

Deuteronomy (Part 3) (1994)

Holiness

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We are going to be continuing this series of sermons on the dominant themes in the book of Deuteronomy. By way of quick review, the first sermon was basically that Deuteronomy gives us vision of what we are to do with our lives, which is to prepare for receiving our inheritance. That would be a New Testament style wording of it. In the Old Testament, it is about living in the land. But, it is the receiving of our inheritance.

Then from there, we went to showing that we are to learn the fear of God, which is something that we do not have by nature. It is something that every single one of us has to learn—to fear Him. And then that fear begins to become the foundation for other more important attributes of what God is.

Then we began to explore in the second sermon of why are we even in the position to be able to do this. There are two basic reasons: God's grace, and God's faithfulness.

Well, I did not quite get done with God's faithfulness, so we will begin there. Turn to Luke 1 to look at something we did not get to last time.

Luke 1:67-75 Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: "Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, for He has visited and redeemed His people, and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David, as He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, who have been since the world began, that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us, to perform the mercy promised to our fathers [Jesus Christ was sent because God the Father is faithful!] and to remember His holy covenant, the oath which He swore to our father Abraham: To grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.

Now, in I Corinthians, as I try to tie this in closer to our time, it says:

I Corinthians 1:9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Now we can read in the Bible that God is faithful, and that is fine. That is good as far as it goes. But, it is necessary for God to become faithful *to us*—in our own eyes, from our own experience; from our own lives, in a very practical and personal way. And so we read in Deuteronomy 8:

Deuteronomy 8:1-3 "Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which the LORD swore to your fathers. And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD."

It is not good enough to have head knowledge that God is faithful. That is fine, but that really does not cut the ice when it comes to life. We have to learn, like the Israelites did, that despite all that they went through—the length of the journey, and all the difficulties that they went through on that journey—God was faithful! He supplied the food that they needed, and the water that they needed; He protected them whenever they needed it.

God was doing that because He was faithful to His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because in a way, He was faithful to Himself and His own purpose. And that which is coming down the road, was dependent—contingent—upon whether He, the faithful God, was able to get these people through the wilderness on the other side, into the Promised Land, where His purpose and plan would continue to proceed.

That did succeed!

Despite all the difficulties and trial and troubles we see in the history of Israel, through the book of Judges and Joshua, first and second Samuel, first and second Kings, first and second Chronicles, all the way through the prophets, up into the New Testament—boom! Right away, in the New Testament we read, “Hey! God is still being faithful! He sent Jesus Christ because He is faithful to His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.”

The issue of faithfulness does not end there. It reaches into everybody’s life that He calls. We just read I Corinthians 1 that you are here because He is faithful! Here, we are 2,000 years removed from Jesus Christ, and you are called because He is still faithful to that purpose and plan that He is working out. It is still going right on.

But, it goes even further than that! Each and every one of us has to know from the time that He calls us until we are resurrected into His Family, whenever it happens to be, when the end is reached, He is still faithful in your life.

So, it is important that we understand this principle. It must be through practical experience, and becomes personally ingrained in our minds, until it becomes part of our personality, that God's Word does not fail—ever!

Thus we read Deuteronomy 8:1-3. And if we would have read further on, we would see that God was concerned about this, and what would happen when they came into a land that was flowing with milk and honey, with streams of water, and all the things they needed—a good, rich land.

What would they do? Would they forget? He was concerned about that.

I feel very certain saying to you that He is not going to forget that we have to learn this lesson of His faithfulness. And when the time comes, when we begin to go to sleep at the switch, when we begin to think proudly that we are doing alright and are secure, and are prospering, that everything is going along right, He is going to shake the tree. And when He shakes the tree, some of the nuts will fall out.

But He is going to shake the tree in order to wake us up and let us know that He is still requiring that lesson of His faithfulness. It is so important because His faithfulness is the basis of our faith in Him. Salvation is by grace through faith. You can only have faith in Somebody who is faithful.

