

## Message #20

## Deuteronomy 15:1-23

There is a theme that we have seen over and over again as we have been going through Deuteronomy and that theme is this: **GOD PROMISES TO BLESS HIS OBEDIENT PEOPLE**. That very theme is stated four times in this chapter alone: **15:4, 6, 10, 18**.

God has developed a very simple formula and that is **Obedience to My word = My Blessings**. So the more we know of the word of God and the more we seek to obey the word of God, the more blessings God will give.

This is true in any context of life. Now a key topic that God is going to develop in this chapter is generosity and generous giving. What we see in this chapter is this:

**SINCE GOD HAS BEEN SO GENEROUS IN WHAT HE HAS GIVEN TO HIS PEOPLE, HIS PEOPLE ARE TO BE GENEROUS TO OTHERS AND TO GOD IN WHAT THEY GIVE.**

Many people view giving to God as some loss of their money. Nothing could be further from the truth. Actually, giving in obedience to God's word is the best investment and use of one's money that one could ever do. That investment shows God you love Him and fear Him and that leads to blessings. This is not just a truth in the Old Testament. This is clearly taught as well in the New Testament.

In fact, the writer of Hebrews said, "For God is not unjust so as to forget our work and the love which you have shown for His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints." The Apostle Paul said that when we generously and cheerfully give to the Lord that "God is able to make all grace abound to you so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed... you will be enriched in everything for all liberality..." (II Cor. 9:6-10).

There are three generous giving principles set forth in this chapter:

**GENEROUS PRINCIPLE #1** – The prosperous are to cancel the debts of the poor after seven years. **15:1-11**

One thing is very obvious from this section; God cares for every single individual in His family whether they are prosperous or poor.

According to **verse 1**, at the end of every seven years all personal debts owed were to be forgiven. The size of the debt is not stated. But whatever the size of the debt was, the lender was to release the borrower from the debt. Moses refers to this again in Deuteronomy 31:10 when it was to occur at the Feast of Booths that celebrated the release from Egyptian bondage. He called it the "year of remission of debts."

Now it is obvious that only one who had a substantial amount would be in a position to make a loan to someone. There were no banks as we know them, so someone would borrow from someone who was in a position to lend.

We may assume that the poor neighbor/brother had some need and went to the wealthy neighbor/brother to ask for a loan. We may also assume that the one who was able to make the loan analyzed the one to whom he was making the loan and calculated that he could pay it back within a six year span of time.

So we are making the assumption that the lender is making a loan to his brother/neighbor based on the fact that his brother/neighbor is not a lazy person who refuses to work or a liar who refuses to pay back what he owes.

So let's say the neighbor/brother was coming up on the seven year mark of the loan and he had not fully paid it back yet. According to **verse 2**, it was to be proclaimed to the neighbor/brother that his debt was canceled because of the Lord's remission.

Now this is significant because when we speak of the Lord's remission, we are making this canceling of debt more than just financial; it is theological. The full debt of our sin has been paid by Jesus Christ and when we have believed on Him we are set free.

Now according to **verse 3**, this was only applicable to God's people. The foreigner outside the family of God did not have a canceled debt. So if a loan were made to someone who was a foreigner, who was not part of the family of God, the lender was not under any mandate to forgive the debt.

In **verses 4-5**, Moses says to Israel if you will implement this when you are in the land, God will abundantly bless you. If you will obey this law, then you will never have to worry about being poor or anyone being poor.

The problem of poverty in this world is not one that will be solved by communism or socialism, it may only be solved by God and God will only solve it when people get serious about Him and His word.

There seems to be here an individual application. In other words, blessings would come to the one who obeyed and not to the one who did not obey. In fact, when we look at the statement in **verse 11**, which says, "the poor will never cease to be in the land," we may conclude that they will always exist until the nation Israel follows through with this, and most individuals will not do it.

God says if you will obey God and implement this in your life with your brothers, then God would let you experience four results:

**Result #1** - You will have so much that you will be able to lend to many nations. **15:6a**

**Result #2** - You will have so much that you will not ever have to borrow from any nation. **15:6b**

**Result #3** - You will rule over many nations. **15:6c**

**Result #4** - You will not be ruled by any nation. **15:6d**

Well this obviously has not happened to Israel yet. She borrows billions from the USA every year. It obviously hasn't happened in the USA because we owe China literally a trillion dollars and we owe 14 trillion dollars to the rest of the world.

In **verses 7-8**, God challenges His people not to harden their hearts against a poor, needy brother who is not part of their town. God wants His people to do what they can to help brothers who are poor from other areas.

In **verse 9**, God warns that when the seventh year comes along, don't put the pressure on the poor person and because you know you have to forgive him. If you start looking at your poor brother with stingy and hateful eyes, it is sin.

