not just to avoid God's displeasure, but to please him as our heavenly father and to point others and to lead others to him, to discover the God who is the abundant giver, full of goodness, full of grace.

That's what Moses' message is to God's people in these chapters in Deuteronomy. And it's not something that's finished, it's not something that's left behind in the Old Testament as there's no relevance for us today, no, no, no, no, no.

This is something that is now in our lives finding its utter fulfillment according to Jesus. Listen to what Jesus says so plainly, you now my followers are the light of the world.

You are a city set on a hill, it can't be hidden. People don't light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

It's Jesus' followers, it's us in his church that carry the torch of the Israel of God today. And that's why Jesus goes right on from those words to tell us that everything that Moses wrote was written for us.

[43 : 53] Listen, in the same way, let your light shine before others so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven. Don't think that I've come to abolish the law and the prophets.

I've not come to abolish them, but to fulfill them. For truly I say unto you, until heaven and earth pass away, not one iota, not a dot will pass from the law until all is accomplished.

Therefore, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of God. But whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

It's only when God's people worship him that they can truly witness to him. And real worship is the obedience of faith, the joyful obedience to the commandments of Jesus our King.

It's when the law of God becomes flesh in the life of God's people that they will be the lights to the world and lead others to the light of the world.

[45 : 11] God's love. That's real worship according to Jesus and according to Moses. Let's pray.

Heavenly Father, how conscious we are of the thinness, the paucity of our worship to you.

Come into our hearts afresh, we pray, O Lord. Fill us with this, your word of truth, that we may be shaped to be a people of thankfulness and a people who know you as you truly are, the God of all goodness and grace, so that we rejoice in your command and love to follow your lead.

So help us, we pray. Shine your light ever more into our hearts that that same light may shine from us and so lead others to you, the great light.

For we ask it in Jesus' name.