Have any of you ever been in a marriage in which there was an adulterous situation? Could you really trust the adulterous person? You cannot do that. You cannot lean on that person—not at all.

Faith is dependent upon faithfulness. If we are going to have faith in God, and trust Him, it will be because we recognize His faithfulness. He will supply all our needs.

What is He going to do?

I Thessalonians 5:24 He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.

What will He do? He will do what He has promised.

I Thessalonians 5:23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

That is what He wants to do, sanctify us completely, and preserve us blameless until the coming of Jesus Christ.

Brethren, that is an astounding promise! Consider the things we do sometimes. They are hardly acts of faithfulness in return to His faithfulness. So, there is a great deal of encouragement there that we can rely upon, a faithful God who will carry through with what He has said He will do.

Turn to II Thessalonians 3.

II Thessalonians 3:2-3 And that we may be delivered from unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful, who will establish you and guard you from the evil one.

That is another wonderful promise that He gives to us!

Turn to Hebrews 10. While we are turning there, consider that in I Corinthians 10:13 he says that He will never give us a trial that is too great. He is faithful! He knows each one of us inside and out, and knows what we can take, and He knows what we are capable of. So, He will not give us anything that is too hard. He does not want to lose that. I will tell you that your salvation, and my salvation depends upon that fact! He is faithful, even in that.

Hebrews 10:22-23 [And because God is faithful] let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.

Paul's exhortation is that we ought to give ourselves over to this totally, hold fast to it, going forward with our lives striving to overcome with as little fear as possible. There is always that element, there, always with the understanding that God is faithful, and has allowed this to occur, and God is sure that we can pass this test that lies before us.

Now, before we move on from this subject, turn to Galatians 3. This subject is essential because our relationship with God is entirely on the basis of these two factors—God's grace, and faithfulness. They are aspects of His personality.

Now because of His faithfulness, because He called us, because His purpose is still being worked out according to the plan He has had from the very beginning, we find:

Galatians 3:26-29 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

Even as the children of Israel, way back when, under Moses and Joshua, inherited the Promised Land because of God's faithfulness, we can look forward to inheriting the Kingdom of God and being a part of it; inheriting all things that Jesus Christ has inherited because He is the recipient of all the promises. We are co-heirs with Him. And because God is faithful, we are now looking forward to all that.

There is a little bit more to this. And this we have to relate to what we are doing. We are getting prepared. Prepared for what? For the next judgment, which is pictured by the Feast of Tabernacles—the Millennium. As was said in the sermonette, we are pillars. We will be pillars in the Kingdom of God. What is the Kingdom of God going to be doing? It will be operating the government of God on earth. And so, it is going to govern the earth using the laws of God. And the people—Beings—who are going to be doing that are the ones who have been faithful to this faithful God. They have inherited that responsibility; have been prepared for it; and now are doing it.

And so, the salvation and the growth of those who are going to participate in that judgment is going to take place because we have been prepared for it. I went through this series during the previous Feast of Tabernacles regarding the church and its purpose, carrying it on through to the Last Great Day, how God is gradually expanding His work outward including more and more, because of the work to do every time a new judgement comes along.

This leads to another major concept. And so, now, we will begin this preparation back in the book of Deuteronomy. We will not be prepared unless we believe that God is faithful.

Deuteronomy 7:6 "For you are a holy people to the LORD your God; the LORD your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth."

Because God has been faithful to His promise, it puts those who He has called (I Corinthians 1:9) into a special niche. Even as Israel is put into a special niche, because of the grace and faithfulness of God, we too are set into a special niche.

Now, that is enough for a person who does not understand very well, to get feelings—expansive feelings—of pride about themselves, that God should think so much of them. I can recall, onetime, visiting a young lady, and I was explaining this to her. And she said, "Well, doesn't that make you feel proud?" And I conceded to her, "Yes, it could, but actually it is more humbling than prideful."