It is wrong to look down on those for whom you cancel debt. You cancel debt thanking God for all He has given.

God says in **verse 10** that He wanted His people to be generous and not have a grieving heart in helping because God will bless us for it.

God says in **verse 11** that the poor will always be in existence and God wants His people helping poor brothers and sisters who have great needs.

There are people who are poor and it is not due to laziness or refusal to work. It is just the way it is.

**GENEROUS PRINCIPLE #2** – The slave owners are to free the slaves after seven years.  
**15:12-18**

There were times when God's own people would hit a low moment in life and during those times, one Hebrew might decide that the best thing for him to do to gain funds or goods or to repay a loan, was to sell himself as a servant or slave to another brother. He would hire himself out to another Hebrew as his servant in exchange for whatever he needed.

It is clear that the slave is not some lazy derelict who refuses to work. He was one who did work as a slave for an owner. He was an honest, hard worker, just trying to have his needs met.

In **verse 12**, God says if this kind of thing happens, he is to be set free in the seventh year. In other words, self-imposed slavery was only to be permitted for six years and then the owner or master was to set the slave free. Now contextually we may assume that a couple of reasons why the slave was a slave was so that he could either just survive or pay some debt. But when he would be released, he did not have much of anything to live on so the owner was not to send the slave away empty-handed.

According to **verse 14**, God said that the owner was to send him away with a generous bonus or compensation package for his work. He was to give him a generous bonus from the flock and from the grain and from the wine vat. As God had prospered him, he was to bless them.

God does bless companies who provide generous compensation to their employees and a generous compensation package when the employee leaves. Those companies who have taken good care of God's people have reaped blessings more than they even know.

God says in **verse 15**, you are to remember that there was a time when you were a slave in Egypt and I redeemed you and blessed you. God says when you give your brother his freedom and you give him generous provisions, just remember that is what I did for you. You were a slave in Egypt and I redeemed you and brought you to this land and gave you everything you have.

At the root core of the word "redemption" is the idea of paying the price that is required to possess something that was once owned or lost. In the Greek Septuagint, the verb "redeemed" (lutrow) is one that means to pay the price and set one free. That is what God did for Israel and that is what He has done for us. That should prompt us to be generous to others.

Now in **verse 16** God makes it clear that there are some people for whom a slave might work and when he was set free, he was so well cared for that he wanted to stay and be with the owner forever.

The assumption of this is that the owner was such a great employer that the employee never wanted to leave this place of work. This could be true of a male servant or female servant.

According to **verse 17**, if the slave decided that this was what he wanted to do, then the owner of the slave was to take an awl and push it through his ear lobe into his door and that signified a lifelong commitment. **This temporary ceremony illustrates a permanent relationship.**

I get a big kick out of these athletes who poke holes in their ears and wear dangling earrings because they are basically saying I am a slave. They won't stand for the national anthem in a country that gives them freedom, but they wear earrings saying I'm a slave.

According to **verse 18**, God reiterates be sure and give the slave the option to go free after six years of service and I will bless you abundantly.

**GENEROUS PRINCIPLE #3** – The worshipper must set apart the first and the best for God.  
**15:19-23**

Giving to God is what shows God we fear Him and love Him. Paul says many people love money. In fact, he said the love of money is the root cause of all kinds of evil (I Tim. 6:10). One way God's people show God they don't love money but love Him is to give to Him.

When it comes to giving to God, God does not want slop offerings or left over offerings from His people. In fact, as near as I can determine from both the O.T. and the N.T., giving to Him is an expenditure that God wants His people thinking about first with their resources.

There are four principles of giving that are clearly spelled out here:

**Principle #1** - God wants the firstborn of the offerings. **15:19a**

God wanted His people thinking in terms of their offerings first. Why this emphasis on first-born? Certainly one reason for this would be because God would send His only begotten Son and His firstborn into this world to offer salvation.

**Principle #2** - God does not want left over offerings. **15:19b**

God did not want an offering after one had used it and got what he wanted out of it. Since the offerings were to be taken to the place God designated for worship, He did not want them bringing offerings to Him that were second-hand offerings.

**Principle #3** - God does not want defective offerings. **15:21**

No flawed animal was acceptable to God as an offering. It is not so much that God doesn't care about the animals that are flawed and defective; it is that God's people need to be willing to give to Him the best of what they have in view of all He has done for them.

**Principle #4** - God's people and others may eat all the things not dedicated to God. **15:22-23**

Other animals in abundance could be used for personal consumption, only they were not to eat or drink the animal's blood.

**PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS:**

1. God has been very gracious and generous with us and we should be to God's people.
2. Giving is the best when it is given first, not last.
3. Generosity is a quality that is like God.
4. God gives us what we have and we need to always acknowledge that.
5. We should ask God for wisdom and look to help others with legitimate needs.
6. We should constantly assess our own giving to God.