She immediately reflected that it made me feel like I had a big head, or something. No, I did not. It was very humbling to know that the great God would even consider to choose me, and set me apart, and to call me holy.

We have to get a good understanding of this, so we have to go back to verse 1:

Deuteronomy 7:1-5 "When the LORD your God brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you, and when the LORD your God delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them. Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son. For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly. But thus you shall deal with them: you shall destroy their altars, and break down their sacred pillars, and cut down their wooden images, and burn their carved images with fire."

I think that every one of you will admit that is a very severe judgment against these people. Turn to chapter 9:

Deuteronomy 9:1-6 "Hear, O Israel: You are to cross over the Jordan today, and go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourself, cities great and fortified up to heaven, a people great and tall, the descendants of the Anakim, whom you know, and of whom you heard it said, 'Who can stand before the descendants of Anak?' Therefore understand today that the LORD your God is He who goes over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and bring them down before you; so you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly, as the LORD has said to you. "Do not think in your heart, after the LORD your God has cast them out before you, saying, 'Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land'; but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out from before you. It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Therefore understand that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people."

We, of course, have to be instructed by that as well, that we are no better than others whom God has called. In fact, He tells us that we are the weak of the world. And yet, it still remains that He has made a very severe judgment against these people, and if you can remember the sermon I gave on the Feast of Trumpets, I read to you some of the judgments against the nations in events that lie just ahead. You can understand that those things are not for the squeamish at all. It is going to be a bitter, discouraging, horrible time for those people.

We cannot misjudge God. God's judgments are holy because He is holy. He *cannot* make an unrighteous judgment. He *cannot* make an unholy judgment. These terrible punishments that He metes out against these people are justified on the basis of their horrible conduct against their fellow man—their own neighbors. It is not just because they are anti-God, it was also what they were doing

to each other. And so, on the basis of their conduct against their fellow man, He made these judgments.

Everything that God does flows from a nature that is holy, and from His love. I am sure that these people were spiritually, ethically, and morally perverted to an extreme that we are beginning to see once again in the world.

Remember, when He made the promise to Abraham (in Genesis 15 I think), He said, “Not yet, because the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.” In another four or so generations, He was going to give them the opportunity to repent, to change their lives, to turn around; but they never took the opportunity. Finally the time came, and in order to preserve their minds, He had to intervene.

Now, there is another aspect to this.

This statement that we are holy has to be seen in the context of a policy of extermination. One of the reasons why is because we will understand the sharpness of the division that God sees between the world, and those who are a part of His purpose.

Please understand this. *The world is not His*. He wants that to be clear. It is His, only in terms of being their Creator. But, the world represents a system that has nothing to do with Him. It is anti-God. It is completely given over to carnality. The carnal mind is enmity against God. It is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed, can it be. And the minds that are governing those nations, the minds that are a part of those religions, the minds that are part of all those social organizations, regardless of the fact that they are capable of doing good, they are still anti-God.

Thus, that article in the *Forerunner* about one of those organizations in this world not being godly. They do good things, but it is not of God. They use the name of God, but it is not of God. How many Protestant and Catholic churches are there out there who use the name of God, and they know that He is the Creator, and yet it is not of God.

Now those people that Jesus says in Matthew 7, “Depart from Me, I never knew you, you workers of iniquity.” They were using the name of Christ, casting out demons in the name of Christ, but it was not part of His work.

His people are holy! Contrast that to a world that is not holy. So, we see from God's own word, here in Deuteronomy, He is doing this so that we will see the sharp division that He sees between His people, and the world.

Now, there is a tendency in all of us to be tolerant, to be “liberal” in that regard. I will not say that it is entirely wrong. But today, things have gotten so perverse in this nation, that intolerance towards sin is held by the world to be evil.

See? You probably see this a couple of times a week: There is hardly a newspaper edition that goes by that somebody does not write to the editor about something that is religious, especially in the Bible Belt of the United States. And if somebody writes in to the paper, and says the homosexuality is evil, condemned by God in the Bible, it is not very long that the newspaper editorial staff will say that these bigots who think like this are intolerant!

You cannot call sin evil, and have it accepted as that.

So, there is an intolerant attitude in the world toward being good. Herbert W. Armstrong felt from his experiences that this began during the First World War. He did not mean that there was not evil and immorality before that, but there certainly was a great deal more respect for what was good and right, toward God, morality, and righteousness. But somehow or another, that began to shift as our men came home from an immoral Europe. That led to the Roaring Twenties; then the Great Depression; then World War Two that was far worse than the first one; and then followed that by the Korean War and by now, war is almost becoming an everyday item. And I will tell you, when we hit the 1960s, this toleration of evil began to crescendo. You could see it in the families probably better than in any other place.

In the 1960s we began to hear open cries that there were no absolutes. People ought to be free to do their own thing. And that the church, society, and government have no right to impose its values or standards of behavior and conduct upon anybody else.

And now, look to where it has led.

Over the past 30 years, we have high school aged children packing guns and taking shots at one another, and killing one another. We have AIDS that is spreading by quantum leaps because people will not change their conduct. No absolutes!

There is a big argument in Charlotte, North Carolina, now, because a group of church people wanted to make sure that there was an educational policy within the school and board, that abstinence would be taught in the sex-ed classes. Quickly, that was shot down.

Entertainment is so sexually violent, and New Age oriented, that you cannot afford to watch any of it anymore.

Public education is losing its effectiveness; the economy is getting ready to go bankrupt; and the government is in the hands of people who want to control your life no other government in American history has ever even dreamed of. And, they are going to do it, too. Mark my words. They are going to do it. Inch by inch they are getting control of people's lives.

People are running wild because the moral people have been so tolerant.

You know, a person can be intolerant without being mean spirited. Do you think God was mean spirited when He ordered the death of those people? That was done in love. It was done, actually, in compassion. The Israelites were His agents in carrying that out, but it was actually done in love. He caused the death of all those people in the Flood because He was intolerant of evil. He did not want their minds to get so warped that He would not be able to lead them to repentance when their time for salvation comes. So, He is letting things roll in the nations of Israel, and you know the principle, "Because the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the hearts of the sons of men are fully set in them to do evil."

Deuteronomy 7:4 "For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods; so the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly."

God wanted these people out of the land because He did not want His people to be influenced by them. It was alright if they were outside of Israel's borders, but they were not to be in the land dwelling side by side with them.

Do you know that original command that God gave did not include killing the people? He just simply said, "I will drive them out." That is all. He was not going to put them to death.

You know, sometimes parents do not want their children playing with certain other children, and so they instruct them to stay away from them. Well, you see that policy that parents institute has a biblical basis to it. That was the policy behind verse 4, "I don't want you 'playing' with those people. They're a bad influence on you, and they're going to pull you down. And so, you're not to tolerate their evil, drive them out!"

Those who are moral and good cannot be tolerant of evil, first in their own lives, and then expanding out whenever we are in the place where we are in the position to exercise the authority of government. We have got to learn the principle now. And, it is in learning this principle you become holy! A holy person will not tolerate evil within himself. It begins there! And then it expands out when we know how to rightly use power without abusing it.

So, God did not want them living side by side because of this principle. His people are holy!

But, I will tell you something else. There was an even bigger reason why He did not want these people in the land. I think you will find this interesting! It has New Testament applications to it.

Holiness has two stages to it. The first is simply, that we are declared to be holy by God's selection, and by His use. We are simply set apart for His use and that puts us into a special niche, a special category, set apart for His pleasure, whatever that might be. But, the second is the condition of transcendental moral purity that permeates every thought and action of the one who is holy.

The first stage is something that is imputed by God. It is simply a legal operation that He does.

The second stage, though, is something that is achieved through the process of living.

Now, this transcendental moral purity is the way that God is! That is the way that He wants us to be—not merely set apart, but also of moral purity that is growing and changing, becoming like God is.

Deuteronomy 14:1-2 "You are the children of the LORD your God; you shall not cut yourselves nor shave the front of your head for the dead. For you are a holy people to the LORD your God, and the LORD has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples who are on the face of the earth."

That cutting of the skin, and also, apparently, a particular style of the cutting of the hair, was something that to God was dirty and foul; probably, it was associated with idolatry. And so, "Do not cut yourselves, do not shave the front of your head, because that is not holy!"

Deuteronomy 26:19 "And that He will set you high above all nations which He has made, in praise, in name, and in honor, and that you may be a holy people to the LORD your God, just as He has spoken."

Deuteronomy 28:9 "The LORD will establish you as a holy people to Himself, just as He has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of the LORD your God and walk in His ways."

This is conditional. And the reason we have to keep His commandments and walk in His ways, is because we cannot be elevated to the second stage of holiness unless we are. That is the way that this is accomplished.

Now, there is one that is very interesting. Turn to Deuteronomy 23.

Deuteronomy 23:13-14 “And you shall have an implement among your equipment, and when you sit down outside, you shall dig with it and turn and cover your refuse. For the LORD your God walks in the midst of your camp, to deliver you and give your enemies over to you; therefore your camp shall be holy, that He may see no unclean thing among you, and turn away from you.”

Is that not interesting? To me it is! I have built much of the remainder of this sermon around this. What significance is there in such a simple, mundane thing as relieving oneself? A simple sanitation law? No, there is much more to it than that. He mentioned holy in the context.

First of all, He did not want them to relieve themselves inside the camp. They had to go outside the camp. And even though they were outside the camp, they had to make sure that what they did was then covered up. And God says that part of the reason for this is that He walks in the camp! He does not want to step on that stuff. You do not want to step on it either!

Now, do you remember what it says in Exodus 3, when Moses was standing (at the burning bush) on the same piece of ground that God was? This is the same principle is it not? He had to take off His sandals and stand in his bare feet, because the ground was holy merely because God was walking on it too.

Now, God wanted those people out of the land because they were defiling the land by their idolatry, and all flows from that behavior; and He did not want to be defiled by it, not even to touch Him. It says, the Lord your God cannot abide sin! He is not the least bit tolerant of it at all. As Herbert Armstrong used to say, He will not budge one inch from His law, because that law killed His Son. He is a holy God. And those who are going to be in His Family are also going to be holy too.

So He illustrates it by simple things. He does not even want to step on our refuse. He does not want sin to be around His people.

We are going to develop this further. There are far more serious ramifications to this than that example. Turn to Numbers 5.

Numbers 5:1-4 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying: "Command the children of Israel that they put out of the camp every leper, everyone who has a discharge, and whoever becomes defiled by a corpse. You shall put out both male and female; you shall put them outside the camp, that they may not defile their camps in the midst of which I dwell." And the children of Israel did so, and put them outside the camp; as the LORD spoke to Moses, so the children of Israel did.

Again, this is because God was in their midst. Turn to I Peter 1 and I will give you a New Testament follow through.

I Peter 1:15-16 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."

This is quoted from Leviticus 11, 19, and 20. This carries right on through into Deuteronomy; and now we see it here in the New Testament. But, in the New Testament, it is far more highly developed than the Old Testament even begins to imply! You see? There are implications, there, that in the New Testament it is brought into focus so that we can begin to see that He wants us to be holy. We are to be holy because He is holy!

Now, God is not merely holy in the sense of being different, or separate from, but He is also holy in the second sense, that is of being transcendently morally pure. He is a cut above everything in every area.

He is the standard that we are to try and emulate. Why? And how?

Turn to II Corinthians. We have already begun to see some of the "whys," because God is holy. So, we are to be holy.

II Corinthians 6:11-12 O Corinthians! We have spoken openly to you, our heart is wide open. You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted by your own affections.

That is what holds us back—our own affections!

II Corinthians 6:13-17 Now in return for the same (I speak as to children), you also be open. Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them [Here we go again! Watch out for the refuse; keep it covered.], and walk among them [which came from Deuteronomy]. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you."

Do you think that the New Testament is not strict? Brethren it is so much stricter than the letter of the law, and in this sense of its design for holiness there is no comparison. The spirit of the law has ramifications that are barely seen in the letter of the law.

Under the letter of the law, they were merely required not to kill somebody. But with the spirit of the law, we are not even allowed to hate anybody, something that is internal, hidden inside. We have to be so pure that we do not even allow the thoughts to begin to lead to hatred to develop.

II Corinthians 6:17-18 Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the LORD Almighty."

II Corinthians 7:1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.

Now we have connected two of the major themes here. The fear of God gets us started in the right direction because it is the beginning of wisdom. But now we are beginning to see take shape the real end or goal toward which God is aiming; by that fear will come faith. By the faithfulness of God will come trust; out of that trust will come love. It begins to develop toward holiness; not just merely being set apart, but being transcendentally morally pure. And though we all understand that we are never going to reach the purity that Jesus Christ did, because we are already defiled, He wants us to understand that this is the direction that He wants us to go in.

Now, we have not finished developing this. I think that it is interesting that if we would look over what God said here between II Corinthians 6:11, and 7:1, we would begin to find that there are similarities between it and Deuteronomy 7:1-5.

What is he stressing that we are to avoid?—marriage; close fellowship with darkness; and idolatry. Marriage with the people of the land—the world. Close fellowship with those, and so forth.

That is part of the how. We just depart away from those things.

He said there that He will not only walk among them (verse 16), He also said He will dwell in them.

The New Covenant steps up the seriousness of our calling in that God not only dwells among us, which was something that Israel shared with us, but He lives in us. He is saying that He does not want His holiness defiled by us dragging Him through our sins. The refuse was simply a symbol of that which is dirty, as was also the discharge from a leper. They are symbols of that which is dirty, that defiles, or is in some way unclean.

Sin is that which defiles the inner man. Though God walked in the camp of Israel, and He did not want to step in the refuse, the discharges from the people, we have to always be aware that God is now in us, and that He does not want what we do in our life to defile this holy God who is inside of us.

Now, you can see that it is far more serious indeed, than merely stepping on human refuse that is thoughtlessly left in His path. He even says in verse 17, here, that we are not even to touch the unclean. He is not kidding when He says that He is in us. He is there.

Do you believe that?

In James 1:27 it says on the subject of holiness, that we are to “keep oneself unspotted from the world.” I can guarantee you that only those people who truly understand the subject of holiness can truly understand why salvation has to be by grace. God will not lower His standards. And He wants us to strive to reach them.

You see, He cannot afford to lower His standards, because He cannot deny what He is—*the* Standard. And so He puts that standard way up there and He wants us to strive to reach it.

Now, how in the world, brethren, can we do this?

Do you know that the book of Deuteronomy tells us how? It does! The book of Deuteronomy does not say that we *will* do it, but does show us the foundation of how it can be done. Turn to Deuteronomy 32. First this is going to seem as though it has no connection to holiness, but it does. This passage is part of the Song of Moses.

Deuteronomy 32:7-9 "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations. Ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell you: When the Most High divided their inheritance to the nations, when He separated the sons of Adam, He set the boundaries of the peoples according to the number of the children of Israel. For the LORD's portion is His people; Jacob is the place of His inheritance.

The context here is showing God's sovereignty over all the nations on the earth. And it is telling us that God portioned out land to all the nations, not just to Israel. But to Israel, He gave the land of Palestine. Now each nation including Israel has an inherent right to the land that God gave them. We then find in the scriptures that Israel apportioned its land to each of the tribes by God's direction. So then, each tribe had their own inheritance. And it belonged to them. What was given to Ephraim did not belong to Judah, and so forth. It was their land.

Then we find in Joshua that the land was then apportioned to families. So, if you were an Ephraimite, you got a piece of Ephraim's portion. And that was your family's land.

It is from this that comes the basic right of an Israelite to own land. It was given to him by God—from God, to the nation, to the tribe, to the individual. And so every Israelite has a basic right from God to own land.

Now following the same exact principle, God says that His portion of all the earth is Israel. He has an inherent right of ownership. Are you beginning to see this? We become in the New Testament the Purchased Possession. He has an inherent right, then, to what He has purchased.

What He is doing here is showing the basis of their relationship. And even as Israel had a basic right to ownership of land, God had a basic right of ownership of them. He was the One who rescued them, right? He is the One who broke their bondage, and now He redeemed them, and they belonged to Him.

I want to show you something that you might not have known was in the Bible. Turn to the book of Psalms.

Psalms 16:5-6 O LORD, You are the portion of my inheritance and my cup; You maintain my lot. The [property] lines have fallen to me in pleasant places; yes, I have a good inheritance.

Here is the other side of the coin of Deuteronomy 32:9. Even as Israel is God's inheritance, God is your inheritance! You have right of ownership to Him! This begins to have interesting ramifications.

How can two in a relationship come to the place where one owns the other? Turn to Psalm 100.

Psalms 100:3 Know that the LORD, He is God; it is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people and the sheep of His pasture.

There is on the part of God an inherent right of absolute and utter ownership because He is Creator. In that light, we are undoubtedly His property. But then again, so is everybody else on earth. That sort of ownership does not fit the context of Deuteronomy 32, nor of Psalm 16. They imply a much more personal ownership of each other.

Now a despotic tyrant or slave owner, may have the most absolute right of property over his subject, or slave. He may have as his right the entire disposal of that slave's skill, labor, and even his life. That is admitted in the Bible as what He said to Nebuchadnezzar. He gave to him absolute power over life and death.

But, does it not seem to you that kind of authority fits what we know of the God of the Bible?

In what sense did Nero own Paul when he took his life? Nero was a tyrant. Paul was a subject of Rome. And so, Nero ordered the execution of Paul. But tell me something—who really owned Paul? Christ did! Paul belonged to another, did he not? There is only one way that two actually come to possess each other, and that is when they give themselves to each other in love.

When two people give themselves in love to each other, certain rights begin to accrue, and I will show you one of them. Turn to I Corinthians 7.

I Corinthians 7:2-3 Nevertheless, because of sexual immorality, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

Because she has given herself to him, she now belongs—her body—to him. The same accrues to her. This principle is involved in this.

Now when Herbert Armstrong taught that marriage is a God-plane relationship, he knew what he was talking about, because humanly, this is the only situation where this can take place to its highest lawful degree—in marriage.

These verses are saying is that God is mine, and I am God's. I possess Him, and He possesses me. But you see, this is only true to the degree that we have given ourselves to Him.

We are beginning to focus in on what makes it possible for us to reach out and have this holiness. In Titus 2:13-14 and Galatians 2:20, they say basically the same thing, that Christ loved me, and gave Himself for me. Add to that John 3:16, that God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son. We can begin to string scriptures together and what we begin to see is that because the Father loved, He *gave*. And because the Son loved, He *gave* Himself.

The only thing that remains to be answered is, whether each of us have given ourselves in love to Him. Did you notice what it was that made us special people? It was that Christ loved us and gave Himself for us. That is what makes us special, and holy.

Ephesians 1:1 Who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of His glory.

We have become the purchased possession. And brethren, is it by this same process by which we come to possess God.

I John 4:16 And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.

Did you see that? We are actually in, as it were, each other.

I John 4:19 We love Him because He first loved us.

That is the process by which we begin to grow toward this transcendental moral purity—holiness. And this can only be achieved in a relationship of love. We have to give ourselves to Him.

Brethren, the only way that God knows whether He actually possesses us, apart from the part that He legally paid for us, is whether we respond in kind to Him.

Think of it humanly, with two people who do not know one another. They meet and begin to see each other more and more until it reaches the place where they want to spend their life together; and they give themselves to each other.

Absolute possession of others is only possible at the price of absolute surrender to them. And no human heart ever gave itself away unless it was convinced that the heart to which it gave itself had given itself to it. If it has not, that relationship will not last very long.

And, it is this, which produces the special relationship the children of God have with Him, over and above the fact that He is the God of all creation.

When we enter into a relationship like this, God serves us, because that is what a person who loves you does. He serves us by being faithful to what He has said He will do. He provides for us in every way. So, He will then continue the process that He has begun with His calling, because He is Creator.

Because He loves us, He wants us to be in His Kingdom, and He makes possible, then for us, serving us, giving Himself to us, making possible our response to Him. That is how He serves us. He tries to remove all the barriers that He possibly can so that we will not reject and resist Him. Is that not what two people do who are courting one another? They try to remove all the barriers that would prevent the courtship from growing into a marriage.

That is what God does. He serves us that way, by trying to remove the barriers that separate us from Him—a complete and total relationship with Him.

How do we serve Him?

The best way we can do this is to do what Jesus said in John 15:8, that My Father is pleased when we produce much fruit. That is what pleases Him. That is what serves Him.

Now, think of this—are not parents served, pleased, and honored when their children do well? Sure they do! That is the same process we are talking about.

John 14:15 "If you love Me, keep My commandments."

This verse is very important to understanding this whole concept. If you love somebody, you will do what is pleasing to them, and for them. What this verse does, and here is what is important, is that it separates to some extent love from commandment keeping. Can you see it? It separates love from commandment keeping.

If you ask anybody associated with the Worldwide Church of God, what is love? They will almost without variation reply, keeping the commandments. And that is correct [as far as it goes]. I John 5:3 says as much. "This is the love of God, that we keep His commandments." But what John 14:15 shows, is that it is an incomplete answer. I John 5:3 is incomplete. John 14:15 shows that love precedes commandment keeping.

Look at it: "If you love Me, then you will keep My commandments. And the keeping of the commandments then becomes the evidence and proof that you love Me."

They cannot really be separated. But it is important to make a distinction, and understand that love consists of two parts. On the one hand there is the very well-known commandment keeping. That is, indeed, love. Love is what you do. But on the other hand, it also shows that there is an affection that motivates the keeping of the commandments. And love is not whole until it includes both.

Tell me something—would you marry somebody who did everything you wanted them to do, while they hated your guts? Ladies, would you want to marry some guy who is a cold fish? You want some heat there, do you not? You want some feeling. You want somebody in whose touch is some electricity that starts those hormones flowing. And it is not just the touch. It is *who* is doing it, too. You know that in that person dwells not just a deep and abiding respect, but somebody who loves you with an affection that is so deep, that you can respond to it willingly, wholesomely, and wholeheartedly. That is what you want.

And, that is what God wants.

Would you say that the Pharisees were beautiful in their love? In some ways, they were awfully strict people. Their love was so rigid and so cold that I do not think they could attract anybody. There was no warmth there, and no affection.

John 14:21-24 "He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him." Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered and said to him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words."

John 14:31 "But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here."

He is saying that the world is going to know that I love the Father so much, that I am willing to give My life for Him; that I have such an affectionate desire for Him that I am willing to keep His command that I become the martyr for all mankind. That is what He said.

Let us finish back in Deuteronomy 6.

Deuteronomy 6:1-5 "Now this is the commandment, and these are the statutes and judgments which the LORD your God has commanded to teach you, that you may observe them in the land which you are crossing over to possess, that you may fear the LORD your God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments which I command you, you and your son and your grandson, all the days of your life, and that your days may be prolonged. Therefore hear, O Israel, and be careful to observe it, that it may be well with you, and that you may multiply greatly as the LORD God of your fathers has promised you—a land flowing with milk and honey.' Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."

Brethren, we have got to have this love, because everything hangs on it.